Chapter 5
Considering the Content and Depth of Reflective Inquiry Among Preservice Teachers Preparing to Work with Elementary-Aged and Adolescent English Learners

Gregory Knollman, Kandace M. Hoppin, and Patricia Rice Doran

Abstract Reflective inquiry as a process to prepare preservice teachers is not a new concept. Dewey (How we think: a restatement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educative process. DC Heath, 1933) advocated for the use of reflective thinking as a means of avoiding practice that solely emphasized memorization as an acquisition of skills. Preservice teachers must have the time within their preparation programs to carefully deliberate on what they have observed along with the space to write and discuss the steps they take to advance the strategies they are learning within their practice. This chapter focuses on the use of reflective journals as a space for preservice teachers to reflect on how they solve problems outside the bounds of memorized techniques. Through this study, we were interested in determining how preservice teachers within one teacher preparation project used reflective journal writing to share their accounts of how they prepared to work with English learners. We selected the student reflection journals to understand how prior experience and interaction with course content and practicum shape ongoing development. We were concerned with the content and depth of reflective thinking (Lee HJ, Teach Teach Educ 21:699–715, 2005) within the journals as it related to the students' participation in the teacher preparation program and the connection to the work with English learners.

Teacher candidates enter classrooms eager to make a difference in the lives of the students they are assigned to teach. Given changing demographics across the United States, candidates now enter classrooms that are more likely to have students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Student backgrounds may look very different from those of their teachers. This demographic divide may impact student

G. Knollman (✉) · K. M. Hoppin · P. R. Doran
Towson University, Towson, MD, USA
e-mail: gknollman@towson.edu

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perception of educator effectiveness (Cherng & Halpin, 2016) and student achievement (Egalite et al., 2015). Since the 1999–2000 academic year, there has been a decline in the percentage of teachers identifying as white; among the 3.2 million public school teachers, the percentage of teachers who identify as white has declined to 80% (NCES, 2019). However, this compares with a student body in traditional public schools that is comprised of elementary and secondary students who are 50% white, 15% Black, 26% Hispanic, 5% Asian, and 3% who identify as two or more races (NCES, 2019). In addition, the number of students whose primary language is a language other than English has also increased within the past two decades (NCES, 2019). In other words, although the racial and ethnic backgrounds of today's public education teachers are changing to reflect a more diverse composition of instructors, the transformation is not occurring at a pace keeping up with the changing demographic of the students they teach. This can be a powerful realization among those planning to enter classrooms as teachers whose lived experience is very different than that of their students, particularly those who are English learners (ELs).

Our focus, as coauthors and teacher educators, remains on offering our students an opportunity to engage with learners from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds to ensure they are prepared to enter classrooms that may look very different from the ones they experienced. Our teacher education program includes an elective set of courses that prepare students for an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsement. Over the course of several years, students enroll in cohorts to participate in additional coursework and internship experiences to offer further preparation to work with elementary-age youth from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

This chapter focuses on the reflections of 22 preservice teachers from a variety of educational preparation programs who met to complete a set of university courses that add an ESOL endorsement to their initial teaching licensure. Participants in this cohort varied in majors and represented backgrounds that looked less homogeneous than the current teaching force. As part of the evaluation of the elective ESOL endorsement program, we wanted to examine not only the outcomes on the academic coursework but also the way the teacher candidates reflected upon the course content and field experiences that shaped their attitudes and dispositions toward the students they served. While teachers entering this program come from a variety of content areas and grade level areas, all are prepared for K-12 ESOL endorsement in our state; thus, teachers' preparation involves experience and case study work with ELs at a variety of grade levels, including adolescents.

We use this space to further examine the reflective process that students engaged in at the midpoint of their preparation experience. This process was part of a broader approach to inquiry with an emphasis on understanding how exposure to diverse classrooms during early internship experiences shaped preservice teachers' connection to the content and the learners they teach. We share how this reflective process assisted the students in applying what they learned in their courses while supporting how we, as course instructors, shaped the program based on students' reflections of those experiences.

Review of the Literature

As preservice teacher educators, we enter each year of our ESOL endorsement project with an interest in ensuring that our cohort of undergraduate candidates are not only prepared to complete the requisite coursework, teaching practicum, and licensure exams, but also that they have ample opportunity to reflect on their practice throughout their experience. For over half of the preservice teachers that entered the project, there was little prior knowledge or experience on how to work with English learners and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. As teacher educators we were familiar with the literature that indicated educational and achievement gaps remained between ELs and their non-EL peers. There are a number of factors that may contribute to this achievement gap beyond the limited knowledge of English (National Academy of Sciences, 2017, p. 25) and the complexity of identifying and reclassifying ELs based on language proficiency (Saunders & Marcelletti, 2013). This gap in achievement poses barriers to academic learning and performance in schools (National Academy of Sciences, 2017; C Trends, 2019, Gandara & Hopkins, 2010, https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/challenges-english-learner-education). Teachers must be equipped with evidence-based practices and linguistically responsive interventions. They must also have a firm understanding of how to support the academic, cognitive, and social emotional needs of their ELs.

While teachers must enter classrooms equipped to offer instruction for all learners, several factors impede their preparation, including lack of preservice preparation or training, limited integration of EL content into existing teacher education courses, and the uneven expertise of teacher education faculty who provide instruction on teaching ELs (Li, 2017). Preservice teacher educators have attempted to tackle that knowledge and experience gap in teacher preparation in a number of ways, including the development of courses specific to EL instruction, emphasis on cultural competence and multi-cultural education integrated within existing preservice coursework, and the integration of strategies and practicum or internship experiences within diverse high needs schools.

To prepare for roles in increasingly diverse classrooms, preservice teachers need to acquire hands-on experiences and opportunities to observe and apply their knowledge of effective instructional methods. Memorizing strategies, standards, and key terms without practice limits the preservice teacher's ability to apply what they are learning. While knowledge of subject matter and recognition of evidence-based supports for diverse learners is useful, without an ability to observe, apply, and reflect on what they are studying, preservice teachers are limited in their preparation. Therefore, the use of self-reflection is particularly valuable for this population as a supplement to, and a way to make sense of, their limited experiences.

To situate reflective narrative in context, it is helpful to consider the role of reflection in general. Dewey (1933) advocated for the need for reflective thinking as a means of training oneself to master methods of systematic inquiry and avoidance of the danger of a practice that solely emphasizes rote memorization as the acquisition

of skill. Concerned with the reduction of training to the memorization of information and limits to a correct response, Dewey advanced the importance of thinking beyond the knowledge of the subject matter to a focus on the improvement of active inquiry, careful deliberation, and the development of experiences as the natural stimuli to reflective thinking (Dewey, 1933).

Making meaning from reflection exists within multiple qualitative approaches to gathering and analyzing data. Both reflective inquiry and narrative inquiry are built upon Dewey's understanding of experience (Downey & Clandinin, 2010). According to Clandinin et al. (2017), "Narrative inquiry is a way of inquiring into experience that attends to individuals' lives but remains attentive to the larger contexts and relationships within which lives are nested." (p. 91). Reflective inquiry also emphasizes the importance of inquiring about experience, with a focus upon the reaction to a set of actions (Downey & Clandinin, 2010). Both approaches are situated in a context or set of experiences, but reflective inquiry "focuses on a particular situation set within a particular context, such as teaching and learning." (Downey & Clandinin, 2010, p. 388).

Shön (1987) considers reflection within the context of indeterminate zones of practice, in which competent practitioners must solve problems outside the bounds of applied theories or memorized techniques. Building on the work of Dewey and Shön, Rodgers (2002) notes that reflection, when systematic and purposeful, has roots in the scientific method, with experimentation, or the testing of theory, within the interaction between self, others, and one's environment. When conducted in community, this testing of theories broadens the practitioner's understanding of their experience. Applied specifically to teaching, reflection serves as an integral step in the study, observation, and experimentation or testing of learned strategies and methods to support students, or those teachers will encounter within their instructional environment. Reflection therefore is a tool for meaning-making of experience (Rodgers, 2002). Teachers learn by doing. There must be time and space within both preservice learning and in-practice for reflection as an essential connection to solving problems, testing theories, and advancing practice.

Reflection is also a practice advanced within preservice teacher education. According to edTPA (Stanford Center for Assessment Learning and Equity, 2019) preservice teachers should move beyond just summarizing teaching practices and begin to reflect on what they have learned by planning, instructing and assessing their learning. Reflection is a process that involves a set of phases. While there are multiple procedures for systematic analysis and reflection, these procedures should include a degree of awareness of the situation and not simply progress toward a solution (Lee, 2005).

Reflection assumes a degree of emotion that requires the student to unpack experiences and question personal beliefs. Shoffner (2008) indicates it requires the preservice teacher to examine practice beyond a specific format or place beyond the university to consider serious thought and positive change. Teachers are required to become active participants by infusing personal believes and values into their personal identity (Larrivee, 2000). They must also consider how the school setting and

conditions, along with the dominant concerns of supervisors influence their professional formation (Cavanagh & Prescott, 2010).

Reflective inquiry lays the groundwork for the testing of new ideas through the basis of qualitative research as a way to study the inner experiences of participants as a means of discovery (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). It also takes on multiple forms within both program evaluation and participatory action research. For example, external evaluators may offer prompts to seek information about the specific impact of practices within a program, or practitioners and members within a project might carry out reflection and share the feedback with others as they study aspects of themselves and connections to the program (Stake, 2010).

Along with the many benefits of reflection, there are also cautions that underlie its use specifically as a means for preparation. For example, there is little consensus on what constitutes the specific steps for reflective practice in preservice education (Lee, 2005). Additionally, preservice teachers' ability to reflect on their practices is risky without additional support from teacher educators (Gelfuso & Dennis, 2014). Individuals may also experience challenges with the depth of their reflection, focusing first on practical concerns, before showing greater capacity for reflection within practicum experiences as they progress from university studies to practical settings (Cavanagh & Prescott, 2010; Shoffner, 2008).

While challenges exist, there are multiple approaches to promote reflective practice in teacher education; in some of these approaches, we see the power and relevance of narrative approaches to reflection. In their introduction to narrative inquiry as pedagogy in education, Huber et al. (2013) indicate the understanding of this form of research is rooted in the experience of co-inquiring with those who, "interact in and with classrooms, schools, or in other contexts into living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories of experience" (p. 213). Applied to teacher education, these narrative techniques are used in part among preservice teachers to make meaning through reflection upon experiences at moments of contradiction and discontinuity (Huber et al., 2013).

Although varied in the approach to the telling and retelling of their experience, the medium by which preservice teachers share their stories is not limited to an oral or conversational approach. Lee (2007) indicates reflective approaches include teaching journals linked to classroom teaching or practicum, response journals that provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on what they have studied in their preparation program, dialogue journals that preservice learners exchange with their professors, and collaborative journals written and exchanged among cohorts of preservice teachers. Reflection can be an important venue for teachers to recognize their strengths and weaknesses during teacher practicums that involve microteaching of taped lessons (Cho, 2017). Journals specifically as a form of reflection also nurture reflective thinking and assist students in making sense of theory, personalizing learning, and applying knowledge to relevant experience (Lee, 2007). Students can benefit, particularly, when they retell and call out their own experiences, using these as springboards to reflection in the process of telling their own stories.

Written reflections also promote critical reflection and community of practice through discussion and a reflection on learning and teaching beyond the bounds of

face-to-face interactions (Yang, 2009). They also serve as a tool to support learning within the context of L2 preservice teacher programs (Arshavskaya & Whitney, 2014). Teacher educators must also open time and space for preservice teachers to think about how events involve ELs in field-based placements, which can be accomplished in part through written reflection and small group discussion (Sugimoto et al., 2017), narrating and recasting events as they occur and afterward.

Understanding that not all practitioners enter with the same level of prior experience with reflective inquiry, and that approaches to reflection vary within preservice programs, there are elements that appear essential in reflective teacher education. These include personal factors connected to the practitioner such as the prior practical knowledge (Shoffner, 2008), attitudes, and beliefs of the practitioner (Lee, 1999, 2007; Akbari, 2007) as well as components of reflective thinking, including the process, the content and the depth of reflection (Lee, 2005; Larivee, 2006; Mena-Marcos et al., 2013; Ryken & Hamel, 2016). Lee (1999, 2005) studied reflective thinking of preservice teachers from multiple perspectives including the content and the depth of reflective thinking, with specific criteria to assess the depth of reflective thinking. These three levels include recall, rationalization, and reflexivity. Lee (2005, p. 703) applies criteria to reflective thinking, in which practitioners' reflection are oriented to the description of experience based on:

1. The recalling of experience without looking for alternative explanations (Recall level);
2. The examination of the relationship between pieces of their experiences and an explanation for what is happening (Rationalization level);
3. The analysis of experience from various perspectives to see how the attitudes of cooperating teachers influence their own values and beliefs (Reflectivity level).

Through this study, we were interested in determining how preservice teachers within our teacher preparation project used reflective journal writing, particularly in narrating their own experiences, to share their accounts of what they were learning within their ESOL endorsement program. We selected the student reflection journals to understand how prior experience and interaction with course content and practicum shape ongoing development. We were concerned specifically with the depth of reflective thinking and content within the journals as it related to the student's participation in the teacher preparation program and the connection to the work with ELs.

One University's Approach to Preservice Preparation

The use of reflective inquiry connected to the student journals is part of a larger teacher preparation project. The model for this project is inclusive of the principles of adult learning and knowledge transfer, in which training and professional development is authentic, purposeful, and job-embedded (Croft et al., 2010). The resulting targeted professional development empowered teachers to collaborate and work

across disciplines (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2015). Beyond the instruction of preservice teachers, we wanted to capture the teachers' evolving narratives as they progressed through their training experiences. We embedded reflection within each step of the preparation process. Students completed entrance surveys at the beginning of the program as they started their first course. The surveys gathered information about their prior knowledge, attitude, and experience working with English Learners. Students were also asked to complete a semi-structured entrance interview that asked them about their prior knowledge of specific instructional strategies along with prior experience with observation or instruction within the classroom. As the students' progressed through the sequence of courses they completed a mid-point interview asking for updates on the instructional strategies that they learned through the coursework and any new experiences they had in the classroom. By the midpoint of their coursework, they also completed a series of journals responses to prompts that asked them to reflect on their prior knowledge, experience, and background in relation to the connected course concepts and field experiences. As the student continued to progress through the program, they had several additional opportunities for reflection, including a third round of interviews and a follow-up questionnaire on their attitudes and beliefs prior to graduation and application for initial licensure and an ESOL endorsement. The authors recognize the caveat that reflection is not the same as narrative inquiry and that caution should be emphasized to avoid creating sweeping assertions across qualitative approaches to discovery (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990); nevertheless, we have found an overlap between opportunities for narration and avenues for reflection, and the intersection of these concepts has been helpful in allowing our students to think and respond critically to their own experiences.

In general, we see the use of reflection as a way to capture the varied dimensions of student's' thought and to provide a space and framework for students to begin to create and consider the stories of their own experiences. In reflection, our students are able – indeed, required – to take a step back from their day-to-day coursework, which focuses on gaining knowledge, trying strategies, and curating resources for their own future careers. In reflection, these activities are put aside so that students instead can consider the experiences and beliefs that underlie and inform their teaching practices. When we add the power of reflection to the activity of narrative, asking students to reflect on and retell their own stories, we are able to create opportunities for students to both tell their own stories and consider the larger implications of those stories in context.

Methods

This project was conducted as part of a larger evaluation of a preservice preparation program that includes a mixed method to examine the outcomes of preservice and in-service teachers preparing for licensure and an ESOL endorsement. This study

adopted a grounded theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The team was specifically interested to learn:

1. When guided by a reflective prompt, what areas of content do students focus upon, and at what depth do undergraduate preservice learners reflect upon new experiences incorporated into their course experiences when working with ELs?
2. How does reflection vary across the undergraduate teacher candidates based on their prior experience working with ELs or being identified as ELs?

Research Site and Participants

We examined preservice teacher reflective journals within the context of a five-year teacher education project. The project included funding for graduate students to complete coursework in leadership and ESOL, along with a sustained professional development partnership with two local schools. Additionally, three cohorts of undergraduate education majors (including major fields of early childhood special education; elementary-special education; special education; secondary education) received fellowship funding to complete 12 elective credits in English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) and culturally responsive practice with the goal of passing the Praxis II content examination in ESOL, a requirement for state endorsement in ESOL.

Data for this study were collected during a summer assessment course that lasted 5 weeks and addressed informal and classroom assessment of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners, including broader issues of professionalism, culturally and linguistically responsive practices, and integration of assessment and instruction. Prior to this course, all students had completed at least one, three-credit class in ESOL through their fellowship funding. This course, an introduction to culturally and linguistically responsive practices occurred in the January term prior to the summer course. Some students had completed additional coursework in linguistic or cultural diversity based on the requirements for their specific major or, in some cases, their specific professional and academic interests.

Data Collection and Analysis

A team of three researchers gathered the data: The course instructor for the summer sequence who also serves as the principal investigator of the preservice preparation project, one of the project evaluators, and a colleague who supported the analysis and had taught courses within the sequence in prior semesters at the university. The team engaged in our own reflective discussions throughout the project design and analysis phase in order to identify areas of our own subjectivity and to correct for potential bias or oversight on the part of each researcher.

Students participated in an interview about their experience at the midpoint of their program, conducted an observation of an ESOL classroom or interview with an ESOL teacher and reflected on their experiences throughout the summer sequence across eight reflective journal prompts that emphasized specific reflections on their own background, their own personal experiences, and various course concepts and field experiences. Students were invited to participate in multiple rounds of interviews. They were also asked to complete multiple reflective journals at the midpoint of their program. Students were required to consent to the interviews and reflections. Participation in the evaluation was encouraged but remained voluntary. Reported information was de-identified. The research was approved by the university's Institutional Review Board.

Evaluation criteria for all journal assignments were identical: "You will be evaluated based on the degree to which you describe one or more significant ideas related to the prompt and connect it as your future as an educator." Students were provided a suggested length (1–2 pages) to guide their work and allocation of time, but responses were not graded on length. The specific journal topics analyzed for this study included:

- Journal Response 1 (beginning of the course): Describe your experience and background in ESOL/with CLD learners thus far. What new experiences or knowledge have you gained from your program thus far, and how do you see these relating to your future as an educator? (We may ask you to reflect on this topic again at the end of the 5 weeks.)
- Journal Response 7 (last week of the course): Describe your response to the module on CLD families and/or your other experiences working with CLD learners or families this summer. What have you learned about CLD learners' families, their needs, and their strengths? What strategies or resources should educators use to engage and support families of CLD learners, and how will you use this information as a future educator?
- Journal Response 8 (last week of the course): Describe your experience and background with CLD learners after this summer. What new experiences or knowledge have you gained from your coursework this summer, and how do you see these relating to your future as an educator?

The data collected through student journal responses underwent a comparative content analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The analysis included multiple stages. The researchers first used open coding to identify codes within the journal responses that the students produced. The research team met to talk about these provisional codes, which led to the development of additional codes and conferment of broader themes. The team specifically looked for patterns across the student reflections. Using Lee's (2005) framework, the team analyzed the students' journal responses with a focus on the content of the journal reflections and the depth of reflective thinking. The team included member checking and triangulation of data across the student interviews and the journal responses.

Findings

The reflective journal experience offered an opportunity for students to think beyond their typical required interaction with course concepts, as journal prompts asked them to reflect more broadly on their personal experiences with ELs and with linguistic or cultural diversity. In their journal entries, some students reflected on how their experiences related to course concepts and information, while others reflected more broadly on their own childhood or adult experiences as ELs or working with ELs.

The team identified topics that students reflected on as they described their experience and background in ESOL, their work with culturally and linguistically diverse families, and the experience they gained through the course. Among the topics that students emphasized, the team noted commonalities that fit into a few broad content areas. These three primary areas of content that teachers focused on within their journals included the application of course content, the importance of building relationships, and the importance of valuing language and culture and its impact on future practice. The depth of student reflections varied across the journal reflections. Additionally, students who identified as ELs or who had family members that were ELs offered a unique perspective on the connection between the content and the depth of their reflection.

Application of Course Content

The preservice teachers' reflective logs involved reiteration of the best practice outlined in class. The reflection did not always describe what was seen in the classroom through observation because many did not have that direct experience prior to the summer courses. The responses in their journal reflections at the beginning of the class reiterated what the course instructors taught during the first half of the program. Student reflections emphasized specific instructional strategies attributed to practices with an evidence base or alignment to standards. Reflection included reiteration of the WIDA standards and language objectives, the importance of differentiating instruction and the value of offering hands-on experiences and visuals for students with limited cognitive academic English.

The content of these reflections promoted instructional practices that students learned through course readings and instructor-led discussion. When asked to specifically reflect on the knowledge gained from the program, the reflective thinking focused on the recall of the specific strategies they were taught during the course in which they were enrolled, or courses they had taken in the prior term. While there was limited connection to practice that they observed, there were several examples of this recall of important concepts.

One student noted within their first journal response that activities that included physical responses and group activities that involve collaboration could be effective

strategies in instructing ELs, noting, "Students would be better served through activities that engaged their total physical response to learning English…encourage and facilitate group activities." Later in the reflection, the student continued with additional strategies stating, "let students collaborate with each other if it is positively impacting their second language acquisition." A second student included reflection on the difference between basic interpersonal communication and the academic language that often develops after first learning to communicate in English. The student suggests "have some structured informal conversations in English. Since a student's basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) develops before the cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), it is important for students to have time to practice it." A third example of the recall of strategies within the reflective journal entries included specific practices that they had discussed in class stating, "support strategies include using gestures, previewing the book, and providing vocabulary words in both the L1 and English." These reflections aligned with Lee's (2005) description of reflection at the recall level, in which students were able to recall important concepts based on stated best practice without thinking critically about their classroom impact. This recall level was present as students shared strategies that they had retained through their coursework to that point in the program.

These quotes embody students who know the technical responses to questions about what the classroom "should" look like to address the needs of ELs. At the recall level students emphasizes the theory and evidence-based practice with limited application of what is happening in practice (Lee, 2005). By the end of the semester, after shadowing ESOL teachers, observing ELs within the classroom, devoting additional time to try what they study, then practices become more than just theory. The journal reflections at the end of the semester continued to emphasize effective strategies that they picked up in class. Students were more apt to also include details on how these strategies were observed in practice. While there was still limited connectivity to their future practice, students recognized the strategies as more than just an exercise within course instruction. They reflected upon the connections between the strategies discussed in class and the practices enacted by teachers they observed.

One student commented on seeing instructional strategies tied to universally designed supports stating, "When I had the opportunity to work with EL students, I also gained a sense of understanding that all EL students can learn the same way a general education student can learn by using methods of universal design and lots of patience." The student continued to highlight observed strategies that illustrate the impact of differentiation, later stating in the reflective journal, "Language does not always have to be expressed orally. It can be expressed through words, pictures, body language, visuals such as anchor charts or videos and so much more." Additional reflections highlighted the general recognition that there are more ELs in schools and limited knowledge among school staff on how to support instruction. A second student commented, "I had the opportunity to shadow an ESOL teacher… and learn more about what a bilingual assessment team does. All three of these experiences have led me to one conclusion, that there is simply an increasing number of ESOL students and not enough knowledge/support to accommodate for

them." Through these observations, the student also commented on the observations noting specifically that the practices discussed in class could be difficult to implement in the time available to offer additional support to ELs. The student continued in the reflection, "I noticed that 30 minutes is not nearly enough time to get through an entire lesson. I believe that if they had at least an hour with the students, they could individualize the instruction a lot more." The reflections were an important facet of not only recalling elements of the instructional strategies that they learned in class, but that there was a connection between what they recall and what they experience in the observation portion of the course.

Students who had prior experience with ELs, whether as a family member or as a self-identified English Learner, connected some of the strategies back to personal experiences. In one instance, a student specifically picked up on the need to incorporate culturally responsive practices within classroom instruction and material sharing, "being raised with a speaker from another country has definitely provided me with a foundation to be culturally aware of others." A second student who self-identified as an English Learner also noted that knowing strategies to support a variety of learners with additional learning challenges including those with disabilities, although important, have limited impact if they have not received instruction on how to specifically apply the strategies. The student wrote, "Teachers who did not get educated of the topic of ESOL education simply assume it is the ESOL teachers' job to help EL and CLD students. In their mind, three or four hours a week in a pull-out environment is enough for EL and CLD students to catch up with the general classroom. Well, I am here to announce what they have thought and assumed is wrong." These reflections were included early within the two students' first journal reflections. They already had prior experience that they not only recall, but incorporated directly into their responses.

The Importance of Building Relationships

A second area of content that remained an area of focus within the reflective journals included the importance of building relationship with students and the families. While building positive rapport with students and families is also a possible strategy to support student engagement, students reflected on the importance of building relationships as a means of gathering information about their needs and abilities. The level of depth of reflective thinking about working with students and families remained for most of the preservice teachers at the recall level. Students were quick to highlight what they recall from the class discussion about the importance of working with families or what they observed from interactions with students.

In their first reflective journal, the students pointed out the importance of building relationships with students as a means of making each member of the class feel welcome. According to TESOL, principle one for exemplary teaching of ELs, emphasizes the importance of knowing your learners. The responses in journals reflected that general recall of learned principles. One student with limited prior

experience ELs or those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds wrote, "building a rapport with any student can positively impact them in the classroom." A second student also with limited prior experience commented, "visuals, repeating directions, explicit teaching, repeating directions, using gestures, and truly getting to know your CLD learners (including their names, culture, background information, likes, dislikes, and key phrases in their home language, etc.) are essential tools to best serve the culturally and linguistically diverse students in your classroom." The students recall what was important in their class discussion; however, with limited experience, there is limited reflection on the impact this rapport has on student achievement, the challenges that students face with acclimation to classroom norms, and challenges they face trying to tackle multiple academic demands.

Students tended to focus on the importance of building relationships with families in addition to working directly with students. In these responses, particularly, students often turned to narrative to share and frame their own experiences. As the preservice teachers continued in the ESOL program and saw how teachers in the practicum classrooms developed relationships with students, the depth of reflection likewise evolved. One student commented,

> One aspect that was especially intriguing and affirming was that the mentor I had was white, but spoke Spanish fluently. It inspired and confirmed my desire to continue working toward becoming an ESOL teacher because I often worried to my mom that since I am white, I would not be as great of an ESOL teacher than someone who has a different language as their native.

A second student noted that as a result of the preservice project, they were more inclined to gather as much information about the student and family so that they could offer targeted resources. The student stated,

> The extensive list of resources that could be formed by looking through peers' toolkits and multilingual resources is incredible, and very useful in the classroom… I will use these resources to make a resource list for ESOL and CLD families. These resources supply families with a wide variety of information…I will assemble a resource center where families can browse, select resources they are interested in, and take information regarding that resource.

A third student commented in their final reflection at the conclusion of the course,

> I can create a comforting environment for my students that allows them to take risks while being supported in all aspects of their development. I can also take the time to think about the assessments that I am creating or using and if they are accessible to ELs and respectful while also holding my ELs to the same high expectations as all other students. Parents will also always be welcome in my classroom and they will be aware of the supports and opportunities available to themselves and their children.

In these examples, students were more apt to rationalize what they were seeing in the classroom and consider how what they observed and the tools they practiced with in class specifically applied to their future practice. They saw the impact of relationships that they observed between the classroom teachers and the ELs. As one student put it, "A goal I have already made for when I begin to teach is to make

sure to involve student's families as much as possible. I plan to have meetings and opportunities for parents to come into the classroom."

The preservice teachers within the cohort who already had experience either as ELs or those who had worked with ELs also shared the importance of building relationships with students and families. As one student noted,

> I learned that there are many bilingual Americans and Americans in general that are aware and are actively searching for solutions to these problems. Education is a great starting point because by understanding and helping children of immigrant/bilingual students', teachers are indirectly relieving stress from their parents. To many immigrants, teachers are their best helper. The teacher is someone they can trust with their children whiles they are busy meeting the general needs of a family. As educators, it is important to know there is a lot we can do with their children to help ease tension in the family.

The student who already had experience considered the needs of students and families not only as a means of making a student feel welcome, but as an opportunity to relieve tension and serve as important partners. While other students with limited experience emphasized the impact on building rapport with students, this preservice teacher also considered the need to build trust with the family. There is a power dynamic that exists between a teacher and student and teacher and parent. Recognizing the teacher's potential position of power, for this preservice teacher, also entailed realizing the teacher's added responsibility to build and maintain trust.

Valuing Culture and Language and the Impact on Future Practice

A final area of emphasis across student reflections included content specific to the importance of valuing culture and language as an integral aspect of one's current and future practice. Within the student reflections the preservice teachers drew specific connections to specific strategies and approaches linked to dual immersion and translanguaging, but unlike the content that focused on specific strategies to support academic instruction, students viewed these supports with an emphasis on valuing language and the need to approach education from the role of an advocate.

While there was less of an emphasis on this specific area of focus, students were apt to point out the importance of valuing language very early in the course. Within the first journal response, several students shared personal stories in which they considered the importance of valuing culture and language within the context of their future practice. This aspect of content included a much deeper level of reflection with a connection to changing or improving their future practice. One student noted, "children feel more comfortable when they can freely use both languages in their learning process." Another student having observed a group of students talking with one another in their L1 and then sharing information with their ESOL teacher stated, "It showed how much I do not know about teaching ESOL students, but any effort given to enrich their learning is a pleasurable experience for them as they are

not feeling the pressure to be perfect in English and can use Spanish freely (at appropriate times)."

Through narrating their own experiences in the classroom, the preservice teachers also saw the impact of using translanguaging and dual-language instruction to connect with their students. As one student noted, "I had the pleasure to work with a handful of CLD students and ELs…In [a] first grade placement – I was able to help these students navigate through the day by providing them with verbal directions in English as well as Spanish." A second student noted, "I have learned how to use their knowledge of their L1 (i.e., Spanish) to help them draw connections between the languages. While I don't give them full English lessons, I do explain concepts and help them practice (which they also do for me in Spanish)."

The preservice teachers acknowledged that what they observed was valuable and that these experiences would assist them in improving their future practice. One student commented, "I believe that both these experiences and finishing the remaining courses will equip me with the tools I need to be the best teacher I can be for the most students." While there was limited time up to the mid-point of the preparation program for students to observe and practice what they were learning in class, the attitudes that they had prior to the start of the program had already evolved. Students who entered with a general curiosity about working with ELs, knowing they would be placed in more diverse schools, were now eager to work with EL students. Establishing a connection between the strategies and the class observations was already making an impact on how they planned to serve students in their future practice. One student concluded an entry stating,

> I was unsure if I would actually use the certification when teaching- I just wanted the option to be available if I chose to. After the first course… I realized just how interested I am in working with EL students…I realized that I do not want to be teacher that turns the blind eye to EL students, I want to be the teacher that is prepared with strategies and supports for these students.

Discussion

Reflection creates space for students to synthesize their personal experiences with their (developing) professional ones. The analysis of student reflective journals was designed to help preservice teacher educators learn more about the type of content that students retained as they were introduced to both new instructional methods and experiences in classroom practicums to try those methods. The reflection alone could be considered an oversimplification of a solution to gather what students retained from a specific class. It could also be viewed as an oversimplification of the problem on how to address whether a student is likely to apply this knowledge in practice. However, reflection is critical in learning whether the preservice teachers not only use the appropriate language, but the connection to evidence-based practice. Lee (2005, p. 712) found the preservice teachers showed "different capacities and preferences" depending on the format of the reflection. Additionally, the

conditions under which the reflection occurred can often shape the content and depth of the reflections.

Although there is limited application in the initial practice, the team believed it was important to continue the cycle of introducing the material in class, requiring students to reflect or process what they learned, observe that learning in a classroom setting, and then apply what they learned in the classroom. This followed with additional time for reflection and then additional time for practice. The cycle could enhance reflective thinking, but it could also enhance the application of strategies that work and refine those practices that need more work.

The style of writing differed greatly by students. In our review of the journals, it was evident some preservice teachers were more comfortable with journal writing. They included a reflection that was less formal and more conversant, while others quoted experts from the course readings or professors in order to respond at the beginning of their reflective journals before engaging in a reflection on their own experience and processing the significance of what they were studying and observing. Some students exhibited a better capacity for reflection, for example, there were students who were able to write and reflect without the need for additional guidance from course instructors. Additionally, some students viewed the exercise as just another course requirement and completed the reflection out of compliance, rather than as a means to reflect on the impact or potential for growth as a future teacher and leader. Given the limited requirements on the structure of the journal entries and the broad prompts that were included as an anchor for the reflections, students had an opportunity to stand back from the process and structure of the class (what they were doing), and use the space to write in a safer environment without concern for a grade or a specific "answer."

The reflective journals allowed students to critically examine their own experiences and identities. Assessing the level of depth is a challenge in part because the use of journals as reflections based on content from the course could impact the level of critical reflection. For example, students know the professor and project evaluator will read the journals. Additionally, knowing that students may be required to discuss some of the information with peers, they may leave certain elements out of the reflective journals knowing they could articulate those thoughts through other means of communication. However, the team still believes the process is useful in helping students document progress and apply what they learn between courses and practicum experiences. It also offers a historical record that students could look back upon to see what strategies they were learning as they went through the preparation courses. They also could see what their reaction to early experiences was like in comparison to their reaction to experiences in final practicum or their first year of teaching.

Upon our own reflection on the findings, our team identified several next steps and takeaways that might inform our practice as both researchers and instructors. First, we believe that analysis of student reflection is valuable and provides additional insights useful to the field at large. We intend to continue the analysis of data from additional rounds of interviews, in which students are asked to share their own personal reactions and stories or experiences, and journal prompts such as these. In

future research, we hope to explore the ways that reflection helps students to consider their own journey as educators and to place it in the context of their professional growth and experience. Additionally, as researchers and teacher educators, we believe these findings highlight the value of reflective inquiry as a practice to incorporate into coursework. We hope to continue refining our own use of reflection as teacher educators, determining the points in each course and program when reflection is most valuable and leveraging it productively at those points.

Second, the team will continue the analysis of data through additional rounds of interviews, including a third round of interviews that occur at the conclusion of the students' course sequence. A fourth interview is scheduled to take place with each student 1 year after they exit the program. We hope to study how the process of reflective inquiry expands and evolves as students wrap up their practicum and continue as lead teachers within their own classrooms. We anticipate continuing to integrate opportunities for reflection within the coursework and programming, including additional opportunities to hold interviews with the students and surveys of their attitudes, knowledge, and dispositions.

Finally, we hope to continue to incorporate reflective thinking activities into the coursework with this second cohort, increasing explicit connections between journal reflection and self-narrative. In doing so, we will continue to ensure the reflective thinking activities maintain low risk (no impact on the grade), stress the importance of personal and conversant responses, pairing with a midpoint interview that requires the students to share portions of their story with others in the class. Such activities can increase the emphasis on reflective narratives used explicitly as a means of examining one's own experiences, biases, and plans for teaching.

When leveraged appropriately, reflection allows students to identify implications and connections to practice. Just listing recommended strategies is not the same as determining the effectiveness and use in practice. While students were prompted to reflect on their prior experience in their first journal response, some started by listing the strategies learned in class. At the conclusion of the course, they were more apt to dedicated time to talking about a specific strategy and the impact they saw within their practice. As we have found, pairing the power of reflection with the structure of narrative affords students the opportunity to apply this same thoughtful and critical lens to their own experience. Rather than critically analyzing strategies or lists of techniques, our students were able to turn that same reflective lens onto their own experiences, drawing out challenging, inspiring, or even troubling aspects of their own experiences in the low-risk, nurturing environment that is typical of most journaling activities. In doing so, we hope that teachers absorb not only some immediate truths about linguistic diversity but also some larger understanding of how it is helpful to step outside our own stories and reflect on them. As teachers continue to meet the challenges and opportunities of our twenty-first-century school environments, we hope that larger lessons of taking time and space to interrogate their own beliefs and experiences can help them become, and remain, engaged and reflective practitioners and advocates.

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