

Guiding Preservice Teachers to Critically Reflect:  
Toward a Renewed Sense about English Learners

by

Amy Michele Markos

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

M. Beatriz Arias, Chair  
Christian Faltis  
Sarah Hudelson  
Terrence Wiley

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this practitioner inquiry was to explore the use of Guided Critical Reflection (GCR) in preparing preservice teachers for English learners (ELs). As a teacher researcher, I documented, analyzed, and discussed the ways in which students in my course used the process of GCR to transform their passively held understandings about ELs. Specifically, the research questions were: 1) What are preservice teachers' common sense about teaching and learning related to ELs? 2) How does GCR transform preservice teachers' common sense about ELs? 3) What is my role as an educator in creating opportunities for GCR?

I utilized methods for data collection that fit my teaching practices. Data sources included three types of observations (self-reflective field notes, audio recordings of each class, and notes documented by an outside observer), student-work artifacts, and my audio reflection journal. I analyzed data inductively and deductively using a modified analytic induction approach.

Building on previous research concerning the use of reflection in teacher preparation, I define GCR as the process in which I guided preservice teachers to acknowledge and examine their common sense about ELs, reframe what they know in light of course learning, and transform their understandings. Five major findings emerged from this study. First, preservice teachers entered the course with common sense notions about ELs rooted in their educational and life experiences. Students felt comfortable sharing what they knew about ELs, but needed to be scaffolded to examine how their life experiences shaped their common sense. Within the course, preservice teachers framed and reframed their common sense in different ways.

Through the process of GCR, students evidenced a renewed sense about ELs.

Finally, my role as a teacher involved establishing a comfortable learning environment, valuing my students' common sense as the catalyst for course learning, and guiding students through their reflective work. Ultimately, I was able to create opportunities for GCR because I too was reflecting on my practices, just as I was asking my students to reflect on their common sense about ELs.

To Tony,

For your endless encouragement, patience, and support.  
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yet still showering me with hugs and kisses each time I arrived or left.

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teaching me about my own. Thank you for your willingness to join me on this  
journey, to live in the gray, and to get tangled in your thinking.

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*Get over your hill and see what you find there*  
– Mumford and Sons

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CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION

**Vignette: “I love ELs”**

I enter my classroom a few minutes before the start of class on a Tuesday evening. As I make my way to the front of the room to set down my teaching materials, I greet my students as I go, taking note of Rob<sup>1</sup> sitting in the back. He sits as if he is in an imaginary recliner, hands clasped behind his head, legs stretched out and resting on the table in front of him. His relaxed body image matches his chosen attitude for the class. Things aren’t a challenge, Rob knows everything – or so he says.

I make my way to where Rob is lounging in the very back corner, the furthest possible seat from the front of the room. In my hands is a green index card, with the words “I love ELs,” followed by a big smiley face.

I crouch down next to him, at eye-level. “Here’s your quick-write from last week,” I say as I pass him the card. Even though there are only a few minutes before class, I take this opportunity to talk with him about this simplistic written reflection.

“Thanks,” he says, his perma-grin unfazed. With a slight chuckle he says, “Yeah, I love ELs.”

“So, that’s what I wanted to talk to you about, I didn’t quite get this. I asked everyone to write about how their definition of ‘English learner’ has changed since

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<sup>1</sup> All names of preservice teachers are pseudonyms.

the beginning of the class –tell me about this, ‘I love ELs’, what’s this mean?” I returned.

Rob, still as calm as ever, says, “Well, I love ELs, who doesn’t?” Laughing as he talks, his sarcasm stings like a slap in the face. Drawing the attention he seeks each week, a few students around us turn to get in on the conversation. I know it’s my turn to respond, and I choose my words carefully. I am feeling the tension between Rob and I, two actors playing out a scene for a growing audience of students. “I get the sarcasm, the smiley face at the end is a nice touch –but what do you really want to say about what you have learned about ELs?” I make my tone light to hide my puzzlement.

“What I’ve learned? I *already knew* about ELs, I know them, they’re gangbangers. I went to high school with a bunch of them – they’re lazy, don’t want to learn English. One of my teachers, he had to teach the ELs, he told us – he thought they were too, just gangbangers, just a waste of his time.” As he speaks, Rob looks around, smiling still, making eye contact with the other students who are listening in. He’s sitting up in his chair now, gesturing with his hands as if to say ‘am I right, come on, somebody’s got my back, right?’

None of the students bite. They appear as shocked as I am with his harsh words stated in such a lighthearted tone.

“Your teacher said this? Did you know any of them, were you friends with them? Isn’t this just a stereotype? Can all ELs be gangbangers?” My words stream out with less thought this time. Rob’s expression is calm and cool, his wide smile still in place. I can feel my blood rising. My knuckles are starting to turn white as I

tightly grip the chair for balance. How things like this can still surprise me, I am not sure. Years of teaching this course has proven time and time again that not all preservice teachers have a positive disposition towards ELs.

Before he responds, I realize we are past the start time for class.

“Rob, it’s time to start class. We can finish talking later.” I recognize this encounter has gone far enough for the moment. The wide eyes of students around us tell me this conversation should continue in a different venue, at a different time. Rob is baiting me, pushing as far as he can to prove that his reality is the truth.

As I make my way back down to the front of the classroom, I shiver inwardly, disturbed at how entrenched Rob is in his past personal experiences, at how much he believes that his experiences are the only truth out there.

## **Introduction**

The vignette above illustrates some of the challenges I have experienced during my work as a teacher educator, teaching the state-mandated Structured English Immersion (SEI) coursework for preservice teachers in Arizona. I have been troubled by the general dispositions of my students (who are mostly white, middle class, monolingual English speakers) towards English learners (ELs). Like Rob, these preservice teachers, the majority of who went through their own K-12 education during an era of restrictive language policies, often have limited understandings and deficit views about ELs. Although not all preservice teachers perceive ELs as “gangbangers,” most define ELs based on what they cannot do. They do not see the linguistic and cultural resources language learners bring to school. They often believe that teaching ELs is “just good teaching” (de Jong &

Harper, 2005) and only requires the integration of a few EL strategies (i.e. anyone can do it). Students take my course because they are required to do so for a teaching certificate. However, I find it no less troublesome to find that semester after semester, students question the need to be prepared to work with ELs, a growing student population in Arizona K-12 schools. In my experience, only a few enter the course with a desire to learn about and eventually teach language learners.

I have come to understand students' dispositions, beliefs, attitudes, and understandings expressed in the course as their "common sense" (Gramsci, 1971) about ELs. While I might not always agree with the ideas students bring to class, their common sense is legitimate, neither bad nor good because it is developed out of and based on their experiences. Further, many times students' common sense ideas are reflected in cultural, social, and educational contexts. But, however legitimate students' common sense may be, I believe it is vital for me, and other teacher educators, to recognize and address the common sense students bring to their preparation coursework.

Given the rise in EL population over the past twenty years (Garcia & Jensen, 2009), the dismantling of specialized language programs for ELs (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008), and the increase of accountability measures (Crawford, 2004), there is a growing need for preparation programs across the nation to prepare *all* teachers for EL. Wong-Fillmore and Snow (2002) and others (Banks & Banks, 2007; Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Nieto, 2000a) clearly state that it is time to move beyond preparing a specialized groups of educators to preparing *all* teachers. Lucas and Grinberg (2008) discuss the ways in which content

related to ELs can be integrated into teacher preparation programs. Recent literature has much to say about the dispositions, knowledge, and skills *all* educators should have in order to teach ELs (Ballantyne, Sanderman & Levy, 2008; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-González, 2008; Merino, 2007; Téllez & Waxman, 2005).

As a teacher researcher, I agree with the reasons why *all* teachers should be prepared. I appreciate the suggestions as to how to go about it. I value the research's recommendations regarding the dispositions and understandings that teachers should have in order to teach ELs. What is largely missing, however, are the practices teacher educators can use to help students develop these dispositions through a critical examination and transformation of their common sense about ELs.

To address this gap, I designed and implemented a practitioner inquiry study examining preservice teachers' common sense about language learners. In it, I explored the use of reflection as both a process and a tool for surfacing and transforming preservice teachers' common sense about ELs. A study like this appropriately acknowledges the current context of preparing all teachers for ELs, recognizing the implications of these policies in practice.

### **Rationale**

While the entire country is expressing a need for well-prepared teachers, this study is situated in Arizona. Although recent changes in Arizona policy and practice regarding language learners have been justly critiqued by many (Gandara, Losen, August, Uriate, Gomez & Hopkins, 2010; Lillie, Markos, Estrella, Nguyen, Peer, Perez, Trifiro, Arias, & Wiley 2010; Mahoney, MacSwan, Haladyna, & Garcia, 2010; Mahoney,

Thompson, & MacSwan, 2004; Wright, 2005; 2010), the passage of Arizona's Proposition 203 created an opportunity and a reason for me to examine what actually happens when colleges of teacher education attempt to prepare *all* teachers for ELs. These recent policy changes provided a unique opportunity to examine and report on the challenges of preparing teachers for ELs through state-mandated coursework that neglects content related to preservice teachers' dispositions towards, experiences with, and understandings about ELs.

**Arizona context.** In 2000, Arizona voters were presented with Proposition 203, English for the Children, a proposition that suggested Arizona schools move away from primary-language (L1) instruction programs and mandated the use of a Structured English Immersion (SEI) model for language learners in schools. Defining the model as “an English language acquisition process for young children in which nearly all classroom instruction is in English but with the curriculum and presentation designed for children who are learning the language,” (ADE 2007) the proposition promoted English-only instruction and discouraged the use of students' native languages in the classrooms. Along with claiming “bilingual education programs are a violation of immigrant children's right to learn English” (Wright, 2010, p. 68) the proposition promoted SEI as a cost-effective model that expedited the English acquisition process (Gandara, et al., 2010). With misleading information and a heightened sense of anti-immigrant sentiment, “English for the Children” passed (Gandara, et al., 2010; Wright, 2010), much to the dismay of the academic community.

Along with the passage of the prescribed SEI model came the mandate to prepare all teachers for ELs. Six years after Proposition 203 passed, the state, in conjunction with the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) and the English Language Learner Task Force, outlined the requirements and curriculum for preparing all teachers for ELs. To that end, Arizona Board Rule R7-2-613 (2006), stipulated every educator obtain an SEI endorsement as part of their certification process.<sup>2</sup>

AZ Board Rule R7-2-613 required all institutions of higher education implement the SEI coursework into their teacher preparation programs, but universities did not have the academic freedom to decide what to teach in the SEI courses; ADE dictated the required content components every SEI course needed to include. Unfortunately, for teacher educators and preservice teachers alike, Arizona's SEI curricular framework does not align with researcher's recommendations on preparing teachers for ELs.

**Arizona's curriculum in comparison to the literature.** The literature on preparing all teachers for ELs maintains that teachers need certain dispositions and experiences, in addition to knowledge and skills, in order to effectively teach language learners. While I will expand on this literature in detail in Chapter 2, I briefly summarize the inconsistencies between four main components of the literature: dispositions, experiences, knowledge, and skills and Arizona's approach to preparing teachers through the SEI coursework.

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<sup>2</sup> Teachers who hold a Bilingual (BLE) or English as a Second Language (ESL) endorsement are not required to earn a SEI endorsement.

While Arizona mandates all teachers be prepared to teach ELs, the SEI curriculum does not address teachers' dispositions towards ELs. The coursework does not require teachers to examine their beliefs about ELs in the process of learning how to teach language learners. Nor does it address whether teachers have past experiences with ELs. These are strong conclusions from the literature which suggest the importance of these experiences in fostering individuals who are reflective, critical, and empathetic of the issues facing ELs (Lucas and Grinberg, 2008; Lucas, et al., 2008; Merino, 2007; Mora, 2000; Tellez and Waxman, 2005; Walker, Shaffer and Liams, 2004). Furthermore, when completing their SEI coursework, teachers do not have to "experience" anything. ADE does not require any outcome or output from teachers completing the coursework, other than they attend the class for the required hours.

Along with the absence of course design addressing teacher dispositions, the state curriculum overemphasizes skills (strategies) for teaching ELs to the detriment of foundational knowledge about linguistic and cultural diversity. Out of the 90 hours of curriculum, 70 are devoted to strategies. This overemphasis on strategies has the potential to promote the misconception that in order to teach ELs, all teachers need is a few good strategies. Yet, the literature reminds us that without generous attention to knowledge related to second language acquisition principles and an understanding of the impact of cultural considerations on classroom learning, future teachers will be left with a misguided understanding about how to effectively use strategies to teach ELs (de Jong & Harper, 2005, Milk, Mercado & Sapeins, 1992; Wong-Fillmore & Snow, 2002).



Finally, although the SEI coursework emphasizes the skills teachers need, the course content promotes English-only approaches for teaching ELs. In contrast, the literature emphasizes a students' L1 can and should be used for learning both content and language (August & Hakuta, 1997; Echevarria, et al., 2008; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008) as well as to promote a comfortable learning environment (Lucas, et al., 2008). Arizona's emphasis on English-only approaches ignores the possibilities for supporting ELs through the use of their L1.

In summary, the state-mandated SEI curriculum fails to provide adequate content for preparing teachers for ELs. First, by narrowly defining what teachers need in order to complete their SEI coursework, ADE has created a checklist of items that fall short of the literature's recommendations. Additionally, the notion that content be covered through clock hours, as opposed to thoughtful, reflective, learning experiences, goes against what is known about effective teacher preparation in general (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Shulman & Shulman, 2004). Finally, I believe what is most troublesome is the lack of attention towards developing preservice teachers' dispositions and understandings about ELs. By neglecting content related to preservice teachers' common sense about ELs, the SEI curriculum ignores the reality that what teachers believe about students affects the ways in which they teach (Kaplan & Leckie, 2009; Nieto, 2000b; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996).

In order to prepare all teachers for ELs in Arizona, I believe teacher educators and program developers need to critically examine the state-mandated SEI curriculum. The reality is, like Rob in the vignette, preservice teachers *do* enter the

SEI courses with deficit, sometimes even racist, views of ELs. It is important to acknowledge these dispositions, whether we like them or not, so that we can expand students' knowledge and provide opportunities for them to shift their perspectives. Based on my personal experience teaching the SEI courses over the last five years, I argue attention to students' common sense about ELs is a vital component of preparation coursework.

### **My Study**

As someone teaching the state-mandated Structured English Immersion (SEI) courses, I am uniquely positioned to study the ways preservice teachers examine and transform their common sense about ELs. I designed my practitioner inquiry study in light of Ball's (2000) words, which state that teachers,

begin with an issue and design a context in which to study it. The issue with which they begin is at once theoretical and practical, rooted in everyday challenges of practice but also situated in larger scholarly discourse, and they create a way to examine and develop that issue further. (p. 386)

My study stemmed from challenges I experienced teaching the state-mandated SEI coursework for preservice teachers. My issue was both theoretical and practical. Teachers do need to be prepared to work with ELs. The literature reports teachers' dispositions towards ELs are important and this study contributes to this literature by examining this issue *in practice*. My value for Guided Critical Reflection (which I elaborate in Chapters 2 and 4 led me to use it as the foundation of my course. Thus, I designed this study to examine what happened when I guided preservice teachers to critically reflect on their common sense about ELs. This allowed me to see how, if at all, students used the process of GCR to transform their beginning understandings about ELs. Specifically, my research questions were:

1. What are preservice teachers' common sense about teaching and learning related to ELs, as evidenced in their participation in the BLE 220 course?
2. How does critical guided reflection transform preservice teachers' common sense about ELs?
3. What is my role as an educator in creating opportunity for critical examination and transformation of preservice teachers' understandings?

In this dissertation, I argue that it is both necessary and possible to influence preservice teachers' dispositions and understandings about ELs, even through a state-mandated course. I offer evidence of the ways in which GCR provided opportunities for preservice teachers to examine, reframe, and transform their common sense about ELs. The findings from this study are especially pertinent to Arizona's context and the practice of preparing teachers through the state-mandated SEI endorsement coursework. But, beyond Arizona, findings from this study have a place in the larger scholarly discourse. As colleges of teacher education continue to integrate content related to ELs into their teacher preparation coursework, research like this demonstrates both the reasons to and practices for transforming preservice teachers' common sense about ELs.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE, THEORY, AND FRAME

#### **Overview of Chapter Two**

In order to design and implement a study related to preparing preservice teachers for English learners (ELs), I relied on existing literature, several theoretical frameworks, and relevant concepts. In the first section of this chapter, I begin by presenting the literature on preparing *all* teachers for ELs, across all grade levels and academic disciplines, and I follow this with a brief description of Arizona's curricular approach to teaching ELs. I contrast the two, highlighting inconsistencies between Arizona's Structured English Immersion (SEI) endorsement coursework and the literature at large, to contextualize my argument for thoughtful answers to these discrepancies.

In the second section, I explain theoretical perspectives I rely on for teaching and learning and the ways I perceive reflection about these theories helped me as an educator address the disparities between what the literature recommends and what happens in Arizona. Recognizing theories are "implicit in any human action" (Schratz & Walker, 1995, p. 105), I explain how I used the theoretical perspectives to conceptualize and use reflection in my course.

In the final section, I present the conceptual framework I utilized as I sought to understand my preservice teachers' common sense about ELs and the ways in which I used Guided Critical Reflection (GCR) to encourage students in transforming their initial understandings. To that end, I define key concepts of this study, Guided Critical Reflection, Common Sense, Tensions, and Renewed Sense.

## Literature on Preparing all Teachers for ELs

While acknowledging the importance of the literature on preparing teachers for diversity, Lucas and Grinberg (2008) argue that preparing educators to teach ELs involves ascertaining whether those teachers have specific competencies and dispositions related to *linguistically* diverse learners (August & Hakuta, 1997; de Jong & Harper, 2005; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008). This vision is one in which linguistic diversity is separated out from the overarching ideas of diversity in general, going beyond “the nature of knowledge and skills that teachers must have *in addition to* what they acquire through their regular teacher preparation” (de Jong & Harper, 2005, p. 102).

In order to identify the additional language-related understandings and qualities teachers need, I reviewed the literature concerning the work of preparing teachers for ELs. I have organized these ideas into five categories: 1) experience with language diversity, 2) a positive attitude towards linguistic diversity, 3) knowledge related to ELs, 4) second language acquisition knowledge, and 5) skills for simultaneously promoting content and language learning. Using these five categories, I provide an overview of the shared agreements in the literature (for a visual representation of the shared agreements in the literature, see Appendix A).

Based on my review of the literature and my experience with both teaching ELs and preparing teachers to teach ELs, I perceive these categories to be interrelated, each one affecting the other. I believe that teachers’ dispositions towards and experience with language diversity are iterative, both informing and being informed by teachers’ knowledge about and skills for teaching ELs.

Furthermore, I believe that skills for teaching ELs must be situated atop a foundational understanding of EL-related knowledge and second language acquisition.

### **Experience with Language Diversity**

Literature on preparing teachers for ELs speaks to the importance of teachers experiencing language diversity for themselves (Mora, 2000; Lucas and Grinberg, 2008; Walqui, 2008). Language experiences can include taking a foreign language class, traveling in countries where English is not the primary language, or interacting with ELs in classrooms. Teachers who take foreign language classes or make other efforts to interact with people who speak another language can gain empathy for what ELs go through on a daily basis in schools.

Of all the experiences teachers could have to familiarize themselves with language diversity, the most preferable are field experiences in classrooms with ELs (Walqui, 2008). Field experiences allow for developing teachers to integrate into a classroom with ELs, and an in-service teacher, giving them the chance to observe and work with language learners. If the in-service teacher is knowledgeable concerning EL instruction, developing teachers also have the chance to see successful instructional approaches for ELs in action. Field experiences can serve as a tool for helping preservice teachers reflect on what works or does not work, for ELs in classrooms and why (Walqui, 2008).

### **A Positive Attitude Towards Linguistic Diversity**

The recognition that a teacher's attitude affects the way they teach and what they expect from students has a significant influence on considerations of how to

prepare teachers (Kaplan & Leckie, 2009; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996).

Teachers who choose to pursue a bilingual (BLE) or English-as-a second language (ESL) endorsement typically enter their preparation program with affirming attitudes towards ELs and linguistic diversity. But this is not necessarily the case when preparing *all* teachers for language learners.

Teachers may come from backgrounds where they have had little experience in minority communities. Additionally, the increase of English-only models for teaching ELs means preservice teachers often come to college with little to no personal experiences with bilingual or dual language programs (de Jong, Arias, M. B., & Sanchez, M. T., 2010). These experiences, combined with media-fueled stereotypes about language learners (Lucas, et al., 2008) make it likely that teachers might hold negative attitudes towards ELs (Merino, 2007).

Preparation programs cannot change a teacher's attitude (only teachers themselves can change their attitudes). Nevertheless, it is vital that efforts to prepare teachers for ELs include providing experiences for them to examine and reflect on their attitudes and beliefs about ELs. Pre-service teachers must first identify and then examine their attitudes about their perceived responsibility to teach ELs, bilingualism, the educability of ELs, their willingness to develop as a teacher of ELs, and the socio-political nature of teaching and learning. Ideally, teachers of ELs should be: a) willing to consider the socio-political nature of school and the impact of political dimensions on teaching (Gandara & Mazwell-Jolly, 2000; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008), b) perceptive of language (non-English languages) as both a cultural resource and a right, as opposed to a problem (Ruiz, 1984), c) able to view ELs'

cultural experiences and linguistic knowledge as funds of knowledge--a resource for both content knowledge and English learning (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992; Mora, 2000), and d) willing to collaborate with others to improve the educational experiences of ELs (Merino, 2007).

Along with experiencing language diversity and having opportunities to examine attitudes and develop positive dispositions about ELs, the work to prepare teachers necessitates effective knowledge about ELs and second language acquisition. These next two categories are the foundation for effectively using skills to teach language and content.

### **Knowledge Related to ELs**

The literature reports that teachers need specific knowledge related to ELs (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Tellez & Waxman, 2005; Walker, Shaffer, & Liams, 2004; Walqui, 2008). I view EL related knowledge as part of the foundation for effectively teaching ELs in classrooms. Without these understandings, any “skills” teachers acquire for teaching ELs may be misused and therefore, ineffective.

### **Knowledge of the connections between language, culture, and identity.**

Language is significant because it is connected to culture and identity. Before teachers can learn “how” to teach ELs, they must first understand the powerful connections between language, culture, and identity (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Merino, 2007; Mora, 2000; Tellez & Waxman, 2005; Walker, et al., 2004). These understandings enable teachers to support students’ English acquisition in ways that value and respect their L1 and home culture. This can prevent misunderstandings about communication and classroom behaviors between teachers and their ELs (de



Jong & Harper, 2005; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008). Teachers who work out of this understanding enable ELs to view themselves as part of the classroom experience, rather than outsiders to it.

**Knowledge of EL students, families, and communities.** Given the powerful connections between language, culture and identity, I support the idea that teachers need an understanding about ELs' backgrounds, prior school experiences, and their proficiencies in both their native language and English (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Lucas, et al., 2008; Merino, 2007; Tellez & Waxman, 2005; Walqui, 2008). Getting to know parents and community members makes it possible to effectively invite parents into the school or extend learning opportunities into the home (Merino, 2007). Being involved with EL families and communities leads teachers away from the misconception that language learners are "blank slates" (Walqui, 2008, p. 107) and offers a backdrop for what ELs can do. These relationships constitute a valuable resource, which enable teachers to co-mediate with families a student's future academic and social goals (Mora, 2000).

Teachers who are committed to learning about their students' backgrounds, and their families, and understand how language relates to identity are better able to create a classroom environment that is comfortable for ELs (Peregoy & Boyle, 2008). All students need a comfortable environment for learning; however, specific attention to creating an environment that is comfortable for ELs is essential because as Lucas, et al. (2008) note, "ELs have been found to feel stigmatized, anxious, unwelcomed, and ignored in U.S. classrooms" (p.4). According to Krashen's (1984) affective filter hypothesis, if ELs are anxious or fearful about speaking English, they

have difficulty processing language addressed to them as well as producing language. In other words, when learners have a high affective filter, learning through language about content is minimalized. Not only can anxiety about interaction in English curb ELs' learning, it also can stifle their social interaction with peers in the classroom. Therefore, teachers must also be prepared to support all students in the classroom to uphold a safe and anxiety-free environment (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Lucas, et al., 2008; Pappamihiel, 2002).

Not only is it critical that teachers have knowledge related to ELs, they should also have a working understanding of how children and youth acquire a second language.

### **Knowledge Related to Second Language Acquisition**

Teachers can rely on their knowledge of second language acquisition (SLA) as the basis for future instructional and affective decisions concerning the education of ELs. I perceive teacher knowledge about second language development to include understandings about differences and similarities between L1 and L2 acquisition and the role of L1 in developing L2 competency.

**Differences and similarities between L1 and L2 acquisition.** A beginning understanding of SLA requires an understanding of the similarities and differences between learning a first and second language (Samway & McKeon, 2007). Without SLA knowledge, teachers often assume that learning a second language is the same as learning a first language. While second language development does in some ways mirror first language development, without specific knowledge about SLA, teachers may rely too much on the similarities and “overlook the impact of

differences between L1 and L2 learning on effective oral language and literacy development and academic achievement for ELs” (de Jong & Harper, 2005, p. 103).

Additionally, teachers need to comprehend the complexities of learning a language and content simultaneously. Without such, they may misleadingly rely on their experiences of learning a foreign language *as equal* to an EL’s experience of learning a second language while simultaneously learning content. In order for teachers to understand SLA, they should have a foundational understanding of the main theories of SLA (behaviorist, nativist, and interactionist) and how these theories influence classroom practices (Peregoy and Boyle, 2008).

**The role of L1 in developing L2.** As policy and societal demands place increasing pressure on ELs to acquire English quickly, less attention is spent on the role of L1 in developing an L2 (Mora, 2000). To move teachers beyond a limited focus of English-only, teacher preparation needs to include the importance of using a student’s L1 to develop their abilities in English (such as accessing prior knowledge and making connections to previous learning processes). In addition, EL teachers need to understand the value of using students’ first languages in content area instruction. Knowledge of how to use a student’s L1 (in instructional tasks such as brainstorming, verbal clarification, or writing first drafts) will prepare teachers for increasing that student’s English acquisition by purposefully integrating their native language abilities. Finally, if teachers have an understanding of a student’s first language, they are better prepared to distinguish typical EL developmental errors in oral and written English production from errors that may be due to

overgeneralization of first language rules (de Jong & Harper, 2005; Lightbrown & Spada, 2006).

When teachers have an understanding of second language acquisition, combined with knowledge about their students on a personal level, they have a solid foundation for effectively using strategies for teaching ELs. Without this foundation, teachers may assume that “just good teaching” is sufficient to meet ELs’ needs. However, overlooking the linguistic and cultural needs of ELs renders “good teaching” ineffective (de Jong & Harper, 2005).

### **Skills for Simultaneously Promoting Content and Language Learning**

Teachers must develop skills for integrating content and language instruction. As such, teachers of ELs must be able to promote language development and content knowledge at the same time. To do so, teachers must first consider the language demands in a particular discipline area, as well as the possibilities for developing language in the content areas (de Jong & Harper, 2005; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008, Merino, 2007; Tellez and Waxman, 2005). They also need to know how to explicitly (through mini lessons) and implicitly (through natural communication in the lesson) draw attention to language features and specialized vocabulary used within the discipline.

Along with recognizing the language demands in the content areas, there are certain pedagogical practices (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008; Gandara & Maxwell-Jolly, 2006; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008) that are helpful for designing and implementing lessons that integrate content and language. These include teachers making connections between features of academic language and students’ L1 (Lucas &

Grinberg, 2008; Walqui, 2008) and providing additional resources for students to access content information about topics being studied (such as L1 texts or books, visuals, multimedia, etc) (Echevarria, et al, 2008). Well-prepared teachers also know how to use interaction to promote ELs academic and conversational abilities (Echevarria, et al., 2008; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Lucas, et al., 2008; Walqui, 2006) and create language-rich lessons in which ELs have the opportunity to read, write, speak, and listen to and for real purposes and real audiences, beyond the teacher as an assessor of knowledge and ability (Echevarria, et al., 2008; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008).

As discussed in Chapter 1, while the literature identifies dispositions, experiences, knowledge, and skills that all teachers need in order to teach ELs, in Arizona, preservice teachers are being prepared to teach ELs through a mandated curriculum that is largely disconnected from the literature. In the next section I offer a quick review of the state mandated curriculum and the ways it falls short of literature's recommendations.

### **Preparing Teachers for ELs in Arizona**

Based on Arizona Board Rule R7-2-613 (2006), all preservice teachers are required to obtain an SEI endorsement. Under this rule, all institutions of higher learning (such as ASU) offering teacher-certification coursework are required to insert six credit hours (equal to two courses) of SEI coursework into their programs. Without these additional two courses, preservice teachers cannot obtain an institutional recommendation from the university and thus, are ineligible to receive a teaching certificate.

The law requires all teachers to complete SEI coursework, and ADE decided that SEI courses offered to preservice teachers include the following categories: EL proficiency standards, data analysis and application, formal and informal assessment, foundations of SEI, SEI strategies, and Parent/home/school scaffolding (ADE, 2009). Along with outlining the categories which must be included in the coursework, ADE also set hour requirements for each category. The categories of the state curriculum objectives and the minimum hours attached to each objective are listed in Table 1. In addition to the minimum number of hours for each category, there are also 21 "flex" hours where instructors can selectively allocate additional time to any of the six curricular areas. ADE recommends that instructors allocate the majority of flex hours to SEI strategies.

Table 1

*Curricular Frameworks for the two SEI Endorsement courses: Content Objectives and Hours*

Course #1: Provisional SEI Endorsement Coursework		Course #2: Full SEI Endorsement Coursework	
<u>Content Objective</u>	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Content Objective</u>	<u>Hours</u>
EL Proficiency Standards	3 hours	EL Proficiency Standards	1 hour
		Data Analysis and Application	3 hours
Formal and Informal Assessment	3 hours	Formal and Informal Assessment	3 hours
Foundations of SEI	3 hours	Foundations of SEI	1 hour
SEI Strategies	24 hours	SEI Strategies	25 hours
		Parent/Home/School Scaffolding	3 hours
<i>Flex hours*</i>	12 hours	<i>Flex hours*</i>	9 hours

\*ADE recommends that Flex Hours focus on the SEI Strategies content objective

The SEI coursework does not align with the literature on preparing teachers for ELs in five main ways:

- 1) The SEI curriculum ignores any discussion about teachers' dispositions towards ELs.
- 2) It does not address whether teachers have past experiences with ELs.
- 3) There is no form of accountability or responsibility for completing the SEI coursework. That is, teachers do not have to "experience"

teaching ELs and ADE does not require any knowledge outcome or performance assessment from teachers completing the coursework. Teachers are only required to attend the class for the required hours.

- 4) The state curriculum emphasizes skills (strategies) for teaching ELs over foundational knowledge about linguistic and cultural diversity. Out of the 90 hours of curriculum, 70 are devoted to strategies; 3 to foundational knowledge.
- 5) The SEI coursework promotes English-only approaches for teaching ELs, ignoring the possibilities for supporting ELs oral and written language development through the use of their L1.

As a teacher educator preparing teachers for ELs, these disparities were a problem for me. In Chapter 4, I will explain in detail my reflective work designing my course. For now, I briefly discuss theories related to teaching and learning, and the way these led my use reflection in my course.

### **Theories on Teaching and Learning**

Once I had a sense of the areas of disconnect between the literature and the state mandated courses, I had to decide on the ways to infuse aspects of the literature that were lacking in the state curriculum into my SEI course. I relied on theories related to teaching and learning that I have learned in my studies for approaching the disconnects. I define learning and teaching through sociocultural (Vygotsky, 1962; 1978) and critical perspectives (Freire, 1974; 1998; Gramsci, 1971; Wink, 1997), following the notions that teaching and learning



- must begin with who students are and what they know,
- are political in nature and embedded in social and historical contexts, and
- are dialectical and occurs through social interactions.

In envisioning my SEI course, I knew that learning needed to start with the knowledge and experiences students brought to the course. Also, the fact that this course was mandated and created by the state was an explicit example of how learning is political in nature. Knowing that teaching and learning are embedded in social and historical contexts, it was important for me to show my preservice teachers how programs for ELs have changed over time. I also wanted them to examine the ways in which their educational history would impact their future practices as teachers. This demonstrates how a teacher's thoughts related to teaching and learning can support or counter ideas prevalent in society. Finally, my belief that teaching and learning are dialectical (Ayers, 2001; Bullough & Gitlin, 1995; Friere, 1974; 1998; Palmer, 1998) and should occur through interactions with people, objects, and events that are both similar and different from our own (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Gay, 1993, 2002), made it necessary for me to offer students opportunities to interact with class content through a variety of sources that both confirmed and challenged the state English-only model. All of these perspectives on teaching and learning led me to make reflection foundational to my state-mandated SEI course.

### **What Do I Mean by “Reflection”?**

I operate from a social-reconstructivist approach (Zeichner, 1994a) and define reflection as a mediating tool for preservice and in-service teacher learning (Dewey, 1933; Jay & Johnson, 2002). Reflection should support an inward focus for

teachers to acknowledge and examine their ideas and practices and an outward focus on the social and historical conditions that shape those understandings and actions. Reflection is both an individual and social process (Jay & Johnson, 2002). Through social practices of reflection, teachers can think through their own understandings and the ways their ideas are supported or challenged by the ideas of others. In this way, reflection can be a means to learning about oneself and learning from others. Reflection in social contexts has the potential to support teachers in what may be an unfamiliar process, and enables them to take up attitudes of reflection: openmindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness (Dewey, 1933; Rodgers, 2002). Reflective teachers are *openminded* to ideas that are different from their own. They are *responsible* to critically examine how their ideas and actions impact others and in what ways. They *wholeheartedly* seek out opportunities to learn new things and challenge their assumptions.

Reflection is both logical as well as intuitive and emotional (Dewey, 1933). When reflecting, teachers “utilize both heads and hearts, our reasoning capacities and our emotional capacities” (Zeichner & Liston, 1996, p. 12) to make sense of what they know and examine the experiences behind their understandings. Reflection provides opportunities for teachers to transform their understandings, which in turn, reconstructs social environments. In this sense, I also consider reflection to be political. Critical examination of understandings and practices through reflection, have the potential to support more human and just societies (Kemmis, 1985).

## Conceptual Framework

To understand and discuss the role of reflection in transforming preservice teachers' understandings about ELs, I draw on four concepts, Guided Critical Reflection, Common Sense, Tensions, and Renewed Sense. It is important to note that my understanding of these concepts do not directly reflect others' theories, but are instead a combination of theories I derived from the literature and my experiences as a teacher-researcher. Accordingly, I do not solely rely on an existing theoretical concept for this dissertation, but have developed my own conceptual understanding of the role of reflection in transforming preservice teachers understandings, as informed by my data. The four main concepts in this study and their definitions are:

- Guided Critical Reflection (GCR) is both a process and a tool for transforming common sense to renewed sense. GCR is made up of three non-linear and interrelated dimensions: Seeing, Learning, and Acting.
- Common Sense is made up of one's uncritically examined, practical judgments about and conceptions of the world stemming from social and cultural experiences;
- Tension is the act of being mentally or emotionally stretched or strained (dictionary.com). Tensions arise when one's common sense ideas are challenged by ideas and experiences lying outside those understandings. I argue that within the GCR process, tensions provide opportunities for transformation; and

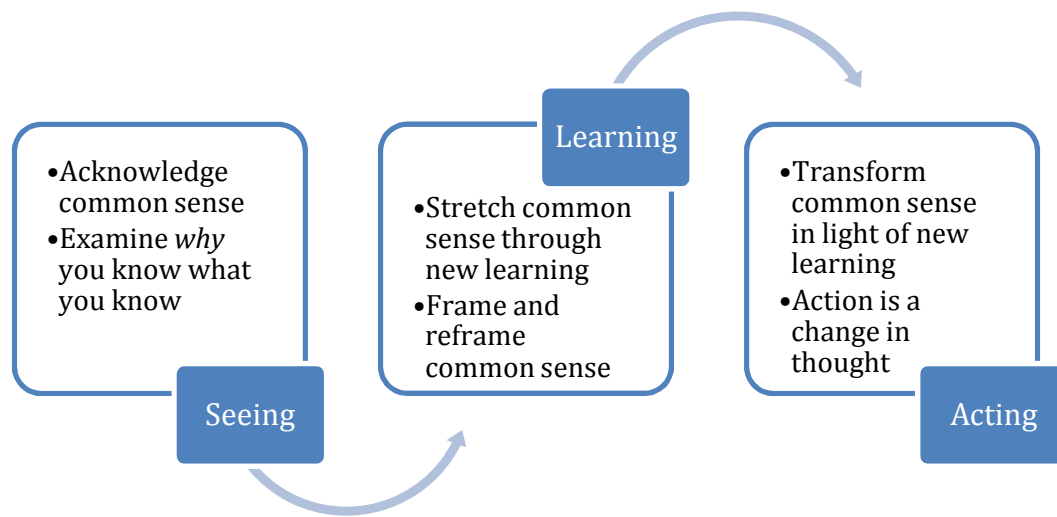
- Renewed Sense is a common-sense understanding, as defined above, that is changed in some way through examination and reflection.

### **Guided Critical Reflection**

While others have written about critical reflection (Gore & Zeichner, 1991; Smyth, 1989; Van Manen, 1995; Zeichner & Liston, 1996), for the purposes of this study, I define the reflection process as *Guided* Critical Reflection. I do this to emphasize my role as a teacher in guiding students to reflect on and transform their common sense about ELs. Because reflection was foundational to the course, students were not necessarily reflecting by choice. I was guiding them to do so. However, based on ideas from Vygotsky (1978), I know that what students can do with a more capable peer one day, they will eventually be able to do on their own. I believed students' reflective work in the course, with my guidance, would better enable them to continue to reflect on their own, in the future.

In my course, GCR included three dimensions: seeing, learning, and acting. I am not the first to describe reflection in dimensions (Jay & Johnson, 2002), but these dimensions are specific to my use of reflection as a mediating tool for learning in BLE 220. Because students in my course were not reflecting on their practices, but instead on their ideas, GCR emphasized reflection as starting with preservice teachers' common sense about ELs. I envisioned the end of GCR, typically described as "action," as a change in thought, rather than a change in practice. Figure 1 illustrates the dimensions of GCR, and its cyclical nature. The three dimensions of GCR are not linear or mutually exclusive; instead they are intertwined

to create a composite cycle.



*Figure 1.* The dimensions of Guided Critical Reflection. The three dimensions of GCR are ‘seeing’, ‘learning’, and ‘acting’. The dimensions are not linear or mutually exclusive, instead, they are intertwined to create a composite cycle. Once the process of GCR ends for one idea, that idea can then be taken up again, through the process of GCR, as experiences and new learning challenge that understanding. In this way, although there are three dimensions to GCR, the process is cyclical and ongoing.

In conceptualizing the ‘seeing’ dimension, I used Lortie’s (1975) notion of apprenticeship of observation, inviting preservice teacher to acknowledge the common sense they had about teaching and learning related to ELs. Seeing enables a preservice teacher to recognize what they know and to consider *why* they know it (i.e. their personal historical, ideological, and political perspectives). Although I valued preservice teachers’ common sense as the starting point for further learning, I did not celebrate common sense at its face value, but helped students critically interrogate their common sense ideas about ELs, first and second language acquisition, and the role of L1 in L2 learning. Thus, revealing how experiences are embedded with contradictions, across people, space, and time (Mayo, 1999).

In the ‘Learning’ dimension, preservice teachers give active, careful consideration to their understandings by framing and reframing their ideas in light of new learning. After critically examining what they know and why they know it, preservice teachers can stretch their understandings to entertain ideas that lie outside of what they know. I designed the course to offer preservice teachers multiple frames through which to consider who ELs are, and what rights ELs are entitled to in education. These frames helped preservice teachers stretch their common sense to consider new ideas. These “stretching experiences” or tensions represent the space between current and new understandings. The tensions that reside in this mental or emotional stretch are the opportunities for possible transformation of ideas.

‘Acting’ is the dimension of GCR where preservice teachers transform their common sense about teaching and learning related to ELs. Unlike prevalent ideas about the outcomes of reflection, the action in GCR is not a change in practice (Dewey, 1933; Schön, 1983). I conceptualized the action dimension of GCR as a change in thought. Once preservice teachers transform their common sense in some way to reflect new learning, their ‘renewed sense’ opens possibilities for additional cycles of reflection. As new experiences or situations challenge a renewed sense, the cycle of reflection can begin again. In this way, the cycle of reflection is ongoing.

In summary, these three dimensions, seeing, learning, and acting make up Guided Critical Reflection. From my perspective, GCR is the process of reflection in BLE 220 wherein preservice teachers have opportunities to transform their common sense about ELs. GCR is a complicated, non-linear, iterative process and

because it starts with what students know, it is individualized to each person in the process.

### **Common Sense**

As stated above, GCR starts with preservice teachers acknowledging and examining their common sense related to ELs. To explain the concept of ‘common sense,’ I draw on Gramsci’s (1971) work. Gramsci described common sense as the uncritically examined ideas we passively assume from our environments; the ideas we typically share with a group of people of the same culture, time, and society (Borg & Mayo, 2002). In this way, common sense is our conception of the world that stems from our social and cultural experiences.

Gramsci was careful not to ascribe value to differing common sense understandings, noting that common sense in and of itself is neither good nor bad. It is what we know, and because common sense stems from experiences, it is different across time, cultures, and societies. Although it might be perceived at times crude or contradictory, common sense is necessary. It provides the unspoken norms and guidelines of our cultures and our communities, allowing us to function safely in our shared space with others. As we act on our common sense, our thoughts-in-practice shape our world. Problems with common sense arise when we share experiences with others whose common sense differs from our own.

This conceptualization of common sense supported me in negotiating the tensions in preparing mainstream teachers for their future work with ELs. Preservice teachers entered BLE 220 with a common sense about ELs stemming from their experiences as English proficient students and their experiences in

education in a time of restrictive language policies. While it would be easy for a teacher educator to judge or criticize students' common sense, Gramsci cautioned against this. Even though, at times, students' common sense about ELs was crude or conservative, such as when students mis-define ELs as illegal immigrants, the reality is that these common sense understandings stemmed from socially and historically shared ideas. It was my challenge to help preservice teachers negotiate their common sense when it differed from what literature recommends as the best practices for understanding, valuing, and teaching ELs.

Gramsci's common sense is a concept he developed for critical analysis of change. It is this possibility for change that I value, and the reason I rely on preservice teachers' common sense about ELs as the foundation for GCR. We know that common sense is malleable because as our environments change (historically, socially, culturally) our common sense changes. Herein lies the possibility for change: if common sense is malleable, teacher educators can find ways to transform it. To that end, GCR is a way for preservice teachers to critically examine their passively absorbed understandings and consider ways to change their common sense.

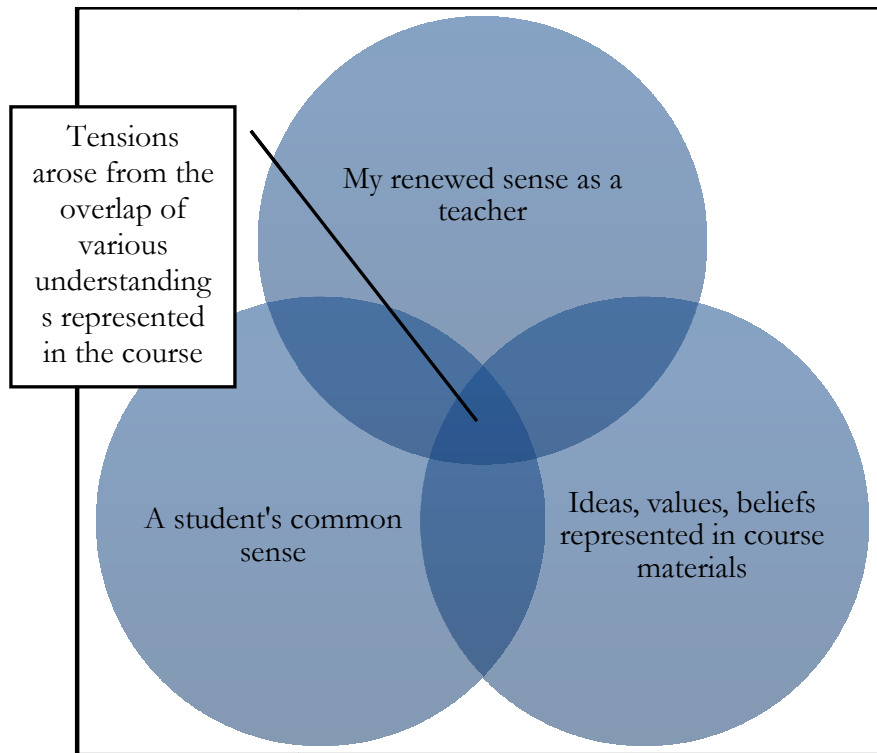
### **Tensions**

Gramsci discussed that common sense was valuable because it held the starting point for development or change of thought. He theorized changes to common sense come from cultural contact with others who hold differing understandings. While he does not describe what actually happens during this cultural contact, from my experience as a teacher educator, I believe when preservice



teachers are exposed to ideas, beliefs, and values that lie outside their common sense, and encouraged to reframe their common sense through another's perspective, they are stretched emotionally and mentally.

Tensions that reside in the mental or emotional stretch are the opportunities for possible transformation of ideas. Figure 2 illustrates that in GCR, tensions were born out of the overlapping and interconnected relationships between preservice teachers' common sense, the renewed sense I brought to the course, and the ideas, values, beliefs represented in the course materials. During this overlap, as differing views were expressed, I encouraged preservice teachers to reframe their common sense in light of new ideas.



*Figure 2.* Spaces of tension in the GCR process lay within the overlap of understandings students brought to the course, the understandings I as the teacher brought to the course, and the understandings about ELs inherent in course materials. As students encountered ideas that were outside of what they knew, I encouraged them to stretch their thinking. Areas of tension provided opportunities for students to transform their common sense.

While I do not assert that *all* learning stems from tensions, I do believe that in the process of GCR as used my course, tensions did provide the opportunities for learning and for the transformation of preservice teachers' common sense about ELs.

### **Renewed Sense**

In order to distinguish between preservice teacher's common sense (their uncritically examined ideas) and their transformed understandings, I use the term 'renewed sense.' Renewed sense is not a concept that I have found in the literature, or in another theory, it is a concept that I define as common sense that has been

examined. It is an understanding that is held, no longer out of passivity, but out of the examination of ideas. In relation to GCR, renewed sense encompasses any change a preservice teacher makes to their original common sense, whether during the seeing, learning, or acting dimension. While I hope that preservice teachers use course learning to transform their common sense, incorporating ideas from the course is not a prerequisite for 'renewed sense.' The mere act of examining one's common sense, of asking oneself, "why do I know that?" one transforms their common sense.

Finally, although renewed sense stems from a critical examination of our common sense, it too may eventually become passive, as one accepts this changed sense as the understanding that one will now act on. To this end, I do not believe that renewed sense is better or worse than common sense, and do not use terms hierarchically. However, what I do believe to hold value is process of critical reflection. As my preservice teachers enter K-12 classrooms and begin work with ELs, I hope they will continue to transform the 'renewed sense' they left the course with, continuing to engage in the process of reflection, as they have experiences that challenge or confirm their understandings.

### **Tying it All Together**

To summarize, GCR was the process of reflection, encompassing three dimensions, seeing, learning, and acting, that I guided students through. GCR started with preservice teachers' common sense. I contend that possibilities for transforming common sense lie in spaces of tension, moments where our common sense is challenged by an idea or understanding that lies outside of what "makes

sense” to us. Within this study, I assert that tensions emerged in the overlapping common sense understandings represented in the course. By this, I mean that my own common sense, the common sense that students brought to the course, and the ideas represented within course materials were all factors creating tension within the course. Through GCR, the critical examination of common sense in light of new learning, preservice teachers could transform their initial understandings into a renewed sense about ELs.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS AND DESIGN

#### **Overview of Chapter Three**

In this chapter, I describe the design and methods of my practitioner inquiry study. According to Cochran-Smith and Donnell (2006), the term *practitioner inquiry* describes varied types of educational research in which “the practitioner is the researcher, the professional context is the research site, and practice itself is the focus of the study” (p. 503). I align my research within this work, as a study that was embedded in the local context of my practice.

One of the tenants of practitioner inquiry is the belief that knowledge can and should come from the inside-out (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; 1999; 2009). This means that the knowers with regard to educational theory and practice are not only *outside* researchers, but include the practitioners *in* the classroom; practitioner inquiry recognizes teachers as having strategic and unique perspectives on the contexts of study and also on the practice itself. In this way, practitioner inquiry flips the traditional outsider-in approach, which uses practitioners as subjects of study or at best, informants. Instead, practitioners themselves also take on researcher roles. This dual responsibility allows practitioners to use their intimate knowledge of their setting and actions to inform their research, as well as for their research to inform their practice.

This proximity to the context, both physically and practically, establishes confidence that those who work in classrooms have the power to generate Knowledge (with a capital K) about teaching, learning, and classrooms (Cochran-

Smith & Donnel, 2006; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Because of the unique and valuable perspectives practitioner researchers bring, this knowledge is worth knowing. Topics for study typically emerge from tensions between what a practitioner expects and what actually happens in the classroom. Practitioner inquiry, “takes its cues – its questions, puzzles, and problems from the perceptions of practitioners within particular, local practice contexts” (Argyris & Schön, 1991, p. 86). It is these perceptions, often created in the discrepancies between theory and practice, which fuel practitioner inquiry studies. When the practitioner is the researcher and the site of study is one’s own classroom context, the merging roles of practitioner and researcher allow for the generation of new kinds of knowledge and original research (Cochran-Smith & Donnell, 2006; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; 1999; 2009). Teachers who research their own contexts create and value research in ways that are not possible for researchers outside of the classroom contexts.

As Cochran-Smith and Donnell (2006) summarize,

the assumption is that the boundaries between teaching and inquiry *must* blur so that practitioners have opportunities to construct their own questions, interrogate their own assumptions and biographies, gather data of many sorts, develop courses of action that are valid in local contexts and communities, and continuously reevaluate whether a particular solution or interpretation is working and find another if it is not. (p. 510, emphasis added)

The use of practitioner inquiry, and the blurring of boundaries between teaching and researching, is one way to keep up with the ever-changing contexts of education (Cochran-Smith & Donnell, 2006; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; 2009).

Practitioner inquiry allowed me to meet the goals of my research – to transform both my practice as an educator and offer opportunities to my students to

transform their understandings about English learners (ELs). Additionally, I chose practitioner inquiry because it is concurrent with my own set of beliefs and goals about learning, research, and preparing teachers for ELs. Since I recognize learning sometimes stemming from tensions between what we expect to happen and what actually does happen, practitioner inquiry honored the ways in which I came to understand puzzles in my particular context. Finally, I assert that preparing teachers for ELs should include reflective work; practitioner inquiry allowed me to reflect on my work as a teacher educator, just as I asked my students to reflect on their common sense related to ELs.

While there are many variants of practitioner inquiry, I designed this study to be a teacher-educator action research study emphasizing components of self-study. Through this design, I sought to answer three questions:

1. What are preservice teachers' common sense regarding teaching and learning related to ELs, as evidenced in their participation in the course BLE 220?
2. How does GCR transform preservice teachers' common sense about ELs?
3. What is my role as an educator in creating opportunity for critical examination and transformation of preservice teachers' understandings?

To answer these questions, I collected and analyzed data from BLE 220:

Foundations of Structured English Immersion (SEI) course, a class I taught during the fall 2010 semester. The course met once a week for 17 weeks. Students in the

class were undergraduates taking prerequisite courses required for admittance into a teacher preparation program at Arizona State University.

I have structured this chapter in five main sections. In the first, I share the variants of practitioner inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Donnell, 2006) I employed: teacher research, self-study, and action research. In the second section, I briefly describe the context of the study (site and participants), since I share further details about the course, students, and myself in Chapter 4. In the third section, I discuss my data sources and collection procedures. In the fourth, I present methods of data analysis and describe the ways I present findings in Chapters 4 and 5. In the last, I address notions of trustworthiness.

### **Practitioner Inquiry**

In order to address my research questions, I combined aspects of teacher research, self-study, and action research to create the practitioner inquiry method for this study. Herr and Anderson (2005) assert that although definitions of practitioner inquiry should remain eclectic in order to envelope the variants included under this genre, researchers must make their definition of practitioner inquiry explicit in their work (p. 5). To that end, I present a clear definition of the chosen variants of practitioner inquiry I used and the ways each supports the study.

### **Teacher Research**

Leading proponents of the field, Cochran-Smith and Lytle describe teacher research as a way to study one's own practice for the chief purpose of contributing to the knowledge of teaching, school reform, and teacher learning. They claim that teacher research emphasizes an "inside-out" approach to education research (1993;



1999; 2009). Teacher research is set apart from traditional education research because, as Hubbard and Power (2003) describe, teachers

bring to our work an important element that outside researchers lack- a sense of place, a sense of history in the schools in which we work...we know our schools, our students, our colleagues, and our learning agendas. Our research is grounded in this rich resource base (p. xiv).

Teacher researchers are K-12 teachers, preservice teachers, and teacher educators who study their own classroom practices in hopes of “developing alternative ways to understand, assess, and improve teaching and learning” (Cochran-Smith & Donnell, 2006, p. 505). Teacher research follows a systematic, reflective approach and sometimes involves work for social justice.

I incorporated aspects of teacher research in my study because I wanted to examine my own practice and my own classroom. My position as a teacher educator allowed me to study what was intended compared to what actually occurred in my state-mandated SEI course. In doing so, I identified with Ball (2000) who advocates that teachers take up areas of inquiry that are rooted in their educational practices, and examine ways to better their practice while contributing to scholarly discourse (p. 386).

My areas of inquiry grew out of the recent Arizona mandate that all preservice teachers must take two courses to receive their SEI endorsement in order to graduate with an institutional recommendation and be eligible for a teaching certification. My BLE 220: Foundations of SEI course provided the best context for this inquiry. I designed my course to emphasize reflection as both a process and tool for surfacing preservice teachers’ common sense about ELs, guiding students to

reexamine what they knew in light of new learning, and giving them opportunities to transform their understandings.

### **Self-Study**

Drawing from concepts of reflection (Schön, 1983), self-study involves the close examination of one's practice (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). It is founded on the notion that "it is never possible to divorce the self from either the research process or from educational practice" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006, p. 506) and focuses on understanding oneself, rather than only focusing on outcomes or actions in an educational setting. Because of this self-focus, there is a great emphasis on narrative and self-reflective methods (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Loughran, 2007; Zeichner; 2007). Although not limited to the educational field, a majority of self-study researchers are teacher educators working in higher education settings, who closely examine their own assumptions, biases, and practices as a means for promoting reflective thinking and strengthening teacher preparation (Dinkelman, 2003).

I incorporated self-study methods because I believe it is impossible to separate myself from the research or my practice as a teacher. Additionally, as someone who values reflection, I knew it was imperative for me to examine my own practices, assumptions, and biases about preparing preservice teachers for ELs, especially as I asked my students to examine their understandings about ELs. Elements of self-study were interwoven into my research as I reflected on and strengthened my own practice, while simultaneously examining the actions of students in the course setting.

## Action Research

Action research is defined by Herr and Anderson (2005) as,

inquiry that is done *by* or *with* insiders to an organization or community, but never *to* or *on* them...Action research is oriented to some action or cycle of actions that organizational or community members have taken, are taking, or wish to take to address a particular problematic situation. The idea is that changes occur either within the setting and/or within the researchers themselves. (p. 3-4)

Educational action research can broadly be defined as research done in collaboration between university researchers and teachers, or by a teacher on his/her own, to enact some kind of educational change (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Corey, 1953; Elliot, 1991; Herr & Anderson, 2005; Noffke, 1997). It is a systematic, reflective process involving examination of a specific issue in schools or classrooms. It entails the work of identifying an educational issue of concern, collecting data, analyzing data, and taking action. Action research can produce various types of action. It might take the form of one teacher altering his/her classroom practices, or a school-wide curriculum change, or changes to common school practices which impact a larger social issue. Although some action research is conceptualized as emancipatory and critical (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Zeichner & Nofke, 2001), not all action research studies are intended to enhance social justice or critique the status quo. Finally, while traditional educational research is concerned with findings that are broadly applicable to educational settings, the goal of action research is to make changes to the context of the study (Tomal, 2003).

Action researchers understand that practitioner inquiry should constitute a spiral of action cycles aimed at addressing particular problematic situations (Herr & Anderson, 2005). To that end, I had several research goals. I wanted to enact

change within the setting of the research (my course), within myself as the researcher practitioner, and within the larger context (teacher preparation for ELs in Arizona).

For my study, I saw action research as the process through which I systematically undertook a cyclical process of: plan-act-observe-reflect (Kemmis, 1985). I developed a plan to improve what was already happening: Arizona is requiring preservice teachers become prepared to teach ELs through state-mandated SEI courses that neglect content related to teachers' dispositions towards ELs. I acted to implement that plan with hopes I could influence students' dispositions, designing my SEI course to utilize GCR as both the process and tool for developing students' understandings related to ELs. I observed the effects of this action in the context of the course; using qualitative, ethnographic, and practitioner research methods to collect data. I reflected on these effects as the basis for further planning and action by analyzing the data. This helped me learn preservice teachers' common sense regarding ELs and better understand the role of GCR in transforming those notions.

My form of practitioner inquiry, which includes elements of teacher educator, self-study, and action research methods, allowed me to closely study a setting in which I am personally vested. It also allowed me to study myself as a teacher. As such, I was not aiming to discover a universal (T)ruth, but to gain an understanding of the actors and actions in my particular context, including myself and my actions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). However, I do believe that although the findings were generated from a single classroom, the knowledge is useful and of interest to a larger context of teacher educators and practitioner researchers.

Knowledge from this study is applicable to both my future efforts as a teacher and analogous to other outside settings (teacher preparation programs, courses on preparing teachers for ELs and policies related to preparing teachers for ELs).

### **Context**

My fall 2010 section of BLE 220: Foundations of SEI was the context for this research. I purposefully selected (Patton, 1990) this site for a few reasons. First, I had taught the course before. Those experiences afforded me familiarity with the content and the challenges of preparing all teachers for ELs through a required course. In addition, using my own class as the site for research allowed me ultimate access to course design and implementation along with the freedom to modify aspects of the course and research in action. As a practitioner inquirer, I was able to keep a pulse on my class as a whole, and the individual preservice teachers in the course. Although it was not without obstacles, my role as teacher researcher allowed me opportunities and insights that I would not have had access to if I was researching someone else's course.

### **Setting**

Our class met in the education building, on Tuesday nights from 4:40-7:30pm, during the fall 2010 semester. The university had recently remodeled the building; our classroom had new carpet and paint as well as updated technology. It included white boards that covered the front wall, a drop-down screen for the Proxima® attached to the ceiling, and a computer. Rectangular two by four foot tables and plastic chairs provided workspaces for students. Although the tables were in rows, students and I always rearranged them into clusters, creating small groups

for collaborative learning. It was important to me that students sit facing one another, although many also turned their bodies to view the power point on the screen at the front of the room.

BLE 220: Foundations of SEI was one of two state-mandated classes that all preservice teachers were required to take as part of their teacher education coursework. As I will discuss further in Chapter 4, the Arizona Department of Education created the curricular framework for the course. There were certain content topics that I was required to address in the class, but I did have creative license for specific course learning experiences and materials. Throughout the course, I used reflective practices to guide students to surface, examine, and transform their common sense about ELs. These reflective efforts were a significant change I made to the course, from past semesters of teaching it.

Since the course was a 200 level class, students typically took it during their freshmen and sophomore years, prior to their core educational coursework. For most students, it was their first course related to education and their first related to ELs. The course was designated as a ‘methods’ course and as such, the enrollment was capped at 30 students. This offered our class a more intimate, interactive setting than the other large, ‘lecture’ styles classes many of my students took that semester.

### **Participants**

The participants in this study were the preservice teaches enrolled in the class and myself, the teacher researcher. I received permission for my study from the Institutional Review Board at our university and on the first night of class, I invited all preservice teachers in my course to participate (See Appendix B for IRB approval

letter). I explained that I was hoping to use the course and our work together to formally develop my knowledge about preparing teachers for ELs. I described that because I was studying both my roles as a teacher and their understandings about ELs, I wanted to audio-record each class session with my digital audio recorder, have an outsider take observation notes from the back of the room, and make copies of their work (if students were willing). I explained to students they were not required to participate and that their decision to participate in the study, or not, would in no way affect their grade in the course. I told them that although I would be writing up and presenting findings from this study I would not identify them by name, but would use pseudonyms for all student participants. Out of the 24 students enrolled in the class, 22 signed consent forms to participate.

**Preservice teachers.** My students were undergraduates, mostly sophomores and juniors, taking prerequisite courses for the two-year teacher preparation program typically offered to students during their junior and senior years. Twenty participants designated themselves as education majors. Two others took the course because they thought they might want to pursue a teacher preparation program, but had yet to designate themselves as education majors at the time of the course. Of the 20 education majors who were in the class, students' future teaching interests ranged across elementary, secondary, special education, and fine arts. Almost all the students were monolingual English speakers. There were three exceptions; one student spoke Spanish as his native language and he learned English as a second language when he started kindergarten. Another spoke English as a first language and Lebanese as a second. The final student spoke English as a first language and

knew American Sign Language. Table 2 presents an overview of participant demographics.

Table 2

*Participant Demographics*

Gender		Count	%
	Female	16	73%
	Male	6	27%
	total	22	100%
Content Area Breakdown			
	Freshman	1	5%
	Sophomore	11	50%
	Junior	7	31%
	Senior	3	14%
	total	22	100%
	Elementary Education	6	27%
	Special Education	2	9%
	Fine Art	2	9%
	Secondary Math	3	14%
	Secondary Science	1	5%
	Secondary English	2	9%
	Secondary History	4	18%
	Non-education Majors	2	9%
	total	22	100%
Language Use			
	Monolingual English Speaker	19	85%
	Bilingual English/Lebanese	1	5%
	Bilingual Spanish/English	1	5%
	Bilingual English/ Sign Language	1	5%
	total	22	100%
Ethnicity			
	White	17	77%
	African American	2	9%
	Hispanic	2	9%
	Other	1	5%
	total	22	100%
K-12 Experience with ELs			
	Limited Exposure	3	14%
	Peripheral Exposure	16	72%
	Personal Experience	3	14%
	total	22	100%



Although BLE 220 was many students' first education-related course, they had all been participant-observers in their own educational experiences (Lortie, 1975), having grown up and experienced education all over the United States. Participants brought ideas to the course about teaching and learning rooted in their previous educational experiences. To better understand the previous experiences participants had with ELs, as part of the Midterm Self-Reflection, I asked each student to write a mini-educational autobiography (Florio-Ruane, 1994), in response to the following prompt,

Explain your personal educational experience, where you went to school K-12 (state, urban, rural, large school, small school, etc) and what you remember about ELs from your educational experiences (did you have any ELs in your class, were you aware of EL programs, etc). (Midterm, October 19, 2010)

After reading and analyzing the students' responses to this question, three themes emerged concerning preservice teachers prior experience with ELs, 1) students with limited exposure to ELs, 2) students with a peripheral exposure to ELs, and 3) students with a personal experience to ELs during their the K-12 education. I include this information as part of my demographic synthesis of students because it gave me an understanding of students' common sense. This enabled me to gear my instruction to their previous educational experiences. I explain the thinking behind my categorizations below.

***Limited exposure to ELs.*** The four students I categorized as having a limited exposure to ELs made statements like, "I didn't have any experiences with ELs until this class" (Gail, Midterm, October 19, 2010). These students made comments indicating how their English proficiency isolated them from language

learners, such as one student who wrote, “All of my classes were with other English speaking students, so I never saw any ELs being pulled out of class or having an aid come in or anything like that” (Ali, Midterm, October 19, 2010). These students reported not knowing how ELs were taught or treated in classrooms, or having no awareness of what sorts of programs existed for language development. One student wrote, “to be honest, I do not remember any encounters with EL students in my elementary school or middle school and do not know how efficient the EL programs were” (Genna, Midterm, October 19, 2010).

*Peripheral exposure to ELs.* Most students reported having peripheral exposure to ELs. This group of 16 students hinted they were aware of ELs, but still knew very little about them, such as the student who wrote, “I didn’t really notice ELs that much, but I was aware of their existence” (Charlie, Midterm, October 19, 2010). These students described how their schools separated ELs from English proficient students, or integrated ELs into mainstream classrooms but then pulled ELs out for language help. In both cases, students described that because programs for ELs did not relate to their personal experiences they did not think much about it:

I knew we had it (a program for ELs) only because I knew students that left our class for a while to learn English, but other than that, I personally didn't pay close attention or ask questions, because it didn't have anything to do with me. (Klara, Midterm, October 19, 2010)

Unlike students who claimed they “knew nothing” about ELs prior to this class, students with a peripheral exposure knew ELs existed in their schools and that ELs received different help or instruction, but beyond that, reported they did not pay much attention to language learners and knew very little about them.

***Personal connection to ELs.*** The final category were students who had personal connections to ELs. One student in the class was an EL, himself. He learned English as a second language when he started kindergarten. He had a personal connection to ELs because, “from kindergarten through third grade I was placed in bilingual classes, English in the morning, lunch, and then Spanish in the afternoon” (Andre, Midterm, October 19, 2010). His experience as an EL was a filter for all his learning in the course. Other students in this group spoke at length about their personal experiences with ELs and related these personal examples to their understandings about ELs. Below, I share an example from one, to illustrate the ways in which three of the 22 participant-students had a personal connection to ELs.

I remember it as early as kindergarten. My best friend was an EL and was held back a year when she first came to the country because they started school at an earlier age in her home country; but she went on to graduate high school as part of the national honors society. One of my closest friends in middle school was from El Salvador and when she came to America was held back several grades even though it seemed she was mentally where she needed to be. We were in the same class in seventh grade; I was twelve and she was seventeen. In tenth grade, one of my friends moved to the United States for the first time from Portugal. He was lucky enough to have taken English classes at school in Portugal because he was able to understand us and we understood him but he still needed to get use to American culture and language. He was pulled out for ESL and me and two other friends were assigned to be his buddies for the year. If you met him now, you wouldn't know he's been in the states for only four years. Even my boyfriend was an EL and was a lot like my friend from Portugal. (Reily, Midterm, October, 19, 2010)

Knowing my students' educational background experiences helped me to understand their ideas related to ELs and the ways in which their experiences as English proficient students in K-12 classrooms shaped their beginning

understandings regarding teaching and learning related to ELs. This knowledge informed my teaching as I reflectively planned and taught with my students in mind.

**Myself: the teacher, the guide, and the researcher.** As the teacher researcher in this context, I had two jobs, to teach the course and research the phenomenon of preparing *all* teachers for ELs. I am passionate about ELs and preparing teachers for language learners. I have been preparing teachers for ELs for the past nine years. My work as an English as a Second Language (ESL) elementary school teacher taught me to value the use and promotion of students' native languages and cultures. Therefore, I am critical of Arizona's recent English-only model for educating ELs. Additionally, because I was prepared to teach ELs through a two-year ESL endorsement program, I am equally skeptical of Arizona's mandate requiring that all teachers be prepared to teach ELs through only two courses. While I will discuss my history as a teacher educator and my ideas about the mandated SEI coursework further in Chapter 4, here I want to note that I was cognizant of the ways my EL teaching experience and teacher educator experience influenced my teaching role during this study. As a teacher, I had an agenda; I hoped that my ideas and the way I designed the course would positively influence my students' dispositions towards ELs. At the same time, I needed students to feel they could express their ideas freely in class, even when their ideas differed from mine or their peers.

As a teacher guiding students through the process of GCR, I wanted students to be able to be honest about their understandings concerning ELs, and to share their ideas related to learning and course topics. To accomplish this, I worked

hard to earn their trust so that participants knew I was truly interested in their experiences in the class, not to place judgments on their ideas, but to understand their thinking. I encouraged dialogue for and against all ideas. I promoted discussion across a continuum instead of allowing one-sided responses. I modeled the ways we can talk about ideas from multiple perspectives, even if they are not perspectives we personally hold. I worked to create an environment where students were able to argue/present/share their ideas, whether they went with or against ideas presented by myself or others. I wanted my participants to know that I was interested in their common sense, their reflective practices, and any transformation of understandings created throughout course experiences.

As a teacher researcher, I was one of the participants, but because of my position of power, my role was *not equal* to the student participants in the study. I knew that my position might cause students to shy away from participating (or participating honestly) because they feared their comments might affect their course grade. When I introduced the study, I did my best to clearly convey that students' participation would not affect their grade. Although I clearly stated these ideas, it was the trust that formed throughout the time I spent with students that allowed them to believe what I said and to be open and honest with me about their ideas.

### **Data Sources and Collection**

I chose a practitioner inquiry design, which allowed for data collection methods that fit my classroom routines and supported my research questions (Hubbard & Power, 1993). I used a variety of data collection methods in order to cast a wide net and prove the worth of assertions across multiple kinds of data

(Erickson, 1986; M.L. Smith, personal communication, March 18, 2009). Most of these methods of data collection took place simultaneously and were ongoing throughout the semester, with the exception of course evaluations, which took place at the semester's end.

## **Observations**

I collected three types of observations throughout this study:

- My Observation Notes
- Digital Audio Recordings
- Outside-Observer Notes

**My observation notes.** I documented my observations each week in a spiral-bound notebook. My entries were dated and included seating arrangements for each week. I used my notebook to document *in the moment* notes, describing both what was happening and my reflections. To distinguish between actions and my thoughts, I noted actions with a + (plus) and thoughts with a  $\Delta$  (delta). I carried my notebook with me as I moved around the room during small-group work and whole-group activities that allowed me to take a side role in the happenings. When I was teaching from the front of the room, I kept my notebook at the front table, within easy reach. After class, I expanded any *in the moment* notes and also took time to document *after the fact* notes (Hubbard & Power, 1993). *After the fact* note taking allowed me to expand on ideas as soon as possible, when my role as a teacher precluded me from doing so in the moment.

**Digital audio recordings.** While observation methods are essential in practitioner inquiry, they can also be limiting because of the dual role responsibilities

(Schmuck, 1997). As a teacher researcher and a full participant in the study, I could not sit in the back of class each week and document rich observation notes (Mertler, 2006). It was impossible to teach *and* simultaneously document everything said or done (by students or myself). Therefore, in addition to the observation notes I jotted down in my notebook, I also recorded my teaching using a lapel microphone and a digital audio recorder. The audio recordings from each class captured the conversational exchanges between students and me. While the audio recordings did not visually document the actions in the course each week, they did recount the talk around the actions. In this way, when I listened to the audio recordings I could create a visual image of what occurred in class.

**Outside-observer notes.** In addition to my observations through audio recordings and the handwritten notes in my notebook, I had an outside observer in class each week to document the actions of students and myself. She had taught the course before, so her knowledge of course content and curricular flow enabled her to concentrate on what was happening in my research context. To give her an understanding of the project as a whole, I shared with her my study purpose and design and sent her my weekly power points. We also met before and after class to discuss any questions or concerns about the data collection process. She and I decided on a side-by-side format for her notes, wherein she documented my talk and actions on the left column and students' talk and actions on the right. She included time stamps throughout and left a wide margin on the right side of the page as a place for me to make my own notes during data analysis.

She always situated herself at the same table in the back of the room and documented what she could of whole-group discussions, my talk, and students' small-group conversations. My intention was for her to document as much as she could about the class as a whole. It was important that she document the gist of discussions, but not imperative that she document which student said what. However, when students chose to share a table with her, she paid careful attention to their talk during group work. When students were not at her table, she did her best to document ideas she heard from groups around the room.

These three forms of observation notes complimented each other and served as means for ongoing, or formative data analysis. During the semester, I spent Thursdays pouring over the week's observation notes. I first looked at my notebook, and reread the ideas I had listed as ( $\Delta$ ) thoughts/reflections. Next, I read the outside-observer's notes to get an overview of what happened during class. Then, using her time stamps as a reference, I located and selectively transcribed pieces from the week's audio recording that seemed relevant to my research questions.

### **Audio Reflection Journal**

Although I documented some *in the moment* reflections in my observation notebook, I also recorded ideas about my teaching and research using my digital audio recorder. I did this each week on my drive home from class. I made a habit of recording these reflections immediately after class because I found it important to both remember and record my immediate reactions to course experiences each week. These audio recordings were the place where I documented not only the actions but



also my reflections on those events (East, 2006). Audio reflections served as a way to document my beginning assertions in the research. Additionally, they helped me reflect on my teaching and students learning so I could modify and adjust classroom practices as needed.

### **Student Work and Classroom Artifacts**

I collected preservice teachers' course assignments as well as artifacts from class activities (brainstorming maps, poster presentations, scripts from dramatizations, etc) as evidence of students' learning in the course. The artifacts that I collected were generated from the learning activities and assignments I designed and used in the course. In this way, artifact collection was not an additional burden for students. Certain assignments, such as the Initial Reaction Questionnaire and the Midterm and Final Self-Evaluation, proved especially helpful in documenting students' understandings about ELs at the beginning of the course and the ways in which students transformed their understandings across the semester. Additionally, the Midterm and Final Self-Evaluation as well as the weekly Quick-writes documented students' willingness to take up the process of GCR. A complete list of student artifacts collected and a description of each can be found in Appendix C.

After collecting students' assignments, I read and graded student work, and photocopied each assignment before handing it back to students. In grading work, I did not evaluate students based on whether they agreed with the ideas in the course or my viewpoints. Instead, I used rubrics that focused my attention on students' ability to articulate and support their ideas related to course learning (see Appendix D for sample grading rubrics). Artifacts became a strong data source because they

already existed in the situation; they were not contrived, nor did they alter the setting of the class (Merriam, 2002). Not only did work samples help me document students' ideas, but they evidenced aspects of my role as a teacher in creating opportunities for students to critically reflect because I had photocopies of my feedback to students.

In addition to student work, I collected course artifacts (course syllabus, readings, lesson plans, and assignment descriptions) as means for understanding course themes outside of student responses.

### **Course Evaluations**

The university uses electronic measures to survey all students about their course experiences. Students completed the online survey anonymously at the end of BLE 220. Although this survey was not specifically designed to inform my research questions, it served as an additional perspective on students' perception of the class, my roles as a teacher, and their learning in the course.

### **Organization of Data**

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) remind us of the complex nature of practitioner inquiry, stating it is a “systematic, intentional inquiry by teachers about their own school and classroom work” (p.23-24). As such, practitioner inquiry emphasizes an ordered way of gathering and documenting the actions in the context under study. To this end, I collected and organized my data systematically. I kept electronic copies of data on three different external drives to avoid data loss. In addition to electronic storage, I kept two paper copies of each data. I organized hard copies of data in two ways; I kept one copy of data in a binder organized by class

date and the other copy in a binder organized by artifact type. I used two large three-ringed binders to organize data chronologically, using dividers to separate weeks one through 17. For each week, I included the following artifacts:

1. the power point I planned for the course
2. students' reading reflections for the week
3. students' Quick-write responses for the week (see Appendix E) for a list of weekly Quick-write prompts)
4. additional student work (any assignment that was due that week)
5. class artifacts (digital pictures I took of ideas documented on the white board, on student posters, in class small group work artifacts, etc.)
6. the power point at the end of class (reflecting any changes made during that week's class)
7. copies of my observation notebook entries
8. copies of outside-observer's notes
9. the transcript of selected sections from class audio recordings
10. the transcript of my audio reflection

I also organized my data by categories, using another large three-ringed binder divided by data type (planned power points, quick-writes, audio reflections, my observation notebook entries, outside-observer notes, etc). By organizing data in these two ways, I was able to look for themes in the data across the course as it unfolded chronologically and across types of data.

## **Data Analysis and Presentation**

Although I have listed data collection and data analysis under separate headings in this chapter, data analysis both overlapped with and extended data collection. Using Erickson's (1986) method of modified analytic induction to explore my data, I went from whole to part in the analysis process. I present two phases of data analysis. The first, *ongoing analysis*, is the formative analysis I did throughout the semester, concurrent with my teaching and data collection. Ongoing analysis informed my data collection and teaching practices, and shaped my beginning assertions. It allowed me a sense of assertions across the data as a whole. The second, *after the course analysis* is the analysis I did after the semester's end. This analysis was summative in nature because it came at the conclusion of my data collection. In this phase, I moved away from looking at data as a whole and examined whether or not each assertion was evidenced in individual parts of the data. I also finalized my assertions and wrote vignettes as a way to capture and express the meaning of assertions.

### **Ongoing Analysis**

As a teacher researcher, my teaching practices encompassed many opportunities for ongoing data analysis (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Hubbard & Power, 1993). I did this by reflecting each week after class, planning lessons, and reading and responding to student work. During this inductive analysis work, I looked at emergent data, and kept track of beginning assertions that were indicated by some degree of support.

**Audio reflections.** Recording my thinking into an audio recorder each week after class provided opportunities for me to reflect on the intertwined nature of my teaching and research. These ten-minute entries encompassed ideas about what I was experiencing in class with my students, the beginning assertions I had regarding their understandings about ELs, and the ways in which they were negotiating new learning in the course. These regular reflections gave me the opportunity to examine my roles in creating a space for GCR, my relationships with the learners in the course, and my experiences balancing my roles as a researcher and teacher.

Each week I transcribed these self-reflections and took additional opportunities to reflect once I printed them out by making notes in the margins. My notes highlighted further questions I had about my practices or students' actions, and helped me identify themes I saw emerging in my own reflective talk. These transcripts became a focal point for understanding the ways in which I was acting out my beliefs about GCR, just as I was encouraging students to reflect on their understandings about ELs. I started to see how as teacher, I was moving through the dimensions of critical reflection. I *acknowledged* what I knew about preparing teachers, *reframed* these understandings in light of experiences with the students, and then *transformed* my thinking in light of new understandings relevant to this particular group of students.

Toward the end of the semester, after reading and rereading these transcripts and my notes, I started to compile a list of ideas about my teaching roles, and the ways in which my roles created opportunities for students to take up the process of GCR. As I moved from understanding the data in this whole-to-part fashion, I used

this list in the final analysis phase to help me develop assertions across data sources and across the course, to answer questions about my own role as a teacher.

**Responding to student work.** One of the benefits of blurring teacher and researcher roles is that my time reading and responding to students work doubled as opportunities for data analysis. I designed course assignments to encourage students' reflective thinking, which suited my inquiry into examining the role of reflection in transforming students' understandings. Therefore, my time reading and responding to student work allowed me to analyze the ways in which students were using reflection and the ways reflection was influencing their understandings.

The class met on Tuesday nights and I graded student work on Thursdays. This allowed me time over the weekend to copy and organize artifacts before I handed assignments back to my students on the following Tuesday. Once I had read and responded in writing on students' work, I photocopied each student-participants' work. In this way, student artifacts documented not only what students were thinking but also the ways in which I responded to their learning on course assignments. Once I had copies of student work, I used a colored pen to make additional research notes on artifacts. Using a different colored pen enabled me to see my initial responses to student work and differentiate them from my later ideas related to themes in the data.

**Lesson planning.** Throughout the semester, I devoted time on Saturdays and Sundays for lesson planning. This planning time gave me another opportunity to organize and analyze data. I began each planning session by organizing data collected from the week prior. As I read and organized data, the work the students

and I did each week informed my decisions about what I should teach and how I might go about it. In this way, my data analysis work informed my planning and teaching work.

As I looked over the data collected each week, I started the next week's planning by writing thematic memos to "bring together the data from across several sources" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 291). These memos summarized not only what we had done as a class, but the ways in which students responded. They served as a point to document my beginning assertions across data sources for each week (power points, audio reflections, student work, observation notes, etc).

At the end of the semester, these memos, along with my notes on student artifacts, and the list of emerging ideas from my weekly audio reflections offered a glimpse of the data. This inductive analysis work, offering a sense of the data as a whole, revealed my beginning assertions in relation to students' understandings about ELs, the impact of GCR in transforming their understandings, and my roles as a teacher in creating opportunities in the course for students to take up the process of GCR. Once the semester was over and I stopped collecting data, I used these beginning assertions to start my deductive analysis.

### **After the Course Analysis**

Throughout the semester, I was living the data; ongoing collection and analysis afforded me a sense of the data as a whole. Once the course was over, I re-read my data in the binders containing the chronologically-organized data. As I read, I relived the semester and my work with students. This time allowed me to see the data again outside of my dual responsibilities as teacher researcher. Although I did

not disconnect with my role as a teacher and my identity as such, reading the data as a whole once the course was over allowed me to forefront my research role. After this reading, I narrowed my list of beginning assertions to those that were represented across the entire data set. Then, I grouped the assertions based on the ways they answered my research questions, categorizing them into two groups:

1. assertions related to students' common sense about ELs (research question #1)
2. assertions related to GCR (research questions #2 and #3)

This moved me into my final deductive analysis work.

**Final analysis for research question #1.** I approached the deductive analysis for assertions related to students' understandings about ELs by focusing on three artifacts of student work: The Initial Reaction Questionnaire (IRQ), The Midterm Self-Reflection, and the Final Self-Reflection. All three assignments asked students to think about and document their understandings about ELs and teaching ELs. On the Midterm and Final, I asked students to reflect on how their understandings at the beginning of the course (as evidenced on the IRQ) had evolved to that point and document how they changed or strengthened their ideas. The IRQ gave me a sense of students' beginning common sense related to ELs, and the Midterm and Final helped me understand the ways and reasons students transformed their understandings about ELs.

To finalize my assertions related to the question, "What are preservice teachers' common sense regarding teaching and learning related to ELs?" I took one assertion at a time, and looked across students and across the three assignments to



find confirming and disconfirming evidence. Because I was not researching change for particular students but for the class as a whole, I confirmed themes across multiple students and multiple assignments. In doing so, my final assertions about students' understandings are representative of themes across the class.

**Final analysis for research questions #2 and #3.** The deductive analysis for the second category, assertions related to GCR, involved looking across all data methods, and across students, as I aimed to find themes representative of my class as a whole. Taking one assertion at a time, I first asked myself, 'How do I know this? What data method(s) evidenced this assertion?' Once I had identified the data source, I then checked the assertion against different data methods. Because of the large amount of data, I approached this search for confirming and disconfirming evidence in a systematic way. I began with the three forms of observations (my notebook of observation notes, the audio recordings of each class, and the outside-observer notes). Using these different forms of observations provided multiple perspectives to support or challenge each assertion. Audio recordings gave me a sense of what was said during the class. My notebook helped me remember my interpretation of those events. The outside-observer notes allowed me to confirm these ideas and interpretations from a different person's perspective. After looking through observations methods, I selected other sources that would offer evidence to support or challenge a particular assertion. In this way, I did not simply check for confirming evidence for each assertion across all parts of the data set. Rather, I used my knowledge about each data source and my understandings of the data as a whole

to logically decide the ways to move through the data as I looked to confirm or disconfirm each assertion.

### **Presentation of Findings**

I present my findings for this dissertation in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. In Chapter 4, I present the findings related to my research question, “What is my role as an educator in creating opportunity for critical examination and transformation of preservice teachers’ understandings?” Although data collection took place during the fall 2010 semester, my roles as a teacher in the fall 2010 semester of BLE 220 began years prior to that course. Therefore, it is important that I provide the reader with an analytic chronology of my work as a teacher educator over the last five years. This personal history provides the necessary background for understanding my study because it conveys the historical and social context leading up to my teaching roles during this particular semester (Cole & Knowles, 1995; Zeichner, 1994b). Following the analytic chronology, I present an assertion and the descriptive evidence from the data addressing my roles as an educator in creating opportunities for my student to examine and transform their understandings about ELs.

In Chapter 5, I present findings related to GCR, and the ways preservice teachers in the course used GCR to surface, examine, and transform their common sense about ELs. Two research questions guide the presentation of findings, “What are preservice teachers’ common sense regarding teaching and learning related to ELs?” and “How does guided critical reflection transform preservice teachers’ common sense about ELs?” In that chapter, I present my findings through four assertions. Because my unit of analysis was the class as a whole and not individual

preservice teachers, my assertions illustrate themes related to GCR across the students in my class. For each assertion, I provide a vignette to bring the reader to the center of course experiences, providing aesthetic and emotional layers of the action. Vignettes, however, are not meant to support the assertion on their own; I also discuss the general and particular evidence supporting each assertion.

### **Trustworthiness and Generalizability**

In practitioner inquiry, validity and generalizability do not follow standard notions of transferability found in positivist research paradigms. Believing that research in particular classrooms cannot be directly transferable to other contexts, practitioner inquiry holds to standards of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) as a way to measure the results of research. Thus, trustworthiness in practitioner inquiry is determined by how credible the interpretations of the practitioner researcher are to the local contexts of the study. While the results may not be directly transferable from one classroom context to another, the trustworthiness of a study validates its interpretations so that practitioners can learn about their context via the inquiry process that other practitioners have used to make sense of theirs.

### **Trustworthiness**

In terms of internal validity, or the trustworthiness of the assertions I make about these data, I must first acknowledge my position as the researcher. In this section, I also explain the ways I used other data analysis procedures to ensure dialogic validity.

**Positionality.** I believe that “it is never possible to divorce the self from either the research process or from educational practice” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle,

2006, p. 506). I consider it important to acknowledge my positionality and the ways in which it affected the process and outcomes of this research. While I detail my roles in creating a course centered on critical reflection in Chapter 4, I briefly discuss my positionality as a teacher researcher here.

My experience as an elementary English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher fueled my passion for this study. My appreciation for language learners and my belief that in order to teach ELs, teachers need to have a positive attitude towards both language learners and language diversity were driving factors within this research. As a teacher educator, I had been teaching the mandated SEI courses at ASU since the fall of 2006, and this particular course since the fall of 2008. So the fall 2010 semester of teaching and data collection was not my first time teaching BLE 220. I found that my past experiences teaching the mandated SEI courses shaped both the inquiry and design process for this study. Along with these responsibilities, I was also a full-time doctoral student in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Language and Literacy. As I studied literature on the qualities, skills, and knowledge teachers need in order to be prepared to teach ELs, I was further motivated to understand the ways preservice teachers were being prepared for their future work with language learners. This positionality had a significant impact on my study, but I do not perceive that to be a weakness. Instead, I see my insider positionality as an asset to this work, and believe my closeness to the topic of study offers a unique perspective that would otherwise not be possible.

**Dialogic trustworthiness.** Dialogic validity relates to the ways I monitored analyses through the critical discussions of research interpretations with peers or

critical friends (Herr & Anderson, 2005). As a practitioner researcher, I was committed to the success of the actions in my study. I wanted them to work. I wanted GCR to be a productive means for preservice teachers to examine and transform their common sense about ELs. However, I employed mechanisms to ensure the trustworthiness of my inferences. I utilized a critical friend (McNiff, Lomax & Whitehead, 1996), sought feedback from my committee chair, and used the outside observer who took weekly observation notes as a modified form of member checking. A fellow graduate student agreed to be my critical friend throughout the study. She read and reviewed my analysis, challenged my thinking, and questioned me on my desire to make this “work.” Throughout the process of data collection and analysis I also sought advice from my committee chair about my methods (Am I casting a wide enough net?) and my emerging assertions (What disconfirming evidence do I have?). Finally, I discussed my assertions and shared my data and analysis work with the outside observer who took notes each week in my class. Her familiarity with the course content, the context of the study, and the participants (the preservice teachers and I) provided a form of member checking.

### **Transferability**

In terms of external validity, I do not propose that knowledge from this study is generalizable to all other settings concerned with preparing future educators of ELs. However, following Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) notion of transferability, I do believe that the knowledge from this study can be applied to other settings, as deemed reasonable by the receiver.

If there is to be transferability, the burden of proof lies less with the original investigator than with the person seeking to make an application elsewhere.

The original inquirer cannot know the sites to which transferability might be sought, but the appliers can and do. (p.298 as cited in Herr & Anderson, 2005)

Following the foundations of action research, my study aims to promote an understanding of my particular setting and participants. Beyond my own setting, I encourage other educators to use the findings as analogous thinking to understand and further question their own practices and theories.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS RELATED TO MY TEACHING AND REFLECTIVE ROLES

In this first of two findings chapters, I answer the question, “What is my role as an educator in creating opportunity for critical examination and transformation of preservice teachers’ understandings?” After a semester of looking closely at my teaching practices, I am convinced that my roles in creating opportunities for guided critical reflection (GCR) began long before I first stood before this particular group of students. When I began to analyze data collected during the fall 2010 semester, I realized that in order to discuss my practices as a teacher during that semester, I first needed to look back across my personal history as a teacher educator. Before I could account for my roles in utilizing GCR in my BLE 220 course, I needed to explain why I decided to design the course around reflection.

To that end, I present an analytic chronology of my experiences as a teacher educator over the past five years. This personal history illustrates how my choice to use GCR in BLE 220 was born out of challenges I faced in my early years of teaching the first state-mandated Structured English Immersion (SEI) course. It also accounts for the thinking I did as I designed the second SEI course, BLE 220. My course development process began with an examination of the state curricular framework for the SEI course in light of the literature on preparing teachers for ELs, along with my early experiences teaching the first SEI course. During this planning work, I both acknowledged and accounted for the tensions between what I knew about preparing teachers for ELs and what the state was mandating I teach.

This reflective work, the thinking back on my history and the evolution of the course, provided a starting point for analyzing data collected during the fall 2010 semester. After I share this analytic chronology, I present an assertion that demonstrates I had three main roles as an educator in creating opportunities for GCR during the fall 2010 semester.

### **Analytic Chronology**

#### **My Choice to Use GCR**

The decisions I made for BLE 220 were borne out of challenges from previous years of teaching the state-mandated SEI courses. In 2006, I taught BLE 407: SEI for Secondary Students, the first of the two state-mandated courses related to preparing preservice teachers for ELs. My class consisted of preservice teachers in the secondary education certification program at the university. It was the first semester that all preservice teachers were required to take a SEI course.

For my students, the course was a late addition to their programs of study, one that few found relevant to their future educational practices. Students' resistance to course content and their frustration over having to take it was palpable. Students voiced their concerns in direct and indirect ways. They made comments, such as one student who said on the first night of class, "Why should I have to teach those kids (ELs)? Their parents won't pay my salary." Indirectly, students expressed their frustration through a lack of participation; some dismissed course content outright. It was clear to me that many of my preservice teachers resented the recent mandate that every teacher needed to take the course and resisted the notion that the responsibility to teach ELs should be shared by all educators.



Another reason for their resistance related to the way the course interrupted preservice teachers' programs of study. They were irritated that they had to take an additional course on top of an already full load or, even worse, during their semester of student teaching. Additionally, as general education majors, or majors in specific secondary content areas, the majority of the preservice teachers did not intend to teach ELs, "I'm gonna be a math teacher, not a language teacher," was a mantra I heard often.

I cannot say definitively whether their negative outlooks stemmed purely from biased attitudes toward ELs or whether their resistance was uncertainty about teaching "those students," exacerbated by the inconvenient circumstances of a mandated course. Either way, I quickly realized that in order to prepare teachers for their future work with ELs, I needed to devote class time to a close examination of what preservice teachers believed about 1) ELs and 2) the state requirement that all teachers be prepared to teach them.

This realization was significant. In the first few weeks of the fall 2006 semester, I reduced my time teaching EL strategies, incorporating more opportunities for preservice teachers to reflect. I wanted them to identify what they understood about ELs, what they believed about their responsibility to teach language and content, and help them articulate why they thought the ways they did. My attempt to balance dispositions, theory, and practice related to ELs in a single course proved to be challenging. Despite my best efforts, I felt troubled by all of the content I had not addressed. By the end of that first semester, I was tired. Students were tired. The end of semester gave us some much-needed breathing room.

For the next year and a half, I did my best to strike a balance between reflection and content. But no matter what I did, each semester felt jam-packed and overwhelming. It was a running joke with my students that we would never get through everything that I had planned for each week. Each week's agenda blurred into the next and due dates ran at least a week behind. At the end of every semester, I felt that 15 weeks of class was nowhere near enough time. Now I was the frustrated one. Although the course was morphing into a place where students could acknowledge their apprehension related to ELs and begin to work through them, one class was not enough to sufficiently prepare them. At the end of each semester, this truth was not lost on my students, or me.

### **Designing BLE 220**

After two years of this difficult balancing act, the university was required to design a second state-mandated SEI course. As the resident SEI expert on the campus, I accepted the opportunity to take a new state curricular framework and design the second course. My excitement about being chosen for this task quickly diminished in light of the fact that no other faculty member would take the job; they did not relish being told what to teach by the state.

**Perpetuating myths and undermining my beliefs.** I took on this responsibility but moved forward cautiously. From my previous work as a teacher of ELs, I knew that the state-mandated English-only SEI model fell short of meeting the needs of ELs in schools (Wright, 2010). From my work in teacher preparation, I did not support the notion that all teachers could be prepared to teach ELs in just two classes. I had to reconcile these tensions to do the job well. I knew that if I did

not approach these assumption-laden courses through a critical means, I would be perpetuating myths and fundamentally undermining my own beliefs. I did not want others to see me as a proponent of Arizona's SEI model, nor the state's approach for preparing teachers for ELs—not my peers or the academic faculty I looked up to, and definitely not my students. On the other hand, my passion was (and continues to be) preparing teachers for ELs. The martyr in me decided that I was the best person for the job; I could be the bridge-builder between the state's requirements and research's ideas of best practice. Putting one critical foot in front of the other, I allowed myself to envision what could be: BLE 220: Foundations of SEI. My work designing the second SEI course began with an examination of what Arizona Department of Education (ADE) required. Table 3 shows the content objectives and time requirements for the second SEI course.

Table 3

*Curricular Framework for the second SEI course: Content Objectives and hours*

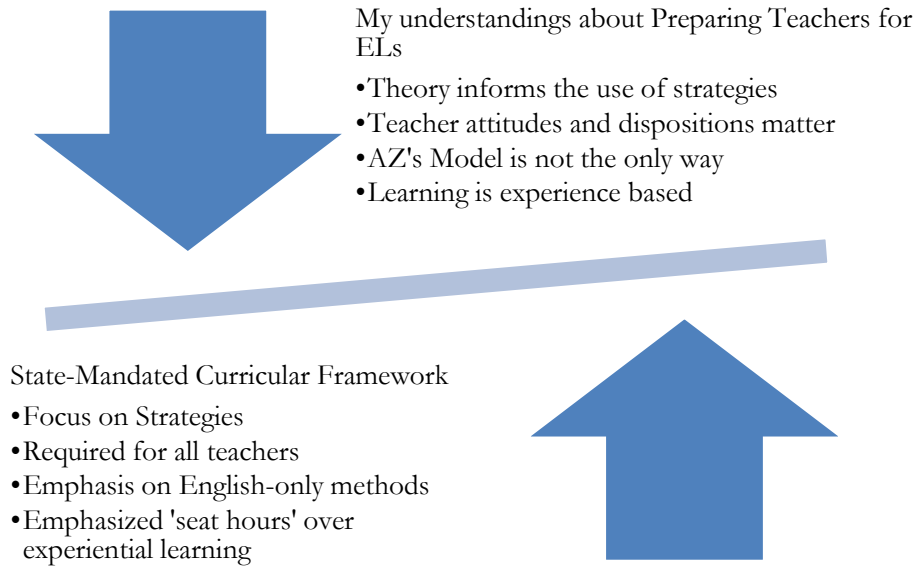
Content Objective	Hours
EL Proficiency Standards	3 hours
Formal and Informal Assessment	3 hours
Foundations of SEI	3 hours
SEI Strategies	24 hours
<i>Flex hours*</i>	12 hours

\*ADE recommends that Flex Hours be put towards the SEI Strategies content objective

As I came to understand the state’s requirements (See Appendix F) for the entire framework), I paid close attention to my rising tensions. Based on my experiences teaching the first mandated SEI course and my familiarity with the literature on preparing teachers for ELs, I knew that the state’s requirements were insufficient in terms of content and quality. I spent time examining the disparities between the state curriculum and what I knew about preparing teachers for ELs. I knew these disconnects held potential for me to help students critique the myths inherent in SEI coursework and think critically about state requirements for teaching ELs. Because I believe that teaching is complex, situational, and uncertain, I knew that I wanted to teach the course in a way that would take preservice teachers beyond, ‘this is what you need to do’ to ‘why do you think it should/should not be done this way?’

**Seeing my tensions.** As I endeavored to identify my tensions, I asked myself, ‘What do I know about ELs?’ ‘What do I know about preparing teachers for ELs?’ and, ‘Why do I know these things?’ As I spent time acknowledging what I knew and believed about preparing teachers for ELs, I discovered tensions between what I knew (based on personal experience and the literature) and the state’s curricular framework. I knew that the literature on preparing teachers for ELs maintains that teachers of ELs need certain dispositions, knowledge, and skills in order to effectively teach ELs (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008), and I was seeing few parallels between what I knew and what the state was asking. Figure 3 represents the tensions that arose during this course-design work.

These tensions included a) making meaning out of another SEI course with an overemphasis on SEI Strategies, b) the mandate that all teachers take the course without time for examining attitudes or dispositions, c) requiring students learn about ELs without working with ELs, and d) the exclusive focus on English-only methods and Arizona’s SEI Model. I explain these tensions here not only to highlight my reflective work as an educator, but to unpack the research-based understandings that currently inform preparing teachers for ELs.



*Figure 3.* The tensions I discovered between my understandings about preparing teachers for ELs, based on the literature and my previous experiences as a teacher educator and the state-mandated SEI curriculum framework.

***Overemphasis on strategies.*** The first tension I experienced was the fact that the curriculum for the second SEI course was more of the same: strategies, strategies, strategies. I was already frustrated by the first class’s emphasis on strategies at the expense of knowledge about linguistic and cultural diversity. The second class still devoted up to 36 out of the 45 hours of curriculum to strategies. I had already seen how this strategies focus had the potential to promote an “it’s just good teaching” mentality among preservice teachers. I knew that without attention to second language acquisition (SLA) principles and or cultural considerations on classroom learning, my students would have misguided and incomplete understandings about how to effectively teach ELs (de Jong & Harper, 2005). I could not support this emphasis, believing that without theoretical understandings,

teachers are ill-prepared to use SEI strategies effectively, no matter how many tools they have in their toolbox.

***Required of all teachers, not just those who want to teach ELs.*** My next tension stemmed from the mandated nature of the course. Going against Haberman's (1991, 1996) suggestion that teacher educators selectively recruit candidates who bring knowledge, experience, and dispositions that will enable them to teach linguistically diverse students well, Arizona mandated all education majors be prepared to teach ELs. But given that teachers' attitudes influence how they educate students (Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996); *should* all teachers be teaching ELs?

The literature tells us that successful teachers for ELs have a positive disposition towards language learners (Brisk, 1998; Karabenick & Clemens Noda, 2004) and Garmon (2004, 2005) recommends that positive views about multiculturalism be a prerequisite for teachers who work with diverse learners . Yet the ADE curriculum did not address preservice teachers' attitudes and beliefs about ELs. I recognized the dangerous assumption underlying the state's expansion of preparation from those who want to teach ELs to all teachers, because I had personally experienced how not all preservice teachers enter preparation coursework with positive attitudes, dispositions, and experiences. Therefore, I decided to create opportunities for my students to examine their own attitudes and beliefs about ELs, even though this was an unaddressed issue in the ADE framework.

***Learn about ELs without interacting with ELs.*** The next tension I came across in the course development arose during discussion about when this new

course would be offered to education majors. Within my university setting, the addition of the second course faced scheduling difficulties; preservice teachers had to take this course prior to the start of their educational program, before they had any other educational classes or access to practicum situations. This news was bittersweet. Because the new course would be offered early in students' college careers, it was designated the first of two in the SEI course series. I saw this as a blessing because it supported my desire to set aside time in the beginning of the preparation process for preservice teachers to examine what they knew and believed about ELs.

However, students would take the course without an internship component to their coursework, which left them without opportunities to “experience” working with an EL or to even observe ELs in school settings. Preparing teachers without an “experience” component goes against practical considerations of preparing teachers for ELs (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Walqui, 2008). Furthermore, according to the curricular framework, in order to complete the course, preservice teacher did not have to “experience” anything. ADE did not require any outcome or output from teachers completing the coursework, other than they attend the class for the required 45 hours. Believing that education is founded in experience (Dewey, 1933), I needed to find ways to bring in preservice teachers' past experience with ELs (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008) or their experiences learning a second language (Mora, 2000) in an effort to compensate for the lack of an internship component.

***Emphasis on English-only methods.*** My final tension was that the curriculum strongly emphasized English-only approaches. If I adhered to state



suggestions, preservice teachers would leave my course without any knowledge of dual language or bilingual models and strategies that utilized and valued ELs' native languages as a resource. To me, this meant preservice teachers would be less likely to consider other models of language-based instruction, despite the literature's clear conclusions that ELs' native language can and should be used for learning (content and language) (August & Hakuta, 1997; Echevarria, et al., 2008; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008) as well as for promoting a comfortable learning environments (Gandara & Maxwell-Jolly, 2006).

All of these tensions played a role in my design work for BLE 220: Foundations of SEI. They led me to find a way to offer students a balance of theory and practice, knowing one without the other would be less effective for teachers' future practices with ELs. I also wanted to create opportunities in the course for preservice teachers to examine their beliefs and attitudes about ELs. Since students would be taking the class without an internship component, I had to find ways to create experiential learning within the walls of our classroom. Finally, I wanted my course to demonstrate value for alternative approaches to educating EL's, beyond the state's English-Only model. Keeping these ideas in mind, I moved on to the particulars of course design: what books we might use, the learning experiences most appropriate for our time, and my expectation for students' renewed sense about ELs.

**Balancing the tensions.** As I envisioned the course, I also considered the importance of aligning content with state mandates. At this point, I realized that the minimalist curricular framework provided by the state was actually an advantage for course development. Although the state required that I submit my syllabus for

approval, it did not mandate what materials I used, or the learning experiences I included. When I inquired into this at ADE, they explained they were only concerned with alignment across the content objectives and course hours.

As I reframed what the state was asking in light of what I knew about preparing teachers, I decided to use ‘flex’ hours to my advantage. I did not take the state’s *suggestion* that “flex hours be applied to the SEI strategies content area” (ADE, 2006). Instead, I put those hours towards SEI Foundations, which included content topics such as ‘the history of SEI’ and ‘second language acquisition (SLA) theories.’ In addition to this designation of the ‘flex’ hours, I decided on three main ways to balance my tensions (see Figure 4). First, I decided to expose students to models and approaches outside of those currently used in Arizona. This meant that we would start with a look at how Arizona came to adopt their one-size-fits-all SEI approach, and what models schools were using prior to Proposition 203. Second, I decided that theory related to second language acquisition (SLA) and cultural considerations had to play a larger role in the course than the state’s allotted *two* out of 45 hours. That meant I needed to manipulate the 36 hours devoted to SEI strategies. Third, I decided that “learning” had to encompass more than just sitting through class. I would take an active approach to learning, using GCR as both a process and pedagogical tool for developing preservice teachers’ understandings about ELs. I now discuss each of these decisions and the ways they shaped the course.

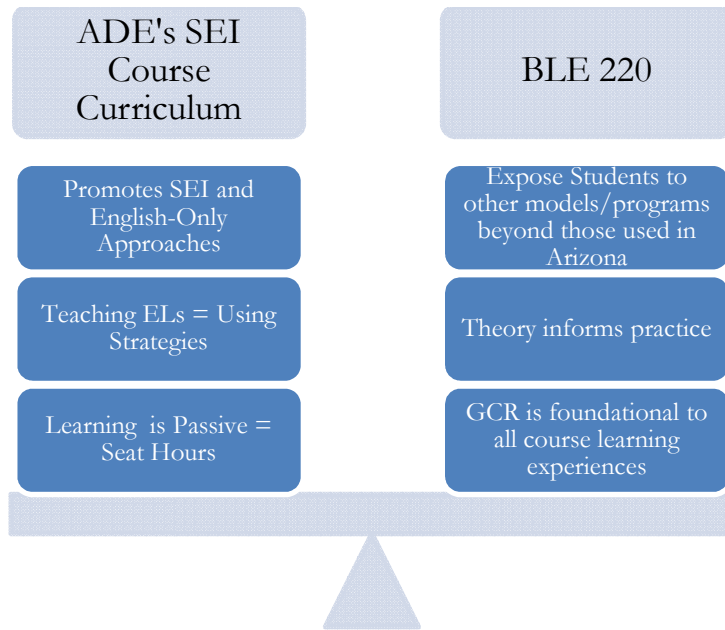


Figure 4. My BLE 220 course design, which balanced the tensions between what the state was asking I do, and what I knew about preparing teachers for ELs.

***Beyond Arizona’s model and approaches.*** I wanted to expose students to other models and approaches beyond Arizona’s mandates, so I chose texts that were comprehensive in terms of programs and approaches for teaching ELs. These were readings with the potential to expose students to all models and strategies, not just the ones used and emphasized in Arizona. I chose a course text *Second Language Learners* by Steven Cary (1998) that highlighted nine different language-learner program models, offering a view of bilingual and English models, as well as Sink-or-Swim. It was important for me that my students understood that English models do not have to be English-only. Cary’s book illustrated that although English-models such as English-as-a-second language (ESL) Teacher Provided or ESL Pull-out may rely heavily on instruction in English, they also value and respect students’ native languages and cultures.

I also wanted students to recognize that although Arizona deems two classes as sufficient for being prepared to teach ELs, other models utilized elsewhere require teachers to have a bilingual (BLE) or ESL endorsement. Students needed to understand the differences between an SEI, BLE, and ESL endorsement. Since most students in BLE 220 were young college students, those who grew up in Arizona schools would have experienced K-12 education after the passage of Prop 203. Therefore, I could expect that they had not been exposed to models outside of Arizona's SEI and English-only approaches.

***Manipulate the 36 hours of SEI strategies.*** Another change I made was to devote more hours to 'Foundations of SEI' content objective. This helped me balance the top-heavy strategy focus of the course by allowing more time for SLA theory and theories related to cultural considerations in learning. While I wanted students to have strategies to use in their future classrooms, I especially wanted them to understand what strategies work for ELs with particular needs, and why. The extra hours on SLA provided time to move beyond an introduction of SLA to analyzing the role of SLA in informing the practices teachers chose to use with ELs.

I also made these changes because students needed time to consider how culture impacts learning. I knew these ideas would support preservice teachers in choosing and successfully utilizing strategies with ELs. I also realized that I could balance the large amount of hours devoted to SEI strategies if I used strategies to teach other course content. For example, if I used an SEI strategy to teach students about culture, these hours spent on culture could count as hours devoted to SEI strategies. This was beneficial because it enabled me to bring in more content

outside of strategies, while making it possible to teach the class by modeling SEI strategies students could use in their future practice. These teaching decisions fit within the confines of the state curricular framework because I modeled and debriefed each strategy the state curriculum asked me to teach.

***GCR as the basis for learning experiences.*** Although the state was satisfied with students merely being in the course for a total of 45 hours, I wanted students to experience learning in other ways. Even though there was no internship component to the class, I could use students' previous K-12 experiences as a point of reference for new learning.

GCR enabled me to not only build on students' previous experiences, but to help them examine their attitudes and beliefs about ELs. Literature suggests that becoming a professional teacher should start with the examination of one's own cultural assumptions and or biases (Dall'Alba & Sandberg, 2006; Nieto, 2000, 2002, 2010). These understandings stem from our life experiences: in education, with diverse groups, and with our own student experience as part of a minority or majority population. I recognized the potential within GCR to give my students opportunities to examine their current understandings and attitudes about ELs, and provide a way to connect students' previous educational and life experiences to new learning in the course (Bransford, Derry, Berliner, Hammerness & Beckett, 2005).

Making GCR foundational to my educational goals significantly shaped course design. As detailed in Chapter 2, GCR involves three dimensions; seeing, learning, and acting. Learning experiences in the course needed to embody these dimensions. To that end, I included narrative writing, autobiography construction,

metacognitive exercises, and the use of similes and metaphors about school, learning, and different types of students, all which are helpful tools in this endeavor (Munby & Russel, 1990). I believed these course experiences, founded as they were on GCR, would allow preservice teachers to

- understand their views about diversity and cultural differences and begin to articulate where they came from (Smyth, 1989; Van Mannen, 1995; Zeichner, 1994c; 1996);
- examine the cultural and linguistic differences between themselves and language learners (Delpit, 1995; Gay & Howard, 2000);
- transform their understandings in light of new learning; and
- see how their understandings and attitudes shaped their starting points for practice (Banks, Cochran-Smith, Moll, Richert, Ziechner, LePage, Darling-Hammond, Duffy, & McDonald, 2005) .

Finally, GCR helped me develop a cyclical approach to course content, meaning that I provided multiple opportunities for students to transform their understandings in light of new learning. I made GCR foundational to the course because I hoped that through the use of reflection, preservice teachers would transform their common sense about ELs. But, it is important to emphasize that as a teacher, I knew I could only offer time and support for preservice teachers to examine their ideas related to ELs; ultimately, any change in understanding was the responsibility of the learner.

An explanation of the course learning experiences that I chose to use for BLE 220 can be found in Appendix C. Table 4 illustrates the main components of the course, as designed around GCR.

Table 4

*Course components designed to include the dimensions of Guided Critical Reflection*

<u>Course Components</u>	Dimensions of Guided Critical Reflection			<u>Incorporation of GCR dimensions</u>
	Seeing	Learning	Acting	
BLE/ESL Mock Trial		▪	▪	Students take on one another's perspectives, allowing them to see the ways they agree and disagree with ideas related to the benefits/drawbacks of BLE and SEI program models.
Course texts/ Readings		▪	▪	Expose students to ideas outside their common sense, allowing them to reframe and consider ways to transform their understandings.
Group work and group discussions	▪	▪	▪	Students have multiple opportunities to share what they know and listen to their peers' ideas. Students can examine the areas of difference and similarity as they expand their understandings.
Immersion Film		▪	▪	Through writing from another's perspectives, students have the opportunity to reframe their understanding.
Initial Reaction Questionnaire	▪		▪	Allows students to 'see' what they know about ELs and how their understandings change.
Midterm and Final Self-Evaluation	▪	▪	▪	Provides students with an opportunity to reexamine their beginning understandings, and asks them to state how their common sense has evolved. Students use course learning to explain how their understandings at the beginning of the course have been strengthened and/or have changed and why.
Quick-Writes	▪	▪		Provides a weekly routine for students to document their understandings related to course topics and questions they have. Students revisit their Quick-Writes on the Midterm and Final Self-Evaluation to see how, if at all, their ideas have transformed.



Beyond the historical explanation of the reasons I came to use GCR as the key component for BLE 220, I now present an assertion related to my roles as an educator in the fall 2010 semester centralized in this dissertation study. After collecting and analyzing data, weekly reflection journal entries, observation notes, and the audio recordings from each class, I know that I was reflecting on my practices as a teacher, just as I was guiding students to reflect in their common sense. My reflective work evidenced the three main roles I used to create opportunities for GCR.

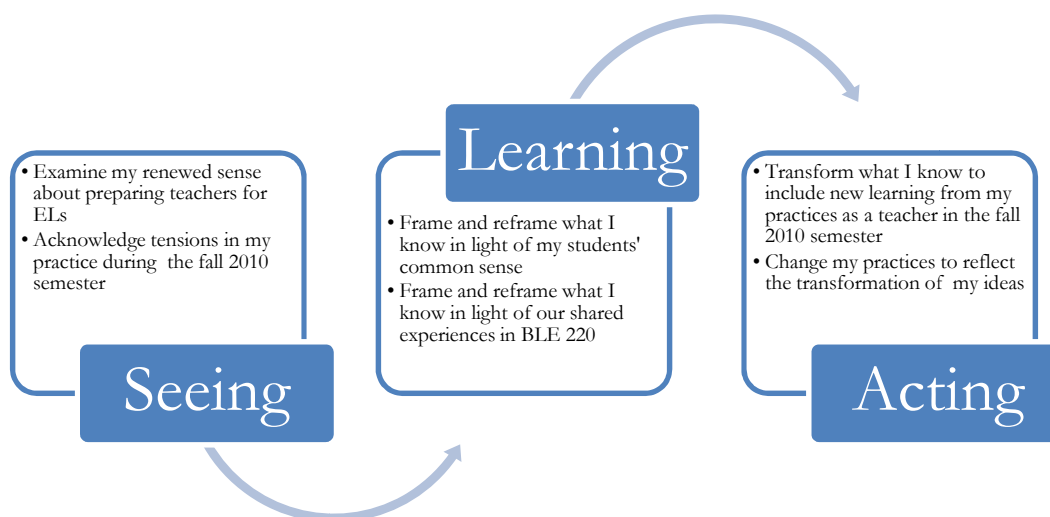
### **BLE 220 in the Fall 2010 Semester**

At the onset of this study, I thought I could just describe my roles and the pedagogical practices I used to promote GCR in the course. But after looking over my data, especially my audio reflections, I realized that it was not only my roles that created opportunities for reflection in the course. Equally as important was the fact that I was reflecting on my practices, just as I was asking students to reflect on their common sense related to ELs. In what follows, I discuss how my reflective work paralleled the dimensions of reflection I was guiding students to take up. Also, I identify three main roles I used to help create opportunities in the course for GCR.

While writing forces me to give a linear account of my reflective work and how it impacted my roles as a teacher, my processes working through the dimensions of reflection were recursive and ongoing. The thoughtful work of designing the course initiated my reflective work on the 'seeing' dimension. This time allowed me to critically examine what I knew about preparing teachers for ELs. My design work

afforded me a renewed sense about preparing all teachers for ELs. As discussed in Chapter 2, ‘renewed sense’ is unlike ‘common sense’ because it is not passive. Instead, renewed sense are common sense understandings that have been critically examined.

I continued to reflect through the teaching process, as I interacted with my students. It is not an overstatement to say that I was continually reflecting, either *in the moment* or *after the fact* about my teaching and students’ learning. Figure 5 illustrates my reflective work as a teacher on each dimension. Although my reflective work operated on the same dimensions as students’, it differed because I was reflecting on my renewed sense (as opposed to students reflecting on their common sense). Additionally, my ‘action’ was a change in understanding that evidenced itself in my teaching practices (as opposed to students’ ‘action’ being a change in their thinking).



*Figure 5.* My reflective process as the teacher on the three dimensions of GCR. I examined my renewed sense about preparing teachers for ELs, acknowledged tensions that arose in my interactions with students in my course, and changed my practices to evidence transformed understandings.

Each week, I relied on my renewed sense about teaching as my starting point for meeting students’ needs and negotiating our work together. This effort to acknowledge what I knew was part of my reflective work on the ‘seeing’ dimension. I also paid close attention to ‘seeing’ the common sense ideas my students brought to the course. This kind of reflection was “running in the background” for me, as I attended to the tensions between what I knew and what was actually taking place in the course. I looked closely at the discrepancies between my understandings and those of my students. I refer to these discrepancies as tensions, places where my own thinking was stretched to accommodate experiences in the course that evidenced differences between what I knew and the understandings my students brought to the course. When I found a tension, I reframed what I knew in light students’ understandings, their preferred methods of learning, and our experiences

together. This framing and reframing of ideas constituted my reflective work on the 'learning' dimension. As I was continuously reframing what I knew in light of the students' reactions to course experiences, expectations, and content, I transformed my understandings and subsequently changed my teaching practices, evidencing my work on the 'acting' dimension. Because I was reflecting on my teaching practices and students' learning, I was able to support students to critically examine and transform their understandings about ELs.

In the final half of the chapter, I present an assertion in answer to my research question, "What is my role as an educator in creating opportunity for critical examination and transformation of preservice teachers' understandings?"

**Assertion #1: As a Teacher I had to Establish a Comfortable Learning Environment, Value Students' Common Sense, and Guide Students to Reflect**

**Discussion of assertion #1.** In what follows, I explain my roles as a teacher to establish opportunities for students to examine and transform their common sense about ELs. These roles, as evidenced in my reflective work, were to: a) establish a comfortable and safe learning environment, b) discover and value students' common sense regarding teaching and learning related to ELs, and c) guide students through the critical reflection process.

*Chloe: It's weird, you know, that you use our names.* Part of creating a comfortable, collaborative environment became the physical set-up of the classroom. No matter how hard I labored every Tuesday at 4:00 pm to arrange tables and chairs into small clusters around the room, I returned each week to find rows of tables and chairs facing the front. Students joined me in the weekly set-up work; if they arrived

early to class, they helped with the classroom transformation. It was during this pre-class rearranging that Chloe told me I was “weird.”

It was before class on the third week. She entered the room and I greeted her, asking casually, “Hey Chloe, how are you?” She responded with a slight giggle. Puzzled, I genuinely inquired, “What’s so funny?” She responded, “It’s weird, you know, that you use our names” (Audio recording, September 7, 2010). Chloe went on to explain that how in her other classes teachers rarely ever talked with her and if they did, no one addressed her by name. She found it odd that not only did I use her name, but that I even remembered it when her nametag was not sitting in front of her.

This experience was a clear example of how my renewed sense regarding creating an affective space for learning did not parallel Chloe’s common sense about the way university classrooms “should” look and feel. As odd as she thought it was that I would use her name, I found it equally strange that her other teachers would not. This quick interaction with Chloe caused me to slow down and reflect on why Chloe and others would think it strange that I attempted to create an environment wherein learning was both personal and relational. This experience prompted me to reframe what I knew about creating a comfortable learning environment. I considered the reasons why a personal environment would seem odd to my students, recognizing that the majority of my students were sophomores who often attended large, lecture-style classes. This course was possibly the only class they were taking that semester with less than 30 students and a collaborative focus. After reframing what I knew in light of my students’ experiences, I transformed my practice. I still

believed that my classroom should be comfortable and that I should get to know students personally to support their learning. However, I decided to be more explicit in presenting why I felt a comfortable learning environment was essential for learning.

To me, creating a comfortable learning environment went beyond using students' names and group table arrangements. Each week I reflected on other ways to make students comfortable. For instance, although we used a lot of group work in the class and I expected students to share their ideas, I scaffolded them to feel safe in doing so. I thought through discussion questions, reflecting on ideas like 'Is this the first time we've talked about this? Will they feel more comfortable if they talk first with a partner before sharing ideas with the class?' Even after I thought I had made appropriate plans, I watched closely as events unfolded each week. If students seemed quiet during discussions, I stepped back and double-checked to see if they were ready to share: "Do you need more time to think? Do you understand what I am asking you to do?" When I heard students struggling to negotiate differences, I would back up and offer suggestions for ways to agree or disagree, "I heard you say...I agree/disagree because" or sharing ways they could raise questions in a respectful way: "You said... what do you think about?" I had a renewed sense that told me students needed to feel comfortable in order to share but I also continuously reexamined the contexts and concepts that caused students to be hesitant in their talk. This ongoing, *in the moment* reflecting led to slight changes in my practices each week as I negotiated students' comfort levels within classroom experiences. It took several weeks, but students became increasingly comfortable in sharing their

understandings and learning. Once students were comfortable sharing their common sense, I had to value their understandings as the catalyst for course learning.

***Chandler: You mean, you remember what we say? OMG!*** A positive affective classroom environment was essential for understanding my students' common sense. But beyond understanding it, I also had to value students' common sense as the foundation for their reflection and learning in the class. This led me to pay close attention and remember things students shared each week.

The quote in this heading came from Chandler, on the second night of class. During a class discussion, I referred to something Chandler had said the week before, "Right, that's like when Chandler said that she thought ELs were..." (Audio recording, August 31, 2010). To this comment, Chandler blurted, "You mean, you remember what we say? Oh my god!" turning away with a blushing face. I nonchalantly replied, "Of course I do," and then carried on with the discussion at hand. After class, I reflected into my audio recorder on my ride home, "Chandler was really shocked that I would remember what students said. That was weird. I mean, I need to remember what they say, how else will I help them learn?" (Audio reflection, August 31, 2010).

Initially, I mentally deemed Chandler's comment as bizarre, but as we moved into week three of the course, I realized Chandler was not the only one who was confused, skeptical even, about why I remembered what students said during the course. I started to see how the fact that I was 'researching' our course experiences exacerbated students' initial uncertainties at about what I would do with the ideas

they shared. Looking back over the first three weeks of class, I noticed other evidence of their doubt. As I walked around the room listening to table groups' talk, I would take notes. Students would ask me, "What are you writing down?" (Heather, Audio recording, August 31, 2010), fearing something they said had been documented for some unknown future use. Sometimes, during whole group conversations, as students shared ideas and I would write them on the board, students would cringe, "Oh no, don't put my idea up there!" (Jacob, Audio recording, September 7, 2010).

I realized that although it made sense to me that good teachers begin with what students know, my dual roles as a teacher researcher were creating tensions for my students. My students' common sense about research was causing them to be skeptical about why I was paying such close attention to what they said and did in class. Again, I had to reframe my understandings in light of these experiences with my students. I transformed my renewed sense, and realized that this dual responsibility demanded a different approach. I needed to talk with students about why I felt it was important to remember what they said in class. Beyond that, I needed to gain their trust.

The next time I turned to document ideas on the board, I spent time discussing why it was important to me that I write down and remember their words,

These ideas will come up again. Just like each week, how I have you do a quick-write. All these ideas will come back. If I remember what you say, if you remember what you say, we can look back and see what we are learning and what new questions we have, how our ideas are getting tangled up. Don't be embarrassed when you see your ideas on the board, or when I bring them up later. I do that because that's how we learn, we think back on what we thought before, last week, the first night of class. (Audio recording, September 21, 2010).



Telling students why I wanted to remember what we discussed as a class was a good start, but I worked hard to prove to them that I valued their ideas, not just because of my own research, but because it was a foundation for their learning in the course.

Valuing students' experiences and common sense as an important beginning point for learning meant that I accepted the ideas they presented. Whether I agreed with them or not, I worked hard to live my own words: "You know what you know because of your experiences. Your ideas are valuable because they are what you know" (Audio recording, August 31, 2010). I tried to balance class discussions, ensuring that differing views held equal weight in our conversations. When a student's idea was perceived as outside the norm of the group, I modeled the way we could dig deeper to understand where someone is coming from, "Tell us more about why you know this." "When did you experience something like that?"

My efforts to establish a safe environment for sharing ideas and value students' common sense as valid forms of knowledge were essential for GCR. Together, these two roles laid the foundation for students to critically reflect on and possibly transform their understandings about ELs. Once we were comfortable as a class, I began to gently push students to see tensions between their common sense and what they were learning. This too required ongoing reflective work to ensure that I placed the right amount of pressure on students to examine, reframe, and possibly transform their common sense about ELs.

***Heather: Thanks for the wake-up call!*** One final role I utilized to help students take up GCR was to guide them through the process. As a guide, I

constantly raised points of contrast between what students knew and what we were learning, in a way that poked at students thinking without pushing them over the edge. This was like walking a tightrope, my constant balancing act. If I put too much pressure on students, overtly challenging what they knew, they would shut down. If there was not enough pressure, those moments of tension would slip away and with them, opportunities to reexamine what they know. I was always looking for tensions and reflecting on how I could point them out in safe ways.

On the first night of class, even as we were still establishing trust with each other, I began to place pressure on students to acknowledge their common sense related to ELs. That night, I explained the role of GCR in the course, sharing that we would start with what we know, figure out why we know it, and then get tangled in our thinking as we learned new and different ideas from each other or from course materials. I told students that although it might be uncomfortable, we would “live in the gray...get messy with the stuff that lies between black and white” (Audio recording, August 24, 2010).

It became obvious to me that I also needed to reflect on how I was ‘pushing’ students. In the moment-to-moment interactions of each class, I thought about the pressure I placed on students as I guided them through the process of GCR. Sometimes, I got the pressure just right, and students were open with their ideas and the conversations were fluid. Other times, I pressured students too much, and our learning experiences closed down. This happened during week four, when we were discussing Arizona’s English-only model for educating ELs.

As students shared their negative opinions of the model, I kept questioning their statements from the perspective of someone who supported English-only. I realized too late that my steady stream of questions had caused students to stop talking. I had pushed some of my students to the point of frustration. That night, I had to acknowledge that maybe I had pushed too much, explaining that I was trying to counter their ideas and stretch their thinking. Students had a hard time understanding why I was “supporting” the English-only model, knowing my feelings about it.

Reflecting both *in the moment* and *after the fact*, I decided that in the future, I would announce my ‘devil’s advocate’ role before I started to play it. This way, students would understand that I was attempting to stretch their thinking, not disprove of their ideas. Beyond these moment-to-moment reflections each week, I examined the ways in which my role in guiding students to ‘see’ and take up tensions changed over the course of the semester. I realized that as we grew more comfortable with each other and with the process of GCR over the semester, I placed greater pressure on students, because I knew they could handle it.

Heather’s words at the beginning of this section, “Thanks for the wake-up call!” (Student artifact, November 30, 2010) came from an assignment we worked on in class on week 15. That night, students were talking about high school age language learners, stating their perceptions that by the time ELs were in upper grades they would be English-proficient. This was a common sense notion that I had been pushing students to reexamine since the beginning of the course. In my frustration over their clinging to an understanding that I thought we had already transformed, I

told students, “Come on you guys, move beyond it. Some ELs in high school will not know *any* English. Not all ELs start school in Kindergarten. Some start school in high school. High school teachers, you’re not off the hook!” (Audio recording, November 30, 2010). As soon as the words were out of my mouth, I feared I had overstepped. It was an outburst I never would have allowed myself in the first weeks of the course. After class that night, as I was reading students’ work, Heather’s words reassured me,

Thanks for the wake-up call! Why do I keep thinking that students in my history classes will know English? I don’t know. I just need to get over it. I might have a student who doesn’t know English at all! Yikes! (Student Artifact, November 30, 2010)

What I had said and how I had said it provided just the right amount of pressure, for at least one learner in the class.

## **Conclusion**

In this first of two findings chapters, I addressed the question, “What is my role as an educator in creating opportunities for critical examination and transformation of preservice teachers’ understanding?” Because I am convinced that my roles in creating opportunities for GCR began long before I first stood before this particular group of students, I began the chapter with an analytic chronology of my personal history as a teacher educator. In it, I illustrated how my choice to use GCR in BLE 220 was borne out of challenges I faced in my early years of teaching the first state-mandated SEI course, and my desire to bridge the disconnects between Arizona’s mandated curriculum and the literature on preparing teachers for ELs.

In relation to my roles as a teacher during the fall 2010 semester, I shared that I too was working through the dimensions of GCR, just as I was guiding my students

to do the same. While the work to create the course marked the beginning of this reflective work, I continued to reflect as I taught and interacted with my students (Dewey, 1933). My thoughtful work to design the course gave me a renewed sense about preparing teachers for ELs. It was my renewed sense, along with my experiences teaching the course, which constituted my reflective work. In reflecting, I examined my understanding about preparing teachers for ELs, and acknowledged tensions arising in my practice. Once I got to know my students and shared experiences with them in class, I framed and reframed what I knew. My transformed understandings evidenced themselves in changed teaching practices (Dewey, 1933; Schon, 1983).

My reflective work centered around three main themes, creating a comfortable learning environment, valuing students' common sense, and guiding students through the critical reflection process. I understand these themes to constitute my roles in supporting the critical examination and transformation of preservice teachers' understandings. But, just as important, I believe that my students took up the process of GCR not only because I utilized these particular pedagogical practices, but because I too, was reflecting on my work as a teacher while I was asking them to reflect as learners. In Chapter 5, I discuss findings related to students' common sense about ELs and the ways in which GCR transformed their common sense into a renewed sense about language learners.

## CHAPTER 5

### FINDINGS RELATED TO GUIDED CRITICAL REFLECTION

I investigated two questions related to the use of guided critical reflection in my course, “What are preservice teachers’ common sense related to ELs?” and “How does guided critical reflection (GCR) transform preservice teachers’ common sense?” In this findings chapter, I present assertions related to the ways GCR helped preservice teachers surface, examine, and transform their common sense about ELs. The unit of analysis for this study was my class as a whole, rather than individual students. My assertions represent themes across students in the class; however, I utilize specific interactions with individual students to illustrate each assertion.

I use the three dimensions of GCR to frame my discussion of how (if at all) preservice teachers transformed their understandings. Based on work by Dewey (1933), Zeichner and Liston (1996), and Jay and Johnson (2002), I define GCR as including three dimensions: seeing, learning, and acting. These dimensions are not linear or mutually exclusive; instead, the dimensions intertwine to create a composite cycle. Although I explained my conceptualization of these dimensions in Chapter 2, I briefly describe them here.

‘Seeing’ was a process of helping preservice teachers to acknowledge the common sense they have about teaching and learning, recognizing not only what they knew about ELs, but articulating why they knew it. The second dimension, ‘learning,’ was the process of preservice teachers giving active, careful consideration to their common sense by framing and reframing their ideas in light of new learning. In this dimension of critical reflection, preservice teachers stretched their common

sense as they connected with new learning, and examined any tensions between the two. Tensions were the spaces for possible transformation of ideas. The third dimension, ‘acting,’ represented a change in thought, a transformation of students’ common sense into renewed sense. I assert that preservice teachers’ renewed sense about ELs encompassed parts of their common sense that were renegotiated to include new learning from the course. These understandings, which existed outside of their individual experiences, helped them think differently about course topics.

In analyzing these data, I looked across students and across the semester to examine the extent to which GCR played a role in preservice teachers changing their common sense about ELs. I looked closely at those occasions when preservice teachers became entangled in their thinking, took pause in their talk, or challenged their own ideas or the ideas of others. These events represented tensions between what students knew and what we were learning together. They also encompassed the possibilities for students to transform their common sense about ELs through the process of GCR.

For each assertion, I offer a vignette as a way to bring the reader to the center of an experience, providing aesthetic and emotional layers of the actions in the course. However, the vignettes do not stand alone; each is followed with a discussion of the particular evidence supporting each assertion.

### **The ‘Seeing’ Dimension**

By completing the Initial Reaction Questionnaire (IRQ) on the first night of class, students began their reflective work on the ‘seeing’ dimension. I intended for this assignment to help students identify what they knew about ELs and to think

through the “whys” behind their understandings. I used the IRQ assignment so that students and I could gain a perspective on their initial common sense about ELs. I also had students interview another individual (outside the class) to gather another person’s perspectives on these issues. This exercise helped students see the societal norms evident in their answers. Overall, the IRQ became an artifact that we revisited throughout the course to support students’ reflective thinking.

I asked students to complete the IRQ on the first night of class. It was a reflective exercise that involved me posting prompts or questions on the Power Point while students wrote down their initial reactions. I encouraged the students to write down the first things they thought, reminded them that there are no “right answers,” and encouraged them to be as honest as they could comfortably be. I explained the purpose of the IRQ was to gather students’ initial ideas surrounding course content, which would then serve as the foundation for reflection during the course. The IRQ was an important start to our reflective work together, and became a starting point for identifying students’ common sense about ELs, along with the things they said during class discussions during the first weeks of the semester. I analyzed these data closely to identify themes in students’ common sense at the beginning of the course.

This work enabled me to determine that most students entered the course with narrow and deficit views of ELs, they equated the best approaches for learning a second language to their own experiences doing so, and that in terms of teaching ELs in a content-area classroom, they had simplistic notions of what would be required of both students and teachers. My second assertion explains how, although



students were able and willing to discuss their common sense related to ELs, getting to the reasons behind their understandings and examining why they knew what they knew, proved to be a challenge.

**Assertion #2: Students Acknowledged a Common Sense About ELs, Rooted in Their Educational and Life Experiences**

**Vignette #2: It's a "No-Brainer"**

Small groups of students cluster around tables throughout the room. I have intentionally placed only four or five chairs at each table. No one sits at the table closest to the white board in the front, and the two tables in the back are empty. For the most part, students sit in the same groups as last week. *Creatures of habit*, I think. It's only the second week of class and they have already started to settle into their place in the room (physically and with their peers). Name tents positioned in front of each student remind everyone of each student's name and one detail about their life. Chloe's name tent has a picture of a fish because she works at an aquarium. Raad's sports a glass half-full, reminding us he is a "glass-half-full kind of a guy." Lynn's shows a pair of running shoes, which match her typical attire: jogging shorts, hair pulled back in a ponytail, ipod clipped to her tee shirt, and earphones slung around her collar like a necklace. As it is only our second week in class, we still rely on the name tents to personalize our discussion. I remind them often to use names as we spread the talk around our group of 25.

I pause at table groups as I walk around the room, listening in as students discuss tonight's assignment, the IRQ. Since it is only our second time together, I purposely stand a bit apart as I listen in, an effort to give students space to get

comfortable sharing ideas with their peers. I move slowly around the room, making a point not to hesitate too long next to any one person or group. But I hear enough to pick up that they are sharing, and to notice that they are talking about the “why’s” behind their answers, something that I had not directly asked them to do. I make a mental note to celebrate this with them as I bring their attention back to the whole group.

“Okay, if you can finish up the conversations with your table groups, let’s come back together as a class. You’ve had the chance to talk with a partner or two at your table, and as I have been floating around from group to group, I am hearing similar ideas, and also a few things that stick out. Let’s talk across as a whole group and see how our initial reactions on the questionnaire are similar or different. We’ll come back to question number one at the end.

Let’s start with question #2, the prompt, ‘When you hear the words *English language learner*, what comes to mind?’ Remember, there are no right or wrong answers, we know what we know based on our experiences. If you want, you can tell us why you think you wrote what you did, give us some context for where your ideas may have come from. Do I have a brave soul who wants to start?”

At first, no one says anything or raises their hand. But I don’t sweat it. Over my five semesters of teaching the course, I have come to realize that it pays to wait it out. Someone always shares and usually his or her contribution has a snowball effect. I put my head down, dropping my gaze to give students a minute and lessen the pressure. I look up to see two hands raised.

“Jacob, thanks. What did you write down?”

Jacob is the tallest student in the class, but you don't notice this when he's seated. He slouches in his chair, arms folded across his reclined torso. He looks comfortable, more relaxed than most. Knowing that this is only the second night of class, and I have just asked students to share ideas that may be somewhat controversial, he strikes me as a student who I can count on to contribute.

Smiling, he says, "So, what I wrote down was kind of a no-brainer, I put, *When I think of an English language learner, I think of someone who doesn't speak English.*"

"Right, someone who doesn't speak English," I say as I write his response down on the board, "It may be a no-brainer, maybe not. Who can add to Jacob's idea?" A few more hands go up, and I call on Shawn.

"Right, obviously, it's someone who doesn't know English, so my idea is kinda like Jacob's. I put, *Someone who is learning another language, someone learning English.*"

I add, *learning English* to the board. "So, can't speak English, and learning English. Okay, we're building off of each other, who else? Heather."

"I guess, I mean, I guess my answer was kinda mean, but it was what I thought, you know?" Heather pauses and keeps her gaze on me.

I use her pause to assure her, "Don't worry about sounding mean. Trust me, ideas will come that might seem harsh or mean, but if you're thinking it, this class, I hope, will be a safe place to talk through them. You can tell us why you think it's mean. Getting your thinking out there is the starting point. What did you write?"

“Sure, I mean, ok, I grew up in Arizona, so I wrote, *Spanish speakers, children of immigrants, maybe illegals,*” she shrugs her shoulders and raises her hands to motion her uncertainty with voicing her written words.

“Heather, you’re not the only one with ideas like this. As I walked around listening to you guys share with your table, I heard similar things. Raise your hand if you wrote down something to do with Spanish, Hispanics, or kids from Mexico.” Seven hands go up.

Without raising his hand, Marcus adds, “I didn’t write that down, but if I was to be honest about that, that’s what I would have put down, students from Mexico, that’s really what comes to my mind. That’s how it was in Texas. ESL. ELL. They were all Spanish-speaking students.”

Around the room there are head nods and “yeahs” coming from students. I add *Spanish speakers, immigrants/ children of immigrants,* and *illegal* to the board.

As I am writing, I hear Stella add, “I’m not from here, and where I went to school in Michigan there wasn’t really a lot of English language learners, like I can’t remember any in my high school. But I wrote down, what he said.” She tilts her head toward Shawn as she reads *a person who is learning English*. “I guess I was thinking about my friend who was a foreign exchange student from Russia. He knew some English, but not like us, you know? So he was still learning.”

I add *foreign exchange student* to the list. “Are foreign exchange students English language learners? What do you think? Talk with your table.”

The noise level rises as they begin to discuss the possibility. As they slip into table group conversations, I make a note on my journal. Borrowing Jacob's words, I write:

*It's a "No-Brainer" = their experiences make what they share 'ok', students need the chance to share both – what they know and to justify why they know it.*

**Discussion of assertion #2.** The vignette above illustrates how preservice teachers entered the course with ideas about ELs that were rooted in their experiences. The common sense students brought to the course was foundational for any new learning we would work through together. It also served as the starting point for the guided critical reflection processes we would use as students transformed their understandings regarding teaching and learning related to ELs. To encourage students to talk about the *what* and the *why* related to their ideas about EL, I regularly repeated this mantra, "You know what you know because of your experiences, your ideas are not wrong, they are what you know" (Audio recording, August 31, 2010). As I listened to students' talk and read their IRQ assignments, I made sense of their understandings about ELs. I also began to realize that not only did students' common sense ring true for them because it was their personal experiences, but that many of their ideas were supported by the societal and cultural norms related to educating ELs and preparing teacher for ELs.

To frame this discussion on themes across preservice teachers' common sense related to teaching and learning about ELs, I use three topics from the IRQ assignment: "Who are ELs?" "What is the best way to learn a second language?" And, "What are the best ways to teach content to a student who doesn't understand

English?” Students’ answers to these questions were particularly revelatory to their common sense notions about ELs.

*Ashland: ELs are the kids that don’t speak English, the Mexicans, the immigrants.* On the IRQ and during the first weeks of class, the majority of my students described ELs as immigrants, Hispanics, and people who could not speak English. They envisioned ELs as young students lacking English abilities because they were recently arrived in the U.S. Predominately, preservice teachers’ common sense about ELs focused on deficit notions: what ELs did not know (how to read, write, and speak in English). They also implied notions of language as a problem (Ruiz, 1984); students pointed out that since ELs cannot speak English, the language used in schools, they should be pulled out of ‘regular’ classrooms.

There was also a quieter, less dominant narrative evident in a few students’ responses on the IRQ. Similar to Shawn’s contribution to the class discussion in the last vignette, these students described ELs in a different way, hinting at a view of language as a resource (Ruiz, 1984): “ELs are students who learned another language as their first language and are now learning English” (Genna, IRQ, August 31, 2010). Although the majority of students defined ELs in deficit ways, this small group of students highlighted what ELs did have instead of focusing on lack. Outside of this, there was little to no mention of the skills or cultural resources ELs bring to school.

I point out these themes not to say that students are generally racist or limited in their knowledge, but to show the prevalent themes in how students initially defined the term EL. Additionally, it is important to note that even though many of students’ ideas were narrow and deficit-based, societal norms validate their common

sense about ELs. For example, there is some truth in the definition that an EL is someone who does not know English. In school, students receive the label EL because they have not passed an English proficiency exam (ADE 2009).

Additionally, the majority of EL students in Arizona are Spanish speaking and the majority of ELs in US schools are young (NCELA, 2007)

Whether deficit, narrow, or resource-based, students' definitions of ELs lacked complexity. Hearing them, I realized we would need to critically examine questions like, 'What does it mean to be proficient? Are ELs in Arizona always immigrants from Mexico?' and 'What happens when ELs show up in High School classrooms?' Looking back over the semester, I could identify the ways we worked to expand these definitions, and the things I did to help students get to the complexities behind the label, "English Learner." This GCR work enabled students to transform their understandings about who ELs were; I discuss this further in Assertion 5.

Students' initial common sense was also evident in their ideas about second language acquisition (SLA). Just like their definitions of ELs, notions of learning a second language were grounded in their personal experiences and reflected society's norms for teaching a second language in school.

***Heather: Immersion! The best and only way to learn a second language!*** When asked on the IRQ, "What's the best way to learn a second

language?” the overwhelming theme was immersion<sup>3</sup>: surround yourself with the language you are trying to learn so you are forced to use it. Some ideas about immersion stemmed from travel/work experiences in places where English was not the dominant language, others stemmed from notions related to time on task, the more language exposure the better, “Immerse yourself in the language as much as possible” (Marcus, IRQ, August 31, 2010). Preservice teachers’ ideas about immersion, “be placed where only the language you need to learn is spoken” (Genna, IRQ, August 31, 2010) reflected the methods utilized in the current English-only model for educating ELs in Arizona. While students’ ideas were valid because they “worked for them,” preservice teachers were not yet critically examining why they believed immersion methods were best nor how these immersion experiences might be different for an EL.

Beyond immersion, students attributed taking a class is the best way to learn a second language. This theme echoed behaviorist notions of SLA, reflective of typical foreign language courses in high school. These students valued part-to-whole processes for learning a second language, and emphasized repetition as key. Later in the course, when we learned SLA theories, I started the discussion by prompting students to, “Stand up if you learned a second language in school, high school, or college” (Audio recording, September 28, 2010). Everyone stood. Then I said, “Stay standing if you consider yourself fluent in that language,” only one person remained standing. This quick interaction showed that students carried with them common

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<sup>3</sup> I use the word ‘immersion’ because it is the word students used on their IRQ or during class discussions to describe the best way to learn a second language. However, based on the ways they defined ‘immersion’ I believe their use of the term was more aligned with the literature on ‘submersion’ approaches.



sense notions of learning a second language that were rooted in their educational experiences, even when those practices proved personally ineffective. I made a mental note of this point of contradiction as a place for reexamining our understandings about SLA.

Although the main themes that emerged in students' initial understandings about SLA were immersion and coursework, several students responded with a different idea. These students said SLA should be connected to everyday, practical use. They believed that rote memorization is not best, that learning a second language is most effective in enjoyable, social exchanges with others. This idea, that learning a language should be social and connected to practical experiences, provided an additional point for future guided critical reflection. Later in the course, I would use these understandings to discuss the affective dimension of SLA, an idea that few students originally associated with learning a second language.

***Genna: The best way to teach content is hands-on strategies and visual aids.*** Although at the time of this course, preservice teachers did not have formal experiences teaching ELs, I make the case that they relied on their previous experiences to envision what a teacher might do when charged with the task of teaching content to ELs. Students' dominant idea about how to best teach content to an EL was to use visual aids. This notion that pictures can easily convey the complexities of content-based concepts is a teaching method preservice teachers observed and experienced in their own schooling. As students, their teachers had them use manipulatives, visuals, and music, all methods they assumed could be effective even with a language barrier. Additionally, as participants in English

dominant educational classrooms, very few saw the opportunity for using students' native languages as a resource in the content area classroom. As such, it was not surprising that very few preservice teachers mentioned using a student's native language to teach content. Preservice teachers' experiences as English proficient students in English dominant classrooms limited their consideration of teaching in a student's native language or using native language resources as possibilities for content instruction.

Reading preservice teachers' responses on the IRQ and participating in our early classroom discussions helped me to understand the common sense they brought to the course. At that time, I knew students entered the class with narrow and deficit views of ELs, they equated the best approaches for learning a second language to their own experiences, and they had limited strategies for teaching content. As a teacher familiar with this course, I recognized how important it was for me to value their common sense as a starting point for our learning together, rather than countering it. It was not always an easy task for me to sit quietly, resisting the desire to push back with counter stories, but during the first few weeks, I listened. Students needed this time in the course to grow comfortable with sharing what they thought and justify their understandings. I needed the time to understand their common sense, to envision possible inroads for future critical reflection.

Providing students a place to acknowledge the common sense they brought to the course was part of the first foundational dimension of guided critical reflection. By asking students to complete the IRQ, I gave them a starting point for 'seeing' what they knew about ELs. Throughout the rest of the course, students

carried this initial common sense as a point for future guided critical reflection.

Moving forward, I would cyclically use this marker of students' common sense to help them reexamine their ideas in light of new learning, in hopes that they would use GCR to transform their ideas.

**Assertion #3: It was Necessary to Scaffold Students through Examining their Common Sense about ELs**

**Vignette #3: It's what we know, because of our experience.**

“We've been throwing this word around: *ideologies*, turn to the people next to you, and talk about it– see if you can describe, in your own words, what is an ideology?” I write, *An ideology is...* on the board so we can document our thinking, then move around the room and eavesdrop on table discussions. After about four minutes I say, “OK, the person with the most jewelry on at your table is going to report out for your group. Take about one more minute and make sure that person can summarize your group's ideas. An ideology is...”

Students decide in their group who is wearing the most jewelry. There is some laughing and banter back and forth about, ‘earrings are counted as two – it's just one piece,’ but they begin to settle on a group spokesperson. Just to be sure everyone has decided, I quickly check in, “If you have on the most jewelry at your table, please raise your hand. Ok, take 40 more seconds to make sure your spokesperson is ready to share your group's ideas.”

About a minute later, groups are still talking, but I offer the familiar segue, “Ok, wrap up your talk at your table and let's come back together as a class. Who wants to start? An ideology is...”

Krissi raises her hand, “We said, it’s the idea of a topic,” she pauses and looks at her notes, “like a group’s idea about something. But not like research, because the group’s ideas only skim the surface of the topic.”

“Ok, so Krissi’s group is talking about ideologies in relation to research – noting that an ideology is not research, but is a group’s idea about something that just skims the surface. Thanks Krissi, who else?” Charlie raises her hand. I nod towards her and she begins, “We said the same thing. It’s like what people think about things.” I add to our class definition, *what people think about things*.

Robin has her hand up, so I bring her into the discussion, “Robin, what did your table decide?”

“We said what everyone else is saying, but we think it’s kinda like research, because in order to form an ideology you have to have some sort of basis or information about that idea.”

Sandra speaks up from another table, “Like an experience, something that would cause you to think in a certain way. And then that idea spreads.”

I motion to the white board, where I have noted students’ contributions to our definition.

*An ideology is...*

*a group’s idea about a topic/just skims the surface*

*what people think about things*

*kinda like research/ starts with an experience, then spreads*

“So, Sandra is saying that ideologies start with experiences. Let’s go with this notion that ideologies are what we think, but also why we think that. Just like

you said, it's an idea about a topic, and that idea probably stemmed from an experience we had, or maybe from an experience someone else had. Just like Marcus, when he shared with us last week. He thought the best way to learn a second language was immersion. Do you remember why he thought that? What experience was he basing his idea on?"

Gail speaks up, "He was in the army, he had to learn Farsi in just a few weeks."

"Right. So, tonight I brought back your IRQ assignment. I want you to take a minute and read back over your responses or your interviewee's responses. See if you can tell not only what your ideologies are but where do you think they came from. Read it through and then talk with your neighbors about what you are seeing."

There is a rustle of papers as students pull out their IRQs. Quiet conversations begin as students look at their initial reactions and make sense of the experiences that shaped their ideologies. As the table talk gets going, I make my way around the room, taking time to kneel next to each group and listen. Once I have circulated around the room, I start our whole-group conversation, "What were some of the underlying ideologies behind the responses on your IRQ?"

Kent starts, "The person that I interviewed said the best way to learn a language is to immerse yourself, like how we learn our first language. But that's not always true. Some people might learn better with flash cards or something else."

I respond, "Immersion, like when we learned our first language. I can see the connection to experience, when we learned our first language; we were immersed

in the language. But let's think for a minute, do ELs in school have the same experience learning English that we did when we were first learning English?"

Marcus offers, "Well, we had to learn to read and write in school and ELs have to do that, they have to learn to read and write in English – so that was the same."

"Ok, we both have to learn to read and write. When did we learn to read and write? What grades?"

I can hear *kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> grade* from students.

"So, by like 3<sup>rd</sup> grade we had learned how to read and write. What happens when an EL comes to school after 3<sup>rd</sup> grade? Is the experience different? They still have to learn, like we did, but what's changed?"

After a pause, Heather says, "Now they are learning it when everyone else already knows it."

"That's one difference, there's no longer that community effect. ELs have to learn English while the rest of the class is using English to learn the content. What's another difference?"

Ashland, who up to this point in the semester has not offered any ideas to the whole group, raises her hand. "It wouldn't matter if they came in kindergarten or in high school, when they are immersed in learning English, they are surrounded by people they can't understand. When we were immersed in the language we were around our family, our friends, and everyone was speaking the language we knew. We got to school and yeah, we needed to learn to read and write, but we knew English. ELs don't know English."

Marcus takes on her idea and offers a challenge, “But when I had to use Farsi, I was immersed in the language and I had to use it to learn it. If I wanted to buy something or get directions, I needed to use the language. I was immersed in the language and it worked.”

Feeling the tension build, I reassure Marcus, “Yes, immersion did work for you. And it’s all right for you to say immersion works because that’s what you experienced. But now, when you come across an instance when immersion didn’t work, or you talk with someone who doesn’t believe immersion is a good way for learning a language, we have to examine ‘Why did it work for me? Why do I think this?’ So, Marcus, why did immersion work for you?”

“I had to learn it, just like ELs in schools, they have to learn it.”

“Right, you both had to learn a new language – but what’s different about your experience of having to learn a new language? You said you were forced to learn it, and ELs in schools are sometimes forced to use English – but, were you forced to join the army?”

Marcus gives me the answer I am expecting, his face telling me he sees the trap that I have lured him into, “No one forces you to join the army, I did it because I wanted to.”

“Now we’re getting somewhere, this is what I like, messing up our thinking.” I offer Marcus a kind smile and see his tension start to fade, “This is what it’s all about. Figuring out what our ideas are, and then examining them. ‘Why do I have these ideas, why did they work for me, and will they work for ELs?’”

**Discussion of assertion #3.** The above vignette illustrates some of the beginning work that we did as a class as we engaged with the dimensions of GCR. The first stage, ‘seeing,’ was the foundational step. Students had the chance to talk and write about what they knew regarding teaching and learning related to ELs on the IRQ assignment and through talking about their understandings in class discussions during the first few weeks. We had a sense of what we knew. As I already explained, themes across students’ common sense were they defined ELs based on what they could not do or did not have, believed the best way to learn a second language was through immersion or taking a class, and believed that to successfully teach content to ELs, all they needed were hands-on manipulatives or visual aids.

Students were able and willing to talk about their common sense related to ELs, but getting to the reasons behind their understandings proved to be a challenge. They wanted me to take their experiences at face value. I wanted them to dig deeper. As I did with Marcus, I worked to scaffold students’ questions, moving them deeper into the specific details that fostered their experiences and eventually shaped their common sense. Before we could move on to reexamining our common sense in light of new learning, we first had to examine our own experiences.

This process proved challenging for different reasons. First, many students declared they had little to no experiences with ELs, and this confounded them. They had ideas, but could not identify the experiences that shaped those ideas. Second, students had experiences in which they themselves had success (like learning a second language) but struggled to move from “it worked for me” to “it worked for



me because...” Third, students were able to equate what they knew to societal or school norms, but were not yet critically examining why schools/society held those ideologies. Table 5 illustrates the scaffolding processes I used to support students through this ‘seeing’ dimension. Students’ ideas and the questions I asked them are a representative sample of students’ thinking, across the course of the semester. The table is not representative of literal occurrences, but shows the different ideas students had, and the questions I used to get at the roots of those ideas. The final column demonstrates how students’ thinking expanded to include new ideas about ELs.

Table 5

*Scaffolding students through the ‘seeing’ dimension of Guided Critical Reflection*

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Example of a Common Sense understanding about ELs: “I know _____ because _____”	GCR Questions I used to scaffold students’ examination of their common sense	Students’ ‘Seeing’ the complexities behind what they know
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Students who had ideas about ELs, but also recognized they had little to no experiences with ELs

The best way to teach content to an EL is to help them one on one. But, I don’t know why I know this because I never had ELs in my classes in school.	Did <i>you</i> benefit from one on one help? When? From who? How did they help you? When did you get the extra help (during, before, after school)? Who arranged the help? How did other students in your class get help when the needed it?	My teachers and I shared a language, so when I was stuck with a concept, I could ask for help. I could talk with my family about what I was learning and my mom would talk with the teacher when I was struggling. Students, like special education students, or kids who struggled with reading would be pulled out to get extra help. Sometimes just a quick bit of extra help was all I needed.
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Students who had ideas about ELs based on experiences that worked for them as mono-lingual English speakers

Immersion is the best way to learn a second language. I know this because it worked for me.	Why did immersion work for <i>you</i> ? When were you immersed? What resources did you have (linguistic, motivational, emotional, peer, etc) to support you through the immersion process?	Immersion worked for me because I wanted to learn the language, it was my choice. It worked because I had people around me that I could talk with in my first language. I knew how my first language worked –so I could make connections to learning a second language.
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We were learning a new language for a real purpose.

Students who had ideas about ELs based on what was practiced in school or society

ELs need to learn English first, before they can learn content. I know this because this is what happens in Arizona schools.	Why do schools in AZ approach teaching ELs in this way? Do other schools do it differently? What does learning only English and no content look like? Who teaches ELs the language and who teaches them the content? How do we know ELs have enough language to learn content? Can you separate content from language? How? How do you make up for the content lost while you are only teaching ELs language?	Schools might choose programs or methods based on resources (financial, personnel). Laws can limit schools. In schools, it's hard to help kids outside of the general student body population. Teachers aren't prepared. Sometimes it's hard to do it all – like teach content and language, and some things may be sacrificed for others (language over content).
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In general, students supported their ideas by saying that things “should” work a certain way, that things did work a certain way for them, or that things worked this way because this is “how it is in schools.” In what follows, I discuss each of these themes, explaining the ways I scaffolded students through this ‘seeing’ dimension of guided critical reflection.

***Gail: I never had experience with ELs, yet I still have ideas about how to teach them.*** Gail’s experience in the ‘seeing’ dimension illustrates how students often acknowledged they had a common sense about ELs, but were not sure where they got that understanding. This group of students knew about ELs, but could not initially place the experiences that shaped their understandings, based on their lack of

experience with language learners. This seemingly contradictory idea led to discussions about the ways teachers (or future teachers) take up practices out of their own educational experiences. For example, when thinking through the common sense notion that the best way to teach ELs is to give them one-on-one help, students decided they knew this because this was how they got help in school, or how they saw other students get help.

Once students identified the experiences that shaped their common sense, I helped them move forward with reexamining the specifics of those experiences in light of new learning. Students were perplexed as to how their experiences as English proficient students in English dominant classrooms could be beneficial for learning about how to teach ELs. However, I knew that these details of their schooling experiences were invaluable. It was critical for students to first identify why things did or did not work for them before I could ask them to make sense of how schooling experiences may be different for ELs.

***Marcus: I know this because it worked for me.*** Unlike students who were questioning not only where their ideas came from but also how their personal experiences could be relevant for teaching ELs, Marcus represents another theme in the ‘seeing’ dimension: students who based their understandings of ELs on personal experiences they deemed similar to ELs’ experiences. Although Marcus was not an EL, he appropriated the idea that immersion was the best way to learn a second language through his own experience learning Farsi in the military. Marcus knew immersion was the best approach because it worked for him.

To me, this sense of equating experiences in learning a first language or learning a foreign language to ELs experiences is a dangerous one. Teachers often make assumptions that first language acquisition and second language acquisition parallel each other, when most often they do not (de Jong & Harper, 2005). Yet, before students could examine how their experiences learning a native or foreign language compare and contrast to ELs' experiences, they needed to understand why their language learning experiences worked for them.

When provided the opportunity to peel back the layers of his experience, Marcus was able to identify the resources that allowed for his successful immersion experience: fluency in his native language, motivation to learn a second language, and a peer group that was going through the same experience. Other students identified additional reasons behind a successful immersion experience, including that immersion during travel-abroad experiences works partly because one wants to travel. In addition, they decided that immersion experiences worked for foreign exchange students because most foreign exchange students studied English before coming to the U.S., had a grasp of school culture/expectations, and a choice about being placed in the immersion experience. Through a close examination of these ideas, my preservice teachers began to identify resources that supported positive language learning experiences. I would refer to these ideas as I asked students to reframe their common sense about ELs on the 'learning' dimension of GCR.

***Sandra: This is what happens in schools in Arizona.*** Beyond placing too much or too little faith in personal experiences, Sandra represents another theme evidenced when I scaffolded students to examine their common sense about ELs: "I

know what I know because this is what is practiced in school.” This theme is similar to the idea that students appropriated ideas from their school experiences, but it is different because students were acknowledging that what they knew was rooted in acceptable school practices for ELs. Students justified these notions by stating, “This is how we do things in Arizona.” For instance, in regards to the idea that taking a class is the best way to learn a new language or that students should first learn English before learning content, students drew parallels to language policies presently affecting Arizona students.

These current educational practices for ELs promote English-only instruction, one-year timelines for becoming proficient in English, and English-first, content-second notions. Students adopted this common sense from school practices, without examining *why* schools utilized these practices. In Arizona, this is troublesome because school practices for ELs stem from restrictive language policies implemented through voter initiatives. Students asked, “Why would schools use a program that doesn’t work?” This gave me an opportunity to take them through the history of language and educational policy in Arizona. We used their assumption, “Schools do what is best for kids,” to critically examine the policies in place for ELs in Arizona schools. We discussed whether these policies are effective, and the challenges they pose for both ELs and the teachers who educate them.

Scaffolding students to examine their previous experiences was the final aspect of the ‘seeing’ dimension of GCR. Once they could articulate not only the common sense they had about ELs, but also critically examine why they held those notions, they were ready for the second dimension of GCR, ‘learning’.

## **The ‘Learning’ Dimension**

In the ‘learning’ dimension, I provided students with opportunities to gain new insights and understandings related to ELs. Through course materials, class discussions, and writing opportunities, we worked through framing and reframing our common sense about ELs through the lens of new learning. In this dimension of critical reflection, preservice teachers connected new learning to their common sense, and examined any differences between the two. I valued these tensions, because I saw them as opportunities for students to reflect and transform their ideas. Assertion #4 speaks to the way students worked through the learning dimension.

### **Assertion #4: Students Framed and Reframed their Common Sense about ELs Differently**

#### **Vignette #4: “So, do you really get beginning ELs in HS?”**

It’s the week after Thanksgiving break. In lieu of attending class during the holidays, I asked students to watch a video recorded last semester: ‘The BLE 220 Panel Event.’ The video documents seven panelists answering questions posed by students who were taking BLE 220 at the time. Although we did not have another live Panel Event planned for this semester, I valued the experience of students hearing about ELs from practitioners, so I asked them to watch the video and come to class with a written reflection. We spent the first bit of class talking through the video, discussing students’ reactions to these questions, ‘How was the panel video helpful to you?’, ‘Which panelist stood out to you and why?’, and ‘What connections did you make between what we are learning about and what the panelists had to say?’

Now, students are busy at their table groups, deciding on questions they will ask the guest speakers visiting our class this evening.

To compensate for the lack of a ‘being there’ experience, I asked two of the panelists from the video to join our class. Lisa, an EL specialist at a local school district, and Ricardo, a high school EL teacher, stand near the front of the room, waiting patiently to field inquiries as the students finalize their questions. After introducing Lisa and Ricardo to the class, I seat myself in the back of the class with my computer open so I can document the talk between students and our guest speakers. The researcher in me is relishing this opportunity to take some *in the moment* field notes. The teacher in me is enjoying the chance to see my students take center stage and facilitate the discussion as they pose questions to our guest speakers.

The conversation between students and guests is seamless. Students pose questions without raising their hands, but are careful not to speak over each other or our guests. My fingers fly across the keyboard as I try to keep up with the talk. The class wants to know, “What are the greatest challenges with teaching ELs?” and “Do schools have resources to help both teachers and ELs?” I can tell students raise these questions from a place of wanting to know what will happen for *them* in just a few years’ time. They listen intently, trying to catch a glimpse of their future work.

Students are raising critical questions, inviting the guests to speak from a place of honesty. At first, Ricardo and Lisa pause before answering, catching my eye before responding. I assure them they are free to speak as they wish, and just as I have said to students all semester, I say, “Feel free to be as honest as you comfortably can be.”



In response to what model works best, Ricardo tells the students about his first years teaching in Arizona before the four-hour model, “I liked it better when my ELs were with me for two periods of the day learning English but then went to other classes too. They had other ESL teachers teaching their science and math classes. So they had the chance to do both, learn English and take content classes. Not like what we have now. It’s all English. They are with me for four hours learning just English. It’s too much. They need to be able to take content classes to graduate and they need time with students who are not ELs.”

Shawn has been paying especially close attention to Ricardo, and takes a moment of quiet to ask, “In secondary schools - how often will you come across ELs in the beginning stages in regular classes, like math and science?”

The question strikes me as odd because we have talked for weeks about how ELs can be at any stage of language acquisition at any age. I thought I had been making some headway in countering students’ common sense notion that ELs enter school in kindergarten and know English by the time they get to high school. I shoot Shawn a look that says, *Really?* but he doesn’t notice. His eyes are fixed on Ricardo.

“You mean now that we have the four-hour model?” Ricardo asks.

Shawn clarifies, “Yeah. I’m gonna be a math teacher and I just wonder, like, how often will I have ELs in my class that don’t know English at all or only know a little bit?”

Without a change of expression, Ricardo matter-of-factly responds, “All the time. It’s very frequent. Of course, it can depend on the demographics of the

school, but many times you will have beginning ELs. Math and Science, those are the two classes ELs have to take in addition to ELD. So, yes, as a math teacher, you will have ELs who are still in ELD, and some of them will be beginners, and maybe not know any English.”

As Ricardo turns away from Shawn to listen to the next question, Shawn’s gaze stays fixed on the front of the room but he isn’t looking at anyone in particular. It’s not a look of disbelief, but one of dawning understanding. He’s taking it in. I imagine puzzle pieces falling into place.

**Discussion of assertion #4.** The ‘learning’ dimension was where students framed and reframed their common sense in light of new learning. Within this aspect of GCR, students viewed their understandings about ELs through the lens of new ideas or experiences that lay outside of their common sense and examined the tensions between the two. After moving through the course each week with students and looking back over a semester of data, I have come to know that students worked through tensions in different ways. First and foremost, like Shawn in the vignette above, students needed time, and repeated encounters with information to make sense of the ideas for themselves. The cyclical nature of the course and multiple engagements I built in supported students in reframing an idea over time. Other times, students needed to engage with the tensions in an analytic manner, weighing ideas in relation to points for and against each idea. Finally, some students made an emotional connection to new ideas and worked through tensions intuitively.

***Shawn: I didn't see it at first.*** Just as my vignette illustrates, sometimes students needed multiple engagements with course material before they took up a tension and considered transforming their understandings. Although I could not believe that Shawn was asking a question that as a class we had discussed for weeks, he was. We had discussed the stages of language proficiency. We had read articles about high school students at varying abilities in English. During the Strategy Presentation (a course learning experience) Shawn presented a strategy to the class and even illustrated how he would modify the use of *Hands on Learning* to benefit students across all stages of language development in his future secondary math classroom (Observation notebook, November 16, 2010). Yet, it was not until Ricardo answered his question that he really took up the tension and started to renegotiate his understanding about ELs being of high school age and possibly not knowing English. This example demonstrates how the cyclical nature of the course supported students in taking up and working through tensions between their common sense about ELs and new learning. It also shows that GCR takes time.

Besides the cyclical nature of course topics, the routine of regularly reflecting on ideas supported students in acknowledging and working through tensions. I asked students to complete weekly Quick-Writes, which allowed them to regularly reflect on their learning. Students became comfortable with the practice, knowing that the ideas they wrote down at the end of each class were never seen as right or wrong, but were a way to document and further make sense of their thinking. Quick-Writes were powerful for students because, as Jacob wrote, they provided “a time capsule for us. Whether a week later or six years later, I will always be able to

go back to that thought and think about how I (*sic*) have grown” (Jacob, Midterm, October 19, 2010). This weekly routine of reflecting, partnered with opportunities to go back (to both Quick-Writes and their IRQ) allowed students to see their learning over time. Sometimes, insights came each week, other times, ideas needed to ferment. Either way, multiple engagements with content and multiple engagements with reflecting provided students with opportunities across time to frame and reframe their understandings.

***Raad: I needed to know the facts on both sides.*** Sometimes when working through tensions between their common sense and new learning, students wanted to know the facts. Two classroom experiences made a noticeable impact on students’ willingness to take up tensions and work through them in a logical manner. The BLE/SEI Mock Trial and The Program Model Experience provided an experience for students to understand all sides of an argument in order to present their learning. In the mock trial, I divided the class into three groups, those in favor of SEI, those in favor of bilingual (BLE) education, and the jury. Raad played the expert witness for the BLE side, Berta Rosa. Later, he described how the mock trial helped him see both sides of an argument,

The mock trial...helped me the most as a learner for numerous reasons. First of all, I had to play Berta Rosa, so I had to not only act as if I was a female, but I actually had to be someone else. I had to be a teacher, I had to be opinionated, and I needed to be biased for Bilingual Programs. In other words, I had to make the character credible and come to life...I had to, whether it was my opinion in real life or not, figure out everything that Berta believed and bilingual programs and why she accepted them...I also needed to know about Kevin Clark’s stance on the issues in case someone from the opposing side critiqued BLE. I had to know the facts on both sides to present to pretend to be Berta. (Raad, Midterm, October 19, 2010).

Just as Raad appreciated the chance to examine an issue from all sides in the mock trial, the Program Model Gallery Walk created an experience for the same analytical approach to reframing ideas. In this learning experience, I randomly assigned small groups of students to present a specific program model for ELs. I told students that their presentations needed to include the pros and cons for the model, as it affected teachers, students, and schools. Some students had to present and defend a model that they may or may not have believed in (such as Sink or Swim or Bilingual Late Exit). Even though it was just an exercise, students had to stretch and reframe their understandings, to advocate for their model, even for a short time. As Brooklyn wrote later, “we needed to know everything about our model, the good and the bad. Even though I don’t really like late exit bilingual, but I was forced to think about what was positive about the model and how it was good for students and teachers” (Midterm, October 19, 2010). While my pushing students to understand ideas from multiple views may not have resulted in a change of understanding about program models for ELs, it gave students practice in framing and reframing their understandings.

***Genna: I would never have known.*** Along with multiple exposures and a facts-based approach to framing and reframing their common sense in light of new learning, some students took opportunities to reframe their common sense because of emotional reactions to course learning. Genna described this theme: “After reading James Crawford’s book, I was exposed to the vast amount of difficulties ELs face in schools. I would never have known how difficult it can be to design programs, get resources, and find materials to help EL” (Genna, Final, December 14,

2010). For her, this exposure to new ideas was an emotional experience. After learning about the challenges ELs face in school, some students reframed what they knew about language learners from a place of empathy. Along with course readings, students also responded emotionally to videos shared in class, especially, in the encounter *Immersion Film*, which I describe in the next vignette.

Along with course materials, interactions with others also sparked emotional reactions from students. Whether they were interacting with their peers, guest speakers, or me, discourse proved to be another way students emotionally took up tensions during the learning dimension of GCR. Students did not always agree with one other during discussions. These opportunities were some of the best indications that students were taking up their tensions and reframing their common sense about ELs in the learning dimension of GCR. Charlie explained in her midterm how she enjoyed the class discussions, stating, “I think I usually know a little about each topic, but I like hearing other people’s thoughts. It helps me evolve my thinking” (Midterm, October 19, 2010).

As students imagined being an EL or teaching ELs, they responded affectively to the difficulties in those situations. These imaginings translated to a personal and powerful understanding—even though many students had limited or no personal experiences with ELs, they tried to imagine the hardships ELs face. Some students began the course with an attitude of, “those students don’t know the language, so it’s their problem,” but I saw a shift in this attitude as students emotionally engaged with the idea that they would have ELs in their classrooms. Once they understood how much a teacher’s disposition mattered for supporting

ELs, students made an evident change in the way they discussed their future role as teachers.

Students' framing and reframing their common sense in light of course experiences and new learning constituted their reflective work on the 'learning' dimension. To summarize, students in the class took up the process of reframing their understandings in different ways. First, some needed time and repeated encounters with information in order to reframe their common sense. Another way students reframed their understandings was in an analytic manner, considering ideas in relation to points for and against each idea. Lastly, students reframed their common sense through emotional reactions (such as sympathy, sorrow, frustration, or disbelief) to course content. After framing and reframing their common sense, students began work on the acting dimension.

### **The 'Acting' Dimension**

The 'acting' dimension of GCR is the place in the reflection process where students' transform their understandings. The action is thus a change in thought. As discussed in Chapter 2, I refer to changes in students' common sense as 'renewed sense'. I theorize that renewed sense is foundationally students' common sense that they have critically reflected on and manipulated in some way. The Final Self Evaluation was an assignment I designed to encourage students to examine their original responses on the IRQ. I asked students for a written response that explained how their initial reactions on the IRQ had evolved, discussing whether they had strengthened, challenged, or changed their ideas. Ultimately, it was this assignment that best served to show me students' renewed sense about ELs.

On the Final, all students reported they had changed their understandings about ELs since the start of the course. However, the ways in which ideas had changed and to what degree varied across students. Additionally, because the process of GCR is ongoing, some students indicated that their ideas were still under construction at the course's end. In this final assertion, I further illustrate how students began to empathize with ELs and share how students hinted at their willingness, or lack thereof, to continue reflecting.

**Assertion #5: Students Evidenced a 'Renewed Sense' about ELs**

**Vignette #5: It's just not fair.**

Twelve minutes doesn't seem like a long time, but tonight, it's just the amount of time needed for *Immersion Film* to offer students a glimpse into the educational experience of Moises, a recently-arrived EL in a 4<sup>th</sup> grade classroom. Watching the film, we hear the intentionally broken audio clips and struggle to understand what the teacher is saying. We see the print on the screen blur and feel the struggle Moises goes through as he attempts to read the directions on the standardized math test. We see that the well-intended use of visuals is a distraction as Moises tries to imagine why the person in the math word problem is running with blocks, mistakenly envisioning building blocks for city blocks. We feel his shame as we see the other students work through the test as he is stuck, wanting to move forward, but not sure how.

The video ends and students start writing. Before the film began, I explained that when it was over, we would do an 'in their shoes' narrative piece. Each student would pick a character from the film and write a reflection from that character's



perspective. On the board is a list of characters from the film: Moises, Moises' Mom, the teacher, the principal, the older brother/Janitor, and the bully. As the increase in table talk tells me most have finished, I walk to the middle of the room and say, "Okay, as you finish writing, turn to the person next to you –if they are done, start discussing, 'which character's perspective did you take on and why?' Then share what you wrote, if you're willing. You can read it aloud to your partner, or just trade cards. I'll give you a few minutes and then I hope some of you will be willing to share your piece with the class."

Students turn to a familiar face around them and start talking. Some trade cards and read quietly, after a quick, "I picked...because...Who did you pick?" discussion. Others take turns reading aloud to each other. I listen for particulars, but they are hard to decipher over the noise. At most, I get a glimpse of the characters represented around the room; many picked the teacher and just as many picked Moises. I hear a few reading from the mom's perspective, one student reading from the older brother's, and one reading from the perspective of the bully.

After about four minutes, I ask students to wrap up discussions with their partner and think about sharing their piece with the class as a whole. "Now that you have had a chance to share your writing with a friend, who is willing to read theirs aloud for the class?" Hands don't immediately shoot up, but that's not a bad sign. It's week 15 out of a 17-week class and we have moved away from calling on raised hands, when they're ready, someone will speak up. "When you're willing, just read your piece, we'll listen. Then someone else can read. I won't interrupt – you guys can just share."

Shawn starts, “I understand math and know how to calculate problems, but I cannot understand the questions. My teacher gives instruction real fast and it’s difficult to understand all the time. I want to do good in school and want extra help, but my teacher is very busy and doesn’t have the time to help me outside of class. Everyone in my class thinks that I’m not smart. I feel helpless when I’m taking the test, ‘cause everyone else is doing very well and I’m stuck. All the information that could help me on the walls has been covered up. My teacher won’t let me use my Spanish dictionary. I feel like I can’t win.”

I keep my head down, encouraging students to take the lead in negotiating the sharing. After a few seconds of silence, Ashland follows with another piece from Moises’ perspective, “I remember when we left home. We came here because my mother said that in America we would have a chance for a better life. She wants me to do well in school so that we can have that. Sometimes I think I’m doing well. I try so hard. I look up the words I don’t know in my dictionary, I work out the problems in math. But, I still feel like pieces are missing. Taking this test today isn’t making me feel any better. I like math. I thought I did really well in math. But this test makes me not so sure. Maybe I am not smart enough. Maybe I did not study enough. It’s all so confusing to me. I *do* know math, I know I do, I just can’t read this test ‘cause it’s in English. It’s not fair.”

I feel the silence between readings; it’s not hasty, it hangs in the air. For a second, this strikes me as odd. Even though class is almost over, no one is packing up; students are not restless like they usually become at this time of night. Then I realize that the power of these narratives is keeping us quiet and still.

One more student begins to read; Marcus offers a narrative from the teacher's perspective, "I feel like Moises is being cheated. He is very bright and is one of my most promising students. But, the Spanish/English barrier is causing problems for both of us. I am trying everything that I possibly can to help him but I am at a loss. I know what would be helpful, books in Spanish, tests in Spanish, but I am so restricted. I went to the principal for help, but all I keep getting is what we can't do, we can't use Spanish in the classroom, we can't use books in Spanish. Well, what can we do? How am I suppose to teach without the necessary tools? I don't know what to do. Moises and I are both very defeated."

**Discussion of vignette #5.** At the end of the course, most students had transformed their understandings about ELs and many attributed their 'renewed sense' to a newfound empathy for ELs. Throughout our 17 weeks together, students began imagining what it is like to be an EL, picturing the struggles ELs go through and envisioning a teacher's responsibility in the process. Course learning experiences like the one in the vignette above, coupled with opportunities for reflection, supported students in transforming their common sense about ELs. This action, a change in thought, was the last dimension in the GCR process.

At the start of this chapter, I framed the discussion of preservice teachers' common sense at the beginning of the course by using three topics from the IRQ assignment: "Who are ELs?" "What is the best way to learn a second language?" and, "What are the best ways to teach content to a student who doesn't understand English?" Here, I use the same topics to frame a discussion of themes related to students' 'renewed sense' about ELs at the end of the class. I demonstrate the ways

the class moved from generalities and stereotypes to more nuanced and specific explanations of these ideas. Again, I use specific quotes from individual students to illustrate themes that emerged across the class as a whole.

***Charlie: What comes to mind now, is someone who is trying to learn English.*** Students transformed their common sense about who language learners are, leaving behind the narrow and deficit views they espoused on the IRQ at the beginning of the semester. To the question, *When you hear the words English Language learner, what comes to mind?*, students originally described ELs as Spanish-speaking immigrants who could not speak English. By the end of the course, they had broadened these notions,

What comes to mind now is completely different...when I first heard the words EL I had a tunnel vision state of mind and only thought of one type of learner...I understand now that an EL is not just a Spanish speaking human being, but it can be any person (in our case school age children) from any type of culture and language, from any part of the world (even the U.S.) who is learning English in a school setting. (Jacob, Final, December 14, 2010)

Students recognized that where they lived, grew up, and went to school shaped their common sense definitions of ELs. Students' renewed sense reflected that although ELs are learning English, they are at different stages of the language acquisition process, and that learning English involves both social and academic language forms. Furthermore, students recognized "ELs aren't just learning English, they are learning the culture and the American ways of communicating" (Jacob, Final, December 14, 2010).

Students moved away from defining ELs in terms of what ELs could not do (speak English) or did not have (proficiency in English) and talked about ELs *as*

*learners*. This important shift in thinking allowed preservice teachers to consider ELs' unique learning needs, the resources ELs bring to learning experiences, and the challenges ELs face as they work to acquire English proficiency and content. As Heather reflected,

the most important thing I learned, that I hope to take with me, is that ELs are LEARNERS - which I overlooked at first. I was blinded by the idea that they didn't know English, and I did not acknowledge the learner part. (Final, December 14, 2010)

Students also concluded that when they think of ELs, they think of students who deserve the same opportunities as their English-speaking peers, face formidable challenges as they work to learn the language and the content, and need teachers who make them feel comfortable and motivate them to learn. As illustrated in the vignette above, students' renewed sense about ELs was empathetically transformed to include not only what ELs lacked, but what they needed from a teacher and deserved from an education.

***Shawn: Language development takes interaction, bilingual support, and scaffolding.*** Shawn's quote about language development summarizes three themes in preservice teachers' renewed sense about the best approaches for SLA, 1) ELs would benefit from time with English speaking peers, 2) bilingual support would be an advantage for ELs as they are learning English, and 3) ELs need a teacher who will support and scaffold them through the process.

Students' renewed sense about SLA reflected a reexamination of the word 'immersion,' a term that littered students' initial ideas concerning the best ways for learning a second language. Some, like Reily, clarified their use of the word,

I still believe in this [immersion], but I want to make clear that I don't mean immersion like we have learned about it in our class...what I mean is that you have to be around native speakers and get a feel for the language...but being around the language isn't enough. (Final, December 14, 2010)

In learning about Arizona's immersion model for educating ELs, which separates ELs from their English speaking peers, preservice teachers decided that the social component of being around others who speak the language you are trying to learn is essential to SLA. Students expanded their ideas of immersion and distanced themselves from the narrow view that being submersed is the "only" way to learn a language.

Marcus illustrated this point in his words, "immersion is unfair for the student and a total lack of effort on the education system" (Marcus, Final, December 14, 2010). Students renewed their understanding about SLA by explaining that combining different aspects of SLA would be best, "being around the language (English) and also having the help of the native language seems like a very successful way of helping ELs" (Krissi, Final, December 14, 2010).

Students' renewed sense evidenced value for a multi-dimensional approach to SLA and a belief that ELs should have opportunities to practice English with English-speaking peers and get support and content knowledge in their native language. In addition, students renewed sense about SLA demonstrated affective considerations: "I would much rather recommend BLE to all students so that they can learn a new language without being completely overwhelmed and they can still practice their native language so that they do not lose it" (Genna, Final, December 14, 2010). Students transformed their common sense about SLA by moving beyond the idea that ELs need to learn English and learn it quickly. Their renewed sense

about SLA valued ELs' native language as both a resource for learning and a way to comfortably support ELs in their efforts to learn English.

In relation to the affective aspects of learning a second language, students' ideas about SLA expanded to include the teacher's role in the process. As Lynn summarized,

Most importantly, I think that in order to learn a new language you need a teacher who is patient, a teacher who understands your previous culture and who appreciates and understands that knowledge and experience you already have to offer. (Final, December 14, 2010)

At the beginning of the course, students wrote about the best ways to learn a second language from their own experiences as a learner. At course end, some students' expressed their renewed sense in terms of the roles they would play as teachers in the language learning process of their future ELs.

Although students described aspects of SLA that the literature agrees are generally helpful (being around others who speak the language you are trying to learn, having support in your native language, and a caring and resourceful teacher), most students concluded that the best approach for SLA cannot be completely determined until you know your EL. As Heather noted, "Teachers need to have a variety of learning techniques to help the many different types of learners acquire English" (Final, December 14, 2010). Moving away from the common sense that there was one way (Immersion! The best and only way!), preservice teachers complicated their answers to say it is hard to state the "best" way to learn a second language until you know your student. This was evidence that although students had transformed their common sense, they were also open to manipulating their renewed sense once they began teaching ELs in the classroom.

*Karla: There are so many ways to teach content to an EL, it's about finding the right way for that individual learner.* Just as students described that approaches for acquiring a second language should be determined on an individual basis, the idea that learning is personal became a theme in students' renewed sense about teaching content. When students reflected on the IRQ question, "What is the best way to teach content to an EL?" they problematized the notion that there could be one "best" way, noting that differences in student language proficiency, students' background knowledge, and teacher preparedness require teachers to decide on best practices for teaching content within a given context. Reily's response on her Final illustrates this theme,

My new response: I don't believe there is a best way to teach content to a student who doesn't understand English...Our course materials and class discussions talk about different ways to accommodate, teach, and engage ELs, but there will be stumbling blocks...the best way to teach content to a student who doesn't understand English is to look at all the options, look at the different angles, and don't rely on just one method. (Final, December 14, 2010)

Students gave evidence that their ideas were still evolving. They expanded on their original ideas that the best ways to deliver content was through visuals and hands-on strategies. They added that strategies for teaching content should correlate to a student's level of English proficiency, should incorporate a student's background knowledge and experience, and when possible, utilize ELs' native language for support.

When reframing these understandings about how to teach content, many preservice teachers noted that learning about the different types of ELs and the



different stages ELs go through as they acquire language should be a prerequisite for deciding how best to teach content to ELs. As Raad said,

We have to know what types of ELs we are dealing with to be able to know how they learn content best. In other words, I used to think that all ELs were the same and just learned the same way, and I made that generalization very prematurely (Final, December 14, 2010).

In these words, Raad showed how students' ideas related to teaching content had expanded to include these new understandings.

Students also began to recognize and appreciate that ELs brought different resources to the learning experiences. The *Immersion Film* helped students in the class acknowledge that although Moises did not know English, he did know math, "I do know math, I know I do, I just can't read this test 'cause it's in English" (Audio recording, November 30, 2010). The realization that ELs bring background knowledge and experiences to the learning context led students to say that teachers should know about their students' background and culture in order to teach them content.

Many preservice teachers also added bilingual supports to their toolbox of strategies for teaching content. Sandra explains,

My original response was 'visuals and examples that are easily identifiable without the requirement of language'. Looking back, I realize that my response was a little narrow minded. My response fits rather well if you are considering teaching content to ELs in Arizona, where they (teachers) are not allowed to fall back on their (students') native language. But, seeing as it's not set in stone and things could possibly change, it would be better if there were more options. Teaching content to students who don't understand English can be pretty simple, if you as a teacher have access to resources in a students' first language (materials or if you spoke the language yourself). (Final, December 14, 2010)

The idea that a teacher could teach content through a students' native language was a groundbreaking one for many preservice teachers. At the course's end, students shared their realization that bilingual instruction could allow ELs to maintain content learning while acquiring English. Students recognized the benefit of this approach while simultaneously questioning the English-only policies in Arizona. However, students willingly talked about the benefits of using an ELs' native language, even if it just meant a teacher learning a few key words in an EL's language to translate key concepts.

Students' responses on their Final Self-Evaluation provided many examples of their renewed sense about ELs and evidenced the particular ways they manipulated their common sense to include course learning. To summarize, preservice teachers expanded their narrow and deficit definitions of ELs. They moved beyond "immersion" and "take a class" as the best ways to learn a second language to value the role of a students' native language in acquiring English and appreciate the teacher's role in supporting the SLA process. Regarding the best ways to teach content to ELs, students expanded on their original ideas of "visuals" and "hands-on" to include bilingual support, utilizing an ELs' background knowledge, and ultimately, deciding on what is best – once you get to know your student.

## **Conclusion**

In this second of two findings chapter, I focused on the ways students in my course used the process of GCR to surface, examine, and transform their common sense related to ELs. Before I looked at the impact of GCR on students' common sense, I first had to understand the ideas students had when they started the course.

Through the IRQ and our early class discussions, I found themes across students' common sense related to ELs. First, students defined ELs in narrow ways, focusing on what ELs lacked (abilities to read, write, and speak in English). They believed that the best ways to learn a second language were to be surrounded by those who speak the target language so that one is forced to learn it, or to take a language class that emphasizes drills and repetition. They thought that in order to teach content to an EL, a teacher could be successful by using visual aids and hands-on activities.

Students' acknowledging their common sense was part of the first dimension of GCR. In this 'seeing' dimension, while students were comfortable sharing what they knew, it was more of a challenge for them to examine the reasons behind their understandings. However, with some scaffolding, students examined how their common sense stemmed from their personal experiences or experiences they saw happening around them. Students thought it was contradictory that even though they had little to no experiences with ELs, they still had ideas regarding teaching and learning related to ELs. They realized the impact of their education and life experiences on what they thought would be best for ELs. Students realized that because experiences worked for them, they assumed such experiences would also work for ELs. Students also came to see that sometimes they help common sense notions because schools and society practice those ideas.

On the 'learning' dimension of GCR, students framed and reframed their common sense in light of new learning in the course. There were three main ways students reframed their understandings. First, students needed time and repeated encounters with information. In addition, some needed to engage with new

information in an analytic way, weighing ideas in relation to points for and against each idea. Lastly, students made emotional connections to course learning, reframing their common sense intuitively.

On the 'acting' dimension, students transformed their common sense about ELs. Students' responses on their Final Self-Evaluation evidenced renewed sense about ELs. Themes across their renewed sense illustrated that students expanded their narrow definition of ELs. They moved beyond immersion as the best for acquiring a second language. They added to their beginning ideas of visual and hands-on, including bilingual support and utilizing a student's background knowledge as the best ways to teach content to an EL.

Data demonstrated that not only did students renew their common sense about ELs, but also just as importantly, some students recognized they were still learning. Several preservice teachers' comments demonstrated that they would continue to reflect on their understandings as they progressed in their learning regarding ELs and began work with language learners in classrooms. This demonstrates the cyclical process of GCR. Renewed sense, just like common sense, is malleable. As students move forward and experience new learning and new tensions related to what they know, the process of critical reflection can begin again.

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

At the onset of this study, I set out to examine and report on the challenges of preparing teachers for English learners (ELs) in the context of state-mandated coursework. The passage of Arizona's Proposition 203, along with Arizona's Board Rule R7-2-613 (2006), created an opportunity and a reason for me to examine what actually happens when colleges of teacher education attempt to prepare *all* teachers for ELs. This is especially relevant within curricular mandates that neglect content related to preservice teachers' dispositions towards, experiences with, and understandings about ELs. To that end, I designed and implemented a practitioner inquiry study exploring the use of Guided Critical Reflection (GCR) as both a process and a tool for preservice teachers to surface and transform their common sense about language learners. Specifically, my research questions were,

1. What are preservice teachers' common sense about teaching and learning related to ELs, as evidenced in their participation in the BLE 220 course?
2. How does critical guided reflection transform preservice teachers' common sense about ELs?
3. What is my role as an educator in creating opportunity for critical examination and transformation of preservice teachers' understandings?

In this final chapter, I summarize conclusions from this study and discuss my contributions to theory and practice related to the use of reflection in preparing

teachers for ELs. I explore the implications for policy specifically related to Arizona's mandated SEI endorsement and curriculum. I discuss the limitations related to this practitioner inquiry study. Finally, I explore insights and implications for future practice and study regarding the use of reflection in preparing teachers for EL.

### **Conclusions**

In this study, I examined themes across my group of students that evidenced the role of GCR in transforming their common sense about ELs. I found that GCR was a tool for preservice teachers to acknowledge, examine, and transform their common sense about ELs. When guided through the dimensions of GCR: seeing, learning, and acting, preservice teachers transformed their common sense about ELs into a renewed sense, evidencing ideas related to course learning.

At the onset of the course, preservice teachers had limited and narrow understandings about ELs that were rooted in their school and life experiences. They believed that ELs were Mexican immigrants who could not speak English, that the best way to learn a second language was immersion, and that the use of visuals would make it easy to teach content to ELs. It was important for students to acknowledge their common sense about ELs, but I also needed to scaffold them through an examination of how they came acquire their knowledge. Once we began to examine where their common sense stemmed from, students discovered the contradictory notion that although they had little to no experience with ELs, they still had ideas about who ELs were and the best ways to teach them. They began to

see that they valued their common sense because they saw schools and society practice it, or because it worked for them.

Throughout the course, preservice teachers reframed their common sense differently to incorporate new learning about ELs. For some, the cyclical nature of course content and exposure to ideas repeatedly over time proved helpful for transforming their common sense about ELs. Other students needed to see the facts on all sides before they made a change in their thinking. Some took up emotional reactions to course content, which motivated them to stretch their common sense in light of new learning. At the end of the course, preservice teachers began to empathize with what it meant to be a language learner, evidencing a renewed sense about ELs.

By the conclusion of the course, not only were students able to describe their ‘renewed sense’ but equally as important, some expressed they were still evolving in their understandings. This suggests the possible potential that for some, the reflection process will continue. Although the transformation of common sense into a renewed sense was the final dimension of GCR, these students understood the process to be cyclical and ongoing. They noted that as they move forward and experience new learning and new tensions related to what they know, the process of critical reflection should begin again.

It is critical to point out my own role in helping students take up the process of GCR and transforming their common sense about ELs into a renewed sense. I designed the course around the use of reflection, incorporating reflective work into course assignments and class discussions. I pushed students to acknowledge and

examine their common sense related to ELs and offered new information to support the transformation of their common sense. I took seriously my role to create a comfortable learning environment, value students common sense (even when I disagreed with it), and guide them through the dimensions of GCR. Additionally, it was not sufficient for me to take up these roles: I too, had to reflect. Although I designed the course around reflection and utilized practices to support students' reflective work, I believe that my preservice teachers took up the process of GCR because it was part of the structure of the course, and because I too, was reflecting on my work as a teacher while I guided them to reflect as learners.

### **Contributions to Theory and Practice**

The findings from this study contribute to theory and practice related to preparing *all* teachers for ELs. As a teacher researcher, I value blurring the theory/practice boundaries and therefore have chosen to discuss my contribution to these two areas under the same heading.

Traditionally, research and literature on the use of reflection in teacher preparation focuses on preservice teachers examining the puzzles and problems that arise in their classroom practices, stating that the reflection process results in a change in practice (Dewey, 1933; Schon, 1983). However, in this study, preservice teachers were not yet practicing in schools and could not reflect on problems in their practice. Thus, I theorized the “action” portion of reflection as a change in thought. My study makes unique contributions to the theories and practices related to the use of reflection in teacher preparation.



First, this study illustrates that opportunities for reflection do not have to naturally arise from problems in practice, but that the reflective process can be similarly valuable when a knowledgeable and reflective teacher educator guides preservice teachers to use their common sense as they work through the dimensions of reflection: seeing, learning, and acting. I have shown that when reflective practices are foundational to course learning experiences, and students have multiple opportunities to practice reflection, the absence of ‘practice’ does not hinder reflective work.

Although reflection is typically understood to result in a change in practice, in the last dimension of GCR, the action preservice teachers made was a change in thought. In this study, preservice teachers were reflecting on their common sense and any transformation to their common sense evidenced the action of reflection. I make the case that because preservice teachers were not reflecting on their practices as teachers, but instead on their common sense regarding teaching and learning related to ELs, that a change in understandings is appropriate evidence of their reflective work. Additionally, because thoughts in action shape our world, we can begin the process of change by transforming our understandings.

This study proves that reflection can be a powerful tool for preservice teachers to examine the experiences that shaped their understandings. While it is a common practice in teacher preparation programs to start learning with the question, ‘What do you know about...?’ when preparing teachers (who are mostly white, middle class, monolingual English speakers) for diverse student populations, we need to go beyond asking students to acknowledge what they know, and move towards

supporting students to critically examine *why* they know what they know. Honoring preservice teachers' common sense as a valid starting point for learning is not enough. As others have suggested (Banks, 1998; Harding, 1991; Villegas & Lucas, 2002)) it is important that preservice teachers develop a "Sociocultural consciousness", realizing that "the worldview they may have grown up with is not universal but is greatly influenced by their life experiences and aspects of their cultural, gender, race, ethnicity, and social-class background" (Banks, et al, 2005, p. 253). GCR is a way that teacher educators can support preservice teachers to critically examine the ways cultural and racial identities shape what they know.

This study points out the power of students' struggle to articulate the reasons behind their common sense. It was easy for students to say what they knew, but being asked to explain "why they knew what they knew" was a new experience for them. But it was a necessary one. It was this self-examination of students' common sense that helped them recognize that people's different experiences give them different understandings. This seems rudimentary, but it is not. As Nieto (2000) cautions, "Teaching language minority students successfully means above all challenging one's attitude towards the students, their languages and cultures, and their communities. Anything short of this will result in repeating the pattern of failure that currently exists" (p. 196). While she was talking about the importance of classroom teachers challenging their understandings about their EL students, I believe the same critical examination is necessary when preparing teachers for ELs. My preservice teachers entered the course with many assumptions, not only about who ELs are, but also about teaching and learning. I valued these assumptions

because I understood them as students' common sense, based on their own school and life experiences. But my value for students' common sense did not prevent me from leaving these notions unchallenged. As Sleeter (2008) asserts, teacher educators must challenge preservice teachers' beginning understandings about diverse learners. Without such prompts for examination, I believe that preservice teachers actions based on their common sense can result in routine practices that are harmful for ELs.

I assert that my work in guiding preservice teachers to reflect on their understandings provided an important opportunity for them to develop reflective habits before they begin work with children. I scaffolded students through the process of acknowledging what they knew and examining why they knew it. I provided opportunities for them to frame and reframe their common sense in light of course learning. I asked students to consider the ways in which their common sense had evolved, the ways in which it had been strengthened or challenged throughout the course and why. This practice enabled students to become increasingly comfortable with the vulnerability inherent in reflection. At the course's end, some students explained that their thinking was still in process, and that they recognized the importance of continuing to learn about ELs. They knew that as they began their work in classrooms with language learners, they would continue to evolve their understandings. I attribute their commitment to future reflective work the fact that reflection was foundation to our course and to the fact that I supported and guided students through the process of reflection; students are better able to reflect on their own, because we first practiced reflection together (Vygotsky, 1978).

## Implications for Policy

I recently met up with a fellow teacher educator, a woman who was my teacher when I was an undergraduate pursuing my degree in elementary education/English as a Second Language. She has since become a mentor to me, and we recently discussed my dissertation work over coffee. I was sharing with her my frustrations about Arizona's context for preparing teachers and the limiting, mandated curricular framework deemed appropriate for preparing all teachers for ELs. I asked her, "When is it gonna change?" To which she replied, "Amy, *it's* not going to change, *we* have to change it." She was right.

It is extremely unlikely that Arizona will change its mandate that every teacher must earn an SEI endorsement as part of the certification process. Equally unlikely is that ADE will redesign the mandated curricular framework for the SEI teacher preparation courses. Knowing this, I assert that it is not enough to *hope* for change, we have to *make* change. This study is significant to policy because it illustrates the ways I, as a teacher educator, had agency in the policy implementation process (Corson, 1999).

I enacted the mandated curriculum in a way that allowed me to stay within the confines of the policy while simultaneously critiquing what the state was asking me to teach. Through my selection of course resources, materials, and learning experiences, I found ways to expose preservice teachers to models and approaches outside of Arizona's restrictive English-only model, ones that value the linguistic and cultural resources ELs bring to school. Additionally, my use of GCR as a means for learning in the course enabled me to address the ADE content in a way that

encouraged critical thinking in my preservice teachers. I enacted Arizona's curricular framework in a way that reflected my bias and personality—in a way that I assert it is necessary for other teacher educators to do.

Teacher educators must critique and expand Arizona's model for teacher preparation. There are too many disparities between the SEI teacher preparation curriculum and the literature on preparing teachers for ELs. As Lillie and colleagues (2010) found in their study, a teacher's preparation impacts how s/he enact language policy. They found that teachers who held a BLE or an ESL endorsement were more likely to respect the linguistic and cultural resources ELs bring to class, subvert the English-only policy, and focus on communicative competence rather than constant error correction. Conversely, teachers who were prepared through the SEI endorsement coursework focused on error correction, strictly enforced the English-only rules, and did not utilize ELs' linguistic and cultural knowledge in the classroom.

My study offers implications for how teacher educators can present SEI endorsement courses in ways that foster the attitudes, dispositions, and approaches typically found in teachers who have been prepared through bilingual or ESL endorsement coursework. It is possible to implement the SEI mandate in a way that values the resources ELs brings to school and honors ELs' educational rights. In this way, teacher educators can work to change the current content surrounding the education ELs in Arizona. While the SEI mandates are probably here to stay, it is essential that teacher educators continue to offer this required coursework from a critical perspective.

When teacher educators critique and expand on the SEI curricular framework, taking agency to enact the policy in thoughtful, local ways, I believe that preservice teachers are thus empowered to critique and expand on the state's model for educating ELs. As my study shows, preservice teachers were able to move away from viewing ELs as a problem, and began to value ELs' native language and culture as a resource for new learning. At the end of the course, they talked about how they wanted to find ways to incorporate a student's L1 into their future classrooms, to enhance learning experiences on academic and affective levels. Students learned to question the notion that ELs can become proficient in English after a single year (as suggested by Arizona's model). They also questioned the worth of English proficiency when it comes at the cost of content area learning (math, science, social studies).

While my preservice teachers were familiar with Arizona's SEI model for language learners, my work to expose them to models and approaches outside of what is currently happening in Arizona enabled them to recognize the lack and begin to envision ways they could expand on Arizona's model. My own agency to critically deliver course content, paved the way for students to discover their own agency as teachers.

### **Limitations**

Every study has limitations, and I highlight four in my work. First, this study reported on the use of GCR to transform preservice teachers understandings related to ELs in a single class. As Mills and Ballantyne (2010) suggest, relying on one stand-alone course to address preservice teachers' attitudes and dispositions towards

issues of diversity is problematic. They suggest that in order for preservice teachers to change their dispositions, entire programs (as opposed to single, fragmented courses) should be structured around promoting more socially just dispositions (p. 454). While the data from this study showed that students took up the process of GCR and transformed their understandings within the course, it did not examine whether or not preservice teachers maintained reflective work as they moved into other coursework. In this way, it is unclear to what extent the dispositions and understandings of my preservice teachers will continue to evolve, or if, once they begin working with ELs in schools, they will critically reflect on their own practices.

Another possible limitation in this study is one that is present in most teacher researcher work: the power differential between students and the teacher (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Huberman, 1996). This is a common critique among this kind of research—that student work may not reveal their ‘real’ thoughts, but only what they feel the teacher wants to see. I designed the course around reflective work, asking students to reflect on their common sense in order to complete course assignments and engage in course learning experiences. One might argue that preservice teachers evidenced a transformation of their common sense because they had to, in order to do well. My students knew reflection was important to me; I made that clear from the first night of class. However, I also made sure that students knew they could complete reflective assignments while maintaining the understandings they had when they entered the course. Each assignment provided an opportunity for them to consider their common sense and course learning in a multitude of ways. Each time, I asked that students expand on how their original

understandings had been strengthened, evolved, or were still under construction. It is true that students had to reflect in the class, but they did not have to change their common sense through the process of reflection in order to earn a grade for the course.

An additional limitation to this study was the lack of disconfirming evidence, data that showed preservice teachers did not take up the process of GCR and ended the course with the same understandings they had when they entered. After teaching and researching my fall 2010 semester of BLE 220 and analyzing data, I know that 23 out of the 24 students in the course did take up the process of GCR and articulated a renewed sense about ELs. I also know that one student in the course did not. Unfortunately, the one student that resisted the reflective process and maintained the common sense notions he entered the course with, did not agree to participate in the study. Therefore, data from that student's course experiences were not included in my collection, analysis, or presentation of findings.

The last limitation to this study is the degree to which it is transferable to other educational settings. As with most practitioner inquiry studies, this study is not meant to be replicated verbatim in another teacher educator's classroom (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). This study was personal. The research design, data collection, and analysis all bear my imprint. The study was borne out of my desires, it came to life in the context of my classroom and through the interactions within it. In this way, the findings of this study are particular to the experiences shared between my students and myself during the fall 2010 semester. But I assert that while it is not meant to be replicated, teacher educators should consider the findings and



methodological considerations from this study in light of their own research and practice (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) related to preparing teachers for ELs and/or the role of reflection in preservice teacher preparation.

### **Final Thoughts**

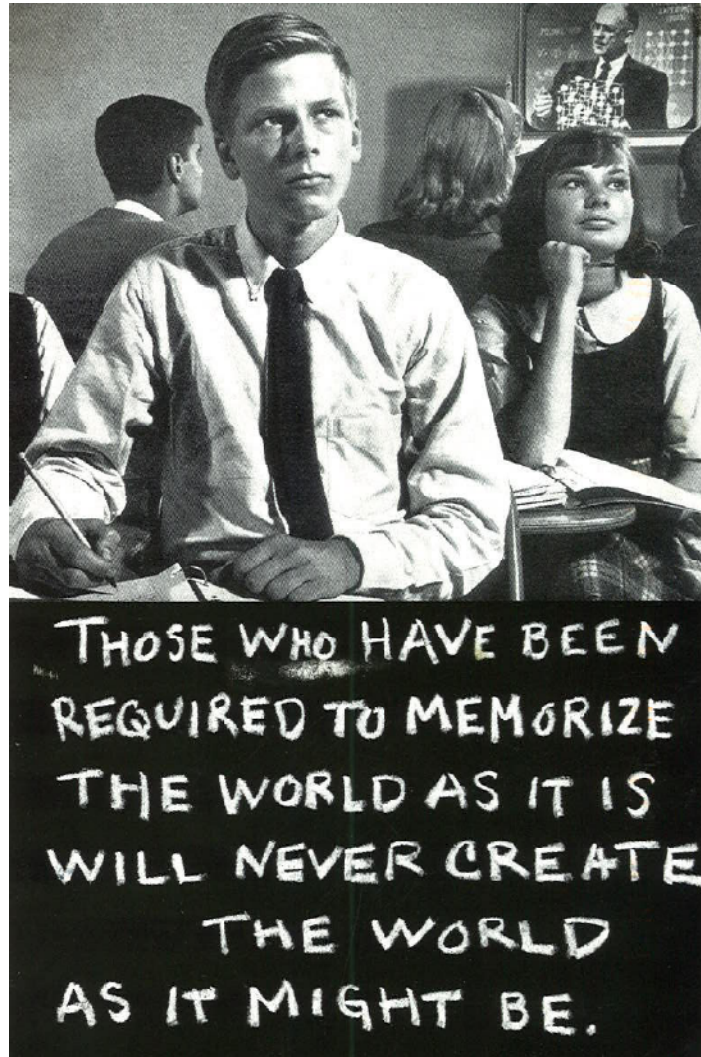
As public policies, language policies, and school practices become increasingly more restricted in relation to the growing population of linguistically and culturally diverse students, it is imperative that teacher educators include opportunities for preservice teachers to critically reflect on current practices and policies as part of the preparation process. We must also realize that the next generation of teachers experienced K-12 education under such policies, acknowledging their common sense as a starting point in this endeavor.

Notions of bilingual education or even the use of languages other than English in classrooms are increasingly rare in Arizona's school contexts. We can no longer assume that future teachers will be aware of the disconnects between Arizona's current English-only, restrictive approaches and recommended practices in the literature. What is worse, because universities are required to offer the SEI course work mandated for all teachers, preservice teachers are misled to assume that an SEI endorsement will provide them with the best practices needed to effectively teach ELs.

I advocate for teacher educators to establish the disconnects between the content we are required to deliver and what is recommended in the literature in relation to preparing teachers for ELs. An essential part of the preparation process

must include leading preservice teachers to critically examine what is and to imagine what could be.

In conclusion, I want to share a quote that has been close to my heart for some time now. It came to me on a postcard in May of 2010, (see Figure 6), and since has been my mantra for preparing teachers for EL in Arizona.



*Figure 6.* A post card from a friend that embodies my desire for reflective work as a means for imaging the world as it might be.

It reminds me that before I can expect future teachers to create a world that could be, I first must do the same. I must consider the ways in which mandates and

policies are restricting my work with future teachers. I am obliged to pay close attention to societal ideas and common sense notions that are too easily being passed along, explicitly or implicitly. I must reflect on the ways to challenge such notions in a way that models and encourages preservice teachers to do the same. To create the world as it should be for language learners in schools, I urge other teacher educators to do the same, and to expect the same of our preservice teachers.

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APPENDIX A

SHARED AGREEMENTS IN THE LITERATURE CONCERNING THE  
QUALITIES, KNOWLEDGE, AND SKILLS ALL TEACHERS NEED TO  
EFFECTIVELY TEACH ELS

		De Jong & Harper (2005)									
		Gandara & Maxwell-Jolly (2006)									
		Lucas & Grinberg (2008)									
		Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez (2008)									
		Merino (2007)									
		Milk, Mercado, & Sapiens (1992)									
		Mora (2000)									
		Tellez & Waxman (2005)									
		Walqui (2008)									
		Walker, et al. (2004)									
<b>Dispositions</b>	<b>Experience with Language Diversity</b>										
	Study of a foreign language			▪					▪		
	Contact with people who speak languages other than English			▪							
	Field experience with ELs			▪						▪	
	<b>A Positive Attitude Towards Linguistic Diversity</b>										
	Acceptance of the responsibility to educate ELs	▪						▪			▪
	An affirming view of linguistic diversity and bilingualism		▪	▪	▪				▪	▪	▪
	Awareness of sociopolitical dimensions	▪		▪						▪	
	Inclination to collaborate with colleagues		▪	▪			▪	▪	▪		
	<b>Knowledge</b>	<b>EL Related Knowledge</b>									
Connection between language, culture and identity				▪		▪				▪	
Knowledge of students (backgrounds, experiences and proficiencies)				▪		▪	▪			▪	▪
Understanding families/community of ELs						▪				▪	▪
Creating a learning environment that promotes a low affective filter		▪	▪		▪					▪	▪

		Second Language Acquisition Knowledge										
		Differences and similarities between L1 and L2 development				▪					▪	
		Language forms, mechanics and uses	▪		▪	▪			▪	▪	▪	
		Role of L1 literacy in developing L2	▪			▪		▪	▪		▪	
		Skills for Simultaneously Promoting Content and Language Instruction										
Skills		Skills for designing instruction that helps ELs learn both content and language	▪	▪	▪			▪	▪	▪	▪	▪
		Skills for understanding and implementing assessments to inform instruction and monitor progress	▪	▪				▪	▪	▪		▪
		Skills for collaboration with colleagues		▪					▪			▪



APPENDIX B  
IRB APPROVAL LETTER



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Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

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**To:** M Arias  
ED

**From:** Mark Roosa, Chair  
Soc Beh IRB

**Date:** 12/02/2008

**Committee Action:** **Exemption Granted**

**IRB Action Date:** 12/02/2008

**IRB Protocol #:** 0811003487

**Study Title:** BLE 220 Pilot Study

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(1) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

APPENDIX C

STUDENT ARTIFACTS COLLECTED FALL 2010

Artifact	Week Collected
<p><u>Creating the Ideal Program Model for Language Learners</u>  A group project: in small groups students will design an original program model for educating ELs. Designs must include connections to language acquisition theories, stages of language acquisition, elements of program models discussed in class, a designated group (early childhood, elementary, junior high or high school), a mission statement, a plan for implementation and evaluation. Models will be presented via power point and detailed in writing.</p>	Week 17
<p><u>Final Self-Reflection</u>  Self-reflection is a key component of this course. Students will write a reflection about your experiences and learning in the course. Reflection will include looking back at responses on the Initial Reaction Questionnaire, and explanation as to how ideas at the onset of the course have strengthened or changed.</p>	Week 17
<p><u>History of BLE/ESL Jigsaw</u>  As part of a group, students will be responsible for presenting a period of history to the other members of the class. Presentations will include a visual that represents the major court cases, laws, and political events of your assigned period. Your group will be responsible for explaining how each event in your period affected educational programs for ELs.</p>	Week 3
<p><u>Initial Reaction Questionnaire</u>  You will complete a set of questions based on course topics. You will also interview someone outside of the field of education on their views on the same set of questions.</p>	Week 2
<p><u>Midterm Self-Reflection</u>  Self-reflection is a key component of this course. Students will write a reflection about your experiences and learning in the course. Reflection will include looking back at responses on the Initial Reaction Questionnaire, and explanation as to how ideas at the onset of the course have strengthened or changed.</p>	Week 9
<p><u>Panel Reflection</u>  For this assignment you view a previously recorded panel discussion. After you have viewed the panel event you will write a reflection on the experience. Reflection must address the following questions, 1)</p>	Week 14

Overall, how was the panel helpful to you? 2) What connections did you make between what the panelists had to say and what we are learning in this course (readings and class discussions)? 3) Describe one panelist's responses in detail. Reflect on why this response was helpful or interesting to you in relation to working with English learners.

### Program Model Experience

Week 6

In small groups students will be assigned a program model for educating ELs. As a group, you will study your model and present it to the class through a collage—defending the model and illustrating its attributes and reasons why it should be the model chosen for educating ELs. You will also become familiar with the other program models that other groups are presenting so you can ask critical questions about the other programs.

### Strategy Presentation and Gallery Walk

Week 13

You will choose an EL strategy that you have learned about in class and design a presentation for a small group that includes an explanation of your chosen strategy. You will include in your presentation how you would use that strategy with a content area lesson and for what types of ELs the strategy would work best and why. Your presentation must include a poster that you will present to the class through a Gallery Walk.

### Weekly Reading Reflection

Weeks 1-16

It is required that you do all of the readings assigned on the assignment grid and respond to the readings in a way that is comfortable and effective for you. Use major quotes from the readings and reflect upon those in your reflection journal. Entries could include sketches, visual diagrams, graphic organizers, etc. Be sure that you do not summarize. Instead, synthesize your understandings from the readings.

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APPENDIX D  
SAMPLE GRADING RUBRICS

**Panel Reflection –Assignment Description and Rubric**

For this assignment you will be responsible for attending the panel discussion and writing a reflection on the experience. Your reflection (2-4 double spaced pages) needs to cover the following three prompts:

**Part One:** Overall, how was the panel helpful to you?

**Part Two:** What connections did you make between what the panelists had to say and what we are learning in this course (readings and class discussions)?

**Part Three:** Describe one panelist's responses in detail. Reflect on why this response was helpful or interesting to you in relation to working with English learners.

Total Points Possible = 30

Exemplary	Well done	Minimal		
Response is exemplary and superior. Critical reflection and thinking is documented through connections between the panel event and personal experiences and course learning. Knowledge of the course's content is demonstrated through reference to readings and incorporation of concepts into response.	Response is well done. Writing summarizes ideas without critical reflection or connection to personal experiences and course learning. Knowledge of the course's content is not consistently demonstrated and references to readings and new concepts are inconsistently incorporated into response.	Response is minimal and thin in both quality and length. Response does not reflect a high quality of understanding of the course content. Knowledge of the course's content is not demonstrated and references to readings and new concepts are not incorporated into response.		
		<u>Exemplary</u>	<u>Well done</u>	<u>Minimal</u>
Part 1: Overall, how was the panel helpful to you?	10 Points	7 Points	5 Points	
Part 2: What connections did you make between what the panelists had to say and what we are learning about in the course (readings, class discussions, etc)?	10 Points	7 Points	5 Points	
Part 3: Describe one panelist's responses in detail. Reflect on why this response was helpful or interesting to you in relation to working with English learners.	10 Points	7 Points	5 Points	

BLE 220: Midterm Self-Evaluation-40 Points

Reflect on your learning as you respond to the following questions and include **specific evidence**. **Responses should be thoroughly developed**. **Be sure that your work is thoroughly edited, typed and double-spaced**.

A. Please choose and respond to **ONE** of the following questions that addresses content covered so far in the course. **Cite at least three citations to course materials/content as evidence**. **Cites can come** from class discussions, course materials (power points) or readings to support your thinking and learning related to the topic. Make sure you distinguish your own thinking and statements from the cited work, by adding references in text (e.g. As Crawford & Krashen (2008, p.35) explain, bilingual education is...etc.):

- **History:** What has been a major trend in the history of BLE? What do you think is a reason for this trend? How has this affected the students and cultures?
- **English only mentality/movement:** What are some reasons (in in history or current events) for the English only mentality/movement? Do you agree that the English language is in danger? Why or why not?
- **Program models:** Compare and contrast two program models. Discuss why you picked the two models to compare and contrast – and describe your evaluation of each. Be sure to include ideas about the individual elements of the model, not just broad, over arching ideas.
- **Arizona's program model:** Imagine you were asked to share your knowledge with a school board concerning the new 4-hour ELD block. What feedback/advice would you give them on Arizona's current model?
- **Second language acquisition theories:** Think about this quote: "We have moved from trying to find a single theoretical framework and methodology that works best with second language learners to thinking about those factors, or variables, that influence the second language acquisition process." (Huerta-Macias, 2005). Describe what theoretical principals you believe in and how they will affect (drive) your classroom practices.

B. Quick-writes: Review your reflective quick-writes from the course so far—pick one.

- Start off by explaining the prompt and what you originally wrote.
- Next, expand on your original response—this could include: adding ideas, clarifying ideas, changing ideas, asking more questions, etc.



- Write about the role of reflection (i.e. weekly quick-writes) for you in this course: How do the quick-writes help you document your thinking?

C. Initial Reaction Questionnaire - Go back to your IRQ and describe one question that you feel you have evolved in:

- Start off by explain your personal educational experience – where you went to school K-12 (state, urban, rural, large school, small school, etc) and what you remember about ELLs from your educational experiences (do you have any ELLs in your class, were you aware of ELL programs, etc)
- State the IRQ question your are revisiting. Explain what you originally wrote.
- Next, explain how your thinking on this question has evolved. This could include how your original ideas/thoughts have been strengthened, changed, etc.

D. Learning experiences in the course:

- Describe a class experience (class activity, interaction technique, learning experience, etc) **and** how it helped you as a learner.
- Describe how you could use this in your future classroom.

	<b>Exemplary</b>	<b>Well done</b>	<b>Minimal</b>
	Response is exemplary and superior. Critical reflection and thinking is documented through connections to personal experiences and course learning. Knowledge of the course's content is demonstrated through reference to readings and incorporation of concepts into response.	Response is well done. Writing summarizes ideas without critical reflection or connection to personal experiences and course learning. Knowledge of the course's content is not consistently demonstrated and references to readings and new concepts are inconsistently incorporated into response.	Response is minimal and thin in both quality and length. Response does not reflect a high quality of understanding of the course content. Knowledge of the course's content is not demonstrated and references to readings and new concepts are not incorporated into response.
	<b>Exemplary</b>	<b>Well done</b>	<b>Minimal</b>
<b>Question 1:</b>	10 Points	8 Points	6 Points
<b>Question 2:</b>	10 Points	8 Points	6 Points
<b>Question 3</b>	10 Points	8 Points	6 Points
<b>Question 4</b>	10 Points	8 Points	6 Points

APPENDIX E

WEEKLY QUICK-WRITE PROMPTS

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Week	Prompt
Week 1	How do your culture, life experiences, and values affect how you will approach the learning in this course? or How do your culture, life experiences, and values affect how you will teach students in your future classroom?
Week 2	What surprises you about the information shared/read about this week concerning language policy for English Language Learners?
Week 3	No Quick-write
Week 4	What event in history had the most effect on education for ELs and why?
Week 5	What should an EL gain from a Language program?
Week 6	What is an element of a program that you learned about that you like and how could you replicate it in your future classroom?
Week 7	Arizona's 4-hour model is.../is not...
Week 8	Beyond SLA we should also consider...because...
Week 9	Going Beyond JGT means.../ From this experience (Woodcock-Munoz) I learned...
Week 10	Something I am starting to understand about teaching ELs is... A question I still have is...
Week 11	What do teachers need in order to be an effective teacher of ELs?
Week 12	No Quick-write
Week 13	What poster/strategy stood out to you? Why? Tell me about one piece of feedback you gave to a peer: what you said and why. Tell me about one piece of feedback you received from a peer: what they said and how you will use it.
Week 14	No class
Week 15	Pick a character from the film – Write from their perspective, using first person.
Week 16	A program model for ELs should include...because...
Week 17	Two stars and a Wish for each model presented

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APPENDIX F  
ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S CURRICULAR  
FRAMEWORK FOR THE SEI COURSE

**CURRICULAR FRAMEWORK FOR  
PROVISIONAL STRUCTURED ENGLISH IMMERSION (SEI) ENDORSEMENT TRAINING (45  
HOURS/AUGMENTED)**

SBE approved 2/26/2007

At the end of 45 clock hours\* of instruction, participants will be able to:

ELL Proficiency Standards Objectives <b>Minimum: Three (3) Clock Hours</b>	Assessment Objectives <b>Minimum: Three (3) Clock Hours</b>	Foundations of SEI Objectives <b>Minimum: Three (3) Clock Hours</b>	SEI Strategies Objectives <b>Minimum: Twenty-four (24) Clock Hours</b>
1. Examine the format and alignment of ELL Proficiency Standards to the Arizona Language Arts (Listening & Speaking, Reading, and Writing) Academic Standards.  (1 hour of contact time)	1. Analyze the content and use of the Arizona English Language Learner Assessment (AZELLA) in guiding ELL instruction.  (1 hour of contact time)	1. Know the legal, historical and educational reasons for SEI.  (1 hour of contact time)	1. Identify and use multiple strategies to improve student achievement. Integrate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensible input;</li> <li>• Ongoing, specific and immediate feedback;</li> <li>• Grouping structures and techniques;</li> <li>• Building background and vocabulary development; and,</li> <li>• Student engagement.</li> </ul>
2. Use ELL Proficiency Standards to plan, deliver and evaluate instruction.  (1 hour of contact time)	2. Discuss the relevance of state-mandated achievement for ELLs.  (1 hour of contact time)	2. Know basic SEI terminology.  (1 hour of contact time)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building background and vocabulary development; and,</li> <li>• Student engagement.</li> </ul>
3. Demonstrate the integration of ELL Proficiency Standards in all content areas.  (1 hour of contact time)	3. Identify and use alternative methods of assessment.  (1 hour of contact time)	3. List language acquisition theoretical principles.  (.5 hour of contact time)	-Develop specific content lesson plans that incorporate all of the above to improve student achievement.
		4. Define the role of culture in learning.  (.5 hour of contact time)	-Present these lesson plans during a minimum of 24 hours of class/contact time.  -These contact hours must include, but are not limited to, discussion, identification, and application of these strategies.  -An evaluation/synthesis of these lessons will also be included in these contact hours.

***\*Training time must total 45 clock hours, which includes twelve (12) flex clock hours to be used at the instructor's discretion to augment any combination of the four areas.***

**Given the additional hours provided in this framework, professionals will be expected to be engaged, in depth, in each one of the four areas required in the training sessions. The minimum number of contact hours in each section of the curricular framework is recommended above. Additionally in the last frame, recommendations are given for implementation of objectives. Finally, this framework allows for (12) flex hours to be used at the instructor's discretion to augment any combination of the four areas.**