TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT....................................................................................................................... iv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.................................................................................................v

DEDICATION................................................................................................................... vi

LIST OF TABLES............................................................................................................ vii

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................1

  Background ..............................................................................................................1

  Problem in the Classroom........................................................................................2

  Purpose of the Study ................................................................................................5

  Research Questions..................................................................................................5

  Definition of Terms..................................................................................................6

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW .............................................................................7

  Best Practices for ESL students ...............................................................................7

  Teacher effectiveness as it relates to teacher experience.......................................13

  Summary ..................................................................................................................17

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY .....................................................................................18

  Introduction............................................................................................................18

  Research Method and Design ................................................................................18

  Setting ....................................................................................................................18

  Description of Subjects and Sample Selection ......................................................20

  Instrumentation......................................................................................................21

  Data Collection Procedures....................................................................................24
ABSTRACT

Understanding and implementing effective English as a Second Language (ESL) practices in the classroom has been promoted as imperative in helping the increasing population of English Language Learners (ELLs) succeed in school. This study examines the various strategies used by elementary school teachers and the challenges they face daily implementing these practices within their classrooms. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected by means of a questionnaire, survey, one-on-one interview and classroom observations.

This study investigated teacher knowledge of effective ESL strategies and identified strategies being practiced within the elementary classroom. The study also explored the relationships among teacher experience, teacher knowledge of ESL students, and frequency of implementation of effective ESL strategies within the classroom. The setting for the study was an elementary school in southeastern North Carolina. Teachers were both interviewed and observed in their classrooms while delivering instruction. Findings indicate that years of teaching experience have no affect on teacher’s knowledge of effective ESL strategies, but do have an impact on how they deliver instruction within their classroom.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I am most indebted to my parents, Edwin and Vicki Ezzell, whose have instilled in me a love of exploration and the inspiration to learn new things, to always do my best, and never stop trying. You were there for me at any hour for advice or support. I couldn’t have asked for better mentors in my life.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all of my former and present ESL students. Without their willingness to learn, motivation to succeed, and love they have shared throughout the years I would not have been able to accomplish this task. Throughout this process I was constantly reminded of how hard they work to achieve higher levels of education through all the challenges and barriers they face. Their earnest desire for education truly inspired me to concentrate on a topic that would hopefully benefit their needs in the classroom in order to achieve greater things.
LIST OF TABLES

Table                                                                                                                               Page
1.         Student Demographics ........................................................................................................19
2.         Demographics of Participants ..........................................................................................21
3.         Components of the SIOP Model ......................................................................................23
4.         Responses from Initial Interview with Participants .........................................................29
5.         Comparison of Survey and SIOP Data .............................................................................33
6.         Comparison of Survey and Years of Experience ...............................................................34
7.         Challenges of teaching effective ESL instruction .............................................................35
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

The nation’s population of English as Second Language (ESL) learners is rapidly growing. It is estimated that this population is growing two and half times faster than that of the English speaking students within our schools (Shore, 2001). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, between the years 2000 and 2020, there will be a 47% increase in Hispanic children ages 5 to 13 enrolled in U.S. schools (Williams, 2001). Herrera and Murry project that by the year 2030 over 40 percent of the students sitting within mainstream classrooms will be English Language Learners (ELLs) (2005). De Cohen and Clewell (2007) indicate this population of students is the most rapidly growing compared to all other subgroups. Whatever the exact figures, it is clear that the population of ELLs in our classrooms is experiencing explosive growth causing consequences for our nation’s public schools and society in general.

This impact of ELLs growth has had disproportionate effects on states. The states of Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina experienced over 350 percent population growth of ELLs from 1992-2002 (SERVE, 2004). But, Ruiz-de-Velasco and Fix (2000) highlight an interesting contradiction between ELLs populations and ELLs growth. Currently six states account for three-fourths of all the immigrant children: California (35 percent), Texas (11.3 percent), New York (11 percent), Florida (6.7 percent), Illinois (5 percent), and New Jersey (4 percent). However, the states with the fastest-growing Limited English Proficiency (LEP) student populations are not the same as the top six traditional immigration states. For example, North Carolina experienced a 500 percent growth between 1993 and 2004, and Colorado, Nevada, Nebraska, Oregon, Georgia, and Indiana all had more than 200 percent increases in that
time period. Though the ELLs population is rising, the Urban Institute analysis of NCES Schools and Staffing Survey indicated the majority of ESL students are concentrated in a small number of schools. Seventy percent of the nation’s ESL population is enrolled in only 10 percent of elementary schools (De Cohen & Clewell, 2007).

Problem in the Classroom

Having such an increase in ELLs creates pressure on the teachers and administrators to build a foundation for learning and academic growth. The federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation of 2001 mandates that schools close the achievement gap that exists between minority students, economically disadvantaged students, special education students, and their peers. For schools to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) towards the educational goals set forth by the federal and state governments, students from every sub group of the population must be proficient on state standardized tests. ELLs are not only included in these assessment measures if enrolled in Title I schools but must undergo additional testing of their English language development. Title III of NCLB addresses ELLs in particular (Haynes, 2007). Each state sets benchmarks for achievement, and students are expected to make AYP on all of these assessments. While they are designated as limited English proficient, they must be tested yearly in Grades K-12 (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008).

NCLB contains significant changes regarding federal policies that directly affect mainstream classroom teachers and individual school districts in the following areas (Haynes, 2007):

- All ELLs must be tested at least once a year using an English proficiency test. They are no longer exempt from statewide accountability.
• Students who have been in U.S. schools for three consecutive years and have been tested in their native language must be tested in English for reading and language arts. They are required to meet the same standards as their native English-speaking peers and demonstrate AYP.

• Standard for English language proficiency needs to be tied to core curriculum content standards.

• In the past, English proficiency test for ELLs assessed basic communication skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Now subject-area academic skills must also be tested.

Since NCLB was implemented, teachers are struggling to implement rich curriculum material for English speaking students and now contemplate on how to implement instructional strategies that are vital to students learning ESL (Olsen, 2006). Teachers are obliged to ensure that teaching strategies in their classrooms are aligned with English language proficiency standards (Haynes, 2007). These goals are complicated because an overwhelming majority of teachers in the nation are monolingual English speakers (Beykont, 2002). Although teachers and administrators are facing many barriers and challenges some have commented that NCLB had raised the bar for ELL student achievement and students were doing better than they had been a few years earlier because standards are high (De Cohen & Clewell, 2007).

In a recent study conducted by Washburn (2008), classroom teachers were asked to explain methods they use to accommodate their ELLs. The teachers failed to provide answers, finally indicating they did not work differently with these students because they did not know how. While many teachers throughout the nation have ELLs in their classrooms, only 12.5 percent of teachers had participated in more than eight hours of staff development or training on
how to accommodate the rapid growing increase of ELLs (Hansen-Thomas 2008). Hobson (2008) indicated if schools are going to achieve equity and excellence, then they must provide teachers with the knowledge base and skills to differentiate curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of all students. It is vital that teachers receive proper training and staff development in teaching ESL children to achieve academically.

Another alarming statistic is Hispanic students are more likely than white or black students to drop out of school before completing high school (Williams, 2001). Because of this statistic educators need better strategies that capture Hispanic students and other ESL students to encourage them to complete school. After NCLB was implemented into the classrooms there was an increase in the number of high school ELLs not receiving a diploma increased because they failed high-stakes test although they completed all other graduation requirements (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008). There is a relationship between not passing the standardized test and dropping out of school although all other graduation requirements are complete.

One main reason ESL students are struggling in today's classrooms is because there are many misconceptions that educators have about this population. There are two basic perspectives that most teachers tend to assume when preparing for ESL learners within their classroom: 1) ESL students do not differ from those of other diverse learners and 2) the discipline of ESL students is mainly a menu of pedagogical adaptations these students need to learn (Harper & De Jong, 2004).

According to the authors the two basic assumptions above are broken down further into four detailed misconceptions the majority of teachers assume:

1. Exposure and interaction will result in English Language Learning

2. All ELLs learn English in the same way and at the same rate
3. Good teaching for native speakers is good teaching for ELLs

4. Effective instruction means nonverbal support (p.153-157)

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine (a) if a relationship exist between teachers knowledge of ESL strategies and their own practice, (b) if a relationship exist between teacher perception of their own ESL practice and observed practice and (c) if a relationship exist between teacher’s years of experience and their knowledge of ESL strategies. The researcher will also investigate the challenges and barriers for elementary school teachers in delivering effective ESL instruction. The findings can prove importance to driving staff development for teachers in the schools to close this achievement gap of NCLB, as well as guide curriculum coordinators working with this population. After discovering the needs and challenges at a school, it is vital to craft a program that meets the individualized needs based on available resources, capacity, and educational goals (Olsen, 2006).

Research Questions

The researcher proposes to investigate an elementary school in Southeast North Carolina in order to answer the following research questions:

1. What practices do teachers of ESL students believe should be implemented in the classroom? Do their beliefs differ with teacher experience?

2. Is there a relationship between teacher knowledge of ESL best practices and the frequency with which they use these practices in their own classroom?

3. Is there a relationship between teacher experience and their knowledge of effective ESL strategies?
4. What challenges do teachers of ESL students perceive to delivery of effective ESL instruction?

Definitions of Terms

For the purpose of this study the researcher will apply the following terms and definitions:

Elementary School: An institution where children receive the first stage of education known as elementary or primary. Ages of children range from 4 to 12 years old.

ESL/ ELLs/ ELs: Students who are learning English as a second language. Their primary language is not English. These terms will be used interchangeably.

Focus Group: A method of collecting qualitative data from a group of people who represent a target audience. These people answer specific questions, discuss opinions and ideas.

Bilingualism: the ability to use two languages.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Much research has been conducted on the design, implementation, and effects of English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction. For purposes of this study, two bodies of research lend themselves to this work. First, research-proven best practices for ESL students will be shared. Second, teacher effectiveness research as it relates to teacher experience will be presented.

Best Practices for ESL students

Teaching ESL students has become a major concern in many schools in America because of the increase in this student population. As with all students, English Language Learners (ELLs) are not a homogenous group. ELLs enter U.S. schools on various levels with a wide range of language proficiencies. In addition to the limited English proficiency and the approximately 180 native languages among the students, we also find diversity in their educational backgrounds, expectations of schooling, socioeconomic status, age upon arrival, personal experience in arriving to the U.S., and parents’ education levels and proficiency in English (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008). After taking into consideration all the issues affecting ESL students in mainstream classrooms, teachers must carefully combine theory and practice with these issues to make academic decisions (Williams, 2001).

Many different approaches can be successful when implemented well (SERVE, 2004). With this in mind, teachers need to be aware that no single program model fits all populations and surroundings. Teachers need to craft the program components and support resources that best fit their needs with the population enrolled at their school (Olsen, 2006). Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2008) also add that no simple, one-size-fits-all solution is clear given the variability in students’ backgrounds. They need different pathways for academic success. Considering the local factors of the population enrolled a school could also include the district’s goals and
resources, surrounding community, and the characteristics of its students (SERVE, 2004). To meet these challenges, fundamental shifts need to occur in staff development, program and curriculum design, resources and materials being implemented, and instructional and assessment practices (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008).

When reviewing common best practices used to teach ESL students Laurie Olsen (2006) summarizes the most occurring strategies in her research Ensuring Academic Success for English learners. In her essay, the purpose was to provide an overview of research and knowledge that educators could utilize to form a school in which English Learners (ELs) thrive and achieve at high levels. Olsen (2006) defines the most comprehensive system of schooling for ELs included eight main components:

1. High Quality and Accessible Preschool Education
2. Supports for Newcomers to Meet Needs of Transition
3. A Comprehensive Program of English Language Development
4. A Program Providing Full Access to Challenging Curriculum
5. High Quality Instruction and Materials
6. Inclusive and Affirming School Climate
7. Valid, Comprehensive, and Useful Assessments
8. Strong Family and Community Partnerships (p.2-5)

Many ELs are immigrants; therefore, walking into a new set of rules and expectations. To support this transition, assessment, placement, referral, and orientation would be helpful to a newcomer (Olsen, 2006). ELs enter school encountering many barriers such as social challenges among the school, peers, and rules. Having a support system in place can reassure the student they are supported. Schools not only need to provide services to their students but also need to
intentionally create inclusive, welcoming and supportive conditions for ELs families, address barriers to engagement, and have an open line of communication needed to monitor their children’s schooling and advocate effectively (Olsen, 2006). Many parents are unaware of what their children should be learning in school. Recent data show that a third of children of immigrants in pre-K to 5th grade had parents without high school degrees, compared with only 9 percent of students with native-born parents (Capps et al. 2005). A support system is vital because the ELLs first impressions and feeling of fitting in will set the emotional state of their classroom studies.

Not only is the emotional climate of a school and classroom the key in building the foundation of an English speaking child’s academic progress, but is a necessity for an ESL student. Brain research has indicated that the environment of a classroom needs to support learning that centers on respect and acceptance to the student’s language and their culture (Williams, 2001). Making students feel like they belong is a requirement to their success because when students do not belong, or feel unsafe, it is difficult for them to learn and respect the teacher.

After developing a welcoming relationship and a supportive first impression with an ESL student the school is accountable for providing an effective program that supplements and aids in academic curriculum. Before choosing just any program, the school needs to consider the students the program is serving. Most schools chose from the following programs to implement: primary language instruction, Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) with supplemental primary language support, SDAIE without primary supplemental support, or dual immersion. SDAIE can be referred to as a sheltered instruction approach. Sheltered instruction is an approach for teaching content to ELs in a strategic way that makes the content more
comprehensible while focusing on student’s English language development (Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2008).

Programs such as Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) assess and measures how much sheltered instruction is being implemented (Hansen-Thomas, 2008). After more than 10 years of research and professional development the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) found that teachers who were trained in using the SIOP Model performed better on standardized writing assessments than a comparison of teachers who had no exposure to the model (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2008). Not only does the SIOP Model include characteristics that are vital for all students but includes features that directly correlate with the academic success of ELLs: 1) inclusion of language objectives in every content lesson 2) development of background knowledge 3) acquisition of content-related vocabulary, and 4) emphasis on academic literacy practice. Before implementing these effective components researchers incorporated ESLs diverse backgrounds and abilities in their native language into the study to develop the structure of the SIOP Model.

By definition, ELs need to learn English and are not able to access the English-taught without support of various resources. In the words of the landmark Lau v. Nicholas Supreme Court decision: “There is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbook, teachers and curriculum, for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education.” Using the SIOP Model allows a teacher to focus solely on language and vocabulary. They closely observed the considerable linguistic differences, and these characteristics have implications for instruction, assessment, and program design (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008).
In 2006, the National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth released a comprehensive synthesis of research on literacy attainment. It concluded that resources and strategies used to teach English fluent students were not sufficient when teaching students that struggled with the language (August & Shanahan, 2006). Olsen (2006) suggests students need a comprehensive program that: 1) Concentrates on reading, writing, listening, and speaking, 2) Teaches all levels of English fluency, 3) Implements age appropriate language fluency and academic English, 4) Learners to interact with English fluent peers, 5) Provides a safe, open, and comfortable environment to have the opportunity to construct their thoughts and 6) Develop their own native language.

Since developing a firm foundation in language fluency is important to ESL students, schools need to place focus on starting this process at an early age. With the demands NCLB has placed on Kindergarten achievement levels, it is vital for a child to have a firm foundation before entering Kindergarten to insure their success. Teachers in one school district commented that because of NCLB, “kindergarten now is what first grade used to be” (De Cohen & Clewell, 2007). A preschool education allows all children to have an equal opportunity to be introduced to an environment of structure, social interaction with peers, and exploration to academic content. Although NCLB does not directly address Pre-K and only 2 percent of NCLB funds are used for pre-K education (King, 2006), there is evidence that NCLB has had a spillover effect on pre-K education. It has raised standards in pre K education (De Cohen & Clewell, 2007). Olsen (2006) indicated that successful programs must be culturally and linguistically responsive and deliver a developmentally appropriate and language rich curriculum to the students.

Providing preschool programs, sheltered instruction programs, etc. for ESL students will not meet their needs if teachers and administrators do not understand how to implement them
effectively into the classroom. Teachers need to be trained in implementing these programs and how to evaluate their success. A major mechanism for improving schools under NCLB is to provide high quality instruction professional development. Teachers are able to see their areas of improvement and continue to nurture their strengths. Professional development has been used to help teachers align curriculum to state content standards and assessment (De Cohen & Clewell, 2007). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2002), although many teachers already find ELs in their classrooms only 12.5 percent have participated in more than eight hours of training or professional development on how to work with ELs.

Williams (2001) concludes that using nonlinguistic representation is another effective best practice teachers can easily implement into their classroom. Building and activating background knowledge is important to learning new context and is better achieved by using pictures, demonstration, graphic organizers, etc. This is an important issue because ELs will most likely come to school with very different experiences than native English speakers (Hansen-Thomas, 2008), but with visual representation they are able to make a mental connection. Another effective tool for high quality instruction is explicit instruction in meta-cognitive tasks. When students understand how to approach new content and tasks students achievement is facilitated (Olsen, 2006).

For ESL programs and practices to be effective a school will use inquiry from assessments to drive their instruction and planning. Teachers make this a valid part of their professional development. In these schools that are effectively reaching ESL students administration supports teachers with time to improve their instruction through planning and ample resources to implement lessons (Olsen, 2006).
Teacher effectiveness as it relates to teacher experience

There have been many requests and demands for researchers to increase their use of interpretive and naturalistic research paradigms to study, understand, analyze, and explain what happens in classrooms (Pass, Riccomini, & Switzer). One main component of a classroom setting is the teacher. Now more than ever, as education in America has entered an age of efficiency and accountability, educators need to be aware of the most effective ways to implement instruction, organize classroom settings, and raise student achievement.

Accountability has become well-rooted in education and will only be broadened when research and studies indicate a better approach (Hammond, 1996). Over time researchers have not only concentrated on how much education a person has to gain to be an effective professional, but has observed how much time a person needs to perform a task before they are considered effective.

Being provided with ample amount of education in a certain area and rich professional development allows a person to become better prepared and more knowledgeable. Having an effective teacher is a problem for many ELLS because NCLB calls for highly qualified teachers in every core academic classroom, it does not require elementary classroom or content teachers with LEP students to have any educational background in ESL methodology or second language acquisition theory (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2010). These authors also report: “Despite the rapidly growing numbers of these students, only four states at the time of this writing have policies that require all teachers in preservice programs to have an understanding of how to teach ELs effectively: Arizona, California, Florida, and New York. (p. 10)” There are many studies and research on what should be done in America’s classrooms, there are few documenting what specific strategies are being used (Pass, Riccomini, & Switzer). The situation at the inservice level has not been any better. In the 1999-2000 Schools and Staffing Survey (National Center for
Education Statistics, 2002), 41.2 percent of the 2,984,781 public school teachers reported teaching LEP students, but only 12.5 percent had had eight or more hours of training in the past three years. Since both preservice teachers and inservice teachers are experiencing the same difficulty being properly trained to effectively teach ESL students, does their years of experience impact their practice? In Marsh’s research (2007), he simply asked a relative question when effectiveness of a teacher was being observed, “Do teachers, like good wine, improve with age?”

Research on the links between teacher inputs and student outputs began nearly 43 years ago with the publication of the Equality of Educational Opportunity Study of 1966, also known as the Coleman Report (Coleman, et al., 1966). This study collected information on a series of teacher inputs, such as teacher education levels and years of teaching experience, and a series of student outputs, such as scores on standardized tests, for a national sample of students. The study then related the inputs to the outputs, and found that, in most instances, the link between the two was weak. In the wake of the Coleman Report, about 400 studies have been conducted relating teacher inputs to student outputs. Their results have been extremely mixed. Of those studies linking the number of years of teaching experience to student outcomes, 30% shows a beneficial effect (1966). Since no beneficial effect exists in 70% there is neutral effect in number of years of teaching experience related to student outcomes.

Herbert Marsh (2007) conducted a methodological/substantive study on the long-term stability of ratings of the same teachers during the course of their teaching career. Marsh applied a multiple-level growth modeling approach by using students’ evaluations of teaching effectiveness (SETs). SETs have been a focus of interest and main source topic for research in North America because they have shown to be valid in relation to a variety of outcome measures pertaining to classroom teachers (Marsh 1987, 2007; Marsh & Roche, 1997). In his investigation
Marsh (1997) evaluated 195 teachers continuously over 13 years (6,024 classes, an average of 30.9 classes per teacher). The study evaluates whether teaching effectiveness increases, decreases, or remains stable with added experience.

His conclusion was that teaching effectiveness does not improve with experience (2007). Although teaching effectiveness did not improve with experience, Marsh (2007) found that effective teachers consistently received positive ratings, whereas less effective teachers consistently received lower ratings; neither became less effective.

Pass, Riccomini, and Switzer (2004) also conducted a naturalistic and empirical methodology research study to investigate the classroom dynamics of a novice teacher and a veteran teacher. They were investigating to see if years of experience impacted the teacher’s classroom. This investigation observed two teachers: Teacher A was in his first year teaching and the top student in his methods class the previous semester. Teacher B was a sixty-year old male that had taught and coached for twenty-four years (Pass, Riccomini, & Switzer, 2004). Both teachers taught with similar philosophies and teaching practices and were viewed by the administrator to be effective in the classroom. Pass, Riccomini, and Switzer (2004) concluded their findings and there was no significant statistical difference between the two teachers in improving students’ scores at a higher rate than the other.

A study was conducted by the Tennessee Department of Education (2007) to investigate the distribution of teacher effectiveness across their school districts. Similar to Marsh’s study (2007) they carried out this longitudinal analysis for more than 14 years and based their research on student’s assessments to measure teacher effectiveness (TN Department of Education, 2007). This study also found that student in high poverty/high minority schools have less access to the state’s most effective teachers and more access to the state’s least effective teachers (2007). They
also suggest while many of the beginning teachers in these high poverty schools are among the states most effective, many of them do not stay in these schools because of the school’s climate or lose their effectiveness over time. TN Department of Education (2007) clearly stated, “It is important to measure teacher effectiveness because teacher experience and education do not always predict impact in the classroom. Some beginning teachers with bachelor’s degrees, for example, may be as or more effective at improving student achievement than experienced teachers with master’s degrees” (p.1).

With three research studies supporting no significant difference between teacher’s years of experience and teacher’s effectiveness, and research that informs of beginning teachers being placed in schools with poor school climate Bivona (2002) performed a study that directly correlated teacher’s years of experience to their teaching morale. Within the classroom today it seems as though teachers are being stretched to the limit (Lumsden, 1998). This causes their personal and school community morale to be lower from all the stress. Once a healthy school environment exist with high morale, teachers are confident in the job they are doing; therefore, having a positive effect on student achievement and the student’s attitudes (Lumsden, 1998).

Bivona (2002) surveyed twenty teachers to generate information from teachers that would show the level of morale based on their teaching experience, workplace conditions and workload. Their years of teaching experience ranged from 2 to 35, 45% of the sample has had between 1 and 10 years of teaching experience, 45% between 11 and 20 years, and 10% between 20-35 years of teaching experience.

This study revealed that experience teachers (teachers teaching more than 10 years) have a more positive attitude toward teaching than teachers who have less experience (Bivona, 2002). After analyzing the data Bivona determined that 78% of the novice teachers were unhappy
teaching and were planning to leave or were undecided (2002). These findings indicate that more teaching training and experience leads to less stress, more efficiency and ultimately high morale (Bivona, 2002). Bivona reported that novice teachers have a heavier workload because they are still in the process of learning how to design lessons for student’s mastery and be a good classroom manager (2002). Harry and Rosemary Wong (1998) comment that when teachers feel they are not being begged, borrowed, and stolen teachers morale increases and their self confidence filters into their classroom effectiveness.

Summary

This review of literature has provided information about effective ESL practices and strategies being used in the classroom and the relationship between teacher’s effectiveness and teacher experience. This study will add to the existing knowledge base by providing insight into effective ESL strategies teachers are using in their classroom and determining whether there is a relationship between teacher’s years of experience and if they implement effective strategies for ESL students.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine what effective English as a Second Language (ESL) practices elementary teachers were implementing for instruction and to investigate the challenges and barriers they encountered while placing these strategies into practice. This chapter outlines the methods and procedures that were used in this study. Specifically, this chapter presents a description of the setting, a description of the participants, the research design, and the instrumentation that were used.

Research Method and Design

This was mixed-methods research study that gathered and analyzed quantitative and qualitative data. The data collected in the study was analyzed to determine which best practices for ESL students are used by elementary school teachers and to determine if teacher’s years of experience related to their implementation of these best practices. The researcher collected data from each participant by means of a teacher questionnaire, survey, interview, and teacher/classroom observation. The use of these research strategies provided the researcher with data concerning what strategies participants use to meet the needs of the ESL learners, and what the barriers and challenges elementary teachers face in terms of implementing effective ESL strategies.

Setting

The rural school district where the study was conducted is located in southeastern North Carolina. According to the US Census Bureau, the district’s population in 2008 was approximately 54,212. The racial demographic of the district is approximately 65% White, 30.5% African American, 3.4% American Indian, 0.3% Asian, 0.9% Multiracial, and 3.3%
Hispanic. Out of the total population 1.4% are foreign-born residents and 3.5% speak another language other than English in their household.

Pireway Elementary School (PES) (pseudonym) has a student population of 197 students in grades PreK-5. According to NC School Report Card, 2008-2009: 67 students are White, 66 students are Hispanic, 51 students are African American, 10 are Multi-racial, 2 are American Indian, and 1 is Asian. PES is classified as Priority School meaning 50 to 60% of students are at grade level or 50% of students are less than grade level (NC Report Card for 2008-2009). Below table 1 presents demographic and performance data for PES.

Table 1
Students Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Characteristic</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>% Passes both Reading and Math on EOG(Grades 3-5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>65.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-racial</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantage</td>
<td></td>
<td>38.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited English Proficiency</td>
<td></td>
<td>23.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pireway School was selected because more than 40 percent of the population is Spanish speaking students. With this statistic PES has already met Herra and Murry’s projection that by 2030 over 40% of ESL students would be sitting in mainstream classrooms (2005). Over the last ten years at PES the population of Hispanic children has more than doubled. The rural community school has the highest population of Hispanic students out of the 19 schools in the district. The elementary school was also selected because the researcher is a current teacher at the school. In response to this large ESL population, the focus of education at PES has changed.
dramatically over the last 8 years. The instruction has shifted from teaching and addressing the needs of mostly primary English speaking students to servicing the rapidly growing English as a Second Language (ESL) student inside the classroom.

The administrative staff of Pireway Elementary School consists of one white male principal. There are a total of 14 classroom teachers. All of the teachers are fully licensed and highly qualified. 29% of the teachers have advanced degrees. 29% of teachers have been teaching 3 years or less, 21% of teachers have taught 4-10 years, and 50% of teachers have been teaching more than 10 years.

ESL students are heterogeneously grouped for all subjects and grade levels. According to information provided by the administrator, ESL students at PES have improved tremendously on their academics over the past five years. He contributes this to students speaking more fluent English before entering into Kindergarten due to students being raised in the area rather than immigrating into this area. Having an early Reading First and a More at Four program available before entering Kindergarten has also made a positive impact at PES by allowing the students to become immersed into the environment and structure of a school setting.

In compliance with the requirements of the Institutional Review Board at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, the researcher applied for and received consent to conduct this study at PES. The researcher also received written consent from the principal at PES to recruit study participants, distribute questionnaires, surveys, and conduct interviews and classroom observations.

Description of Subjects and Sample Selection

A total of six teachers participated in the questionnaire, survey, interview, and classroom observations. There were two focus groups throughout the research: 1) Teachers with less than
five years of experience and 2) Teachers with more than five years of experience. Although participant’s race and gender were the same, the participants varied in terms of their years of experience, number of grades levels they have taught, and teachers with advanced degrees. Participant demographic information is presented in table 2. To maintain anonymity, participants were given a pseudonym for this study.

Table 2
Demographics of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Yrs. Of Experience</th>
<th># of Grades Taught</th>
<th>Advanced Degrees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group 1: 5 yrs. Or less</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bell</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackie</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group 2: More than 5 yrs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tie</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deb</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pamela</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Instrumentation

The first data collection instrument was a questionnaire, the Questionnaire for Teachers Concerning ESL students (see Appendix A). The questionnaire was designed by the researcher and used in this study as a selection process for the researcher’s participants. The entire staff was given the opportunity to fill out the questionnaire and provide feedback to the questions that were asked. The questionnaire consisted of five questions. The researcher used the instrument to gain information on years of experience among the staff, interest in the research topic, and personal opinions based on challenges faced within the classroom concerning ESL students.
The second data collection instrument was a survey that was administered prior to interviews, Survey on ESL Knowledge (see Appendix B). The survey used in this study was taken from a book by Judie Haynes, *Getting Started with English Language Learners: How Educators Can Meet the Challenge*, 2007. The survey consisted of thirteen questions.

The Survey on ESL Knowledge was divided into two sections. Section I contained 6 items and dealt with six key concepts of second-language acquisition. The items related to culture shock, comprehensible input and output, language acquisition and learning, age differences, the affective filter, and the silent period (Haynes, 2007). Section II contained 7 items and dealt with, according to Haynes, the most pressing and frequent question administrators, board members, and classroom teachers ask. Within Haynes research in section II (2007), she analyzed the essential theories in second-language acquisition, and examined the differences in acquiring social and academic English based on common underlying proficiency (CUP). Both sections were formatted into true/false statements. Teachers were asked to indicate whether they thought the statements were true or false.

The third data collection instrument was a one-on-one teacher interview with the researcher, Initial Interview with Participant (see Appendix C). The six interview questions used in this study were generated by the researcher to analyze three specific areas as they relate to each research question. Question 1 addressed teacher experience and the various grade levels that the teacher had taught. Questions 4, 5, and 6 related to Perceived Behavior (What best practices for ESL students do the participants believe they implement into their classroom.) Finally, questions 2 and 3 concentrated on the challenges faced within the classrooms among teachers of ESL students.
The other data collection instrument used was The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) (see Appendix D). This instrument was used to record data collected from the teacher observations. The observation checklist was developed by Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2000; 2004; 2008).

Within this model there are required features that the teacher must include for every lesson to accommodate the needs of English Language Learners (ELLs), but it is very flexible allowing teachers to include components they find effective with non-ELL students. Many features that are included are characteristics of high quality instruction, not for just ELLs but all students, such as: 1) cooperative learning, 2) reading comprehension strategy instruction, 3) writers workshop and 4) differentiated instruction.

Table 3 shows the eight components of the SIOP Model (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008) and highlights features of each.

Table 3
The Components of the SIOP Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Feature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Preparation:</td>
<td>Content and language objectives, grade-level concepts, content adaptation, supplementary materials, meaningful activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Background:</td>
<td>Connections with students’ prior experiences and knowledge, vocabulary development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensible Input:</td>
<td>Appropriate speech, clear explanations of tasks, various ESL techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies:</td>
<td>Explicit learning strategies, teacher scaffolding, various question types</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction:</td>
<td>Frequent interaction, appropriate grouping, increased wait time, clarification in the native language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice/Application:</td>
<td>Practice with hands-on materials, integrated language skills development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Delivery:</td>
<td>Meeting language and content objectives, student engagement, appropriate pacing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review/Assessment:</td>
<td>Review of key vocabulary and concepts, regular feedback on students output, informal assessment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are thirty features on the SIOP, each with a range of possible scores from “0” to “4” or NA; therefore, a five point scale: 0= Not evident, 1=half way between not evident and somewhat evident, 2=somewhat evident, 3=half way between somewhat evident and highly evident, 4=highly evident. The thirty items were broken down under the components of the SIOP Model. Six items were included under Lesson Preparation, 3 items were under Building Background, 3 items were under Comprehensible Input, 3 items were under Strategies, 4 items were under Interaction, 3 items were under Practice/Application, 4 items under Lesson Delivery, and 4 items under Review/Assessment. Having eight specific areas to focus on made the observation of data within the 30 minute classroom visit more plausible, and gave the researcher detailed criteria to observe.

Data Collection Procedures

After announcing the objectives and data collection procedures of the study to the faculty of Pireway Elementary School through an email and newsletter, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to all teachers’ mailboxes the same afternoon. The Questionnaire for Teachers Concerning ESL students was administered to gain knowledge on years of experience among the staff, interest in the research topic being studies, and personal opinions based on challenges faced within the classroom concerning ESL students. Participants were given one week to complete and return the questionnaire. The researcher received 7 completed questionnaires from 14 participants. After collecting questionnaires from the staff, the researcher randomly chose three teachers for each focus group: 1) Teachers with less than 5 years experience 2) Teachers with more than 5 years experience. The researcher chose six teachers to be involved in the study by evaluating each question to determine the participant’s interest in the study.
The researcher created a consent form which explained objectives of the study, data collection procedures, privacy information, and requirements of the participants. Teachers who volunteered to participate were required to sign this consent form, as directed by the Institutional Review Board, and return it to the researcher. The researcher received consent from five regular classroom teachers and one media specialist.

After the participants completed the consent form the researcher scheduled an appointment to meet. Two objectives for the appointment were: 1) To complete a survey and 2) To discuss key concepts of ESL best practices through an interview. Prior to the teacher interviews the researcher discussed the purpose of Judy Haynes book with the participant. The researcher gave detailed information of Haynes purpose in *Getting Started with English Language Learners: How Educators Can Meet the Challenge*, 2007. The researcher explained the survey Haynes published in her book and the survey used in this study was the same survey used by Haynes in the 2007 published book. Participants completed the 13 question survey in front of the researcher before the interview took place.

After the participant completed the survey they were asked six questions in a one-on-one interview with the researcher. While the researcher interviewed the participant with the Initial Interview with Participant data instrument the researcher tape recorded the interview. Tape recording the interview allowed the researcher to stay focused on the questions and discussion for each topic. After the interviews were completed the researcher transcribed each interview with the participants to investigate common themes that developed from each interview. The researcher also compared and contrasted answers based on the two focus groups.

The final data collection procedure was an unannounced observation of five regular classrooms and one library period. The observations were conducted in order to observe best
practices for ESL students based on the SIOP model and perceived beliefs of strategies used within the classroom. All six teachers, three from each focus group, were observed. Classes were visited at random. The observations were done in a walk-through fashion and the observer spent at least 30 minutes in each classroom. The teacher participants were informed of the week in which they would be observed, but were not told on which day, nor during which class the observation would take place. While the researcher was observing the class the data was recorded on the SIOP. Each item on the checklist that was observed was rated on a scale from 0-4 and was designated with a check. If the strategy was not observed, the item was checked NA.

Data Analysis

There were four research questions that guided this study. The data analysis procedure for each question is presented below.

Question 1: What practices do teachers of ESL students believe should be implemented in the classroom? Do their beliefs differ with teacher experience? One-on-one interviews will be analyzed for major themes to identify ESL best practices. Supporting quotes will be used to support these themes. Data will be divided in to two groups based on teacher experience. Results are presented in Chapter four.

Question 2: Is there a relationship between teacher knowledge of ESL best practices and the frequency with which they use these practices in their own classroom? ESL knowledge was determined by participant scores on the survey of ESL knowledge. Participant practice was determined by participants SIOP scores. Participants were placed in two groups based on their survey response- those above the mean and those below. The SIOP scores were then compared to look for a pattern. Results are presented in Chapter four.
Question 3: Is there a relationship between teacher experience and their knowledge of effective ESL strategies? Teacher experience was determined by the years teachers had been teaching. ESL knowledge was determined by participant scores on the survey of ESL knowledge. Participants were placed in two groups: 1) Teachers teaching five years or less and 2) Teachers teaching more than five years. The survey scores were then compared to look for a pattern. Results are presented in Chapter four.

Question 4: What challenges do teachers of ESL students perceive to delivery of effective ESL instruction? Teachers perceived challenges in delivering effective ESL instruction was determined by a questionnaire, and questions 2 and 3 of the one-on-one interview. Responses were compared to look for a pattern. Results are presented in Chapter four.

Findings from this study are presented in chapter four. Chapter five offers a discussion of findings, limitations, and suggestions for further research.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter is divided into four sections in order to present data and findings to address each of the four research questions investigated in this study. The first section will answer the first research question and will include findings of the data collected from the Survey on ESL Knowledge. The researcher will analyze the common themes that arise between teacher knowledge of ESL best practices and determine whether the responses differ with teacher experience. The second section of this chapter will address the second research question and will include findings of the Survey on ESL Knowledge and participants Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) scores. The third section of this chapter will address the third research question and will present findings in the relationship between teacher experience and their knowledge of effective strategies based on their survey. The fourth section of this chapter will address research question four and will include an analysis of two questions during the one-on-one interview and the responses on the questionnaire and how they relate to challenges teachers face with effective ESL instruction.

Research Question One

Data collected from question 4, 5, and 6 on the one-on-one interview was used to answer question one: What practice do teachers of ESL students believe should be implemented in the classroom? Do their beliefs differ with teacher experience?

The Initial Interview with Participants consisted of six interview questions. Questions 4, 5, and 6 related to Attitudinal Behavior (What best practices for ESL students do the participants believe they implement into their classroom?) The researcher reviewed the data and searched for
familiar categories, themes or patterns that occurred among the focus groups. Table 4 shows the responses and common themes.

Table 4
Responses from Initial Interview with Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Categories, Themes, and Patterns</th>
<th>Supporting Responses from teachers teaching five yrs. or less</th>
<th>Supporting Responses from teachers teaching more than five yrs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Hands On                               | -“I feel like the learners get more out of the lesson when it’s hands on. If they can physically put their hands on it, it will provide more of a mental picture.”  
   -“Having a manipulative for them to touch allows them to experience it in real life; a picture can not provide this.” | -“I feel for a student to be successful they have to experience a new topic by using all of their five senses if it’s necessary. They have to touch, hear, see, smell and taste.”  
   -“If we provide things hands on they can actually see it will help them learn better.”  
   -“Completing activities within centers are some observations you would see from my students.” |
| Visual Aid                             | -“If they don’t have any prior knowledge they can see it there in front of them and visualize it.”  
   -“After knowing you taught a lesson by telling, showing, and doing, you have presented the material in various manners where the child should be able to comprehend.” | -“I definitely feel the child should be kept in a regular classroom with lots of visual aid for them to look at while you are teaching about it. This allows more support within your lesson.”  
   -“I always try to make sure they are able to touch, see, and hear everything I’m teaching about because they may be unaware of the vocabulary they are unfamiliar with.”  
   -“Students would be on the Smart Board because it’s such an awesome visual aid.”  
   -“Students will be on computers listening, seeing, and experiencing the curriculum.  
   -“Giving them things to cut, paste, color, and move around is more effective.” |
| Repetition/Structure | -“They learn most effectively by repetition and structure. They have to have the same routine. It’s like they can’t function without routine.”
   -“When it’s repetitious the students seem to grasp the concept better even if they don’t understand at the beginning.”
 | Confidence | -“Building their confidence is one of their main issues. Letting them know that they can do it and to keep them positive to finish their work and do their best is effective teaching.”
   -“I don’t want them to feel like they are not important; we try to push English on them so much.”
 | Peer grouping | -“I get fluent peers to help them if they don’t understand the language having someone to help guide them until they are comfortable at the task really benefits my students.”
   -“Some of my Hispanic students are more proficient in some areas and if you pair them together a student may be more likely to get it from that speaker that is more proficient in the language. Sometimes they do better with peers.”
   -“I think this is a great idea as long as they don’t become dependent on the translator.”
 | -“Most ESL students are hard workers and really want to do well; we just need to show them they are loved and we will do anything to show them we are here for them.”
 | -“Pairing them with other students that speak the language is a main strategy that I use especially if the other student is strong in that area.”
 |
| Interaction | -“My students perform well in groups.”
-“I interact with my students one-on-one to clear up any questions that are confusing.” | -“Hopefully you would see some interaction going on, and me being the facilitator. The children would be involved and engaged with what they are doing.
-“Lots of interaction with students. Students will be interacting with each other and the Smart Board.” |
| Communication | -“I really need to work on slowing down and pronunciation of my words and sounds. That will help me when I do my phonics, because that part of the reading helps the ESL children tremendously.”
-I allow the students to explain things back to me just to make sure they understand.” | -“I find that I do speak slowly and are more direct. Many learners need to be able to hear clear and precise directions so they can understand.” |
| Modeling | -“You would observe me doing a lot of teacher modeling and asking guiding question to help students understand what they are working on.” |  |

The resulting data shows that teachers teaching five years or less commented on every revealing theme apparent throughout the interviews. The novice teachers showed an ample amount of knowledge based on effective ESL practices. The veteran teachers did not comment on modeling and repetition/structure being one of their classroom strategies.

Research Question Two

Data from the Survey on ESL Knowledge and the classroom observations were used to answer question two: *Is there a relationship between teacher knowledge of ESL best practices and the frequency with which they use these practices in their own classroom?*
The Survey on ESL Knowledge consisted of thirteen statements. Questions 1-6 created section 1 on the survey. Questions 7-13 created section 2 on the survey. Section 1 directly correlated with comprehensible input and output, the optimum age for language learning, and the emotional state of the learner (Haynes, 2007). In Section 2 focused on the most pressing questions facing educators. Teachers were asked to indicate whether they thought the statements were true or false. The researcher analyzed the data by focus groups. The SIOP was used to record data collected from the teacher observations. There are thirty features on the SIOP, each with a range of possible scores from “0” to “4” or NA; therefore, a five point scale: 0= Not evident, 1=half way between not evident and somewhat evident, 2=somewhat evident, 3=half way between somewhat evident and highly evident, 4=highly evident. There is a total possible score of 120. The thirty items were broken down under the eight components of the SIOP Model. The researcher analyzed the data by categorizing the survey and SIOP scores from highest to lowest. The SIOP scores were recorded first and then the researcher entered their correlating Survey score. Then the researcher broke the total scores for the survey and the total scores for the SIOP into two groups: Above Mean and Below Mean. Table 5 shows the comparison of knowledge of ESL practices and frequency of these practices used within their classroom.
Table 5
Comparison of Survey and SIOP Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Individual Survey Scores</th>
<th>Group Mean Score</th>
<th>Individual SIOP Scores</th>
<th>Group Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Above the Mean</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below the Mean</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of Scores</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher analyzed the graph and determined there was not a relationship among participant’s individual survey scores and their SIOP score. There was not a great range variation in the individual survey scores, but there was a distinct range variation in the individual SIOP scores. The participants that scored below the mean in their SIOP scores scored the mean on their individual survey scores. The participants that scored below the mean in their SIOP scores scored equally on their individual survey scores as the participants that scored above the mean in their SIOP scores. The data shows that there is a range of 28 points in the SIOP scores and only a 2 point range in the Survey scores.

Research Question Three

Data collected from the Survey of ESL Knowledge was used to answer question two: Is there a relationship between teacher experience and their knowledge of effective ESL strategies?

The survey consisted of thirteen questions. The researcher divided the data into categories based on years of experience and then placed the number of questions the participants answered correctly under their appropriate group. Table 6 shows the scoring of the survey.
Table 6
Comparison of Survey and Years of Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>5 years or less</th>
<th>More than 5 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% correct on knowledge</td>
<td>58.9%</td>
<td>64.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of the data analysis show that both focus groups demonstrate almost equal amount of knowledge on the survey. Haynes (2007) suggests developing a successful learning environment for ELLs every classroom teacher and administrator needs to understand the six essential concepts of language acquisition. Teachers with more than five years experience scored 25 out of 39 questions correct. This was two points higher than teacher with five years of experience or less because they scored 23 out of 39. Although the scores were two points different the resulting data shows teachers with more than five years experiences scored 5.2% higher; therefore indicating more knowledge on effective ESL strategies.

Research Question Four

Data collected from questionnaire and questions 2 and 3 on the one-on-one interviews were used to answer question two: What challenges do teachers of ESL students perceive to delivery of effective ESL instruction?

The Questionnaire for Teachers Concerning ESL students was designed by the researcher and used to aid the selection process of participants and to measure participant’s perceived challenges to providing ESL instruction in their classroom. The questionnaire consisted of five questions and responses to the first three questions correlated with research question four. The one-on-one interview was also used to collect responses concerning the challenges teacher perceive to delivery of effective ESL instruction. After collecting data from both components the researcher observed common themes, categories, and patterns that were reported and viewed as
an area of difficulty in delivery of effective ESL instruction within the classroom. The researcher found the common themes. In Table 7 the researcher provides supporting data for each category.

Table 7
Challenges of teaching effective ESL instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Challenges</th>
<th>Supporting Responses and Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Prior Knowledge   | “When introducing something new you try and build it on prior knowledge and if they don’t have any it’s hard to make a connection.”  
 “By third grade you expect them to have a firm foundation with experiencing many things, but every day I get simple questions from them that you assume they would already know.”  
 “Learning new ideas and building it to prior knowledge. Many times their experiences are not like ours; therefore, we are unsure of what they norm, or culture difference in having prior experience to various things.”  
 -Lack of prior knowledge |
| Language Barriers | “Trying to understand them when they are translating a word is difficult.”  
 “The students as well as the teachers get very frustrated when they feel they are not communicating very clearly, and when they don’t know what you are talking about.”  
 “Talking solely in English is challenging. If they had more bilingual classes I feel this would help.”  
 “One of their biggest challenges is their enunciations of letters and words.”  
 -Language Barriers  
 -Understanding the language and directions that are given.  
 -Being able to explain themselves and tell why. |
| Lack of confidence | “When they don’t understand or don’t feel comfortable asking, instead of worrying they just sit still or place their focus on something else. They won’t ask because they are scared.”  
 -Being withdrawn and not having enough trust.  
 -Level of student’s frustration.  
 -Having self confidence in the work they do |
Table 7 cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural differences</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| -“In the classroom sometimes we expect students to have had experience or background on the subject but because of the culture they don’t know.  
-“I think the biggest challenge with the female Hispanics is relating home to here. At home most of their families want them working on house work chores, folding clothes, etc. instead of focusing of school.”  
-“Meeting expectations of the teacher and the rules within the classroom.”  
-Understanding the student's culture. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| -“Our biggest challenge is being able to provide bilingual books with lots of information for them.”  
-Having enough bilingual material to support their home language.  
-Have a stronger more consistent ESL program.  
-Translator being involved with the class.  
-Provide resources (audio programs).  
-Having the More at Four experiences available to a larger number of students.  
-Provide more classes/staff development for teachers  
-Courses for parents/parent meeting to help them understand |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bridging home to school</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| -“The teachers of our younger students want books easy enough for them to read and when they go home to read to their parents. This could help bridging home to school.”  
-“They are at school all day surrounded by English and then go home and hear no English. We need to bridge that gap by providing more Spanish at school and more English at home so it will be consistent.”  
-Parental Support (Parents having the knowledge to understand how to support you and the student).  
-Communication between students and parents. |

The resulting data show that the six most common challenges that teachers face when delivering effective ESL instruction are: students having prior knowledge, language barriers, cultural differences, having enough resources to implement, bridging school to home, and lack of confidence. Teachers provided much information on their questionnaires and one-on-one interviews about daily challenges they encounter.
Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges and barriers for elementary school teachers and also determine which education strategies are most influential on the success of ESL students.

The data reveal teachers identify many challenges they are faced with but these same challenges are the areas within teacher knowledge on effective ESL instruction they scored lower on in the knowledge survey. The same challenges the teachers identified were areas of weaknesses within their classroom observations.

According to the data collected and analyzed in this study, teachers years of experience have no affect of knowledge of effective ESL strategies, but does impact how they deliver effective ESL strategies within their classroom.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, SUMMARIES and RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Chapter four presented the findings from the research on effective ESL strategies, how it relates to years of experience, and challenges elementary school teachers face implementing these into their classroom. This chapter will discuss the study’s limitations, implications, recommendations, and suggestions for future research.

Implications of the Findings

Research question one asked what practices do teachers of ESL students believe should be implemented in the classroom and if these beliefs differ with teacher experience? The findings in Chapter 4 indicate that teachers teaching five years or less commented on every revealing theme apparent throughout the interviews. Although the teachers teaching more than five years did not report on two areas the researcher observed these two strategies taking place within their classroom. The novice teachers and the veteran teachers both shared many ideas. The novice teachers were quick to answer; therefore, knowing the “right” answer either because they truly practice these strategies in the class or because they are freshly out of school and have learned these in their methods courses. Novice teachers are often more aware of best practices that need to be implemented into lessons because they have just graduated with an undergraduate degree. The researcher may not have observed these strategies taking place in the novice teacher’s classroom because they have not yet had the time to implement them effectively into their classroom routines and lessons.

Research question two asked was there a relationship between teacher knowledge of ESL best practices and the frequency with which they use these practices in the classroom? The findings presented in Chapter 4 indicate that teacher’s knowledge does not have a relationship
with the frequency in which they use these practices in the classroom. The participant who scored the highest on the SIOP scored a 97. They also scored the highest on the survey. The participant who scored the lowest on the survey also scored the lowest of their SIOP with a 69. Although the other four participants scored a range of scores on their SIOP they all scored equally on their survey; therefore, knowledge and frequency of use did not have a relationship. A likely reason for this scoring is that the specific strategies that were determined to be most often used are also best practices that are used daily, regardless of whether or not they intend to the ESL population. For example, strategies such as “clearly define, display, and review with students content and language objectives”, or “give clear explanation of academic tasks”, are not strategies which are exclusively associated with effective ESL strategies, but are examples of instructional “best practices”.

Research question three asked if there was a relationship between teacher’s experience of their own ESL practices and their knowledge of effective ESL strategies. After analyzing the data in Chapter 4 the researcher found there was a relationship between teacher’s years of experience of their knowledge of effective ESL practices. The teachers that have taught more than five years scored 5.2% higher on their survey. One reason for this finding could have been the teachers teaching more than five years have had a chance to gain more staff development and more field experience than teachers teaching less than five years.

Research question four asked what challenges teachers of ESL students perceive to delivery of effective ESL instruction. The findings presented in Chapter 4 indicated that the six most common challenges that teachers face when delivering effective ESL instruction are: students having prior knowledge, language barriers, cultural differences, having enough resources to implement, bridging school to home, and lack of confidence. The researcher also
discovered that the weaknesses present in the classroom observation and teacher’s knowledge on the survey had a direct relationship with the confessed challenges faced within their classroom. This could contribute to lack of staff development within the district and school on effective ESL practices. The researcher also adds, “In the five years I have been teaching at PES I have not been to one staff development workshop directly correlated to effective ESL strategies to implement in the classroom.”

Recommendations

Out of 19 schools in the district, PES has the highest population of ESL students. Therefore, there is a pressing need for the teachers, administrators, and curriculum specialist to be able to meet the needs of ESL students. It is the recommendation of the researcher that school-wide staff development or training on second-language acquisition and effective ESL practices take place.

Many ESL students are placed in classrooms where teachers are very knowledgeable about their subject matter, yet have limited experience and knowledge in working with non-English-speaking students. Many assumptions are made by educators and feel that ESL students learn the exact same way as English speaking students. Not only do teachers need to understand how to teach these students but needs to be familiar with how students acquire a second language. The training should focus on all aspects of ESL practices, including understanding ESL students in general, intentional strategies used for lesson planning, lesson delivery of effective practices, evaluating and assessment, and reflecting on changes needed for future lessons. Targeting the whole staff could prevent the disparity and inconsistency of use of knowledge and practice in using effective ESL practices.
The researcher also recommends implementing staff development that directly correlates with effective ESL strategies that need to be implemented into the classroom. The purpose of staff development is to help teachers and administrators understand the key concepts of second-language acquisition, acquire strategies to differentiate instruction for ELLs, and develop an appreciation of diverse cultures in the school community. The school could also offer staff development in being trained in a research based model to implement into the classrooms such as SIOP. Teacher can then be trained in using this model effectively. Effective professional developments are a key component in preparing educators to successfully meet both the academic and social needs of ELLs. Schools and local universities could use this study to help guide staff development on the topic of implementing effective ESL practices into elementary schools.

Limitations of the Study

The following limitations are inherent in this study. The study is restricted to one elementary school in a rural school division. Generalizations cannot be made for other grade levels or other elementary schools. Because the data were collected with questionnaires, surveys, one-on-one interviews, the responses were dependent on the subjective attitudes and opinions of the participants. An additional limitation of the study was the selection of participants. The sample of teachers was very small. A small sample also prevents the researcher from making broad generalizations about the results. Finally, the short duration of the observations (a minimum of thirty minutes) and the short number of observations (one) was also limiting to the findings.
Suggestions for Future Research

1. This study might be repeated in several elementary schools with different demographics to determine if the same effective ESL strategies are/are not present.

2. This study might be repeated using a larger sample and lengthier, more frequent classroom observations to see if the data and results are the same.

3. This study might be repeated using a more diverse demographic group of participants to see if the data and results are the same.

4. A study might be conducted in the middle or high school grades to determine if the use of effective ESL strategies by teachers is similar to those identified at the elementary school level.

5. A study might be conducted in PreK-2 grades and 3-5 grades to determine if the use of effective ESL is the same or different.

6. A more detailed study might be conducted to determine exactly what kind of impact staff development and training in effective ESL strategies has on teacher use and knowledge of implementing this instruction in the classroom.

Summary

Our goal as classroom teachers and administrators in a rapidly changing society is to prepare teachers to teach content effectively to ESL students while developing the student’s language ability. Teacher’s years of experience did not have a relationship on teacher knowledge of effectiveness in this study, but did have a relationship on how teacher’s implemented strategies into their classroom. We as educators need to prepare all teachers with effective strategies to implement into their classrooms, regardless of their years of experience. Not only will implementing effective ESL practices benefit the non-English speaking students but it will
insure success for English speakers as well. The lack of success in educating linguistically and culturally diverse students is problematic because federal and state governments expect all students to meet high standards to accommodate requirements of the NCLB. In order for students whose first language is not English to succeed in school and become productive members of our society, they need to receive better educational opportunities in U.S. schools. It is the researcher’s opinion that continued research on the topic of effective ESL practices will prove valuable to the field of education.
References


SERVE. (2004). *English Language Learners in the Southeast: Research, Policy, & Practice*.


Tennessee Department of Education: Research Brief. (2007, March) *Tennessee’s Most Effective Teachers: Are they assigned to the schools that need them the most?* Retrieved October 2, 2009 from www.tennessee.gov/education


APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS CONCERNING ESL STUDENTS

1. How long have you been teaching?

2. In teaching the Hispanic population what are challenges you face within the classroom?

3. What do you feel are the student’s challenges within the classroom?

4. Having these challenges, what do you feel PES needs to better overcome these challenges?

5. What are some positive experiences that you have had with this culture/ population?
APPENDIX B

SURVEY ON ESL KNOWLEDGE

(Taken from *Getting Started with English Language Learners: How Educators Can Meet the Challenge* by Judie Haynes, 2007)

-Answer each question (T) True or (F) False

_____1. My new comer should be referred to the child study team. He is often disruptive in the classroom and kicks and hits other children. There is something wrong with him aside from not knowing the language.

_____2. The more time students spend soaking up English in the mainstream classroom, the faster they will learn the language.

_____3. Children who have the ability to memorize grammar rules and complete pages of grammar drills will learn to speak and write English more quickly.

_____4. Children learn a second language faster and more easily than teenagers and adults do.

_____5. The emotional state of the learner doesn’t interfere with the acquisition of a new language. As long as English language learners (ELLs) receive instruction from a classroom teacher, they will learn English.

_____6. Students should be strongly encouraged to speak English from the first day.

_____7. English language learners need one to three years to master social language in the classroom.

_____8. Students don’t always acquire social language naturally in informal contexts. They need to be taught how to communicate appropriately in social situations.

_____9. Although English language learners may speak English on the playground, this does not mean they have mastered the academic and cognitive language of the classroom.

_____10. Learning academic subjects in their native language helps ELLs learn English.

_____11. Parents of English language learners should be encouraged to speak their primary language at home.

_____12. Students who have strong literacy skills in their native language will learn English faster.

_____13. Students need more than two to three years in bilingual or ESL classes to succeed in school.
APPENDIX C

INITIAL INTERVIEW WITH PARTICIPANT

**Initial Interview with Participant:**

1) How long have you been teaching? ______ How many different grade levels have you taught? _____:

2) In teaching the ESL population, what are challenges you face within the classroom?

3) When thinking of the challenges you face, what do you feel are the student’s challenges within the classroom? Are they the same? Why/ Why not?

4) What do you consider to be an optimal learning environment for the ESL students? (How do you feel ESL students learn the most effectively?)

5) Being a monolingual English speaker, what are strategies you use within your classroom to teach ESL students?

6) If I were to come into your classroom unannounced what are some actions I would observe from you as a teacher? / From the student?

   TEACHER:

   STUDENT:

7) Before planning a lesson or teaching, are there assumptions about the ESL population that guide your instruction?

8) Is there anything the community could contribute to your efforts at GES to improve this barrier between teacher and student?
# APPENDIX D

## THE SHELTERED INSTRUCTION OBSERVATION PROTOCOL (SIOP)

The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2000; 2004; 2008)

Total Point Possible: 120 (Score with 4= Highly Evident and 0= Not evident)

**Points Earned:** ___________________

*Place a check in the box that best reflects what you observe.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preparation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Content objectives</strong> clearly defined, displayed, and reviewed with students</td>
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<td>2. <strong>Language objectives</strong> clearly defined, displayed, and reviewed with students</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Content concepts</strong> appropriate for age and educational background level of students</td>
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<td>4. <strong>Supplementary materials</strong> used to a high degree, making the lesson clear and meaningful (e.g., computer programs, graphs, models, visuals)</td>
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<td>5. <strong>Adaptation of content</strong> (e.g., text, assignment) to all levels of students proficiency</td>
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<td>6. <strong>Meaningful activities</strong> that integrate lesson concepts (e.g., surveys, letter writing, simulations, constructing models with language practice opportunities for reading, writing, listening, and/or speaking)</td>
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<td><strong>Building Background</strong></td>
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<td>7. <strong>Concepts explicitly linked</strong> to students’ background experiences</td>
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<td>8. <strong>Links explicitly made</strong> between past learning and new concepts</td>
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<td>9. <strong>Key vocabulary</strong> emphasized (e.g., introduced, written, repeated, and highlighted for students to see)</td>
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<td><strong>Comprehensible Input</strong></td>
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<td>10. <strong>Speech</strong> appropriate for students’ proficiency level (e.g., slower rate, enunciation, and simple sentence structure for beginners)</td>
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<td>11. <strong>Clear explanation</strong> of academic tasks</td>
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<td>12. <strong>A variety of techniques</strong> used to make content concepts clear (e.g., modeling, visuals, hands-on activities, demonstrations, gestures, body language)</td>
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**Strategies**

13. **Ample opportunities** provided for students to use learning strategies
### Appendix D cont.

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<tr>
<td>14. <strong>Scaffolding techniques</strong></td>
<td>consistently used assisting and supporting students understanding (e.g., think-alouds)</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. A variety of <strong>questions or tasks that promote higher-order thinking skills</strong></td>
<td>(e.g., literal, analytical, and interpretive questions)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction</strong></td>
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<td>16. Frequent opportunities for <strong>interaction</strong> and discussion between teacher/student and among students, which encourage elaborated responses about lesson concepts</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. <strong>Grouping configurations</strong></td>
<td>support language and content objectives of the lesson</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Sufficient <strong>wait time for student responses</strong></td>
<td>consistently provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Ample opportunities for students to <strong>clarify key concepts in L1</strong> as needed with aide, peer, or L1 text</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Practice/Application</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>20. <strong>Hands-on materials and/or manipulatives</strong></td>
<td>provided for students to practice using new content knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. Activities provided for students to <strong>apply content and language knowledge</strong> in the classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. Activities integrate all <strong>language skills</strong> (i.e., reading, writing, listening, and speaking)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lesson Delivery</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>23. <strong>Content objectives</strong></td>
<td>clearly supported by lesson delivery</td>
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<tr>
<td>24. <strong>Language objectives</strong></td>
<td>clearly supported by lesson delivery</td>
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<tr>
<td>25. <strong>Students engaged</strong></td>
<td>approximately 90% to 100% of the period</td>
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<tr>
<td>26. <strong>Pacing</strong> of the lesson appropriate to students’ ability level</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Review/Assessment</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>27. Comprehensive <strong>review of key vocabulary</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>28. Comprehensive <strong>review of key content concepts</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>29. Regular <strong>feedback</strong> provided to students on their output (e.g., language, content, work)</td>
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<tr>
<td>30. <strong>Assessment of students comprehension and learning</strong> of all lesson objectives (e.g., spot checking, group response throughout the lesson)</td>
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</table>