

TEACHERS WHO WORK WITH ENGLISH LEARNERS WHO HAVE HAD  
INTERRUPTED SCHOOLING: A COLLABORATIVE ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

by

Greer P. Mancuso  
A Dissertation  
Submitted to the  
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The Requirements for the Degree  
of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
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George Mason University  
Fairfax, VA

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## **Dedication**

This is dedicated to my husband Mark, my daughter Isabella, and my son Mason for supporting me throughout my studies and being patient and understanding with me while I was working on this research. I also dedicate this to my parents John and Janice Peden; they believed in me from the start and always encouraged me to continue my education. My parents have helped me in so many ways and constantly offer their support physically, emotionally, and financially. I also would like to dedicate this to my Aunt Becky Calvert who has been my cheerleader all my life. She always believed I could do anything no matter what it was. Lastly, I would like to dedicate this work to all the ESOL students I have taught over the years. Their stories, resilience, and determination have inspired me to do this study in an attempt to better the educational opportunities for future ESOL students in the United States.

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## **Abstract**

### **TEACHERS WHO WORK WITH ENGLISH LEARNERS WHO HAVE HAD INTERRUPTED SCHOOLING: A COLLABORATIVE ACTION RESEARCH STUDY**

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Dissertation Director: Dr. Rebecca K. Fox

This study centered around the knowledge and experiences of those teachers who work with a unique group of English Learners (ELs) who are often referred to as students with interrupted schooling. Recent immigration trends show that an increasing number of immigrant students with interrupted schooling are entering U.S. classrooms. Students with interrupted schooling may have more extreme socioemotional, literacy, and academic needs than former EL populations due to changing global situations and factors that have influenced this demographic. These factors have led to changes in the way students with interrupted schooling acquire English as an additional language and call for teachers to be prepared to work effectively with them. This study was done through a Collaborative Action Research (CAR) collective, where English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers examined their own pedagogical knowledge, skills, and practice and then were called upon to contribute Professional Development (PD) recommendations, future research recommendations surrounding education for ELs with

interrupted schooling, and improved pedagogical guidelines and resources that were determined collectively by their informed experiences and knowledge as desired additions to benefit ESOL teachers who work with ELs with interrupted schooling. Additionally, the teachers in this CAR collective are educators who were all directly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the findings of this study also include significant themes that surround the impact on ESOL teachers and ELs during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. The research contributes recommendations, new knowledge, and resources that will serve to inform the educational research community as well as benefit teachers, school division Professional Development, and schools and colleges of education for pre- and in-service programs offerings.

## **Chapter One**

This study centered around the knowledge and experiences of those teachers who work with a unique group of English Learners (ELs) who are often referred to as students with interrupted schooling (Potochnick, 2018). This group of ELs have the furthest to go to catch up to their English-speaking peers because they often arrive in the United States with differing literacy skills in their home language, have missed several years of school, and may have socioemotional needs that must be met first before optimum learning can occur (Custodio & O'Loughlin, 2017). These factors have led to changes in the way students with interrupted schooling acquire English as an additional language (Khan, 2012) and call for teachers to be prepared to work effectively with them.

English Learners (ELs) with interrupted schooling face challenges in U.S. schools because they are expected to acquire a level of academic English and content-based curriculum at the same time, while also being called upon to acquire content knowledge.

As ELs they are not yet proficient in English, but they are held to the same standards and accountability benchmarks as native English speakers with only some modest accommodations regarding how soon and in what manner they must take high-stakes assessments, which in most states are only offered solely in English. (Custodio & O'Loughlin, 2017, p. ix)

Research has indicated that prior formal schooling experiences, as well as literacy development in the EL's home language, influence the learner's academic and language development in their new environment (Khan, 2012). These factors also affect how quickly the student can match the linguistic and literacy skills of their native-speaking peers (Khan, 2012). Previous studies have indicated that if certain alphabetic and numerical literacy skills are not reached in the first language, ELs may experience challenges in learning an additional language (L2; Collier, 1987; Collier & Thomas, 1989; Cummins, 1981, 1991; Thomas & Collier, 1997). Therefore, schooling in a student's home country does appear to have a strong bearing on their academic success upon arrival in the United States. If the needs of all students are to be met, understanding their backgrounds, prior schooling, and literacy/numeracy skills becomes essential.

ELs in U.S. classrooms vary widely in their culture, background experiences, and former education. Immigrants come to the United States for a variety of reasons, including economic, family, political, and security (Hos, 2016). Today, the majority of those migrating to the United States are immigrating as refugees and asylum seekers (Advocates for Children of New York, 2010). Many refugees and asylum seekers come to the United States to escape extreme conditions, such as humanitarian emergencies in their home country, while many other immigrants come to the United States for job opportunities, the prospect of learning English, and educational opportunities (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2013).

Some immigrant students have traveled to the United States with family members, and others have come as unaccompanied minors (Sawyer & Márquez, 2017). Many ELs

in U.S. classrooms have had smooth journeys and others, traumatic ones (Custodio & O’Loughlin, 2017). “Some have left behind happy memories and others, turmoil and despair” (Custodio & O’Loughlin, 2017, p. ix).

It is important that educators not view ELs—particularly those with interrupted schooling—from a deficit perspective (Herrera et al., 2012). By taking an asset perspective, educators have a greater potential to recognize the benefits that these diverse students bring into classrooms (Herrera et al., 2012). It is also worth mentioning that when this group of students is referred to as lacking in a particular area, such as print literacy, it should not imply that U.S. schooling is superior to the prior education of students with interrupted schooling; rather, it should acknowledge that the education these students received prior to their arrival in the states may not have prepared them for U.S. approaches or grade-level content described by published curriculum standards of U.S. schools (Ylimaki, 2013).

## **Background**

A peak in immigration in the early 1900s saw over 20 million immigrants come to the United States in search of a better life and better opportunities for their children (Advocates for Children of New York, 2010; Martin, 2013). Another strong trend towards immigration occurred around 2007, when approximately 12.2 million immigrants came to the United States (Martin, 2013). Once again, the United States is now experiencing a strong influx of immigrants. It is estimated that immigrants now are arriving to the United States in numbers not seen since the spike in the 1900s (Advocates for Children of New York, 2010; Freeman & Freeman, 2003; Martin, 2013).

As immigrant populations increase, so do the numbers of children born to them. Among new immigrant families, approximately 10.8 million are school-aged children. This increase in immigrant children has more than doubled the number of ELs in the United States (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010a). In fall 2015, the percentage of ELs in U.S. public school students was estimated at 10% or more of the population in eight states. These states, most of which are located in the West, were Alaska, California, Colorado, Kansas, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, and Washington. California reported the highest percentage of ELs among its public school students, at 21%, followed by Texas and Nevada, each at 16.8% (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2018). Nineteen states and the District of Columbia had percentages of EL students who were 6% of the population or higher but less than 10%, and 14 states had percentages that were 3% or higher but less than 6%. The percentage of students who were ELs was less than 3% in nine states, with Mississippi (2%), Vermont (1.6%), and West Virginia (1%) having the lowest percentages (NCES, 2021). The overall percentage of students in EL programs increased from 9% in 2009 to 9.3% in 2014 (NCES, 2021). Current statistics are not readily available on the increase of students with interrupted schooling in U.S. classrooms. However, Ruiz-de-Velasco et al. (2000) estimated that 20% of ELs in high school and 12% of ELs in middle school had missed 2 or more years of schooling. Students with interrupted schooling are most at risk for struggling academically (Short & Boyson, 2004). This group also had a higher rate of students leaving school without finishing than students who have had consistent years of schooling (Montero et al., 2014).

ELs constituted an average of 14% of total public school enrollment in cities, 9.1% in suburban areas, 6.5% in towns, and 3.6% in rural areas. In fall 2015, there were more ELs in lower grades than in upper grades in public schools (NCES, 2021). For example, 16.3% of kindergarteners were ELs, compared to 8.2% of sixth-graders and 6.6% of eighth-graders. Among 12th-graders, only 3.9% of students were ELs. This pattern is driven, in part, by students who are identified as ELs when they enter elementary school but obtain English language proficiency before reaching upper grades (NCES, 2018). However, it is important to clarify that in some parts of the United States, percentages of ELs are much higher. For example, California reported the highest percentage of ELs among its public school students (19.4%), followed by Texas (18.7%) and New Mexico (15.8%). An additional 23 states had percentages of EL students between 6.0% and 10.0% (NCES, 2021). The county in the mid-Atlantic region in which I teach has a much higher population of ELs represented in our schools than the national average. In 2021, 26.8% of students in my county were ELs, who spoke over 200 languages (FCPS, 2021; Virginia Department of Education, 2021). The higher population of ELs in my county supports my own personal reasons for conducting this study because I have a strong desire to improve the education of ELs with interrupted schooling in my community.

Over the past few years, U.S. schools have seen a significant increase in the number of undocumented, unaccompanied children coming to the United States from Central America to join their families (U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 2015). Immigrant students from other parts of the world have lived in refugee camps, war-torn

countries, or cultures where girls are not given formal schooling (Custodio, 2011). Many have migrated to escape economic hardships and thus come from areas with differing access to schooling (DeCapua et al., 2009; Ruiz-de-Velasco et al., 2000). Based on previous trends in immigration, it is more likely that a higher percentage of school-aged ELs will now have experienced interrupted schooling. For example, the recent wave of unaccompanied minors coming to the United States from Central America also generally fits into the category of students with interrupted schooling (WIDA, 2015). The unique life situations that many of these students experienced in their home countries have led to interrupted educational opportunities (WIDA, 2015).

It is also important to note that the perception of the age of maturity can vary from culture to culture. While in the United States a 16-year-old is considered a minor, a child of this age would be considered an adult with adult responsibilities in many other countries. (WIDA, 2015, p. 1)

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) created by the U.S. Department of Education (2019) now mandates that all students in the United States meet yearly evidence-based goals and have access to and completion of rigorous, college preparatory coursework. Therefore, it is now imperative that English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers are prepared to meet the needs of immigrant students who enter U.S. classrooms having experienced interrupted schooling.

## **Overview of Study**

### ***Purpose***

With today's immigration trends, not all ESOL teachers feel prepared to meet the many different needs of ELs with interrupted schooling (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015b). The purpose of this research was to gather information about the pedagogical skills and knowledge base that current ESOL teachers need to help students with interrupted schooling be most successful. The information gathered is from the perspective of experienced teachers who work with students who have had interrupted schooling and who thus have the potential to know and understand their students' academic strengths and challenges.

Teachers who work with ELs who have had interrupted schooling are in a unique position to produce knowledge necessary for others to have in order to better equip teachers of ELs to meet the needs of this population of students. Due to the rapidly changing demographic trends, it is critical to now have a better understanding of what ESOL teachers know about this population and as well as the teachers' own perceived needs. The information gathered from ESOL teachers who work with students with interrupted schooling has the potential to be used to revise current Professional Development (PD) curriculum and implement a more culturally competent set of strategies that make all students feel welcomed and valued, while also helping them reach their highest academic potential.

### ***Research Questions***

The first two research questions aim to articulate ESOL teachers' realities, needs, and challenges when working with ELs with interrupted schooling. Since the COVID-19 pandemic started near the commencement of this research study, our collective of ESOL teachers had many discussions surrounding the education of ELs during the pandemic. Therefore, a third research question was added retroactively after the culmination of the study to address these additional findings. During this investigation, our collective of ESOL teachers specifically asked the following research questions:

1. What knowledge, skills, dispositions, and instructional strategies do experienced ESOL teachers identify as being important for ESOL teachers to now possess in order to best support the development of ELs with interrupted schooling in their classes?
2. Given current demographic changes in the ESOL population, what expanded knowledge do these ESOL teachers identify as being needed (or optimal) to support their work with ELs with interrupted schooling?
3. What unique challenges emerged from the ESOL teachers' experiences for the education of ELs with interrupted schooling during the COVID pandemic?

### **Rationale**

With the influx of students with interrupted education who have differing literacy skills in their home language, some researchers are attempting to address and identify the specific needs of students who have experienced interrupted schooling (Menken et al., 2012). Teachers now seek interventions that are designed to help explicitly teach literacy

skills across the content areas that are necessary to tackle the curriculum, especially at the secondary level (Menken et al., 2012).

### ***Personal Goals***

I have been an ESOL teacher for the past 15 years in U.S. public schools. I have worked at both the elementary and secondary levels, primarily teaching literacy courses to newcomer ELs. My experience afforded me the opportunity to watch myself and other ESOL teachers adjust and adapt over the years as our classroom demographics have shifted. My years of experience now make me a veteran ESOL teacher. I am able to share my own experiences from my teacher preparation program with the CAR collective, and I share a perspective of what I believe veteran ESOL teachers need now regarding PD in order to work with ELs.

During my first year of teaching ESOL at an elementary school, most of my ELs were born in the United States. At that time, ELs generally arrived in the United States with a solid foundation of literacy in their home language. Many were among the 70% of ELs who were U.S. born and accustomed to the U.S. schooling system (Sawyer & Márquez, 2017).

In my current ESOL position at the secondary level, I have no students who were born in the United States and 90% of the ELs I teach have missed two or more years of schooling. I have had an increase in students who are recently arrived immigrants with differing levels of literacy in their home language and have thus important needs for their ongoing education for any number of reasons. Often my students have fled countries due to political unrest, violence, and economic hardships. Some of my students are refugees

or asylees. Many of my secondary students now come to the United States as unaccompanied minors. This shift in demographics has changed the way I need to be prepared to instruct my ELs.

I saw a huge difference in the preparation needed in order to teach ESOL at the elementary level versus the secondary level. Many of my students now need foundational literacy instruction immediately upon arrival. As a former elementary teacher, I had extensive preparation in how to teach foundational literacy to emergent readers. This was a skill I have carried throughout the years when I am teaching secondary level ESOL students to read and write. I find this is a critical skill that I am thankful I learned early in my teaching career. I have noticed over time this is not a skill that all secondary teachers have been taught in their preparation programs. Additionally, some have experienced trauma in their lives that may affect how they learn in the classroom. Therefore, I have seen many of my secondary colleagues struggle when they teach ELs with interrupted schooling who arrive as older learners. I have firsthand knowledge of the shift in ESOL classrooms over the past 15 years which affords me the opportunity to share my position and opinions with my CAR collective.

### ***Practical Goals***

Teachers of ELs and general classroom teachers will soon have students with interrupted schooling in their classrooms, if they do not already (Roy-Campbell, 2013). While ESOL teachers are often the first to work with this population of students, all teachers should understand their backgrounds and needs in order to support their learning, because not all school systems across the United States have the same type of

English language support for ELs (Custodio & O’Loughlin, 2017). Schools with fewer ELs often do not have as many ESOL teachers servicing ELs, which leads to ELs being placed in more general education settings (Milnes, 2014).

Some schools take a more sheltered approach, in which ELs spend most of their day with an ESOL teacher who uses English adapted to students’ proficiency level, supplemented by gestures, visual aids, manipulatives, as well as some home language support provided separately (Hanover Research, 2015). Other schools take a more inclusion-based approach, where ELs are served in mainstream classrooms, with ESOL instructional support provided in the classroom by an ESOL specialist (Hanover Research, 2015). Some states have funding to offer schools specifically for newcomers (Hones, 2007); others enroll their newcomer ELs into the traditional compulsory school.

Educational policies for the instruction of ELs in the United States are created in the courts and through administrative regulations as well as by acts of Congress (Gándara et al., 2005). In 2015, ESSA was signed into law by President Barack Obama in an effort to set high standards for America’s schools and to place accountability at the center of the framework (Gándara et al., 2005). ESSA requires that all students in U.S. schools be taught to the highest academic standards that will prepare them to succeed in college and/or their career in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

Additionally, all students must participate in annual statewide assessments that measure students’ progress towards these high standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Under ESSA, underperforming schools are held accountable in an attempt to improve performance in the schools where groups of students are not making progress, and where

graduation rates are low over extended periods of time (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

ESSA requires that state and district leaders use evidence-based interventions to address any inequities. For ELs at the secondary level, one important measure of opportunity to learn is access to and completion of rigorous, college preparatory coursework (Callahan & Hopkins, 2017). Since ESSA includes all students in annual measures of progress, it is now more imperative than ever to ensure that ELs, especially those with interrupted schooling, have access to the highest-trained ESOL educators with the necessary PD and resources (Callahan & Hopkins, 2017).

Often the lowest-performing schools may have ELs who struggle to pass annual statewide exams, making yearly progress and graduation rates lower over time (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Due to differences in prior formal schooling, ELs with interrupted schooling (Schmidt de Carranza, 2017) and the teachers who instruct them will likely need the most assistance in order to meet federal goals under ESSA. Therefore, it is critical that educators of ELs be fully prepared to help their students, most particularly those with interrupted schooling, to acquire English as expeditiously and effectively as possible to not only help students be successful, but also to meet U.S. federal mandates for compulsory education.

An important aspect of ELs' learning should involve acquisition of English for academic success as well as maintaining and continuing to develop their own home language, because this might alter the course of literacy acquisition for these students (Baker & Wright, 2017; Macedo, 2000). This is especially critical when working with

students who have experienced interrupted schooling, because they have a lot to learn academically in a shorter amount of time than their native English-speaking peers (Custodio & O'Loughlin, 2017). Bilingual students are more likely able to transfer literacy skills from their home language to their L2 without adding confusion (Khan, 2012). Although students with interrupted schooling often come with limited literacy skills, it is still an advantage to be able to transfer any knowledge that they possess to the L2 to accelerate the acquisition of English (Bialystok et al., 2009). Now it is imperative that all teachers begin to acquire a deep understanding of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), specifically those with interrupted schooling, so that they are better able to make grounded pedagogical choices when including home language supports (Tabors, 2008).

### ***Intellectual Goals***

As immigrant students with interrupted schooling are not as widely studied as traditional ELs, much can be learned from ESOL teachers' experiences, knowledge, and their needs when trying to help students with interrupted schooling be academically successful in the United States (Bigelow & Tarone, 2004).

Several qualitative case studies have been conducted in the last 5 years, exploring ESOL teachers who work with students with interrupted schooling (Drake, 2017; Fulghum Ingram, 2017; Oliver, 2017). The intent of this research is to delve deeper into the experiences and perceptions of ESOL teachers who work with students with interrupted schooling versus focusing on the students themselves and their unique needs.

The results and recommendations stemming from this research have the potential to provide ESOL teachers, teacher educators, and those in charge of PD in schools and

school districts with a deeper understanding of ELs with interrupted schooling, with recommendations and improved pedagogical guidelines and resources that will be determined collectively through a Collaborative Action Research (CAR) community of educators.

### ***Definitions***

Throughout research in this area, acronyms are often used to refer to this group of teachers, such as ESOL teacher, EL teacher, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), and English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher. For the purposes of this research, the term *ESOL teacher* has been designated as the title of choice because that is what is most commonly used in the school systems where the participants base their experiences and knowledge.

Additionally, students with interrupted schooling are often referred to with different acronyms, such as Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE; DeCapua & Marshall, 2010b) or Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE; DeCapua & Marshall, 2015b). For the purpose of this research, this group of students will be referred to without an acronym—simply as students with interrupted schooling (Potochnick, 2018). Throughout this research, the term *home language* will be used, which indicates the most commonly spoken language in the home for everyday interactions (Khan, 2012). This terminology is relevant because students typically have literacy skills in their home when they enter U.S. schools.

## **Chapter One Summary**

The numbers and unique qualities of students with interrupted education are increasing in U.S. schools. Researchers are now attempting to address and identify the needs of this population of students because teachers now seek interventions that are designed to help explicitly teach literacy skills across the content areas that are necessary to tackle the curriculum, especially at the secondary level (Menken et al., 2012). Chapter Two presents a review of the literature regarding the changing demographic context and the EL population shift in U.S. schools, SLA research, ESOL teacher knowledge and how teachers address the unique needs of students with interrupted schooling; and in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

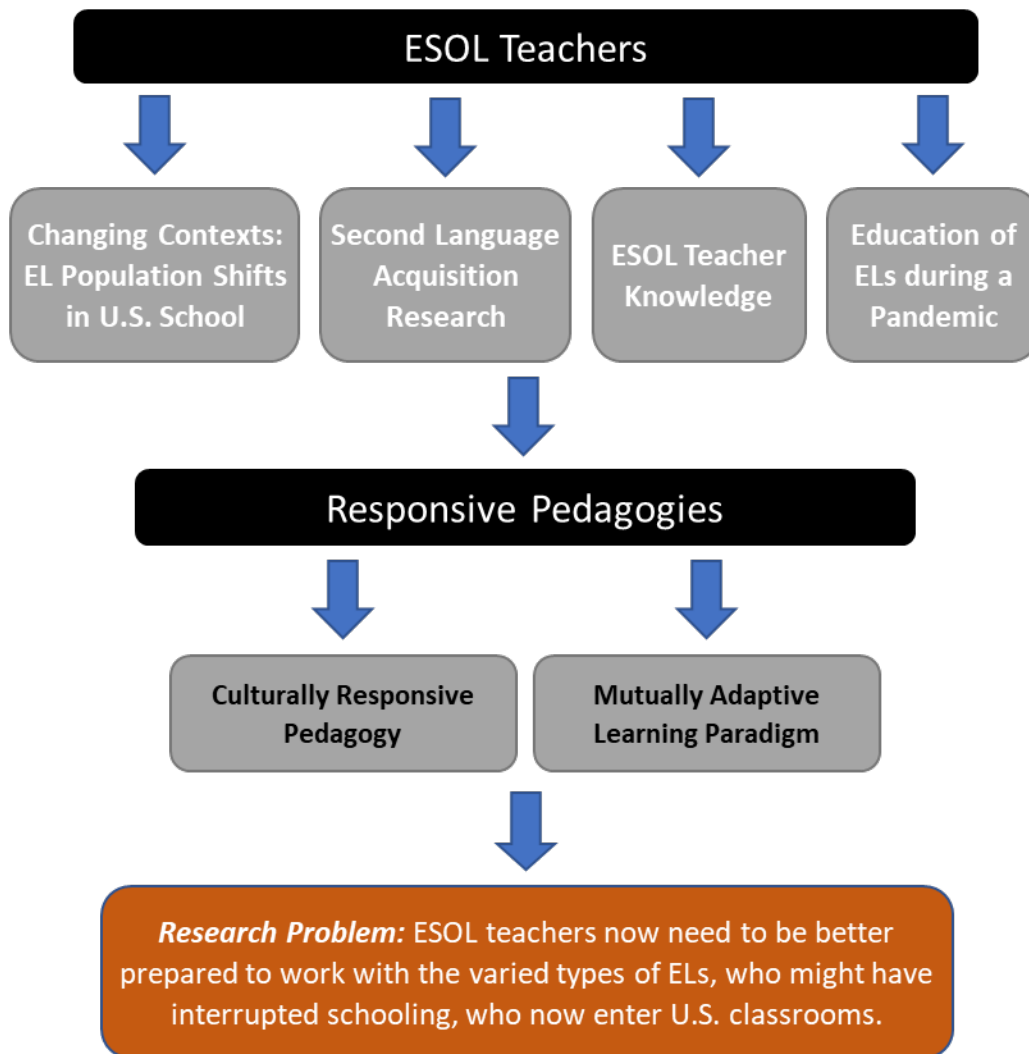
## **Chapter Two**

There are four major areas comprising the conceptual framework informing this study: 1) the changing demographic context and the EL population shift in U.S. schools; 2) SLA research and the role that this field of research plays for students who have experienced interrupted schooling; 3) ESOL teacher knowledge, particularly as it pertains to how teachers address the unique needs of students with interrupted schooling; and 4) in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the fourth area of literature addresses the education of ELs during a pandemic. As the unanticipated existence of the pandemic greatly influenced the findings of this study, this area of literature was added retroactively. The body of research on educating ELs during a pandemic is small but provides emerging findings to inform educators' work.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework shown in Figure 1 provides a context within which this study is conducted and informs the analysis of the data. Some of the research presents contextual information related to the demographic shift. The impact of the demographic shift in the United States now brings more ELs into classrooms who have had two or more years of interrupted schooling (DeCapua et al., 2009; Ruiz-de-Velasco et al., 2000). A difference with this unique population of ELs is that the students may have more socioemotional needs and literacy and academic needs than that of former EL

populations (Browder, 2014; DeCapua et al., 2009). These differences may have changed the characteristics of our traditional EL profiles and thus may have changed their learning needs. ELs of the past might have more commonly arrived with literacy knowledge in their home language that allowed them to transfer their home language knowledge to the L2 to assist with SLA (Freeman & Freeman, 2003). When students have differing levels of literacy and educational background in their home language, this affects the level of support needed to acquire English (Musetti et al., 2009). From my local observations, it appears that ESOL teachers now need additional knowledge regarding how to help ELs acquire English using pedagogical tools and strategies for students who do not have literacy skills in their home language.



**Figure 1**

*Conceptual Framework*

The conceptual framework discussion is divided into four major sections that provide the context for this study: EL Population Shifts in U.S. Schools; Second Language Acquisition Research; ESOL Teacher Knowledge; and Education of ELs During a Pandemic. A section on responsive pedagogies, which discusses how this

research intersects with the following two theories: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm.

A careful and thorough review of the following databases has been conducted that focused on the major areas discussed in the conceptual framework (Figure 1). Primary key words that were used during the literature search were: English Learners, English Language Learners, Students with Interrupted Formal Education, Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education, Interrupted Schooling, Interrupted Education, Limited Schooling, Refugee, and Teacher Knowledge. In general, the parameter used was research in peer-reviewed journals and dissertations that had been published within the past 10 years. Additionally, some research was used that is older than 10 years to provide a historical context for the changing demographics in the United States and the changing needs in the field education for ELs over time. My search included both U.S. and international research on students with interrupted schooling. I reviewed studies on students and the teachers who work with students with interrupted schooling. I focused on research pertaining to students and teachers in elementary and secondary school settings. I ruled out research that focused on adult learners as well as ELs who were born in the United States and had not immigrated from another country to the United States.

The following is a list of databases consulted to create this synthesis of literature:

- Academic Search Complete
- Childhood Development and Adolescent Studies
- Chronicle of Higher Education
- EBSCO

- Education Database
- Education Research Complete
- Educational Administration Abstracts
- ERIC
- JSTOR
- Peace Research Abstracts
- Pew Research Center
- Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection
- ProQuest
- ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global
- SAGE Journals Online
- SAGE Research Methods and Cases Online
- Science Direct
- Social Sciences Citation Index
- Taylor & Francis Online
- Teacher Reference Center

My study sought to reveal current ESOL teachers' self-report of their knowledge, experiences, needs, and successes when working with ELs. This study delves into the additional knowledge, skills, and dispositions they believe necessary to successfully meet the unique needs of this increasing population.

## **Changing Contexts: EL Population Shifts in U.S. Schools**

### ***Today's ELs***

Researchers have done extensive work on identifying different groups of ELs in the United States (Baker & Wright, 2017; Bialystok, 2007; Cummins, 1981; Freeman & Freeman, 2003; Hakuta et al., 2000; Hos, 2020; Kim, 2017; Schmidt de Carranza, 2017). In their research, they discuss three groupings of ELs. Freeman and Freeman's (2003) research is still relevant today because these groups still exist and are widely discussed in educational research communities.

The first of Freeman and Freeman's (2003) groups consists of newcomer students who come to the United States who have had the opportunity to receive adequate formal schooling; they are cognitively comparable to their peers in terms of content knowledge in their home language but may need additional knowledge of how to perform these cognitive and academic operations in English.

The next group comprises newcomer students who come to the United States without adequate formal schooling (Schmidt de Carranza, 2017). This group includes students who may be refugees, asylum seekers, or migrant workers who may not be able to attend school year-round due to their work demands (Freeman & Freeman, 2003; Schmidt de Carranza, 2017). Many of these students enter school with minimal exposure to English. Additionally, they may not have early literacy experiences in their home language (Freeman & Freeman, 2003).

The third group increasingly consists of older EL students who were born in the United States or came to the United States at a very young age, who speak their home

language in the home. In research, this group is often referred to as Long-Term English Learners (LTEL; Kim, 2017). LTELs are similar to students with interrupted schooling because they may need to catch up by a few years in their content knowledge and language acquisition. They may also need improvements to their literacy skills in their home language. The key difference between these two groups is that LTELs do not have the same needs in formal schooling (Kim, 2017).

### ***Immigrant Students with Interrupted Schooling***

The academic needs of students with interrupted schooling in U.S. schools has recently been addressed by a small body of researchers (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010a; DeCapua et al., 2007; Zehr, 2009). There are many labels given to students who have experienced interruptions in schooling. In the past, this group of students has been referred to with a formal label of Students with Interrupted Formal Education (Browder, 2014; Custodio, 2011; DeCapua et al., 2009; Potochnick, 2018). More recently, however, this population of students has been frequently referred to simply as ELs with interrupted schooling to avoid dehumanizing this unique group with a label or acronym (Potochnick, 2018).

While all ELs have unique needs and individual characteristics, recent thinking has emerged pointing to the notion that students with interrupted schooling may have more individualized needs, prompting the research community to explore changes in how educators need to be prepared to work with this group (Freeman & Freeman, 2003; Schmidt de Carranza, 2017).

Students with interrupted schooling are ELs who may have only been able to minimally participate in formal schooling in their home country (Browder, 2014; Custodio, 2011; DeCapua et al., 2009). ELs with interruptions in schooling may comprise refugees or immigrants who have come to the United States with documented or undocumented status, as well as children of migrant workers (Hickey, 2014). Many come to the United States having never attended school at all in their home country, while others may have had one or several years of instruction (Hickey, 2014).

In some countries and rural areas, schooling is can be limited by scarce resources, inadequate preparation of teachers, part-time school days, and outdated pedagogy (Custodio, 2011; Freeman & Freeman, 2002; Lukes, 2015). Often, students with interrupted schooling have greater literacy and numeracy needs than their English-speaking peers. Many students with interrupted schooling need additional support to learn academic content because they have participated in a different style of learning that did not consist of the same academic focus found in U.S. schooling (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011).

Prior formal schooling experiences, as well as literacy development in the EL's home language, have been shown to influence the learner's academic and language development in their new environment (Khan, 2012). These factors can also affect how quickly the student can match the linguistic and literacy skills of their native English-speaking peers (Khan, 2012). Schooling in one's home country does appear to affect a student's academic success upon arrival in the United States (Khan, 2012).

If the needs of all students are going to be met, understanding their backgrounds, prior schooling, and literacy/numeracy skills becomes essential. However, research continues to show that there is a shortage of educators prepared to respond to the needs of the ELs now entering the United States (Coady et al., 2011; Wong-Fillmore & Snow, 2002).

This population shift is putting more pressure on school districts to ensure that their teachers are prepared to provide ELs high quality instruction (Coady et al., 2011) because ESSA requires that all students in U.S. schools are taught to the highest academic standards that will prepare them to succeed in college and/or their career in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Therefore, it is crucial that researchers and educational communities now focus on and invest time to improve PD for ESOL teachers to help all ELs, especially those with interrupted schooling, meet U.S. federal educational goals.

### ***Literacy***

Immigrant students from other parts of the world may have lived in refugee camps, war-torn countries, or cultures where girls are not provided formal schooling (Barowsky & McIntyre, 2010; Custodio, 2011). Many have migrated to escape economic hardships and thus come from areas with limited access to schooling (DeCapua et al., 2009; Ruiz-de-Velasco et al., 2000). All of these factors can lead to a need for enhanced literacy skills in the home language.

Literacy encompasses many factors and can be defined in several ways. Print literacy is the form most valued and assessed in the school setting. Print literacy is the

ability to read and comprehend text and the ability to write (Burt et al., 2003). Combined factors influence the literacy skills of students with interrupted schooling. Often students with interrupted schooling have differing levels of literacy in their home language. Many times, students with interrupted schooling enter the middle and high school level reading at a kindergarten or first-grade level (Hickey, 2015). Adolescent students with interrupted schooling have greater needs when it comes to academic performance and general well-being (Hos, 2020). Ruiz-de-Velasco et al. (2000) found that approximately 32% of ELs attending secondary schools in the United States have missed 2 or more years of schooling since the age of 6. In order to meet the reading and writing developmental needs of these students, changes need to be considered in the literature supports and interventions used with this population (Hickey, 2015).

Many times, the families of students with interrupted schooling are coming from settings or locations where schooling has limited options (Santisteban, 2014). When parents themselves have not had the opportunities for a solid, or even basic education, and this is accompanied by conditions of economic needs, students are faced with a greater need with regard to literacy and acquiring English (Santisteban, 2014). Many students with interrupted schooling have been found to need basic print literacy. General educators are most often unprepared for the foundational print literacy needs of these students (Hickey, 2015). Academic literacy must be effectively and explicitly addressed for students with interrupted schooling, especially at the middle and high school age (Fry, 2005). Many teachers may need interventions that are designed to help them explicitly

teach literacy skills across the content areas in order to appropriately tackle the curriculum (Menken et al., 2012).

Students with interrupted schooling also experience an additional obstacle in terms of access to appropriately leveled and designed school programming for their needs (Schmidt de Carranza, 2017). Academic programming in the United States at the secondary level, both in EL and non-EL settings, assumes a higher level of academic literacy and metacognitive skills. Due to their differences in previous formal education, age-appropriate academic content is difficult for students with interrupted schooling, even if they are learning in their home language (Crosnoe & Turley, 2011; Ruiz-de-Velasco et al., 2000). This is generally attributed to school attendance, curricular differences, and limited resources (Dooley, 2009). All of these factors influence the likelihood of an advantage or disadvantage when they come to the United States (Crosnoe & Turley, 2011, p. 336).

### ***Socioemotional Needs***

Students with interrupted education arrive in the United States each year for a multitude of reasons. It is not uncommon for students with interrupted schooling to have left their home country due to war, political instability, violence, or religious persecution (Hodes, 2000; Hos, 2020). Over the past 10 years, the United States has seen a significant increase in the number of undocumented, unaccompanied children coming to the United States from Central America to join their families (U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 2015). Due to the nature of experiences of this recent trend of immigrants, it is more likely that a higher percentage of school-aged ELs will have experienced interruptions in

schooling (WIDA, 2015). For example, the recent wave of unaccompanied minors coming to the United States from Central America also generally fits into the category of students with interrupted schooling. The experiences that many of these students had in their home countries have led to interrupted educational opportunities, in addition to added socioemotional needs (WIDA, 2015).

### ***Immigration Journey***

Safety is a significant concern for families who make their way to the United States. The immigration process itself can disrupt schooling due to the lengthy journey (Glick & Yakibu, 2016; Lukes, 2015; Rendall & Torr, 2008). Immigrating to the United States can be very dangerous, especially for undocumented immigrants seeking to relocate here (Gudiño et al., 2011).

### ***Family Situations***

Over the past few years, the southwestern border of the United States has seen a significant increase in the number of undocumented, unaccompanied children crossing the Mexican border into the United States. Authorities estimate that between 65,000 and 90,000 undocumented, unaccompanied children attempted this journey between 2012 and 2014 (U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 2015). Many of these children are apprehended by U.S. authorities and placed in holding facilities. These children may be detained for a significant amount of time while a judge determines whether they will be permitted to make the United States their new home (U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 2015). This journey and detention time all add to the interrupted schooling these students face.

Some of these children are reunited with families in the United States, where there may be many challenges they face associated with reunification. Many have not seen family members since they were very young (Adelman & Taylor, 2015). Once the children arrive, they may now be adolescents who are reuniting with a parental figure (Adelman & Taylor, 2015). This can create significant stress and emotional strife in the home (Barowsky & McIntyre, 2010; Martinez et al., 2011). It is difficult for students with interrupted schooling to adapt to being raised in a new country, with a new language, and by a new parental figure who has been absent from their lives for many years (Barowsky & McIntyre, 2010; Martinez et al., 2011). Many students may suffer from feelings of abandonment and trauma, combined with adjustment to their new life. This poses obstacles for the students' success in the United States (Pierce, 2015).

### ***Stress and Anxiety***

School is the predominant place where students with interrupted schooling receive their primary acculturation and have their first experiences in their new society (Bartlett et al., 2017). Therefore, it is critical that schools be the positive support system that these immigrants need so that students with interrupted schooling feel like they are entering a safe and welcoming environment that builds on their knowledge, assets, and language—where teachers help them find their new place socially and academically (Bartlett et al., 2017). With proper teacher preparation, schools have the potential to rebuild the academic, social, and emotional well-being of students with interrupted schooling (Sinclair, 2007). Research on students with interrupted schooling has shown that some struggle with self-esteem issues, depression, isolation, and rejection due to the hardships

they face in their lives, such as moving to a new place, and discrimination (Green, 2003; Hos, 2020; Romanowski, 2003).

The concept of trust is extremely important to students who have experienced trauma. Students who have been forced to leave their countries may have difficulty trusting authority figures such as teachers (Brown et al., 2006). Students must feel like they belong to the school learning community before they will have enough trust to take risks and learn. Several studies on socioemotional needs suggest that students benefit when teachers express attitudes of value towards the students, provide a community-centered environment, and share personal stories to promote strong relationships and build trust (Bransford et al., 1999; MacNevin, 2012).

Current research discussing socioemotional needs tends to share the common theme that prior experiences and understanding culture are incredibly important in order to help students be successful (Free & Križ, 2016; MacNevin, 2012; Moll et al., 1992). It is important that teachers build relationships and develop empathy for students with interrupted schooling so that they can better understand students' culture, background, and funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992). Culture is part of identity, and identity relates to how well a student does in school and ultimately in society (MacNevin, 2012).

Research has also shown that being an immigrant to the United States can lead to various emotional stresses that might influence immigrant students and their families (Martinez et al., 2011; Panchanadeswaran & Dawson, 2011). Recent immigrants face additional discrimination regarding their country of origin and their legal status (Panchanadeswaran & Dawson, 2011). Undocumented students are constantly navigating

daily life as an undocumented person while trying to fit in and participate with their documented peers (Negrón-Gonzales, 2014). For example, Negrón-Gonzales (2014) reported that a code of silence appears to be a fundamental part of the undocumented experience in the United States. Students admit to rarely talking about their experiences, legal status, or family situations with adults and teachers in their school for fear of consequences (Negrón-Gonzales, 2014). It is almost as if they are living two different lives at once that are kept secret from each other. This becomes exceedingly challenging for teachers who work with these students because the life they live at home is very different from the life they portray in school.

Immigrant families experience a large strain, which influences the speed at which they become comfortable in the United States (Negrón-Gonzales, 2014; Panchanadeswaran & Dawson, 2011). Many students may come to school feeling anxious and fearful that their families may face discrimination and possible deportation (Martinez et al., 2011). Transferring this information to the classroom setting and dealing with these troublesome uncertainties can affect academic performance, classroom behavior, and language acquisition. Additionally, being undocumented can lead to additional stress, nervousness, anxiety, and negative emotions (Patler & Pirtle, 2017) on the part of the individual student and their family. Teachers must know about these factors so that they might understand the varying influences that are affecting learning performance.

### ***Political Climate***

Currently in the United States, there is a dilemma that relates to undocumented youth who were brought to the United States as children and have spent most of their lives here (Jordan, 2016). This poses a particular problem because undocumented students, even if they have attended school in the United States most of their lives, are not eligible to work, obtain financial aid, or receive in-state tuition in many states for a college education (Schmid, 2013). The lack of formal citizenship can affect private life, family, and relationships.

Political climate can potentially be a stressor that heavily influences many ELs (Martinez et al., 2011). Additionally, it can be particularly challenging for students with interrupted schooling who have additional academic needs to contend with political climate stressors in addition to their unique schooling needs (Patler & Pirtle, 2017). For some undocumented students who have been living in fear of deportation for years, their worries were lifted when the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program was renewed (Napolitano, 2012). The threat of discontinuing the DACA program has recently thrown many DACA recipients back into a state of heartbreak and fear. They fear for their families, their ability to stay in the United States, and their ability to live prosperous lives (Jordan, 2016). Many students feel that their legal status situations are possibly in jeopardy again, which leads them back to living with worry, stress, and anxiety (Jordan, 2016). These feelings of unknown status and safety trickle into the classroom and affect academic performance, attendance, and even behavior (Hos, 2020).

Approximately 775,000 minors and 850,000 young adults were living under DACA status as of 2012 (Yoshikawa et al., 2017).

These types of experiences can greatly influence students' performance at school. Students might have difficulty paying attention and appear withdrawn from school activities and peers (Capps et al., 2007, p. 48). Grades may fluctuate when students experience a risk of parental deportation or have recently lost a parent due to deportation (Macías, 2018). Conversely, many students exhibit academic resilience and an increased focus on their school performance despite experiencing tremendous stress (Capps et al., 2007). In some cases, it has been noted that the separation of a family has even become a motivating moment that encourages the student to work harder to show their parents that they will be successful in the United States (Capps et al., 2007).

### ***Socioeconomic Status***

Socioeconomic Status (SES) is an important factor that warrants further investigation into the extent to which SES explains ELs' elevated risk for needs in reading and academic in general in their new setting (Kieffer, 2010). Low SES is known to put students at elevated risk for early difficulties (Snow et al., 1998). Upon arriving in the United States, students with interrupted schooling may face minority status, economic barriers, differing levels of education, and discrimination. Research has also shown that students and their families often settle into a segregated settings where they are once again exposed to more adverse life events (Gudiño et al., 2011). Struggling to seek new job opportunity in the United States can further add to the psychological and economic needs of these students (Santisteban, 2014). Often, the parents work long hours, which

often results in the youth being alone for extended amounts of time with little to no academic support at home (Fortuny et al., 2009).

### ***Living Situations and Transportation***

Some newly arriving students who experience economic challenges may have living conditions where they share spaces with multiple families (Gottfried et al., 2019). These types of living situations also make it challenging for students to complete academic tasks and homework in the evenings (Madrid, 2011). SES may affect one's ability to have adequate transportation, making it difficult for students to attend school functions, stay after school for extra help, or attend extracurricular activities (Gottfried et al., 2019). These experiences are ways typical youths make friends, socialize, and feel included in their school community (Madrid, 2011). For students with interrupted schooling, not being able to participate in extracurricular activities reduces their opportunities to feel included and engaged in school.

### ***School Readiness***

Research has shown that the U.S. academic culture can be overwhelming for students with interrupted schooling because they often face rigorous expectations for prior content knowledge and annual high-stakes assessments to graduate, and they need a better understanding of how to “do school” in the United States (Zimmerman-Orozco, 2015). This can lead to academic and behavioral needs, resulting in many students leaving school early (Hos, 2020).

A large part of U.S. schooling now uses computers, laptops, and personal devices. Technology is seen as a luxury for many immigrant students, and upon arrival to the

United States, many have little experience with various technologies (Benson, 2013; Riel & Schwarz, 2002). Some newcomer ELs may be disenfranchised when it comes to technology because many still need access to computers at home (Benson, 2013; Waters, 2007). SES can also influence a learner's readiness for school and their ease with access to technology (Benson, 2013). It is not uncommon for students with interrupted schooling to first be introduced to keyboarding skills when they arrive to U.S. classrooms (Benson, 2013). This can make completing academic tasks challenging and stressful, especially when it comes to mastering the keyboard to take statewide assessments. This can also pose a pedagogical dilemma for teachers when preparing for the needs of and expectations for these students (Riel & Schwarz, 2002). ELs disproportionately have more economic needs. Research has shown that this influences their reading development and their readiness for school (Kieffer, 2010).

### ***Adult Roles***

In addition to the challenges with school readiness, students with interrupted schooling, are also often called upon to take on more of an adult role in their homes in order to help supplement a family's earning (Sawyer & Márquez, 2017; Snow et al., 1998). Jobs may be more difficult to obtain for parents who do not speak English, so their English-speaking adolescents may work to contribute to the family income. A common theme emerging from the literature is that ELs often have out-of-school responsibilities such as chores, taking care of younger siblings, and working outside of the home to earn money (Hos, 2020; Stewart, 2015).

Adult roles such as those noted above can also make it difficult for students to focus on their academics, stay for after-school help, or join extracurricular activities that might help facilitate their acclimation to the United States (Hos, 2020; Stewart, 2015). The added responsibilities can be emotionally exhausting for these students as they seek to simultaneously balance school and assist their families (Barowsky & McIntyre, 2010; Martinez et al., 2011). These students are not starting at the same place academically as their peers in the United States, and furthermore family needs and survival in the United States are often their biggest priority with academics holding a lesser place of priority (Sawyer & Márquez, 2017; Snow et al., 1998).

### ***Parental/Care Giver Support***

Upon arrival in the country, immigrant families experience the same cultural shock, emotions, stress, and acclimation stressors as their children. It can be very difficult for families to adapt to the new expectations of a school system and know how to best support their children (Barowsky & McIntyre, 2010; Martinez et al., 2011). Parents who have not yet learned English or do not hold the same cultural understanding of parental engagement as in their home country are reasons some immigrant parents avoid contact with the schools. The availability of an adult who can speak their language and offer advice for mitigating the complexities of school has a significant impact on the immigrant student's sense of self-efficacy (Fashola et al., 2001), and some school districts accomplish this better than others. Research has shown that reaching out to the new families is an important way to foster a caring relationship between schools and families (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015b; DeCapua et al., 2020). Students with interrupted

schooling who enter a classroom having their basic needs met will feel more comfortable in their classrooms and be more receptive to learning (DeCapua et al., 2020).

### **Second Language Acquisition Research**

The second broad area informing this study is drawn from the field of SLA research. All teachers preparing to work with ELs take at least one course on SLA theory, along with their other coursework. Some of the general areas that all ESOL teachers must understand in order to be competent are effective ESOL instructional strategies, contextualized unit and lesson planning, English language proficiency standards, intercultural awareness, principles of SLA, and formative and summative assessment (SABES, 2019). Additionally, in recent years, the field of SLA research has increased to include many additional areas, including identity formation and important aspects of culture that had been missing or not as prevalent in teacher preparation and PD in the past (Bal, 2014; Cabrera & Leyendecker, 2017; Swain & Deters, 2007).

Earlier ESOL teacher education programs prepared teachers for the contexts of that time, that is, it was expected that most ELs brought with them prior schooling experiences and literacy in their home language (Freeman & Freeman, 2003) into their new U.S. classroom. In his early research in SLA, Cummins (1979) distinguished between the two types of language that students acquire when learning a new language: Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). BICS refers to the informal everyday linguistic tasks that one needs. CALP, on the other hand, is more difficult to acquire and refers to academic tasks such as those that involve reading and writing skills.

According to the reconceptualization of the *new* mainstream SLA, today BICS is more commonly referred to as social language, and CALP is better known as academic language (Swain & Deters, 2007). New SLA views acquisition as a cognitive and individual phenomenon. It takes a more holistic approach on language and language acquisition that acknowledges the influence of social context, identity, task, and setting on language use and acquisition (Firth & Wagner, 1997).

Social language includes non-academic tasks such as asking for directions and holding an informal conversation with a peer. Students require far less time to acquire social language than they do academic language (Collier & Thomas, 1989; Cummins, 1979). Academic language is needed for mastery of learning and might involve such skills as the literacy skills needed to navigate a course textbook, write a research report, and use formal speech patterns to engage in a cognitively demanding academic discussion (Collier & Thomas, 1989; Cummins, 1979). Because standardized tests are written and designed to assess academic language and content, social language alone would not sufficiently demonstrate student proficiency as measured on a high-stakes test. This is problematic, considering that ELs often acquire conversational fluency in English within about 2 years, but research has shown that it requires approximately 5 to 10 years to catch up academically in English (Collier & Thomas, 1989; Cummins, 1999).

Another challenge faced by educators of ELs is that they are now teaching more students with interrupted schooling who have varying degrees of literacy skills in their home language (Freeman & Freeman, 2003; Schmidt de Carranza, 2017). Research has found that differing levels of literacy and educational background in students' home

language affects the level of support needed to acquire English (Musetti et al., 2009). This makes it more challenging to transfer students' literacy skills from their home language to the L2 of English (Bialystok et al., 2009).

It is thus also important to support a student's home language development because this might alter the course of literacy acquisition for that student. Bilingual students are more likely able to transfer literacy skills from their home language to their L2 of English without adding confusion (Bialystok et al., 2009). Although students with interrupted schooling often come with differing literacy skills, it is still an advantage to be able to transfer the knowledge they possess to the L2 (Bialystok et al., 2009).

### **ESOL Teacher Knowledge**

The third broad area of research informing this study is ESOL teacher knowledge. It is critical that all ESOL teachers understand how radically different educational and cultural experiences can be for students with interrupted schooling. Academic struggles can be attributed to a variety of factors, including both scarcities of resources and the cultural norms in different areas that may be incongruent with Western-style education (Grigorenko, 2007).

Along with the shift in demographics across the United States, there is also an increase in the variety of ELs who are enrolled in schools that do not have teachers who are experienced at working with ELs with such unique needs. While this student demographic has shifted drastically in some parts of the country, the teacher population has remained largely monolingual (Guarino et al., 2006), white, and lacking personal and professional experience with culturally diverse populations (Howard, 2006). In some

settings, monolingual, white teachers may hold a deficit-based belief about ELs and their abilities (Salas & Portes, 2017). Teachers' beliefs have been shown to have an effect on their expectations of their students (Salas & Portes, 2017). Several additional pedagogical techniques, frameworks, and classroom practices are currently emerging at the forefront of research regarding students with interrupted schooling.

### ***Need for Building Relationships***

Most students with interrupted schooling walk into U.S. classrooms with lived experiences and emotions that the typical student might not possess. It is important that ELs enter a safe and respectful environment (Gay, 2010, 2013). Many students with interrupted schooling may have lost loved ones, may feel abandoned in a new country, and may be resistant to trusting the people in their new school and community (Santisteban, 2014). It is critical that teachers of students with interrupted schooling recognize the importance of respecting diversity and building positive relationships between teacher and student (Gay, 2010, 2013). Ultimately, students will be more successful and willing to participate if they feel safe and valued. The classroom environment should contribute to academic success and building community (Prokopchuk, 2019; Santisteban, 2014). The most effective teachers are those who are culturally and emotionally responsive and show genuine caring for their students (Gay, 2010, 2013). In many collectivist cultures, the teacher is viewed as the student's family. Students believe teachers should care about them (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011). This makes them feel welcome and valued in school (Gay, 2010, 2013). For some students, celebrating each student's birthday and significant personal occasions builds this

interconnected classroom community for students with interrupted schooling (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011).

The importance of interconnectedness between students with interrupted schooling and an educator is imperative to their success in U.S. schools (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015b). These students have valuable life experiences that teachers and classmates can build on during instruction (Zimmerman-Orozco, 2015). Often having a teacher who will listen to their stories, be culturally sensitive to their backgrounds, and show empathy for their experiences can really motivate students to perform in the classroom (Gay, 2010, 2013). Students with interrupted schooling have an even greater need than other students to feel connected to each other and their teachers. School should be a place where these students feel they belong (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015b).

### ***Added Cultural Knowledge***

Many U.S. instructional programs are designed for students who come from an individualistic culture. This type of culture focuses on a person's attributes, traits, achievements, and personal accomplishments (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011). A mismatch that can exist between students with interrupted schooling and mainstream U.S. students is individualism versus collectivism. Other research has indicated that many immigrant students with interrupted schooling come from a collectivist culture where their self-identity is heavily based on group relationships and group responsibilities, which are regarded in their culture as being more important than individual achievements (DeCapua & Marshall, 2010a). Since these students are often from collectivistic societies, feeling

that they are part of a safe community with members who support each other is very important for them to feel comfortable and willing to learn.

DeCapua et al. (2007) have reported that students with interrupted schooling may not yet read and write in their home language. This can be a challenge for them as they work to catch up and develop higher-order thinking skills while also preparing for high-stakes tests and simultaneously mastering literacy in a new language.

### **Education of ELs during a Pandemic**

A final area of emergent research that has become an integral part of the current study addresses the education of ELs during a global pandemic. The World Health Organization (WHO) named the disease caused by this severe acute respiratory syndrome as COVID-19 on February 11, 2020 (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020a), and subsequently designated it as a world-wide pandemic on March 11, 2020 (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020b). On April 2, 2020, the number of cases reported worldwide crossed 1 million, with 205 countries and territories affected (Worldometer, 2020). Much of the world was on lockdowns that were imposed in March 2020. The majority of schools, universities, and colleges had suspended face-to-face teaching, forcing teachers and students to move to online distance learning for an indefinite period of time (Patra et al., 2021). Suddenly, much of the globe entered into a virtual world of teaching and learning. Many educators reported that they had no idea how to continue the teaching and learning process (Patra et al., 2021). In some countries, educators started sending presentations and videos to their students. Eventually many schools and institutions switched to using Zoom, Google Classrooms, Google Meet, and WebEx software as tools

for instruction. Many students did not find this useful, and a lot of confusion resulted regarding the method of teaching to be adopted (Patra et al., 2021). Many students across the globe struggled with online platforms due to reasons such as network issues (Patra et al., 2021). Although literature on teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic is just now starting to emerge, a small body of new literature shows that the pandemic has had a major impact academically and emotionally on teachers, students, and their families across the globe (Chang-Bacon, 2021; Dube, 2020; Sayer & Braun, 2020; Shin, 2020).

By the summer of 2020, one out of five U.S. teachers reported they were unlikely to return if schools were to reopen (Page, 2020). Many states faced resignations and retirements (Bailey & Schurz, 2020; Will, 2020), which were combined with budget shortfalls and new online teaching challenges (Kini, 2020). Thus, it has become critically important that current educators are supported in meeting the challenges of teaching online to ELs (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, both educators and students were forced to move abruptly to an online learning platform. During this time, educators turned to many virtual resources. Most teachers simultaneously had to learn how to use the platform as they were also figuring out how to plan lessons for online delivery (Sayer & Braun, 2020). According to a study done specifically with ELs (Sayer & Braun, 2020), many ESOL teachers struggled to find online content that included accommodations appropriate for ELs. In Sayer and Braun's (2020) study, ESOL teachers reported that the virtual platforms being used were not designed with ELs in mind. This research informs this study because it shows there may be a common need for improvements to virtual

resources and materials for ESOL teachers and ELs moving forward in the aftermath of a pandemic.

ESOL educators, in particular, were faced with the dilemma of how to maintain learning for ELs during the COVID-19 pandemic. “In typical school settings, ELs benefit from rich language interaction with their peers for both social and academic purposes,” (Sayer & Braun, 2020, p. 1). As schools moved to remote learning, the main strategies for making input comprehensible, such as the use of verbal and nonverbal cues, were largely lost (Sayer & Braun, 2020). Although some online programs included read-aloud texts, they still lacked appropriate accommodations to make content instruction effective for ELs, particularly for ELs with interrupted schooling. This affected ELs most who are emergent readers, since they could not receive the one-on-one or small group instruction required to build early fundamental skills of reading through scaffolded oral interactions (Sayer & Braun, 2020). ELs with interrupted schooling were often involved in face-to-face, level-based reading groups to support their early literacy needs (Wright, 2019). Online instruction meant the loss of this type of differentiated learning supported through oral interactions (Sayer & Braun, 2020).

Well into the next school year, and possibly beyond, students will continue to learn in non-traditional formats; therefore, both educators and students need to be prepared for new learning approaches (Chang-Bacon, 2021). Chang-Bacon (2021) reported that the disruptions of COVID-19 amplified the lack of technology, necessary accommodations, and appropriate resources that are provided to this population of ELs. School closures during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated new possibilities as

technology and accommodations for ELs were implemented on an unprecedentedly large scale in ways that had been deemed unfeasible for EL populations in the past (Chang-Bacon, 2021).

Additionally, both students and teachers need emotional supports as education returns to an emerging new type of normal. With the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic, even greater efforts need to be made to address students' and teachers' social emotional needs (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020). Research has shown that building strong relationships encourages students to feel safe and supported at school (Santisteban, 2014). This is critical for ELs with interrupted schooling who might have experienced trauma in their past. The switch to a virtual teaching environment has removed the ability for the teacher and student to connect on a deeper level, which poses a new risk of ELs with interrupted schooling who may decide to leave school (Rodriguez et al., 2020).

### **Responsive Pedagogies**

Students with interrupted schooling have different needs when compared to their EL counterparts who have home language literacy, and it is possible that the way they learn may also be affected (Khan, 2012). Two major areas of theory that may influence the learning of students with interrupted schooling are Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP; Gay, 2013) and the Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015a). These areas of theory may help researchers to develop new knowledge in order to enhance current ESOL teachers' expertise when welcoming these students into classrooms with the appropriate cultural sensitivities, emotional supports, and pedagogical skills and tools.

### ***Culturally Responsive Pedagogy***

Most students with interrupted education arrive in their new U.S classrooms with greater socioemotional needs than those of the typical student. It is critical that teachers of students with interrupted schooling recognize the importance of respecting diversity and building positive relationships between teacher and student (Santisteban, 2014). The knowledge of CRP has the potential to provide teachers with a greater chance of reaching students with prior experiences that might be a barrier to their academic success. CRP affords educators the opportunity to show appreciation and value for all of their students' past experiences, culture, and identity (Ball, 2009; Gay, 2010, 2013; Paris, 2012; Warren, 2018).

The CRP model focuses on making instruction relevant to students whose backgrounds are different from that of the dominant culture (Warren, 2018). This is critical because school practices have been designed around the cultural norms of the dominant social group (Lee, 2010), which can lead to inequitable results for some students. CRP is a student-centered approach to teaching in which the students' cultural strengths are identified and nurtured to promote student achievement and a sense of well-being about the student's identity (Gay, 2010, 2013). This increased recognition of a student-centered approach supports the new mainstream SLA theory, which posits that SLA, in addition to addressing the acquisition of language itself, is also a theory that envelops sociocultural processes, such as identity formation, the incorporation of societal norms, and cultural dimensions present in the learning process (Swain & Deters, 2007; Zuengler & Miller, 2006). The students' social environment is a source of mental

development, where socialization is accomplished through the use of language and human interaction. Language is learned through social interactions (Swain & Deters, 2007; Zuengler & Miller, 2006).

Research has also suggested that CRP has been useful in reducing barriers to academic achievement for diverse populations (Carter & Welner, 2013). CRP asks teachers to build upon, appreciate, and sustain students' cultural differences in one's teaching. Through this framework, teachers learn to develop habits that enable them to accurately respond to the needs of diverse youth. Teachers cannot control the skills with which ELs arrive in their classrooms. However, teachers can monitor and control their professional and personal responses to the skills and knowledge with which students enter their classrooms (Warren, 2018). The majority of classroom learning experiences are directly relevant to and reflective of students' home lives (Gay, 2010). For diverse learners to succeed, they need to believe that the teacher genuinely cares about them. CRP helps teachers realize that their students want to be visible, heard, valued, and an important member of the classroom community (Gay, 2013).

According to Warren (2018), a major component of CRP is the development of empathy among teachers. Having empathy enables the teacher to connect what the teacher knows or thinks about students and families to what they do when responding to student needs and creating learning experiences for students. Thus, teacher educators should be provided professional learning experiences that enable them to acquire firsthand knowledge of the youth and families they serve (Warren, 2018).

### ***Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm***

In addition to honoring students' backgrounds in the classroom, as well as authentic and relevant curriculum (Bigelow & Vinogradov, 2011), there is also a paradigm that attempts to address the needs of students with interrupted schooling called the Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm (MALP). The underlying philosophy of MALP is that educators must make changes in their instructional methods to make them more culturally comprehensible to students with interrupted schooling. MALP suggests that by using processes that are familiar to the students, such as building on their oral communication as a scaffold to help them better access language and content, they will be able to better bridge the expectations from home culture to school culture (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015a). By leveraging the students' strengths and using them as a vehicle to introduce concepts that are not familiar and comfortable, students will be able to access this information at a greater level. In MALP, before taking additional steps, teachers must first accept the conditions that students with interrupted schooling need in their learning environment (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015a).

### **Chapter Two Summary**

Chapter Two presents the conceptual framework informing this study. This research provides insight into the many reasons why students with interrupted schooling may have more socioemotional, literacy, and academic needs than those of earlier EL populations in U.S. schools (Browder, 2014; DeCapua et al., 2009). These new needs have resulted in a call for changes in the way that teachers work with and support students with interrupted schooling as they acquire English (Khan, 2012). Chapter Three

provides the research design, which includes the method and analysis for how this research was conducted with experienced ESOL teachers who work with students with interrupted schooling.

### Chapter Three

This research explored the experiences and knowledge of experienced ESOL teachers working with ELs with interrupted schooling to uncover the nuanced and unique pedagogical skills and knowledge base required for future and current ESOL teachers to promote the success of those ELs through the ESOL teachers' eyes and experiences. I chose a qualitative approach through Collaborative Action Research (CAR) to investigate the perspectives of experienced ESOL teachers in order to gain greater understanding of the areas that were presented in Chapter Two.

This chapter first presents the research questions agreed upon by our CAR collective that led the study. Following this, I share my researcher positionality. I also provide an overview of the CAR methodology and why it was purposefully selected for this study. I then provide the research design, introduce the teachers in our collective, and explain our procedures and timeline. The final sections of this chapter discuss the data analysis process used and review the trustworthiness of this research study.

It is important to note that the ESOL teachers in the study will be referred to as a *collective*. I am also an equal member in the CAR collective. A collective is a group of people who share or are motivated by one common issue or interest and where collective action is a means of improving the status or situation for a group of people (Wright,

2009). A collective is much more than a group because it works together to achieve a common goal.

### **Research Questions**

In many cases, even ESOL teachers find it challenging to understand all the needs of students with interrupted education and support their academic success (Custodio & O'Loughlin, 2017; Khan, 2012). With the significant demographic changes at hand, the teaching community now needs to be more prepared to both welcome and meet the varied needs of these students in U.S. classrooms and help them enter the U.S. workforce as well as meet the yearly evidence-based goals outlined in ESSA (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). Researchers in the field of teacher education, teachers, and school-based personnel supporting ESOL teachers would benefit from focusing on what ESOL teachers are doing and identifying the resources they need to help students with interrupted schooling be successful in U.S. schools. The first two research questions were initially created with an aim to articulate ESOL teacher's realities, needs, and challenges when working with ELs with interrupted schooling:

1. What knowledge, skills, dispositions, and instructional strategies do experience ESOL teachers identify as being important for ESOL teachers to now possess in order to best support the development of ELs with interrupted schooling in their classes?
2. Given current demographic changes in the ESOL population, what expanded knowledge do these ESOL teachers identify as being needed (or optimal) to support their work with ELs with interrupted schooling?

Shortly after this CAR study commenced, the COVID-19 pandemic affected the entire world. Additional themes emerged from conversations and journal entries that fell outside the first two research questions initially identified. All of the teachers in this CAR collective are educators, and were all directly affected by this pandemic. The pandemic was a dominant source of conversation among our collective as all teachers had to make a sudden pivot to online instruction. As a result, the findings of this study also include significant themes that surround the impact on ESOL teachers and ELs during this time of crisis. Therefore, a third research question was added retroactively during the data analysis to address these added findings. This study thus also aimed to answer the following additional research question:

3. What unique challenges emerged from the ESOL teachers' experiences for the education of ELs with interrupted schooling during the COVID pandemic?

In order to investigate our research questions, this research design sought the voices of experienced ESOL teachers to provide rich, nuanced, and contextual data for analysis. Next, I will explore my own researcher positionality, which is important because it gives me a unique access and is an aspect that gives me trustworthiness among our collective.

### **Researcher Positionality**

The concept of positionality refers to the researcher's insider or outsider relationship to the community engaged in the inquiry. Even though I participated as an equal member in all aspects of this CAR study, I took on the role as an insider-outsider (Humphrey, 2007; Smith et al., 2010). I bridged both worlds of being a member in the

research site, while also conducting research in the site which had contradictions and dilemmas that I had an ethical responsibility to share with the research community.

As an ESOL teacher in our CAR collective, when tackling an inquiry together, I acted more as an insider. An insider is a researcher who works as a member of the collective as an equal with the other community members (Rowe, 2014). During our initial synchronous meetings, I strove to remain in the background and only responded to questions rather than volunteering information or my views. My desire was to decrease the likelihood that I was perceived as the “leader”. During this study I was constantly negotiating roles (Call-Cummings, 2017) between being an insider and an outsider. I was conscious about being an outsider and not wishing to be perceived as an “expert” or “knower,” yet, at times I still had to motivate and facilitate discussions and provide guidance on how to interpret our findings.

I worked collaboratively with our group to decide discussion topics and areas of focus. I completed online journals along with my collective and participated regularly in our online discussion boards. However, as the study progressed, it became evident that there was a part of me that was very different from the rest of the teachers in our collective. I am a graduate student pursuing a doctorate degree, and this was something that my collective could not connect to and made me more of an outsider at times. Additionally, at the culmination of this study, I took on a stronger role as an outsider, since I am still an ESOL teacher, but now I was doing the majority of the final data analysis and reporting on the findings independently.

This shift in demographics in my own classroom has changed the way I need to instruct my ELs. Many of my students now need foundational literacy instruction, and some of these students battle trauma from their prior experiences. Although I completed an excellent teacher preparation program, I did not leave fully prepared to meet the varying needs of all my English learners, particularly older learners past primary grades. I learned the most about how I need to differentiate, scaffold, and be prepared for the socioemotional and socioeconomic differences of my students while working with them in my secondary level classroom.

My personal experiences working with ELs who have experienced interruptions in schooling prompted me to conduct this research to gather data that could help ESOL teachers better prepare to work with students who have experienced interrupted schooling. I have struggled to find ways to understand and meet the needs of my students, establish their prior knowledge, and often compensate for the fact that they may not have had the advantage of learning literacy in their home language. I welcomed my EL students as they have entered my room after political unrest, violence, and economic deprivation in their home countries. I listened to the stories of my refugee students and heard about the journeys of my students who arrived as unaccompanied minors. I sat with teachers in my building who were trying to prepare themselves to teach 15-year old newcomers who have not attended school since first grade and have no literacy in their home language. I struggled to prepare lessons for a room of EL students with a range of worldly experiences, foundations in literacy, formal schooling experiences, English language acquisition, and socioemotional needs. I believe that it has been most powerful

for me to learn about my students and perfect my teaching pedagogy while working in my own classroom and collaborating with colleagues who share the same experiences. Now, as I seek to contribute what I have learned, I realize that other teachers may have had similar experiences; I would like to draw on their experiences and expertise to provide input based on their individual contexts to advance our field in the service of ELs.

Additionally, I am a National Board Certified Teacher. National Board Certification was designed to develop, retain, and recognize accomplished teachers and to generate ongoing improvement in schools nationwide. The National Board Standards represent a consensus among educators about what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards [NBPTS], 2021). Going through the board certification process required me to reflect on and analyze my teaching daily to improve student achievement. Research shows that students of teachers who reflect on their own practice regularly will have greater achievement than those whose teachers do not engage in reflective practice (Center for Education Policy Research, 2012; National Strategic Planning and Analysis Research Center, 2017).

Reflective teacher practice, an essential component of National Board Certification, inspired me to engage in the process while conducting research with teachers who work with EL students. My own experiences with reflective practice are why I believe in the idea of teachers becoming researchers and participating in CAR. CAR is the self-reflective undertaking by teachers to improve their own educational practices (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Additionally, teachers reflect on their understanding of

these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). My teaching pedagogy has improved the most while working in my own classroom and collaborating with colleagues. My practical experience, daily reflection, and discussions with fellow ESOL teachers have been more valuable than any professional development I could have attended. For these reasons, I felt teachers might benefit from taking on the role of an investigator or explorer into their personal teaching context, while at the same time being a member in it (Boog, 2003; Burns, 2010; Gunz, 1996). The results of this study are immediately applicable to the teachers of ELs because the results share the voices of ESOL teachers who have current real-world experiences, needs, and successes when working with students with interrupted schooling.

I believe that my ESOL teaching experience working at both the elementary and secondary levels provided me with extended knowledge and added perspective regarding working with ELs, thus providing me credibility and insight to work within our CAR collective. Like the other ESOL teachers, I also work with students with interrupted schooling and can share my own stories of challenges and successes. Prior to this study, I had engaged in CAR in my classroom and had positive outcomes in how I reflect on my pedagogy and adjust my instruction. My own background helped me to be viewed as an equal member of this research collective. Yet, power dynamics are still at play, given that I was ultimately the one writing about this research study.

In order for me as the researcher to be fully accepted and respected in a new collective, I first had to demonstrate knowledge and skill before others were able to open up to me about their thoughts and experiences (Johnson, 1984; Rowell et al., 2017). Since

I already possessed experience in a large public school system and worked with ELs, this encouraged teachers in the collective to feel comfortable sharing openly and honestly about their experiences.

As a teacher researcher, I have an ethical responsibility to accurately report the findings of this study (Mertler, 2017) and ensure that I do not assume, based on experiences with my former students, that all ESOL teachers and their students have similar lived experiences. For example, not all ELs have gone through traumatic and painful experiences or journeys. There is no single experience or individual crisis for every EL (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). The same principle applies to other ESOL teachers in different parts of the United States. Simply because I have had certain experiences with my own ELs does not mean that other teachers have witnessed and taught students with similar situations and backgrounds. By working with other teachers of ELs, I had the opportunity to learn from their valuable insights, gather experiences, and produce recommendation that led to the creation of materials and resources that can be used in future PD for teachers who work with ELs.

Students immigrate to the United States from all over the world. My unique population of ELs can be very different from students who immigrate from different countries to other locations in the United States. Although students with interrupted schooling are prevalent in many parts of the world outside of the United States, this study focused only on teachers working in the United States because the basis of this study is to help students with interrupted schooling succeed in the United States based on the goals set forth by the U.S. Department of Education (2019) in ESSA. The secondary reason this

study takes a deep look at U.S. ESOL teachers is to benefit U.S. educational programs, PD for pre- and in-service teachers, and future research surrounding the U.S. education system.

ELs coming from different countries have vastly different backgrounds, varying types of and access to previous schooling, and unique lived experiences. Throughout this research study, I strove to maintain an open perspective and not make assumptions about the experiences of other teachers and their students.

### **Collaborative Action Research as Methodology and Reflective Practice**

In today's global education field, CAR has become part of a broad movement that flips the traditional approach of knowledge production, encourages reflective practice, and values teachers as both producers and holders of legitimate and valuable knowledge (Burns, 2010; Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). "Collaborative Action Research can be a way to acknowledge, respect, and work in alliance with social practices grounded in alternative knowledges" (Rowell et al., 2017, p. 69). The works of Fals-Borda, Freire, Horton, Swantz, Gaventa, and many other pioneering action researchers were first steps toward knowledge democracy (Rowell et al., 2017).

CAR allows teachers to identify a problem or issue that they share together within their own teaching context and consider looking into it more deeply and systematically as a group (Elliot, 2003). A collaborative of teachers takes on the role of investigators or explorers into their personal teaching context, while at the same time being members in it (Burns, 2010; Rowell et al., 2017).

### ***Collaborative Action Research as Methodology***

The motivation for designing this study as a CAR study was to have experienced ESOL teachers, who work with students with interrupted schooling, become co-researchers themselves in an effort to disrupt the traditional separation between researcher and teachers. CAR has the potential to increase teacher empowerment (Bedford, 2009; Boog, 2003; Book, 1996; Fals-Borda, 2001; Hensen, 1996; Whitehead & McNiff, 2009), and bridge the divide that exists between research and practice (Johnson, 2012; Mills, 2011).

CAR provides educators new knowledge and understanding about how to improve educational practices or resolve significant challenges in classrooms and schools (Mills, 2011; Stringer, 2007). Additionally, in the education field, the main goal of CAR is to determine ways to enhance the lives of students (Mills, 2011). At the same time, CAR has the potential to enhance the lives of those professionals who work within the educational system (Hine, 2013).

CAR has become increasingly popular in second language teaching circles, which is an indicator that it might also be beneficial to use in EL classrooms (Burns, 2010; Kodituwakku, 2017). Several studies have been conducted over the past 10 years that take a CAR approach to studying the practicing teachers who work with ELs and preservice teachers preparing to work with ELs (Carmouche, 2015; Delkeskamp, 2012; Frank, 2018; Jones-Jackson, 2015; Moran, 2017; Sims, 2018; Taylor, 2015; Yang, 2012). Growing evidence suggests that language teachers from all over the world find CAR to be a highly effective form of research methodology when working with students learning

a language because the teachers can work collaboratively with other colleagues to explore common issues (Burns, 1999; Edge & Richards, 1994; Rochsantiningih, 2005; Tinker Sachs, 2002; Wallace, 1998). However, I was unable to find any CAR specifically involving teachers who work with students with interrupted schooling. This study fills a particular area in the research literature regarding students with interrupted schooling and adds the use of this methodology with teachers who work specifically with ELs who have had interrupted schooling.

Although CAR has existed for a long time, it is still an important and relevant methodology used in educational research. The impact of CAR was originally divulged through Thiollent's (2011) work. Over the past 5 years, CAR has been used abundantly in North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand (Rowell et al., 2017). Research indicates that there are several advantages to conducting this type of research with preservice and practicing teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000). CAR is a form of authentic assessment that contextualizes teaching and allows teachers to move beyond personal reflection to more rigorous and structured examinations of challenges they might be having in teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Zuber-Skerrit, 2012).

Since CAR is a form of practitioner research, it encourages teachers to become lifelong learners and makes them more open to developing a variety of teaching methods and verifying whether those methods work (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). CAR engages teachers in their own teaching process and helps them become more reflective (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). It has been illustrated to help empower teachers to have confidence in their teaching and enables them to become agents of change (Bedford,

2009; Boog, 2003; Burns, 1999; Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000; Gore & Zeichner, 1991; Webb, 1990).

CAR in and of itself does not always make teachers aware of all elements of their students and pedagogical practice. However, participating in CAR can assist teachers in helping them think, stretch their perspectives, and guide them to be more thoughtful regarding their instruction (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Teachers must themselves really have a need and want to change in order to benefit from CAR.

CAR has focused on issues English language teachers have experienced in their classrooms and their thinking or beliefs about teaching (Borg, 2003; Buck et al., 2005; Burns, 1999, 2005a, 2005b; Gatbonton, 2000; Mullock, 2006; Price, 2001; Schoen & Schoen, 2003). Additionally, many informative qualitative case studies have been conducted in the last 5 years, exploring ESOL teachers who work with students with interrupted schooling (Drake, 2017; Fulghum Ingram, 2017; Oliver, 2017). Research to date has focused on the situation of ELs with interrupted schooling. However, there is limited current research, especially using a CAR approach, on the teachers who work with students with interrupted schooling. Thus, my proposed dissertation emerged, that now contributes to the pedagogical skills, knowledge base, and PD that current ESOL teachers should have in order to meet the needs of students with interrupted schooling.

### ***Reflective Practice***

A decade of research shows that students of teachers who reflect on their own practice regularly have greater student achievement than those whose teachers do not engage in reflective practice (Center for Education Policy Research, 2012; National

Strategic Planning and Analysis Research Center, 2017). Reflective teaching is empowering and provides a way for teachers to become actively involved in articulating the nature of their work and extending their knowledge base of teaching (Cirocki et al., 2014; Zeichner & Liston, 1996). CAR is an important tool used as part of reflective practice. CAR has been well documented as an important form of teacher research that encourages reflection through the intentional and rigorous examination of teacher practices in the classroom (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). The ultimate goal of teacher reflection using CAR is to improve practice and its positive influence on students, particularly ELs. If the desire is for schools to produce more powerful learning on the part of students, school systems have to offer more powerful learning opportunities to teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

Reflective practice has already been proven to have a positive impact on teacher pedagogy and student achievement (Cirocki et al., 2014; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2019). Asking teachers to participate in a CAR approach further supports reflective practice, which is particularly effective in promoting teacher and student academic success with ELs who may have interrupted schooling (Sowa, 2009).

### **Research Design**

Practitioners tend to be more vested in research that directly affects their pedagogy, community of colleagues, and students (White, 2011). Asking a collective of ESOL teachers to engage in a study that encouraged us to look at the qualities of our own pedagogy, examine our challenges and success, and gather materials and resources that we will personally be able to use provided a strong foundation for teachers' engagement

and participation because it found value in the experience and the ultimate goal of their process and products.

The Methods Matrix provided as Table 1 (adapted from Maxwell, 2013) shows this study's research design. The matrix shows the relationships between the research questions, data and data sources, sampling decisions, and data analysis.

**Table 1**

*Methods Matrix (Maxwell, 2013)*

Research Questions: What do I need to know?	Sampling Decisions: Where will I find these data?	What kind of data will answer these questions?	Why might these data help me answer this question?	Data Analysis
<b>RQ1:</b> What knowledge, skills, dispositions, and instructional strategies do experienced ESOL teachers identify as being important for ESOL teachers to now possess in order to best support the development of ELs with interrupted schooling in their classes?	10 (n=10) selected teachers who are ESOL teachers, work in the United States, and have a licensure or teaching certification equivalent to that of an educator who is trained to work with students who are learning English as an additional language in the United States.	Journaling by teachers: Bi-weekly throughout study.  Shared teacher resources, shared online site, teacher stories (successes and challenges), lesson plans, and online chat, Twitter slow chats, e-mails, and discussions surrounding topics selected by the collective as deemed useful by the collective.	Content of journals provided information in relation to pedagogical decisions teachers make, their successes, and needs.  Content materials shared informed the collective on the skills and pedagogy of ESOL teachers.	Coding in teacher bi-weekly journals (Saldaña, 2015).  Analysis of shared materials and resources for common themes.  Researcher memos about shared materials.  Transcription and coding of online communications and chats (Saldaña, 2015).
<b>RQ2:</b> Given current demographic changes in the ESOL population, what expanded knowledge do these ESOL teachers identify as being needed (or optimal) to support their work with ELs with interrupted schooling?	Selected teachers described above. (n=10)	Synchronous monthly focus groups once a month over 6 months.  Audio recording of teacher focus meetings.  Contents of teacher journals.  Transcriptions of teacher focus groups and online discussion.  Shared teacher resources and materials.	Contents of teachers' journals and focus group discussions revealed areas of strengths and areas of improvement for teacher knowledge and resources.	Transcription of focus groups.  Researcher memos.  Coding of all audio recordings, discussions, and journals  (Saldaña, 2015).

Research Questions: What do I need to know?	Sampling Decisions: Where will I find these data?	What kind of data will answer these questions?	Why might these data help me answer this question?	Data Analysis
<b>RQ3:</b> What unique challenges emerged from the ESOL teachers' experiences for the education of ELs during the COVID pandemic?	Selected teachers described above. (n=10)	<p>Synchronous monthly focus groups once a month over 6 months.</p> <p>Audio recording of teacher focus meetings.</p> <p>Contents of teacher journals.</p> <p>Transcriptions of teacher focus groups and online discussion.</p> <p>Shared teacher resources and materials.</p> <p>All as deemed useful by the collective.</p>	Contents of teachers' journals and focus group discussions revealed areas of strengths and areas of improvement for teacher knowledge and resources.	<p>Transcription of focus groups.</p> <p>Researcher memos.</p> <p>Coding of all audio recordings, discussions, and journals</p> <p>(Saldaña, 2015).</p>

### ***Teachers in the Collective***

During this study, 10 ESOL teachers from a wide variety of school systems in the United States participated in a CAR study with the purpose of improving instruction for teachers who work with students who have experienced interrupted schooling. My role in this CAR study was not only as a researcher but also an equal participant with an insider-outsider status (Humphrey, 2007). I am included in the data and represent one of the 10 ESOL teachers in the study. All teachers had current or previous experience working with students who we believe to have experienced a minimum of 2 or more years of interrupted schooling. All teachers in the CAR collective had licensure or teaching certification equivalent to that of an educator who is trained to work with students who are learning English as an additional language in the United States.

### ***Participant Selection***

Experienced ESOL teachers were intentionally selected for this study because we are typically the first adults to work with students with interrupted schooling (Custodio & O'Loughlin, 2017) and will likely have received the greatest degree of preparation and skills to work with this population of students. In many school systems, teachers are considered novice teachers during the first 5 years of their teaching careers (Kirby et al., 2006). Approximately half of all new teachers leave the profession within their first 5 years (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Rinke, 2014; Simos, 2013). This research study required experienced teachers who had 5 or more years of experience working with students with interrupted schooling in the United States.

ESOL teachers were selected from a variety of educational networking groups across the United States that have members who are teachers who work with ELs. I am a member of several large educational networks such as Teaching for Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), Washington Area Teaching for Speakers of Other Languages (WATESOL), and the educational community at George Mason University. I also asked my personal contacts from other universities if they had recommendations of ESOL teachers for this study. I contacted members and personal connections in these organizations to find ESOL teachers who work with students with interrupted schooling. During the initial selection process, I sent a recruitment message to educational network groups mentioned above (see Appendix B). I also orally shared the research study during networking opportunities at my university and at local, regional, and international educational conferences.

Once I found a pool of interested candidates, I sent out electronic correspondence with further details on the study (Appendix C). When candidates responded and stated they were willing to participate, I then asked them to complete a Google questionnaire (Appendix D) with open-ended questions. I carefully analyzed the responses to this questionnaire and selected ESOL teachers who represented different locations, experiences, age of students, and ethnicity and background of teachers who instruct students who have interrupted schooling. After initially reviewing the questionnaire responses and making teacher selections, I followed up with electronic communication (Appendix E) informing the teachers that I had selected them for the study and asked them to sign and return an informed consent agreement (Appendix F). Additionally, I

notified those teachers who were not selected for the study with a brief explanation as to why (Appendix G). The selected teachers, their demographics, and background can be viewed in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Teacher Demographics*

Pseudonym	Years of Experience working with Students with Interrupted Schooling	States Represented	Age Group Taught (by School)	Countries where Students with Interrupted Schooling are from
Rebecca	9	Virginia	Middle & High	Central America, Eritrea, Ivory Coast, Dominican Republic, Syria, & Turkey
Jenny	10	Virginia	High	Congo, Afghanistan, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, & Burundi
Irena	10	New York New Jersey Massachusetts North Carolina	Elementary	Dominican Republic, Haiti, Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Yemen, & Afghanistan
Betsy	10	Vermont	High	Somalia, Congo, Tanzania, Burma, Nepal, Thailand
Mary	11	New Jersey	Middle	Burma, Thailand, Mexico, Syria, & Ecuador
Sandra	5	Maryland New Jersey	Elementary	Afghanistan, Haiti, Syria, & Guatemala
Olga	7	Illinois New Jersey	Middle	Guatemala, Honduras, & Mexico
Peter	10	Oregon	Elementary	Mexico & Guatemala
Kathy	13	Maryland	Middle	El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Iraq, Congo, Eritrea, Somalia, & Sudan
Erica	4	New Jersey New York	Middle	Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Dominican Republic, & St. Croix

All teachers selected had a licensure or teaching certification equivalent to that of an educator who is trained to work with students who are learning English as an additional language in the United States. Teachers in the collective had experience working with ELs with interrupted schooling that ranged from 4 to 13 years. Teachers in our collective represented nine states that spanned from the east coast to the west coast. Elementary, middle, and high school data are represented in this study. Teachers in the collective had experience working with ELs with interrupted schooling that represented 21 countries. Pseudonyms have been used for all CAR members in this study, including myself, as agreed upon by the collective members and in the IRB documentation.

This study took place over 4 months. The study started at the beginning of March 2020 and concluded at the end of June 2020. I created the timeline for this research to be done during the academic school year since this was when most ESOL teachers were actively teaching and had access to students in classrooms while participating in the study. This allowed teachers to improve their pedagogical practice while participating in the study since it is immediately relevant to their instruction.

## **Procedures**

CAR is founded on the ideals of democratization among researchers and participants. This form of methodology is heavily rooted in epistemological orientations and the value of equity of participation (Adelman, 1993; Rowell et al., 2017). During this study, teachers collectively decided what direction we wanted to take and what outcomes would be beneficial for improving their instruction. We discussed needs that we had when working with students with interrupted schooling. Teachers collaboratively

determined what content and resources should be collected and why. The collective decided how we would communicate and collect data and at what specified intervals. Some initial suggestions I presented to the collective were (1) monthly participation in synchronous CAR focus groups, (2) biweekly journaling, and (3) online discussions using journal prompts (Appendix H) and discussion boards. Teachers collectively decided the format we wanted when sharing information, what materials were needed to help students and teachers succeed, what PD needs exist for their colleagues in school buildings and administrative offices, and what potential resources and recommendations are needed to share with current and future practitioners who have students with interrupted schooling in their classrooms.

Lastly, this CAR collective prepared future research recommendations for resources that still need to be created, what still needs to be examined regarding instruction for ELs, as well as PD that still needs to be revamped and created to assist ESOL teachers who work with students with interrupted schooling.

### ***Institutional Review Board (IRB)***

My George Mason University IRB approval documentation for this study is provided as Appendix A. I explained and distributed informed consent forms to potential teachers who had been approved by the IRB (Appendix F). I informed the teachers of the nature of the research, that participation was voluntary, and that they could leave the study at any time. I asked teachers to sign the informed consent form as an agreement to participate.

### ***Incentives***

I was awarded a grant that I used to fund small monetary gifts for the teachers following the completion of the study. This incentive was included in the submission to the IRB.

### ***Timeline***

**Table 3**

#### *Timeline of Data Collection*

Activities	Time	Location
Institutional Review Board Process	December 2019	George Mason University
Initial Recruitment Message sent	January 2020	Online
Google survey analyzed, teachers selected, consent forms completed	January 2020 – February 2020	Online
Initial email introduction communication from me providing directions on how to access shared Google site	February 2020	Online
1st journal entry requested and used as a means for introducing each participant to the collective	March 2020	Posted online on Google shared site for teachers to read and reflect/comment
First online focus group – 1 hour face-to-face collaboration session	March 2020	Online using collaborative virtual meeting technology
2nd journal entry request	April 2020	Posted online on Google shared site for teachers to read and reflect/comment
Biweekly journal entries commence	March 2020 – June 2020	Posted online on Google shared site for teachers to read and reflect/comment
Online face-to-face 1 hour collective meetings	Once a month March 2020 – June 2020	Online
Data Analysis	March 2020 – June 2020	Research

## **Data Sources**

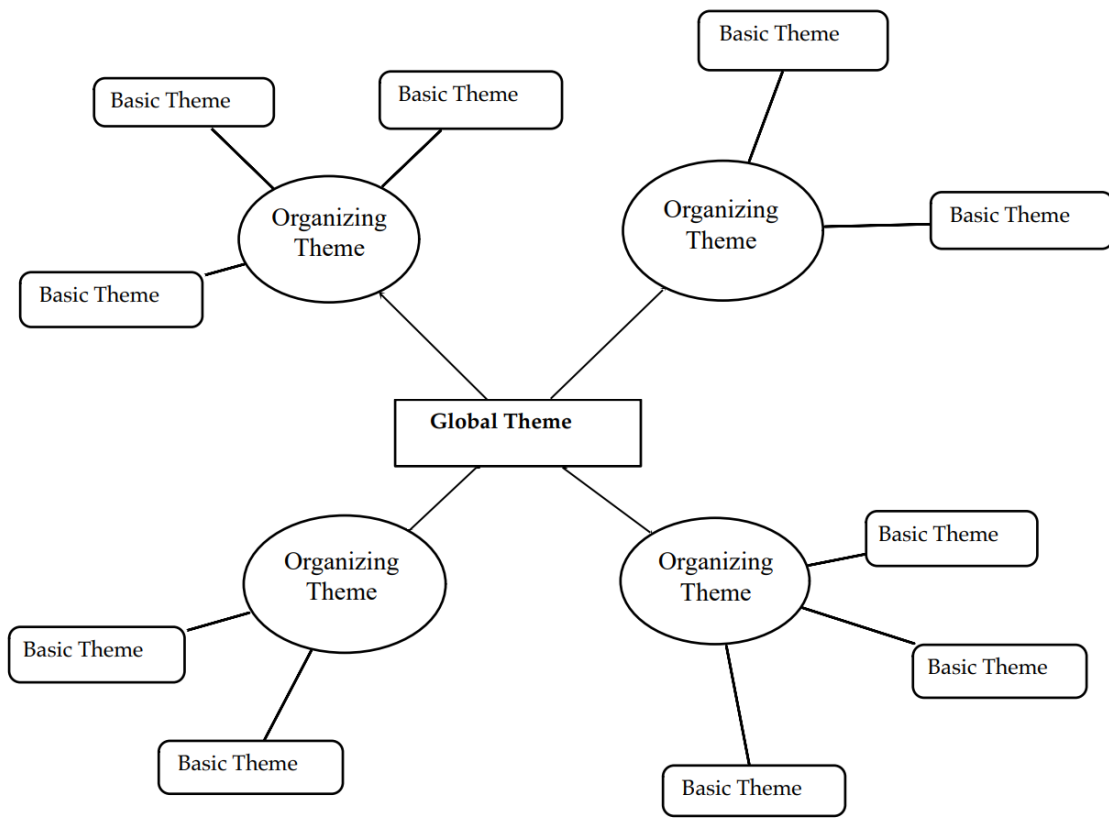
### ***Overview***

During this investigation, the following data were collected: researcher memos, transcriptions of online communications and journals, transcriptions of online focus groups, and shared teaching materials and resources. Throughout the research study, I offered for teachers to collectively be responsible for conducting the data analysis, but the majority of our collective declined and gave permission for me to do the majority of the data analysis after the conclusion of the study. We used thematic analysis of data from online discussions, informal chats, journal entries, shared documents, and more structured focus group transcripts to explore useful resources, teachers' pedagogy, teacher knowledge, areas of strength, and areas of growth.

### ***Thematic Network Analysis***

Our CAR collective used Thematic Network Analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001) to analyze the data collected during this study. There is relatively little said on how to analyze the data that qualitative researchers are presented with at the end of the data collection period (Bryman & Burgess, 1994; Feldman, 1995; Silverman, 1993). For qualitative research to yield meaningful and useful results, it is imperative that the material be analyzed in a methodical manner (Attride-Stirling, 2001). This can only be achieved by recording, systematizing, and disclosing our methods of analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Applying thematic networks is simply a way of organizing and then creating a thematic analysis of qualitative data. Thematic analysis seeks to find the most notable themes in the data at different levels. This analysis also aims to find thematic

networks to facilitate the structuring and depiction of these themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Although thematic network analysis has not been used directly yet with teachers of ELs, it has been used successfully in several recent qualitative inquiries involving educators in an effort to analyze and organize transcripts of interviews, discussion groups, and think-alouds (Hakansson et al., 2020; Joffer et al., 2020). Since our CAR collective had similar qualitative data, such as discussion groups, open-ended questions, and journals, thematic network analysis was selected as an appropriate and structured way to organize our findings and bring to light the most salient themes from our study. Thematic analysis is presented as thematic networks that are web-like illustrations (Attride-Stirling, 2001), as portrayed in Figure 2. Figure 2 summarizes the main themes constituting a piece of text.



*Note:* From Attride-Stirling (2001).

## Figure 2

### *Thematic Network Analysis*

Three classes of themes were used in this analysis. Basic Themes are the lowest-order theme that is derived from the data. For a Basic Theme to make sense, it needs to be read within the context of other Basic Themes. Together, they represent an Organizing Theme. Organizing Themes are the middle-order themes that organize the Basic Themes into clusters of similar issues (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Organizing Themes group the main ideas proposed by several Basic Themes, and dissect the main assumptions underlying a

broader theme that is especially significant in the texts as a whole (Attride-Stirling, 2001). In this way, a group of Organizing Themes then creates a Global Theme.

Global Themes encompass the principal concepts in the data as a whole. Global Themes group sets of Organizing Themes that together present an assertion about a given issue or reality (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The Basic and Organizing Themes are arranged together in a web-like map to portray connections in a Global Theme. This arrangement creates thematic networks (Figure 2).

### **Trustworthiness**

During the final analysis and reporting, I engaged in reflexivity. Reflexivity allowed me to now position myself outside the research process and critically reflect, through continuous self-awareness, on the process our CAR collective went through and analyze their testimonies and report on the deeper implications of the study (Finlay, 2002; Takeda, 2013).

Trustworthiness in qualitative research generally refers to the quality of a study and the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of a study (Polit & Beck, 2014). I established trustworthiness and credibility in this CAR study by having equal engagement with our CAR collective, participating in peer-debriefing, and conducting member-checking, and all teachers of the collective participated in reflective journaling (Connelly, 2016).

Working together as a collective of teachers with a shared interest was beneficial because we all had different experiences and thoughts to discuss. Additionally, this allowed us to *member check* our communications, journaling, and findings with others

among our collective (Carspecken, 1996), adding to the dependability of this study (Polit & Beck, 2014). Member checking in this study was important so that I was viewed as an equal ESOL teacher, working side by side with other ESOL teachers who had a similar vested interest in our research study and its outcome. Multiple minds bring different ways of analyzing and interpreting the data (Saldaña, 2015). Member checking encouraged our collective to be more collaborative in our analytic approach and increased trustworthiness and the quality of this study (Saldaña, 2015).

Additionally, my own researcher positionality was important in this study because it gave me a unique access and was an aspect that gave me trustworthiness within our collective. My ESOL teaching experience gave me credibility to work within our CAR collective alongside the other ESOL teachers (Polit & Beck, 2014). My own background helped me to be viewed as an equal teacher of this research collective. Similar to the other teachers, I have experienced the same personal struggles when working with ELs with interrupted schooling.

### ***Tensions and Researcher Bias***

The tensions of the study came from researcher bias. My extensive background in working with ELs might have influenced my judgment of the teachers against some external standards and caused me to overlook ideas that do not fall into the frame of pedagogy that I am accustomed to using with my own ELs. I fought against this tendency by reading the transcripts and observation memos repeatedly to see what was and was not present. In addition, I needed to distinguish between descriptive and analytic notes and keep records of events without attributing feelings to the teachers. To minimize

researcher bias, I considered Greene's (2007) ideas of "appropriate balance of participant and observer roles, keen perceptive acuity, and reporting of observations in rich, descriptive contextualized detail" (p. 167). Another potential threat was the reaction of the teachers. During data analysis, I needed to continually ask myself whether some things shared were prompted by my presence as the initiator of this research study. In order to assist with this dilemma, I had a peer debriefer help me analyze and comment upon some segments of the data to help me see any bias or assumptions that might be emerging (Connelly, 2016).

As a teacher researcher, I have an ethical responsibility to accurately report the findings of this study (Mertler, 2017) and ensure that I do not assume, based on experiences with my former students, that all ESOL teachers have similar experiences with ELs with interrupted schooling. Throughout this research study, I strove to maintain an open perspective and not make assumptions about the experiences of other teachers and their students.

Additionally, it cannot be overlooked that I asked the teachers in the collective to continue participating in this study, if willing, even though we were all living through an unexpected global pandemic while trying to take care of our families and teach ELs. I knew having the opportunity to collect groundbreaking data during a historical event was powerful and would lead to significant changes in the education community. However, it was still an ethical dilemma to know how much added stress was appropriate for the teachers in the collective to experience.

### **Chapter Three Summary**

The qualitative approach of CAR was used in this study to investigate the perspectives of experienced ESOL teachers in order to gain a greater understanding of the areas that were presented in Chapter Two. Using CAR allowed us to explore the experiences and knowledge of qualified ESOL teachers working with ELs with interrupted schooling to uncover the nuanced and unique pedagogical skills and knowledge base required for future and current ESOL teachers to promote the success of students with interrupted schooling. During this study I participated as an equal member in all aspects of this CAR study. I took on the role as an insider-outsider (Humphrey, 2007; Smith et al., 2010). I bridged both worlds of being a member in the research site, while also conducting research in the site at the culmination of the study because I did most of the analysis and reporting on the findings independently. Chapter Four presents findings as organized by Global Themes that address the research questions.

## **Chapter Four**

The results of this CAR study produced findings our collective used to articulate ESOL teachers' realities, needs, and challenges when working with ELs with interrupted schooling. Themes from this study were created from the voices and discussions of and posts by the ESOL teachers during the data collection period.

Throughout this CAR study, the research collective gathered and interpreted community discussion board posts, blog entries, synchronous meeting transcripts, documents, and online conversations. Our CAR collective created several Global Themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001) after analyzing the data that directly addressed the first two research questions. Additionally, since the COVID-19 pandemic started near the commencement of this CAR study, our collective had many discussions surrounding the education of ELs with interrupted schooling during the pandemic. At the conclusion of this study, this analysis generated additional themes that specifically pertained to the instruction of ELs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, a third research question was added retroactively after the culmination of the study to address these additional findings.

This chapter presents the findings according to the research questions. The first major section addresses Research Questions 1 and 2 through examination of the first three Global Themes. The second major section of this chapter discusses findings

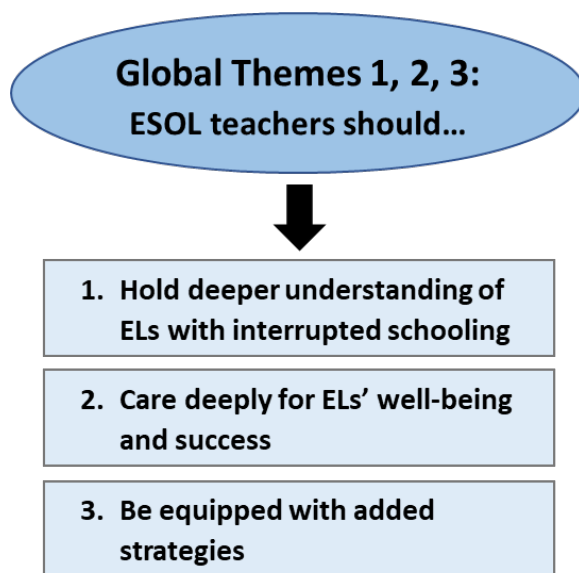
pertaining to Research Question 3. The findings presented in Chapter Four emerged in response to the following three research questions:

1. What knowledge, skills, dispositions, and instructional strategies do experienced ESOL teachers identify as being important for ESOL teachers to now possess in order to best support the development of ELs with interrupted schooling in their classes?
2. Given current demographic changes in the ESOL population, what expanded knowledge do these ESOL teachers identify as being needed (or optimal) to support their work with ELs with interrupted schooling?
3. What unique challenges emerged from the ESOL teachers' experiences for the education of ELs with interrupted schooling during the COVID pandemic?

### **Thematic Network Analysis**

The findings presented here reflect Thematic Network Analysis as described by Attride-Stirling (2001). After the initial coding framework was devised, Basic Themes were created, organized, and sorted into Organizing Themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Finally, analysis of the Organizing Themes then generated overarching Global Themes, which then encapsulated the major findings related to each thematic network.

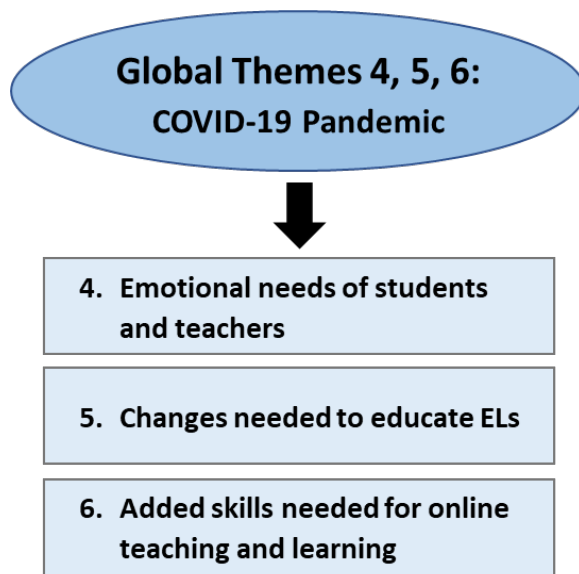
After careful review and analysis of the data, the CAR collective identified three Global Themes that addressed the first two research questions. These three, which were highly prevalent throughout the findings, are listed in Figure 3 in hierarchy according to which topics were discussed the most in the teacher dialogue—the first (Global Theme 1) being the theme that was most discussed.



**Figure 3**

*Global Themes 1, 2, 3 – What ESOL Teachers Must Know and Do*

Following the initial set of identified Global Themes, three additional themes emerged that fell outside the first two research questions; these three additional themes addressed the third research question. All members of this research study were educators and were all directly affected by the pandemic. The pandemic was a dominant source of conversation among our teachers, as all educators had to make a sudden pivot to online instruction. As a result, the findings of this study also included three Global Themes that reflected CAR teachers' responses and thinking regarding the pandemic's impact on ESOL teachers and ELs during this time of crisis. The three pandemic-related Global Themes are listed in the order of how dominant the discussion topic was among the collective—Global Theme 4 being the theme that was most discussed.



**Figure 4**

*Global Themes 4, 5, 6 – COVID-19 Pandemic*

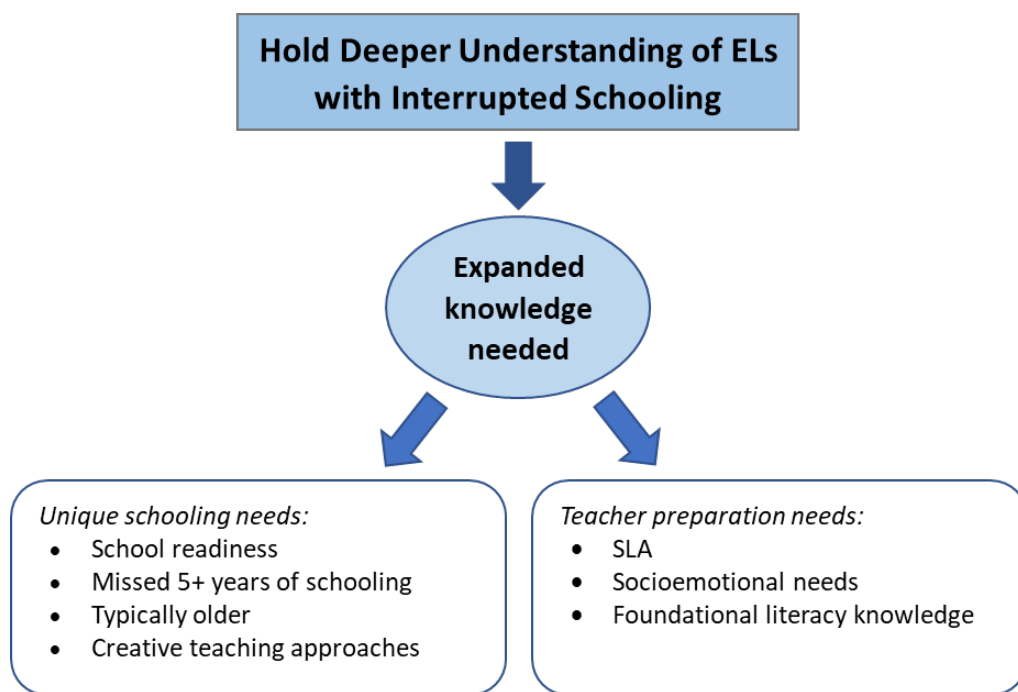
Each of the six Global Themes above (Figure 3 and Figure 4) is represented as a thematic network (web-like illustration) in the following sections. The rectangular box at the top of each thematic network represents the overarching Global Theme. Next, the oval represents the Organizing Theme. Last, the white rounded rectangular boxes represent the Basic Themes according to Thematic Analysis as described by Attride-Stirling (2001). These are the major topics discussed. Throughout this chapter, I will be referring to the topics in the white boxes as *subthemes*.

### **Global Themes Pertaining to Research Question 1 and Research Question 2**

In the following three subsections, I will address the thematic network discussion related to the first three Global Themes, which relate to Research Questions 1 and 2.

### ***Global Theme One: Hold Deeper Understandings of ELs with Interrupted Schooling***

Throughout this study, our collective continuously discussed what specific knowledge was essential for ESOL teachers to know and understand about ELs, particularly students with interrupted schooling. Figure 5 displays the entire visual of the thematic network for knowledge.



**Figure 5**

#### ***Global Theme One***

The collective created two important clusters of needed knowledge (subthemes) that were represented in the findings:

1. Students with interrupted schooling have unique schooling needs.

2. ESOL teachers need expanded teacher preparation in order to educate their ELs with interrupted schooling.

Salient quotes in the following section provide supporting evidence for the two knowledge areas listed in Figure 5.

**Unique Schooling Needs.** Members of our collective had experience working with students with interrupted schooling from nine different U.S. states representing the east and west coast. The populations of students in the classrooms of the CAR teachers were very different from one another with regard to experiences and backgrounds and represented 21 different countries. It was evident through our study that many of our members were continually learning about the different experiences and academic backgrounds of the new ELs with interrupted schooling in their classrooms. In an online journal entry (April 22, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal), Betsy wrote, “What I have noticed with my...students is that none of them look the same.” Betsy’s observation captured the uniqueness and difference of each student with interrupted schooling voiced by the CAR collective. It is clear that she, like other educators, was teaching students who came from different countries and had very different academic backgrounds that do not often correspond to grade-level learning expectations in the United States. It is also important to mention that Betsy’s statement indicated that she had noticed that her students had such different needs while working at her teaching job. Her statement indicated that she was not prepared for the unique difference of her students prior to becoming a teacher after leaving her teacher preparation program. It is possible that Betsy was not aware that her ELs would have such unique characteristics which might lead to a

larger concern in teacher preparation for future ESOL teachers. In an online journal entry (July 2, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal), Mary wrote:

There is no manual in the world that can prepare someone to teach these students what they need to know in order to survive...It's about giving each individual student in a single class period the tools they need to succeed.

Mary's statement demonstrated that she felt discouraged because, in her view, there was no one-size-fits all PD that could prepare educators to work with students who had interrupted schooling because each student had experienced such differences in background and learning. However, she did recognize that it was essential for her to teach each student based on what they needed individually and that there might not be one lesson plan that would fit all students in her classroom. This implied that ESOL teachers are not all prepared with the necessary tools to educate all the different students with interrupted schooling enrolled in their classes. This statement also indicated that ESOL teachers are not confident that they have been given the PD necessary to work with ELs with interrupted schooling. This bleak perspective regarding PD for ESOL teachers needs to be addressed and improved upon so ESOL teachers feel valued and successful when teaching ELs. The collective suggested that improvements to ESOL teacher PD might include more scenarios of what it is like to teach differing ELs with interrupted schooling, better instructional tools, and expanded information about students with interrupted schooling. While it is impossible to expose teachers to all the different students they might encounter, better preparing teachers for a broader variety of students with interrupted schooling would most certainly make teachers feel stronger and more

successful in the classroom. The four major subthemes discussed were *unique schooling needs*, *school readiness*, *missed five or more years of schooling*, *typically older*, and *need creative teaching approaches*.

***School Readiness.*** Subtheme one, *school readiness*, was a skill our collective discussed where we needed to better understand ELs with interrupted schooling and where they needed assistance in learning. In one of our synchronous virtual meetings, teachers voiced that ELs with interrupted schooling tended to have a different understanding of the expectations of a school environment than their peers. U.S. academic culture can be overwhelming for students with interrupted schooling because they often face rigorous expectations for prior content knowledge, face annual high-stakes assessments to graduate, and often face challenges in understanding U.S. school norms (Zimmerman-Orozco, 2015). Our collective agreed we needed to gain knowledge in order to change this situation for ELs and help them navigate the U.S. educational system successfully.

Teachers also shared in a synchronous meeting that they were not always fully aware of the past experiences of ELs with interrupted schooling which may contribute to an alternative style of behavior in school. This was an area of concern for the collective because research in areas such as responsive pedagogy tell us that we must know our students before they are willing to learn (Gay, 2010, 2013). Our collective wondered if all ESOL teachers have been adequately prepared to understand past experiences of ELs.

***Missed Five or More Years of Schooling.*** A second subtheme that contributes to the unique needs of ELs with interrupted schooling is that they have often *missed five or*

*more years of schooling*. This group of ELs has a different level of academics than their English-speaking peers (Custodio & O'Loughlin, 2017). This is because they often arrive in the United States with differing literacy skills in their home language and have not had consistent schooling (Custodio & O'Loughlin, 2017). Jenny's next quote (July 1, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal) explained that some teachers were unaware of how Jenny's students with interrupted schooling differed from other student populations, such as students who have special needs:

He and his family were transient...I remember we had to have tons of meetings (exploring special needs) because he wasn't able to participate in classes...The saddest thing I remember is that in one particular meeting the special education chair described this student as "feral."

Jenny stated her student was transient because this might also be a factor associated with his educational needs after arriving to the United States. Jenny shared her sadness that this group of educators at her school viewed her student as *feral*. The use of the term *feral* to refer to a student provided a strong example of just how gravely misunderstood her EL with interrupted schooling was in his school. Jenny later told the group she suspected that her student's unexpected behavior was a result of moving frequently and not being exposed to a structured school setting for many years. Yet, her colleagues had a very different view of his abilities and needs as indicated by their continued efforts to explore special needs services for her EL. As an ESOL educator myself, I was shocked by this situation and had concerns that even among experienced teachers a student could be so inappropriately labeled and misunderstood. This situation is particularly troubling

because Jenny did not take this moment to educate her colleagues from other departments about the characteristics of her EL and additionally how making reference to a student as *feral* might represent larger issues such as racial bias in her school building. Additionally, this situation indicates that further discussion is needed among all who work in Jenny's school building to ensure that the characteristics and needs of ELs are understood.

Our CAR collective was surprised at Jenny's experience, but it was apparent this dehumanization of ELs might be more common than we often acknowledge in schools across the United States. The collective discussed how Jenny missed a valuable opportunity to advocate for her EL and share important information with her colleagues on the unique experiences and strengths of ELs and how they should be viewed and respected as human beings just like every other student. Advocacy is a skill that is lacking among our ESOL educators and will be further discussed in Chapter Five.

***Typically Older.*** A third subtheme that dominated conversations was that ELs with interrupted schooling were *typically older* learners. Kathy voiced that students with interrupted schooling had a different understanding of school procedures and how often they needed to attend school. Additionally, Kathy noticed ELs had differing cultural perspective on the value of education. The following quote (May 8, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal) showed Kathy's description of the struggles her EL with interrupted schooling had as he attempted to adapt to school routines in the United States:

He was 17 I think and in 9th grade. He hadn't attended school...since 5th grade.

He had been working...school for him was culture shock. He had been living an adult life for like 5 years, so when he came to us, he didn't understand...He was

made to sit in an assigned seat...follow a bell schedule...ask permission to use the bathroom...didn't get a paycheck...had to do homework...the structure and couldn't adjust to the routine. The expectations we had for him ("diploma," "graduate," "career") were noble and righteous, but too abstract for him to grasp...He dropped out as soon as he turned 18...He wasn't stupid, he wasn't incapable of learning. He just couldn't "deal."

Kathy's quote was similar to many conversations the collective had regarding the structural and institutional barriers the ELs with interrupted schooling had when attending U.S. schools. Teachers in the group had a difficult time seeing the possibilities of academic success for ELs who arrived in the United States at older ages at the secondary level. Teachers in our collective had a disposition of empathy and respect for ELs and often felt that the structural socioeconomic barriers were just too great for older ELs who had been working and needed to continue making money. This notion that academic success for some ELs might not be attainable is very concerning because teachers need to feel that they work in an educational system that equips them to effectively help ELs reach their goals. Kathy's quote represented how the U.S. school system is not set up appropriately for older ELs with educational needs who have taken on responsibilities like providing financially for their families. The concept that a diploma was a *noble* and *righteous* idea, yet possibly impossible according to the teachers in our collective. This presented a discouraging perspective regarding the opportunities for ELs that must be addressed within the education of not only our ESOL teachers but also the educational system. Many ELs may not experience academic success according

to current U.S. academic norms the way our educational system is currently structured. These structural inequities prohibit ELs from reaching their full potential and changes in schooling opportunities for ELs must be augmented to meet the needs of our diverse populations in U.S. schools.

***Creative Teaching Approaches.*** Kathy's thoughts expressed our fourth subtheme, which is teachers who work with ELs with interrupted schooling need more knowledge of *creative teaching approaches*. The idea of creative teaching approaches might involve a more flexible schedule for classes offered in different formats and different times of the day or on weekends.

The CRP model focuses on finding creative solutions to make learning relevant to students whose backgrounds are different from that of the dominant culture (Warren, 2018). CRP is part of the conceptual framework for this study because it adds a critical component that works against traditional school practices that have historically been designed around the cultural norms of the dominant social group in the United States (Lee, 2010). The CAR teachers voiced the concern that existing teaching practices are not as successful for ELs with interrupted schooling, and therefore more creative and flexible teaching practices should be implemented by ESOL teachers.

Kathy voiced that her student had experiences that were different from the traditional ESOL students and therefore had different schooling needs than the rest of her ELs. The behaviors she described indicated that her student was living with adult responsibilities for many years and now was being forced to adapt to a new structure with strict expectations that treated him as if he were a younger child. Additionally, she shared

that her student no longer had the ability to earn money during the day. ESOL teachers need to be better prepared with the knowledge and structural opportunities to provide courses in different formats, at different times, and be advocates to seek curriculum and course offerings that will benefit ELs who need work and career experiences while also fulfilling their graduation requirements.

These types of creative teaching approaches also indicate that structural changes in education are needed. The U.S. educational system needs to alter graduation requirements, curriculum requirements, and offer courses that fit the diploma requirements but might also assist with technical or trade career opportunities for students who have arrived at older ages. This finding calls for systemic changes in education that meet our students with possibilities for success rather than compliance mandates that force them to make nearly impossible choices.

**Teacher Preparation Needs.** The members of our CAR collective called for improvements in teacher preparation in areas such as what strategies to use with this population when traditional SLA teaching strategies are not effective, how to support the socioemotional needs of students who have experienced trauma, and how to teach foundational literacy. Additionally, teacher stories indicate that a stronger emphasis on the experiences of students with interrupted schooling need to be integrated into teacher preparation programs across the United States. One of the blog entries that teachers in our CAR study completed asked:

Do you feel your teacher preparation program effectively prepared you to work with students who have had interrupted schooling and our current trend of ELs? Is there anything you think should have been added? Please explain why or why not.

Eight teachers in the collective responded to this blog prompt, and all eight shared that, in their opinion, their teacher preparation programs did not prepare them adequately to work with students with interrupted schooling. The majority had little to no instruction regarding students with interrupted schooling. The following sample of quotes provides further insight into the fact that teachers in this study felt there was not enough preparation in this area for ESOL teachers who work with students with interrupted schooling.

Jenny and Irena are both teachers on the east coast of the United States. They both shared their thoughts that their teacher preparation programs at the time of licensure work did not provide the necessary instruction for them to understand and be successful teaching students with interrupted schooling. Irena did not recall any discussions regarding ELs or students with interrupted schooling. Irena wrote (May 20, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal), “Teacher preparation programs need to reflect what is happening in schools in real time.” Furthermore, Jenny shared the following (June 4, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal):

All you have to do...to be ESL certified is pass the Praxis test...I think this does a great disservice to both teachers and students, as it does not give teachers enough background in preparing them to teach this population of students.

Jenny felt that simply passing a test does not give ESOL teachers the skills they need to work with students who have interruptions in schooling. Next, Peter, who is a west coast teacher, also agreed that his undergraduate and graduate program did not sufficiently prepare him to work with this population of ELs. Peter wrote in a journal (May 21, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal):

Very little of my experience working toward my ESL minor that was relevant to working with SIFE students...my Masters in TESOL...there was also very little that could prepare me to work with students who have had interrupted schooling.

The statements from Irena, Jenny, and Peter provided perspectives from teachers on both the east and west coasts who felt underprepared to work with ELs with interrupted schooling. This indicates that there is a need to look more carefully at the types of content now presented in teacher preparation programs for ESOL teachers.

In the blog responses, several teachers reported how long it had been since they received their preparation to work with ELs. Members of the CAR collective all completed their teacher preparation programs between 10 and 29 years ago. Sandra explained that she had worked in education for 27 years and that a lot had changed in the world since she finished her teacher preparation program. She explained that she had big challenges with teaching SIFEs and it was difficult to juggle their *intensive needs*. Sandra's reference to intensive needs indicated that there is an issue keeping veteran educators current with their knowledge on the changing demographics and needs in their classrooms. It is understandable that more intensive teacher preparation on how to meet the needs of students with interrupted schooling may not have been included in teacher

preparation programs if this was not a major concern in the past. However, these findings suggested that current teacher PD regarding this population is still not as prevalent as needed in fully preparing ESOL teachers to meet the needs of students with interrupted schooling. Next findings will be presented from three subthemes that emerged from our conversations surrounding teacher preparation needs were *Second Language Acquisition (SLA)*, *socioemotional needs*, and *foundational literacy knowledge*.

***Second Language Acquisition (SLA)***. Rebecca, an experienced teacher, wrote in her blog about the need for ESOL teachers to better understand how ELs acquire English, especially ELs who have had interrupted schooling. The field of SLA tells us that knowledge and literacy in a home language is easier to transfer to an L2 (Swain & Deters, 2007; Zuengler & Miller, 2006). In one of her journals, Betsy referenced not fully understanding how to help ELs with interrupted schooling acquire literacy, since her teacher preparation program had prepared her to build upon ELs' prior literacy skills to support English literacy acquisition. Betsy wrote (June 5, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal), "There is not much to transfer when you haven't learned to read or do school (at least as we understand it) in the first place." This is a problematic deficit orientation towards ELs that was held among some in our CAR collective and is likely representative of the broader profession. It is evident that the assets and strengths of ELs with interrupted schooling need to be addressed more in teacher preparation programs and ongoing teacher PD. This orientation is concerning and will be further discussed in Chapter Five.

***Socioemotional Needs.*** Rebecca wrote that ESOL teachers need to be better prepared to support the *socioemotional needs* that students with interrupted schooling might have due to prior trauma. Rebecca wrote (May 20, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal) that ELs with interrupted schooling “...need emotional support, sometimes counseling, and empathy.” Olga affirmed Rebecca’s thoughts in a synchronous meeting and said that she needed guidance on how to instruct students who have had trauma. Betsy also felt the same as Olga and Rebecca and wrote in a journal (April 22, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal):

You...cannot assume that people define “trauma” in the same way. I once had ...father tell me that his 14-year-old daughter had never experienced a traumatic event, even though her mother died when she was seven. “That was a long time ago,” he said.

Betsy explained that she felt her student’s loss of her mother was a traumatic event that needed to be addressed. She was astonished that her student’s father did not consider this trauma. It is clear that families and educators have different definitions of trauma. ESOL teachers need to engage in meaningful, and deep readings and reflection in order to recognize and respond to the individual needs of their students. Additionally, ESOL teachers need to have more education in recognizing and understanding these situations and needs.

During the same synchronous meeting, Sandra explained (February 23, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate discussion board), “Students have overcome more obstacles than most to come to school...they sometimes have seen more trauma than any child their age

should ever have to endure.” These quotes illustrated their opinions that ESOL teachers should know about and recognize past trauma in order to understand how to meet their students’ emotional needs in the classroom (Hos, 2020; Prokopchuk, 2019).

Next, Rebecca shared a story of her experiences with a student with interrupted schooling. Her story painted a picture of what life is like as an older student with interrupted schooling who tried to fit into the U.S. educational system and failed. This quote from Rebecca (May 5, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal) demonstrated how critical it is to understand students’ past experiences and home life, build a relationship, show empathy, and appreciate the challenges of entering the U.S. school system with no English as an older learner:

...20 year old....wanted to learn English...had not attended school in many years...worked...long hours after school...had my class at 8am...he was so tired from working and attending school...attend sporadically...told him who cares (that he was older)...deep down I understood...financial pressures took over and he dropped out...this story is sad for me is because our students are no longer allowed to attend school after their 22nd birthday...so far behind that I don't think he would have learned enough English to get the credits he needed for a diploma by the age of 22...maybe it was better that he worked to help his family. I wish this story had ended better.

This story represented the unique nature of the situation of ELs with interrupted schooling and how Rebecca felt ESOL teachers must have expanded knowledge in order to effectively reach an older learner with interrupted schooling. Rebecca stated that it was

an extreme challenge to help her student learn enough English to master high school content in order to graduate before he was too old to attend school. Rebecca explained that her student was battling the emotional stress and fatigue of trying to support his family financially while still trying to reach his own goals. She felt that at his age, his needs were unique and different from those of a traditional ESOL student. Rebecca's words clarified that not all ESOL teachers are prepared or even understand that they might have much older learners who have immense emotional and family challenges outside of school.

Rebecca's next quote (April 27, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal) encapsulated her thoughts on how critical it was to understand the needs of students with interrupted schooling and that expanded knowledge was needed in teacher preparation for ESOL teachers:

I wish I knew early on in life what I know now...It is important not to assume that they enter your classroom with any background literacy...may not have attended school for many years...may not know how to act in a classroom...it is critical to get them the support they need immediately...

Rebecca felt it was essential now that all ESOL teachers are given the necessary preparation to understand the pressures of age, finances, possible trauma, and culture shock, which can all have an impact on the learning of ELs with interrupted schooling.

Next, Mary wrote about a possible solution—involving more case studies—to better prepare teachers to learn specifically about ELs with interrupted schooling (May 29, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal):

The limited...resources that were out there never addressed the specific needs I had in teaching my populations. I would have appreciated more case studies from teachers around the country to share their experiences about the realities...

Rebecca, Betsy, and Mary are all ESOL teachers on the east coast of the United States. However, Olga is an ESOL teacher in the Midwest of the United States. These teachers' statements suggested that improved preparation for ESOL teachers is a need that exists across the United States and is not isolated to one geographic region. However, it must be acknowledged that even if teachers have all the preparation needed and culturally responsive knowledge, barriers still exist for the success of ELs with interrupted schooling if the educational system is not built in a way that allows different opportunities for success.

***Foundational Literacy Knowledge.*** Rebecca wrote about how critical it is that all teachers be prepared with knowledge on how to teach emergent literacy to ELs (May 20, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal):

ESOL teacher for 14 years...not feel I was properly prepared for...students with interrupted schooling...I don't remember...courses telling me what to do with a student who is now 17 and hasn't attended school in the past 7 years and has never learned to read or write.... We need...basic skills on how to teach literacy...ESOL teachers to ALL be trained on how to conduct guided reading groups, teach print literacy, handwriting, computer skills, and the foundations of reading...basic elementary teaching skills are what our secondary teachers now need.

Betsy also felt that ESOL teachers needed more preparation on the basics of teaching literacy. Betsy wrote (June 5, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal), “Never do I remember being taught how to teach SLIFE students...never...taught the basics on teaching emergent reading...or how to make math...visual...”

Rebecca shared her struggles when trying to reach ELs with specific literacy needs. Rebecca wrote (March 27, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal), “I wish now I had a good PD that gave me actual strategies on how to start with a student who had never learned to form letters, read, or write, in her home language.” Rebecca suggested that she never had a meaningful PD or any preparation on how to work with an EL who has never had the opportunity to attain literacy in any language. Since this is often the case with many ELs with interrupted schooling, this is an important detail that provides insight into improvements in teacher preparation and PD when it comes to working with students with interruptions in schooling (Browder, 2014; DeCapua et al., 2009; Hickey, 2015).

Sandra shared similar concerns about having challenges understanding where to start when working with a student with interrupted schooling regarding literacy instruction. She wrote (April 27, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal), “The greatest one (challenge) is juggling a student who...never held a pencil before...” Rebecca also felt that not all ESOL teachers are properly prepared to provide basic literacy instruction to ELs with interrupted schooling. Rebecca wrote in her journal (May 31, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal):

Not all secondary teachers have this elementary background....one of the things that has made my most successful...I started out my teaching career as an ESOL teacher for kindergarten and 1st grade...taught the basics of reading and writing workshops, word work, phonics instruction, whole language approach, and how to run guided reading groups to teach emergent readers...I think it (this knowledge) would give them (secondary teachers) the greatest success...

Olga summarized the collective's thoughts on the need for better emergent literacy preparation. Olga wrote (June 13, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal), "Several people mentioned they feel they needed training on teaching and assessing early literacy skills and emergent readers." This would indicate that the focus on all ESOL teachers having pre-emergent literacy preparedness needs to be more of a focus in teacher preparation and teacher PD. Next, Rebecca supported Olga's thoughts regarding the need for improved teacher literacy knowledge (May 9, 2020; group Blackboard Collaborate meeting):

...is one of those first, basic, necessary skills that a teacher would need to have when they're working with a student who has absolutely no literacy whatsoever to start with those, um, you know, reading letters, phonics.

Teachers in this CAR who had backgrounds in elementary education reported that they felt they may have greater advantage when working with students with interrupted schooling. It was evident through our discussions that many of our teachers had never received the appropriate—or any—preparation in how to teach basic literacy to ELs who may have differing literacy in their home language.

Additionally, the collective felt that the educational communities needed strengthened strategies for ESOL educators to teach the language domain of writing. During one of our synchronous meetings, we attempted to gather resources on each of the four language domains (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). We quickly realized writing instruction was an area of weakness. Erica said (May 9, 2020; group Blackboard Collaborate meeting), “We don’t really have a lot of strategies (writing) right now...I saw that we had stuff (strategies) for speaking and reading and listening...What about writing?” Erica’s quote represented an area of need in teacher preparation.

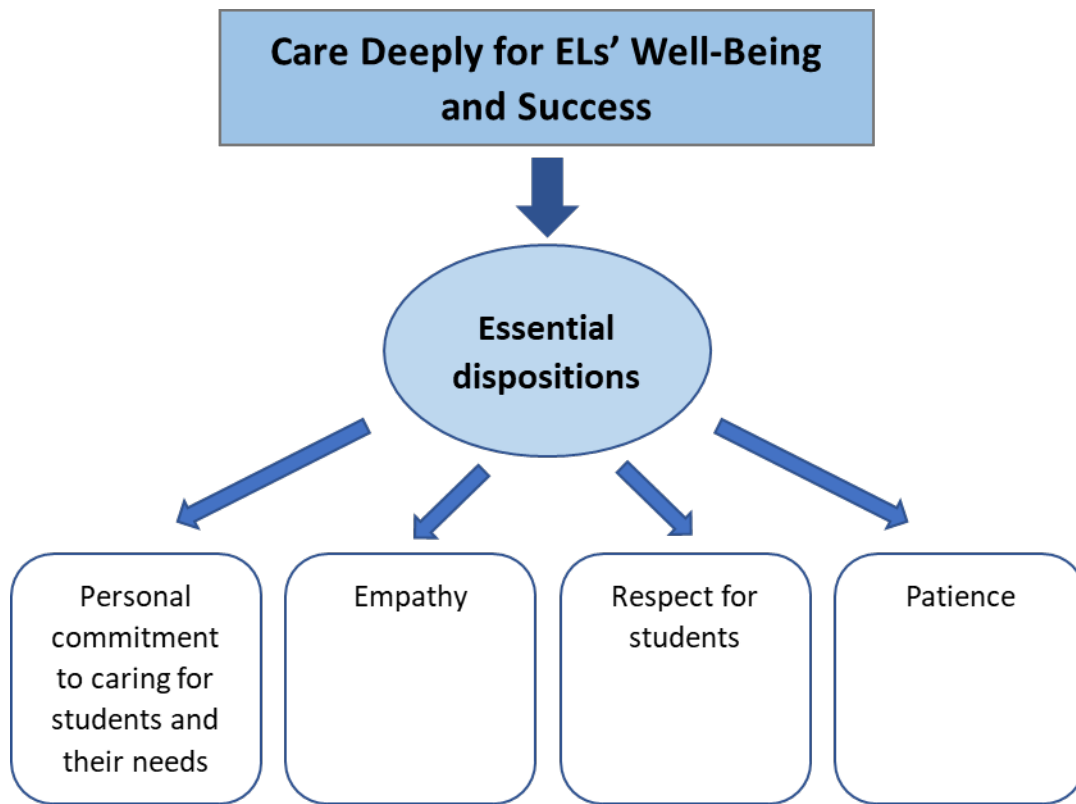
The collective identified writing as an area where ESOL teachers needed to develop greater skills and strategies to teach writing to ELs with interrupted schooling. Additionally, teachers shared that the writing domain was one of the weakest language domains for ELs with interrupted schooling. The statements expressed that teachers do not feel confident about teaching writing to ELs with interrupted schooling. These findings imply that more writing resources, materials, and instructional strategies need to be created for ESOL teachers who specifically target instruction for ELs who have had interrupted schooling, and that writing instruction is not as developed as it should be in ESOL teacher preparation programs and their PD. The teachers in our CAR collective have extensive experience in the education field and recognized a need for deeper and more targeted teacher preparation, especially in the area of foundational literacy instruction. Clearly, the CAR collective believed that teacher preparation programs and ongoing PD for current ESOL teachers should be expanded for future and current ESOL teachers across the United States.

The findings from the CAR dialogue within this section provide insight into how U.S. teachers viewed their challenges and now need expanded knowledge to help students with interrupted schooling who face challenges with the adjustment of re-entering school after often many years of being absent, in a new country, and trying to learn a new language. Teachers in our group felt that ESOL teachers need to be prepared and given more in-depth knowledge, greater resources, and more tools to help ELs with interrupted schooling learn quickly and effectively. If this information is not addressed in their preparation programs, it is essential that teachers' knowledge and skills be updated through professional learning opportunities. Yet, providing teachers with this added knowledge and education is not the only way to improve the success for ELs with interrupted schooling. These findings demonstrate that it is critical now that teachers advocate for changes to create equitable schooling structures that work with the unique needs of ELs and still offer them opportunities for success in school. The following section addresses the dispositions for ESOL teachers identified by the collective as being essential.

***Global Theme Two: Care Deeply for ELs' Well-Being and Success***

Throughout data collection, during online asynchronous and virtual synchronous discussions, our collective identified the importance of holding certain dispositions towards ELs with interrupted schooling. We discovered that as a group we shared many of the same dispositions, feelings, and connections toward student experiences. Our findings revealed several dispositions (subthemes) as being the most crucial for ESOL

teachers to have in order to be successful working with ELs with interrupted schooling (Figure 6).



**Figure 6**

*Global Theme Two*

Primary dispositions as identified as being essential by our ESOL teachers are listed from most prevalently discussed: *have a personal commitment to caring for students, empathy, respect for students, and patience*. The dispositions identified are captured by teachers through the representative quotes that follow.

**Personal Commitment to Caring for their Students.** The collective data identified *personal commitment to caring for their students* as the most essential disposition for ESOL teachers because it was repeatedly discussed and came to the forefront of nearly every synchronous meeting and journal discussion. The following statement by Betsy captured the deep care she had towards her ESOL students. Betsy's quote (April 22, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal) is an example of the collective's agreement about the importance for ESOL teachers to ensure their students know that their teachers care about them:

My colleagues like to say that I can't save them all. But I can sure as heck try. I think all students in their heart of hearts want to do their best...They need to know that you care in order for them to care.

It is evident in the quote that Betsy cared so much about her ELs that she felt it was her job to save her students. Betsy's statement made it seem as if she was all alone in helping her ELs reach their educational goals. At the same time, it could be problematic if ESOL teachers felt they needed to take on the role of a savior of ELs without the support of others. Her feelings indicate that ESOL teachers feel isolated at times when trying to support the academic and emotional needs of ELs with interrupted schooling. This finding indicates that Betsy does not have additional support for ELs within her school. This is troubling and produces concerns if a teacher takes on the role of a savior and feels she is solely responsible for helping ELs succeed. This minimizes the strengths and resilience of minority students and their ability to learn independently. While this was not the intention that Betsy had, this finding cannot be ignored because it may be

more representative of others in the field of education and should be more explicitly addressed in teacher preparation.

Rebecca supported Betsy's feelings about the importance of having a commitment to caring when she expressed her sadness about one of her students who dropped out of school. Her thoughts demonstrated her concern about the financial hardships that her student's family faced. Rebecca wrote (May 5, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal), "This story is sad for me...He was so far behind...I often thought maybe it was better that he worked to help his family. I wish this story had ended better." It is evident that Rebecca was able to separate her understanding of what her student needed academically and what his family needed in order to survive in the U.S. She referred to this student as "so far behind", which suggested that it may be impossible for him to reach high school graduation. Rebecca's emotion showed how deeply she cared for her student. Yet once again, this might lead one to believe that educators are discouraged and not confident about the current structure of U.S. schools and how they are not set up to provide ELs with interrupted schooling equitable opportunities to reach success.

These quotes are examples of how the collective viewed deep caring for students and their well-being and success as being an essential quality for ESOL teachers to possess. The strong emotions expressed among the collective led us to believe that, although not directly stated, teachers in the collective felt it was an impossible challenge to help older ELs with interrupted schooling obtain a high school diploma because of the structural and systemic constraints in the U.S. school system that do not appropriately address the needs of ELs.

The sad feelings represented in the findings showed teachers' deep frustration and feelings of inadequacy to help ELs. Teachers in the collective demonstrated a strong disposition for caring, which resulted in a bleak outlook on the success of ELs in U.S. schools. This perspective might be more common among ESOL teachers and must be addressed moving forward. These teachers understood that academics were not the most important factor in the education of ELs with interrupted schooling. Teacher testimonies supported why it was important to care about students' other needs, in addition to learning, such as socioemotional and socioeconomic needs.

Our collective felt that being an ESOL teacher was not simply about academics and learning English. For us, teaching is about caring for our students and influencing their lives. The scenarios we discussed are not the typical experiences of teachers and are unique to working with ELs with interrupted schooling. Throughout these findings it is clear that teachers struggled to understand and educate ELs while possessing feelings that the U.S. educational system was not set up to meet the needs of this population of students. Concerned emotions were easily heard during teacher testimonies. The strong and caring dispositions of the CAR collective made their jobs challenging at times since they often were put in a position where they felt the educational system was working against their efforts to help ELs succeed academically.

**Empathy.** *Empathy* was the second most mentioned disposition by the CAR collective as being essential for ESOL teachers to have. The idea of empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Students are often motivated to learn and participate in the classroom when they have teachers who will listen to their stories, be

culturally sensitive to their backgrounds, and show empathy for their experiences (Gay, 2013). The collective felt that when they demonstrated empathy for their students, it encouraged their students to perform well, which may have made ELs with interrupted schooling feel more comfortable participating in school (Warren, 2018).

While it is certain that not all ESOL teachers share the same empathetic dispositions, our CAR collective agreed that those of us in the collective shared similar dispositions and felt possessing empathy was essential to understanding the ELs that we teach. The following quotes by three teachers illustrate the type of empathetic disposition teachers in the study felt we had in common and therefore made us better able to connect with ELs. Rebecca wrote (May 5, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal), “I went out of my way to help his family with food, supplies, extra tutoring...” Rebecca demonstrated that she understood that making sure her students were fed and comfortable with the necessary supplies was important to address before even thinking about their academic needs. She showed empathy and understanding that her student and his family had extreme socioeconomic needs. Having an empathetic disposition helped Rebecca understand that she may need to help ELs she teaches with other needs first before planning instruction.

Betsy shared the same empathy and understanding of a hierarchy of needs as Rebecca. Betsy wrote (June 5, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal), “I was less concerned with the curriculum instead...whether the student had eaten that day.” She agreed that ensuring ELs she teaches were fed and healthy was more important to their adjustment in the United States than immediately worrying about learning English. She

showed empathy by understanding that ELs with interrupted schooling may be lacking critical basic necessities and may require assistance. Peter also concurred with Rebecca and Betsy by explaining that he is empathetic to the situations of his students and what they need first before they will be able to fully participate in a school environment. Peter wrote (February 29, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate discussion board), “I think it boils down to what needs do our students have, and then, how do we provide access to our students so they can get their needs met.” Peter demonstrated the importance of having empathy because he first considered what his students had and then what they needed in their homes to be able to participate regularly in school. While we are not able to say that all ESOL teachers have the same dispositions, these findings led us to believe that empathy is an essential disposition for ESOL teachers. Additionally, these teacher testimonies and experiences point to the need for structural changes to better support our newcomers when they enter U.S. schools. If new ELs arrive and are enrolled in schools, yet they don’t have their basic and physical needs met, this is a problem that requires major changes in systems of entry when immigrant families arrive in the United States.

**Respect for Students.** Throughout this study, teachers’ discussions and responses displayed their disposition towards *respect for students*. All of the secondary teachers in our collective had experienced some ELs with interrupted schooling choosing to drop out of school despite our best efforts to help them continue their education. Teachers reported ELs felt pressure to leave school once they were legally permitted so they could support their family. Some bodies of research have reframed the concept of *dropping out* of school as students possibly being *pushed out of school* (Mireles-Rios et al., 2020). The

chances of students, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds, being pushed out of high school increases by 20% for every week of school they miss (Jordan, 2019). This is relevant to the findings in this study because our collective noted that the majority of ELs with interrupted schooling came from disadvantaged backgrounds and were often pushed out of school. This is problematic regarding the educational opportunities for older ELs with interrupted schooling entering the U.S. school system. This indicates that policy makers must enact changes to ensure that ELs have an opportunity to earn a diploma without the pressures of possibly being *pushed out of school* so that they can survive economically in the United States.

Teachers displayed a disposition of respect for students' desire to support their families financially. Teachers wanted ELs to finish school but understood the harsh reality that the socioeconomic struggles, academic needs, older age, and the shortened time frame to learn English and content, were huge obstacles that require systems-wide change. Teachers respected their students' decisions to leave when the barriers of trying to make money and attend school were just too great. Betsy wrote (April 22, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal), "The only thing I could do was let them go with love. I let them go with a brochure in their hand for community college...have to let them go." This concept of letting students go suggested teachers are aware of the barriers ELs face when arriving in the United States at an older age and try to graduate high school. Rebecca felt the same as Betsy and also demonstrated her deep respect for students' decision to leave school. Rebecca said in her journal (May 5, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal):

I...adored these students...I tried to meet them where they were. But it wasn't enough for all of them. The only thing I could do was to let them go with love. I told them they could come back....I wanted all the doors to be open.

What these statements really mean is that these teachers understood the barriers ELs with interrupted schooling faced when trying to balance working, providing for their families, attending school, and learning English all at the same time. Teachers shared that they knew ELs come to the United States for better employment opportunities and in hopes of providing their families a better life. However, it is important to mention that these findings suggest that the U.S. school system is not set up to support immigrant students who may come from disadvantaged backgrounds at an older age. This indicates that more needs to be done in school districts to help ELs balance school and work. U.S. schooling expectations need to shift to be more flexible for working immigrant students so that they feel validated in their desire to support their families economically and feel it is attainable to receive an education at the same time. The collective agreed that having a disposition of respect for students was essential in order to understand the reasons behind the decisions ELs with interrupted schooling make when trying to balance work and school.

**Patience.** ESOL teachers shared that *patience* is an essential disposition for teachers working with ELs with interrupted schooling. Multiple teachers expressed that students with interrupted schooling needed a patient teacher who was willing to put forth extra time and interventions. Teachers shared that the time constraints they experience as they attempt to help ELs progress through language levels and content feels nearly

impossible at times. This indicated that structural change is necessary in addition to these important teacher dispositions.

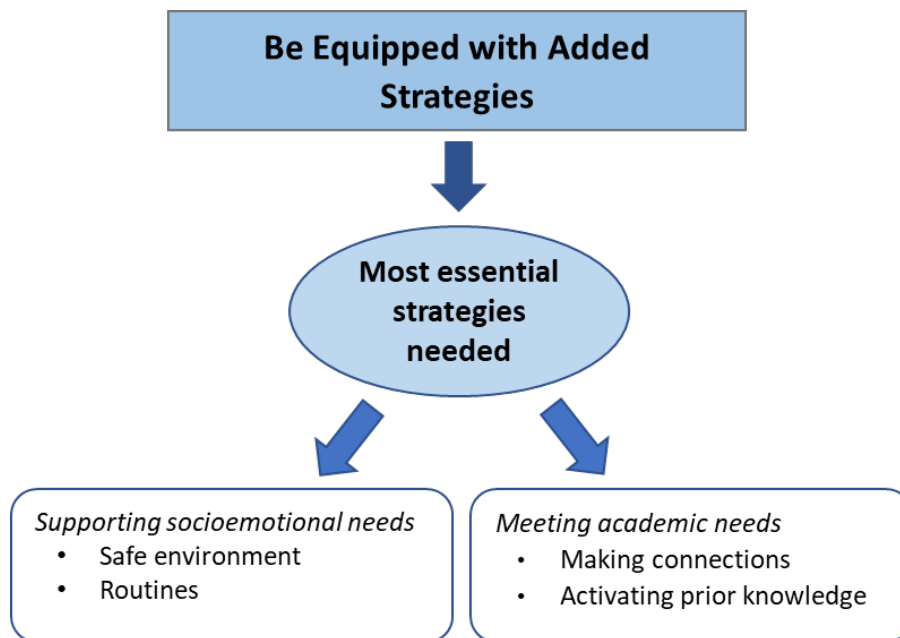
Peter wrote (May 31, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal), "...patience is the most essential difference...generally need a little more explanation, more interpretation, more pictures, more repetitions..." Peter's statement demonstrated the patience that he felt ESOL teachers needed to possess to be successful working with ELs who have had interrupted schooling. Peter later explained that the reason ESOL teachers must have a patient disposition is because their students are often going to need more time, scaffolding, and repetition in order to learn new concepts. Kathy supported Peter's thoughts on the importance of ESOL teachers having patience when it comes to the expectations of how much time a lesson should take versus how much time instruction takes in reality with ELs with interrupted schooling. Kathy wrote (May 8, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal), "Patience and understanding are the biggest assets a teacher can have when working with SLIFE students. They might need repetition, explanations in different modalities, and extra time to process." Kathy's statement affirmed Peter's experience that repetition and needing extra time to explain concepts are essential to the learning of a student with interrupted schooling. Additionally, both Kathy and Peter also suggested ESOL teachers must be patient enough to include different teaching approaches and modalities to meet each of their students' unique needs.

The testimonies of the collective showed that it is essential for ESOL teachers to possess the disposition of patience when working with ELs with interrupted schooling. The findings led the collective to believe that there is a lack of flexible instructional

models and timeframes in the U.S. educational system that would allow for a slower and more patient approach for ESOL teachers to instruct ELs with interrupted schooling.

***Global Theme Three: Be Equipped with Added Strategies***

Teachers in the CAR voiced that it is essential that ESOL teachers possess specific sets of strategies in order to work with students who have had interrupted schooling (Figure 7).



**Figure 7**

***Global Theme Three***

The collective shared in their journals that ESOL teachers require a deeper understanding of the background of ELs with interrupted schooling. With these specialized skills, ESOL teachers may be able to best help ELs with interrupted schooling

reach success. The collective shared in journals and online discussions that the only way ESOL teachers will possess these strategies is if they are provided the focused PD and preparation to obtain such knowledge and extended skills.

The thematic network for Global Theme Three is presented visually in Figure 7. The figure shows the instructional strategies our CAR teachers identified as being most essential when working with students who have had interrupted schooling. These strategies are grouped into two subthemes: *supporting socioemotional needs* and *reducing academic needs*.

**Supporting Socioemotional Needs.** The first of the most essential strategies identified by the collective as being needed was supporting socioemotional needs. Our findings suggested that being able to support the emotional needs of students was one of the top skills ESOL teachers needed that would further benefit them in being successful with students who have interrupted schooling. We identified two essential subthemes that we felt were the most critical for ESOL teachers to understand: *creating a safe environment* and *routines*.

**Safe Environment.** Teachers mentioned in online discussions that with traumatic experiences may come fear and a need to feel secure in the classroom. Current research indicates that it is essential for ESOL teachers to have the appropriate strategies to help their students feel safe at school (Newcomer et al., 2021). The following example from Peter's online journal supported current research and captured this point well. He noted how creating a safe learning environment can help support the socioemotional needs of his students. Peter wrote (February 29, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate discussion board),

“I have found that the most important thing I can do at school is to create an environment that they can feel comfortable enough to take risks learning English.”

Rebecca supported Peter’s thoughts on the need for teachers to understand that ELs with interrupted schooling may need additional emotional supports and counseling based on their lived experiences. Rebecca wrote in her journal (May 20, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal):

They also need emotional support, sometimes counseling, and empathy. I remember hearing student stories in my graduate program but none of them really went deep into the journeys, trauma, and educational experiences our students have or have not had.

Kathy also explained that there is a lack of knowledge and resources given to ESOL teachers to enable them to develop the skills to best support ELs with socioemotional needs. Her next quote mentioned that her district recognized this was a problem and attempted to address it by hiring bilingual therapists. Kathy wrote (February 23, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate discussion board), “For socio-emotional and behavior issues, so many students have experienced trauma, we are really needing more resources...we really need more therapists.” Kathy indicated that school systems need some form of improved mental health provision. This is not something that can be fixed through PD. This would involve a greater institutional change to include more of a focus on mental health in school districts moving forward.

Olga explained why creating a safe haven (Hos, 2020) helped support the socioemotional needs of her ELs with interrupted schooling. This allowed her students to

have a comfortable and predictable place to go every day. Olga wrote (June 4, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal), “I try to make my classroom a safe haven...I allow students to come to my classroom before school and during their lunch...as opposed to isolated in the cafeteria or in the gym.” Olga affirmed current research (Hos, 2020; Prokopchuk, 2019) and provided evidence that ESOL teachers must now possess more advanced strategies to meet the socioemotional needs of ELs with interrupted schooling. ESOL teachers must understand, in advance of meeting their students, that their students might have experienced a traumatic past.

***Routines.*** Our data further supported this need and confirmed recent research that says ELs with interrupted schooling most often have experienced traumatic events and/or struggle with adapting and feeling comfortable in their new classroom environment (Bruce et al., 2018). Betsy captured the importance for ESOL teachers to understand how to have classroom routines and develop a strong classroom community to support ELs with interrupted schooling and their socioemotional needs:

The more their days look the same, the more they will be able to rely on school as a predictable place. This minimizes trauma...show them that you are willing to be vulnerable and that you care about where they came from. (April 22, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal)

Our findings indicated not all educators understand the importance of having a regular routine for ELs with interrupted schooling. The collective shared that ELs with interrupted schooling have experienced many disruptions to their routine when it comes to home life, moving, and prior schooling experiences. Teachers communicated that they

had the most success when they kept consistent daily routines with ELs who had experienced interrupted schooling. Kathy wrote her thoughts on the importance of daily routines and how they help students academically (May 9, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal): “I have to teach procedures one time and then it’s the same every time after. Kids can relax knowing what to expect...they’ve been out of school, the routine gives important structure.” Kathy mentioned that students can relax when they know what to expect and they know the routine. Daily routines can ease fear and uncertainty for students (Prokopchuk, 2019). Educational preparation programs and ongoing teacher PD need to include a stronger focus on how to implement daily routines into their curriculum as fundamental knowledge for ESOL teachers in an effort to meet the socioemotional needs of ELs with interrupted schooling.

Our CAR collective represented geographic locations across the United States and faced similar concerns regarding the socioemotional preparation needed for ESOL teachers. Therefore, we deduced that this need for more socioemotional preparation may be a problem in many districts across the United States. All of the testimonies from the collective implied that the socioemotional education currently in teacher preparation and current teacher PD is not as robust as it needs to be, specifically for ESOL teachers. The data indicate that the socioemotional pedagogy may be critical now in ESOL teacher education. Additionally, based on the teachers’ stories, supporting socioemotional needs is not widely developed enough in teacher preparation programs for new ESOL teachers who will work with ELs with interrupted schooling. These findings indicate that better

mental health supports are needed in U.S. schools and will be further discussed in Chapter Five.

**Meeting Academic Needs.** The second of the most essential strategies identified by the collective as being needed was reducing academic needs. Discussions surrounding instructional strategies for ESOL teachers were powerful because they demonstrated where ESOL teachers have strengths and ample resources and where teachers identified areas for improvement. The collective frequently discussed strategies that are essential for ESOL teachers to use in order to facilitate meeting academic needs of ELs with interrupted schooling. This was a recurrent topic of discussion in our journals and synchronous meetings because many teachers in our CAR did not feel they were fully equipped with the necessary strategies to best help ELs academically. However, we identified two subthemes that we felt were the most critical for ESOL teachers to understand: *making connections* and *activating prior knowledge*.

Through these conversations, our collective created a list of what we felt were the most essential instructional strategies for ESOL teachers to have, specifically to assist with meeting the individual academic needs for ELs with interrupted schooling. These types of culturally responsive strategies are not new in the educational research community (Ball, 2009; Gay, 2010, 2013; Paris, 2012; Warren, 2018). However, what is new is that our CAR collective compiled a comprehensive list what we thought were the most key strategies that ESOL teachers needed to possess in order to best instruct ELs with interrupted schooling. Teacher conversations indicated that not only were these some of the most important strategies for ESOL teachers, they were also the strategies

that were needed the most when teachers were going through preparation programs and ongoing teacher PD. The first subtheme identified was *making connections*.

***Making Connections.*** Our CAR collective felt the importance of *making connections* was critical in order to build trust with students with interrupted schooling who likely may have experienced trauma. Our data suggested that the ability to make connections with this population of students was an essential strategy to assist with academic growth. Next Betsy expressed the overall feelings of our collective regarding the importance of making connections as an essential step before addressing specific academic needs. Betsy wrote (June 5, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal), “We can’t really teach until we make connections...students need to know you and need to know that you know them before they can learn from you.”

Teachers felt that in order to make connections, teachers must know how to do so. Therefore, they believed that this skill must be explicitly taught to teachers during teacher preparation. Findings suggested that there may need to be greater focus and attention placed on how to build and make connections with ELs with interrupted schooling in teacher education programs and in ongoing PD. These findings affirmed current research that also states that making connections to prior knowledge and experiences is a successful strategy when working with ELs with interrupted schooling (Prokopchuk, 2019).

***Activating Prior Knowledge.*** The second subtheme identified was *activating prior knowledge*. Additionally, our CAR collective shared stories in their journals about ELs with interrupted schooling who had had different lived experiences and prior

schooling experiences. For example, many teachers wrote about students who had been working jobs, farming, or caring for siblings prior to coming to a U.S. school. Teaching ELs with interrupted schooling was different from instructing other ELs because they had often had more adult roles in their life, such as working, farming, or caring for family (Freeman & Freeman, 2003; Hickey, 2014; Schmidt de Carranza, 2017). Our discussions and blog entries revealed that we felt more successful as ESOL teachers if we were able to activate prior knowledge for our students in order to help them make connections from their past experiences to their new learning. Teachers in our collective shared that when we connected our lessons to the personal experiences of each of our students, ELs were more engaged and willing to learn, since they understood that context of the lesson. These findings are consistent in sharing how essential it is for ESOL teachers to be fully prepared to activate prior knowledge, especially when working with ELs who have missed several years of school (Prokopchuk, 2019). Kathy explained the importance of helping students activate prior knowledge so they could acquire new knowledge more quickly (March 9, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal):

The students have lots of real world experiences, farming, auto mechanics, caring for younger siblings, eating in a restaurant....So if we can relate connect to a situation they're familiar with, they have a frame of reference (for learning new knowledge).

In Kathy's example, she realized her students had had unique lived experiences such as taking on the role of a caretaker or work on a farm. The CAR collective felt it was critical that ESOL teachers know how to harness these lived experiences and help students relate

to what they do know and understand when trying to learn new information. Educational research shares the importance of ESOL teachers connecting to students' prior knowledge when working with diverse learners (Ball, 2009; Gay, 2010, 2013; Paris, 2012; Warren, 2018). Our findings further indicated that this should be an essential strategy that must be given a larger focus in teacher preparation programs and ongoing teacher PD, especially when working with ELs with interrupted schooling.

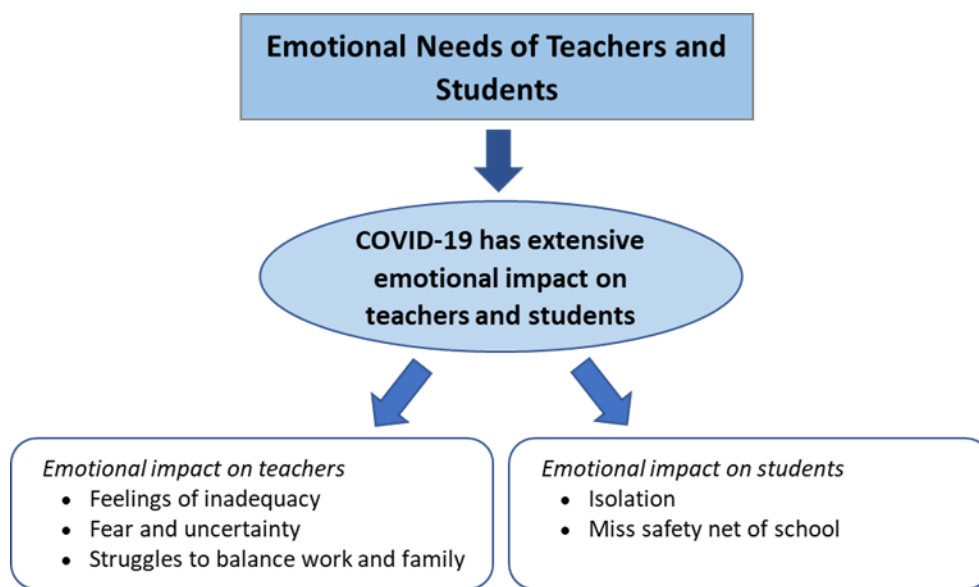
The discussions surrounding instructional strategies for ESOL teachers were powerful because they demonstrated where ESOL teachers had strengths and ample resources, and where teachers identified areas for improvement. The following section will address three Global Themes that resulted from this study related to educating ELs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Global Themes Pertaining to Educating ELs during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

The pandemic was a large component of our conversations and an unanticipated topic that permeated our discussions and thus came to have a dominant role in the findings. All teachers in the collective were directly affected and concerned for the safety and well-being of their families and students, with particular concern for ELs with interrupted schooling and COVID-19's effect on their education. The findings revealed three Global Themes pertaining to educating ELs during the pandemic. These themes specifically addressed the pandemic's influence on the education of ELs with interrupted schooling.

### ***Global Theme Four: Emotional Needs of Teachers and Students***

Findings related to COVID-19's impact showed the lives of teachers and their families and the lives of ELs and their families were disrupted by the pandemic. The thematic network for Global Theme Four is presented in Figure 8 and represents the emotional impact COVID-19 had on teachers and students.



**Figure 8**

### ***Global Theme Four***

Online discussions, blog entries, and voices of the CAR collective indicated that both teachers and students endured some forms of extreme stress and trauma during the pandemic. Teachers discussed that these emotional needs cannot be ignored and must be kept at the forefront of planning for the educational system to return to normal. This

suggested that trauma-informed pedagogy would benefit teachers and that trauma supports will be valuable for both teachers and students.

**Emotional Impact on Teachers.** Three important characteristics regarding the subtheme of *emotional impact on teachers* will next be discussed: *feelings of inadequacy*, *fear and uncertainty*, and *struggles to balance work and family*. Findings related to the COVID-19 pandemic provided evidence there was an impact on teachers. Teachers reported feeling extreme stress, uncertainty, feelings of inadequacy, and even trauma. There were multiple occasions during this study when the feelings of despair overwhelmed our teachers and sometimes led numerous members to tears.

***Feelings of Inadequacy.*** Throughout this study, the collective voiced their lack of confidence and *feelings of inadequacy* while trying to teach ELs online. The following quote by Rebecca represented her feelings of inadequacy while trying to teach virtually during a pandemic. She said (June 13, 2020; group Blackboard Collaborate meeting), “I think that made me feel inadequate...haven’t had that hook online with them...I felt like a great teacher and then now I’m like...Maybe they don’t feel that it’s worth it.” It is evident through Rebecca’s quote that she used to feel successful in reaching her students when schooling was face-to-face. However, she now struggles and does not feel as strong or confident trying to reach her ESOL students virtually. It is evident that members in the CAR collective struggled with confidence to teach during this challenging time. Teachers who feel unsuccessful may not feel as valued or motivated to continue. This could have long-term effects on the education of ELs and the ESOL teaching profession.

***Fear and Uncertainty.*** Another emotional impact on teachers was the feeling of *fear and uncertainty*. Teachers in the CAR collective were anxious about the duration of the pandemic and the implications for their students and their families. The following quote by Rebecca (June 13, 2020; group Blackboard Collaborate meeting) captured the collective's fears and feelings of uncertainty during the pandemic:

I've been...sad about all this and interacting with students is what makes me thrive as an educator and that's what gets me going everyday...I like being...with my students...I think our students, our ELs, especially thrive off of that...how long will this last. If this goes through next year, then I'm not as happy as I was before.

Rebecca's thoughts were valuable because they showed how challenging it was to connect and engage with ELs online. Rebecca conveyed her dissatisfaction with the way things are going today as an ESOL teacher. This was an important part of the findings because it is possible many other teachers had the same thoughts, which could lead to teacher attrition (Page, 2020). By the summer of 2020, one out of five U.S. teachers reported they were unlikely to return if schools were to reopen (Page, 2020). These data suggested the COVID-19 pandemic could have a direct influence on all teachers deciding to remain in the education field due to feelings of inadequacy, lack of confidence, and the stress of learning to teach in a new style. Thus, it is critically important that current educators are supported in meeting the challenges of teaching online to ELs (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020).

***Struggles to Balance Work and Family.*** Teachers reported that their job responsibilities abruptly shifted to virtual teaching from home. Data showed that teachers *struggled to balance work and family*. Many members of the CAR collective shared that they had family obligations and/or children with their own online learning needs while trying to teach virtually. Teachers expressed that there were enormous repercussions when teachers were suddenly forced into a new role in which they were navigating many different responsibilities at once while still trying to be an effective educator for ELs. The following quote by Rebecca showed how home distractions played a huge role in the emotional impact on teachers. She said (June 13, 2020; group Blackboard Collaborate meeting), “This has been the most overwhelming process ever. And then throwing in also working from home and I have two small kids.” Additionally, the following quote captured from Rebecca demonstrated the tremendous challenge experienced by all teachers in our collective to stay focused on their jobs while trying to teach from home and support their own families during a pandemic. She explained (April 5, 2020; group Blackboard Collaborate meeting), “I’m having a really hard time and I’m trying to like stay focused on everything and I have a lot of new things thrown at me...with online teaching and my kids at home...” Next, Rebecca shared how difficult it was to navigate helping her own children learn virtually while trying to support her new ELs online:

...which is insane because I have a second grader who’s also doing online learning from 9:30 to 10:30 Monday through Friday through our county, and which is smack in the middle of two of my classes....my guys are all brand new

to the country. Nobody has Wi-Fi. (April 5, 2020; group Blackboard Collaborate meeting)

Jenny also supported Rebecca's feelings on being frustrated and distracted trying to work from her house and balance school and home. Jenny said (June 13, 2020; group Blackboard Collaborate meeting), "Well...I feel like I haven't had an extended thought in my three months. You know, like (group laughs in agreement)..."

These quotes provided examples of the types of major disruptions the ESOL teachers experienced in their lives during the pandemic. Not only were they still trying to do a good job educating ELs, but they were also trying to do this while working at home and caring for their own families. This was a relevant finding because many ESOL teachers across the U.S. may have had the same experiences trying to teach and work at home either part-time or full-time. Our collective felt the stress, focus issues, and distractions were something that could not be ignored and will likely affect the way teachers teach and the way ELs are educated moving forward.

**Emotional Impact on Students.** The findings also showed the COVID-19 pandemic had an *emotional impact on students*. Two major characteristics of this subtheme were discussed: *isolation* and *missing the safety net of school*. Teachers reported that ELs had been hit hard emotionally during the pandemic, and data indicated that teachers and students felt isolated, missed human contact, were fearful, and missed the safety and support of school.

**Isolation.** Many teachers shared that ELs missed the comfort of school while staying home to learn. The following quotes by two teachers embodied the general

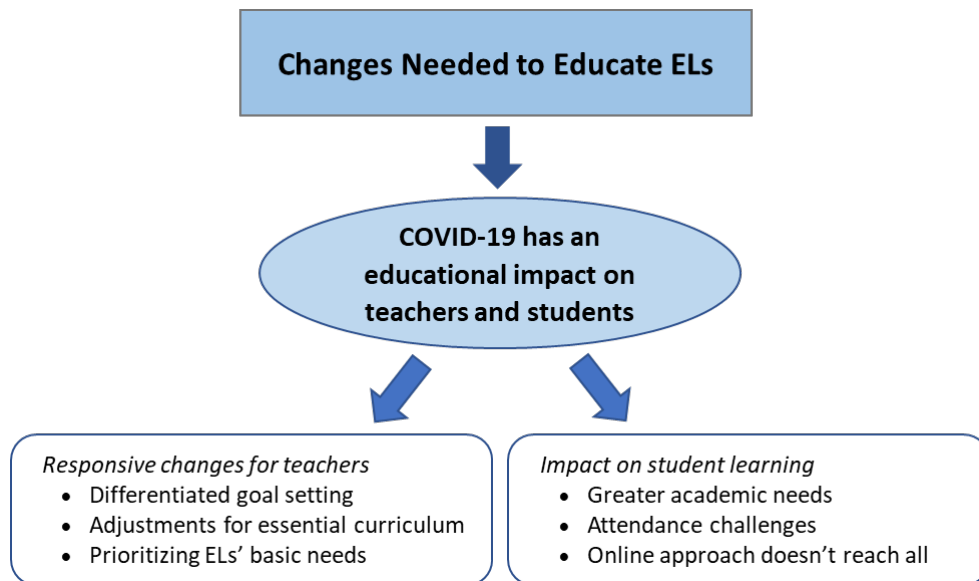
feelings among our CAR collective that our students felt *isolation* and missed their school communities. The following quote from Mary explained how hard it was for her students to be isolated and not see friends during the time she was stuck at home during the pandemic. She said (April 5, 2020; group Blackboard Collaborate meeting), “It’s really hard for her (Mary’s student) to not, you know, see her friends.” Kathy supported Mary’s thoughts and explained that she now realized just how much her students needed the enjoyment and assurance of school.

***Missing the Safety Net of School.*** In many cases, school was the only stable place students had in their lives. Kathy wrote (June 18, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal), “The COVID-19 crisis...shows just how much the students rely on us for community, food, counseling, socialization, routine...” The CAR collective reported that prior to the pandemic, students could go to school for not only learning, but also socialization, routine, food, and emotional support. Literature says that teachers can help ELs overcome their trauma through building relationships, having a safe haven for learning, and building trust (Newcomer et al., 2021). Teachers felt that during the pandemic, these supports had been completely removed from their students. The collective shared that schools play a huge role in supporting the entire community around them and it is possible their value was not fully appreciated until this life-changing crisis occurred.

#### ***Global Theme Five: Changes Needed to Educate ELs***

Our CAR collective saw firsthand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on both ESOL teachers and ELs as we journeyed through this five-month study. Therefore, many of our findings reflected these specific areas of impact. Figure 9 provides a visual of the

thematic network determined for how the COVID-19 pandemic changed the way we educate ELs.



**Figure 9**

*Global Theme Five*

The educational impact of the pandemic is divided into two subthemes. The first subtheme focuses on the *responsive changes for teachers* because teachers and their needs are at the heart of this study. The second subtheme focuses on the *impact on student learning* and the additional obstacles the pandemic created for the education of ELs in the United States.

**Responsive Changes for Teachers.** Three major topics were discussed by the collective in order of hierarchy: *differentiated goal setting*, *adjustments for essential curriculum*, and *prioritizing ELs' basic needs*. There is no denying the COVID-19

pandemic changed ESOL teachers' daily requirements and how they educated ELs with interrupted schooling.

***Differentiated Goal Setting.*** All teachers in our collective agreed that the way we had been accustomed to teaching ELs abruptly changed without preparation or warning. This sudden change in education forced teachers in this study to adjust and *differentiate goals* for ELs' learning in an unfamiliar virtual setting. The quote below by Sandra embodied the general feelings among the CAR collective when it came to schooling changes during the pandemic. Sandra wrote (March 25, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal), "This pandemic will change the way we teach..." In Sandra's quote she discussed how many students in her district did not have access to Wi-Fi, which made it nearly impossible to teach them virtually. She felt lost on how to approach teaching her ELs when access to technology and virtual resources were such a challenge to acquire. This was a relevant finding because many teachers in our collective experienced the same struggles and lack of technology resources for their students and had to adjust their teaching. ESOL teachers may now need to be better prepared to modify instruction to reach ELs who lack access to all the virtual resources and Wi-Fi needed.

Many of our synchronous meetings, blog posts, and online discussions focused on how the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically changed the instructional platform that most teachers used. All members of the CAR collective were asked—with no warning or preparation—to immediately move to online platforms. Teachers reported they did not all feel prepared to teach online. The quote below by Peter captured a general feeling expressed by the collective regarding online instruction and how they believed it did not

work for all educators and courses. He said (May 21, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal), “One teacher cannot reach all students with this singular approach.”

These quotes and the general consensus of the collective indicated that ESOL teachers must change and differentiate the goals they set for ELs with interrupted schooling who are now learning in a new and unfamiliar environment. It is also important to note that ESOL educators must advocate to their schools to support these new differentiated goals in their educational plans for the ELs in their districts.

***Adjustments for Essential Curriculum.*** Teachers reported that not only were they forced to move to an online platform, but they were also asked to instruct their students in a reduced amount of time that was not equivalent to their normal school day hours. This forced ESOL teachers to shift their mindsets and focus only on what was considered essential learning. The following quote by Rebecca demonstrates how ESOL teachers were forced to make tough decisions about *what is the most essential curriculum* to cover during the pandemic. Rebecca said (April 5, 2020; group Blackboard Collaborate meeting), “I really had to focus and narrow down to what was the most important thing...for my ESOL students...cut out a lot...and just pick and choose what I felt they really needed at that moment.” Other members of the collective voiced similar challenges; they felt time became a considerable issue and teachers had to reduce parts of the curriculum for ELs with interrupted schooling. Discussions surrounding the potential changes in curriculum for ELs with interrupted schooling led the collective to speculate if changes needed to also be made to the expected yearly growth and passing state exams rates for ELs with interrupted schooling. This finding led to a further discussion that can

be found in Chapter Five about what are now considered essential curriculum and graduation requirements for ELs. Possibly, it is time to make a change in the expectations for learning for ELs that historically have put them at a disadvantage for academic success.

***Prioritizing ELs' Basic Needs.*** Many teachers in the CAR collective shared that during the pandemic *ELs needed more assistance in meeting their basic needs*. Students with interrupted schooling who enter a learning environment that meets their basic needs will feel more comfortable and be more receptive to learning (DeCapua et al., 2020). Teachers agreed their role as a teacher shifted and they now felt they needed to focus more on helping ELs with interrupted schooling with basic needs in addition to academics. The quote below by Rebecca represents the collective's feelings toward the new role for ESOL teachers to provide basic needs before academics. She said (May 9, 2020; group Blackboard Collaborate meeting), "Still food and Wi-Fi...attendance...still contacting and communicating and needing food and resources." Rebecca's thoughts demonstrate a shift in mentality about what is the essential schooling role for ESOL teachers now. Additionally, they indicate that ESOL teachers experienced schooling changes and are now spending much of their time finding ways to provide basic needs as their first priority.

**Impact on Student Learning.** From the ongoing dialogue and online discussions, teachers felt the pandemic had enormous repercussions for the learning of ELs with interrupted schooling. ESOL teachers voiced that they now see the following impacts on

student learning, which are listed in subthemes from most prevalently discussed: *greater academic needs*, *attendance delinquency*, and *online approach does not reach all*.

***Greater Academic Needs.*** Teachers shared that ELs with interrupted schooling now have *greater academic needs* that will require extra work once school returns to the new normal. The following quote by Sandra represents how even greater academic needs surfaced for her ELs with interrupted schooling during the pandemic. She said (June 30, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal), "...completely fell off the track (ELs with interrupted schooling) – meaning they were impossible to have any contact with, let alone to actually teach...my student did nothing for 4 months..." Sandra explained that even those students with access, years of regular schooling, and a basic understanding of technology still struggled in a virtual setting. However, Sandra's ELs with interrupted schooling got completely lost during the pandemic due to a lack of contact with school and an inability to participate in online learning, and therefore have even greater needs in education now.

***Attendance Challenges.*** Teachers in the CAR collective also reported that *attendance challenges* had a huge impact on the success and achievement of their students during the pandemic. The next quote by Rebecca (June 13, 2020; group Blackboard Collaborate meeting) shows just how overwhelming attendance issues can be for ESOL teachers during the pandemic:

I struggle to the point of tears sometimes of why are my kids not showing up when they were showing up in school. You know, I always had some who wouldn't show up because of jobs, but, I mean, the attendance is so painful right

now. And these kids, like, I loved them, they loved me, things were great. And then I'm like, "What-What am I doing wrong right now..."

It is clear in Rebecca's quote that, from her perspective, her ELs used to love attending school. The collective believed that their new absence was likely a direct result of the pandemic and school now being online. There is a risk now that ELs will be further behind academically following the pandemic due to factors beyond both the students' and teachers' control.

***Online Approach Does Not Reach All.*** During the pandemic, ESOL teachers reported difficulty providing necessary interventions immediately after being asked to instruct online. During the pandemic the only option for learning was virtual instruction. This is an educational systems issue and the collective felt their students struggled with only being offered one instructional approach. Teachers voiced that the *online approach does not reach all* students, specifically those with interrupted schooling. Many online programs lacked appropriate accommodations to make content instruction effective for ELs, particularly for ELs with interrupted schooling (Sayer & Braun, 2020). Online instruction meant the loss of differentiated learning supported through oral interactions (Sayer & Braun, 2020). Many teachers explained that they believed the lack of face-to-face interaction with students directly affected their students' learning for the remainder of the year. The following quote by Sandra shows how the online approach does not reach all students, especially ELs with interrupted schooling. She wrote (June 14, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate journal), "These students need such intense teacher intervention,

and the best (online) teaching tools cannot begin to replace that human relationship which is where you see much of the progress happen.”

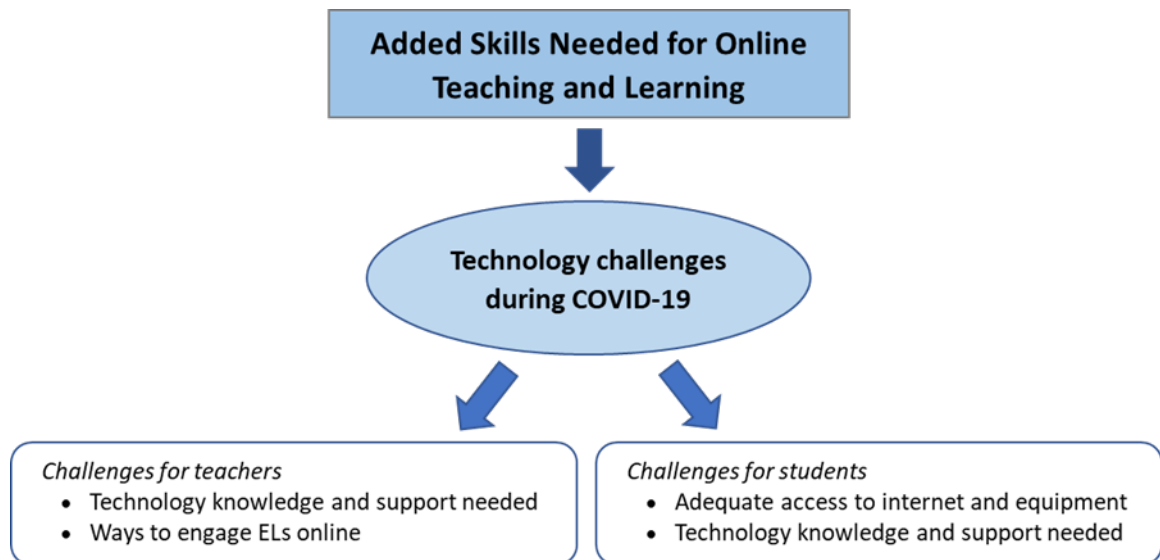
The following thoughts by Betsy and Jenny show substantial structural barriers for ELs with interrupted schooling without the support of face-to-face teaching. Betsy explained that without the face-to-face support of their teachers, many students completely forgot how to do basic tasks online and eventually gave up trying. Jenny stated (June 13, 2020; group Blackboard Collaborate meeting), “They forgot how to do everything. Everything. Share documents, don't know how to do it...upload a document, don't know how to do it.”

Sandra, Jenny, and Betsy’s quotes are imperative to this study because they showed the pandemic had more than a short-term impact on students’ learning. They expressed that their students were affected for the remainder of the year. These findings may indicate there may be long-term repercussions for ELs and their ability to access school and learning following the pandemic. From these quotes capturing teachers’ sentiments, teachers’ general belief was that without the support of in-person instruction, ELs with interrupted schooling suffered when trying to access a virtual platform without the face-to-face support of their teachers. This potential long-term impact on student learning will have implications that must be addressed now as we move into the future of online learning and online preparation for ELs.

### ***Global Theme Six: Added Skills Needed for Online Teaching and Learning***

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, both teachers and students were forced to quickly adopt and adapt to online learning environments. The entire visual of the

thematic network shows that all educators and students now need to be comfortable teaching and learning virtually. This theme can be viewed in Figure 10.



**Figure 10**

*Global Theme Six*

The visual displayed in Figure 10 is divided into two subthemes: *technology challenges for teachers* and *technology challenges for students*.

**Challenges for Teachers.** During our synchronous meetings and online discussions, the collective reported that they did not feel prepared with the technology expertise to instruct ELs with interrupted schooling online. Teachers voiced that they struggled the most in the following two areas: *technology knowledge and support needed* and *ways to engage ELs online*.

***Technology Knowledge and Support Needed.*** Teachers reported that they did not feel prepared with the technological skills to instruct online and scrambled quickly to change their instruction. The collective felt they needed more *technology knowledge and support*. Erica shared that not all teachers are tech savvy and prepared to shift to a virtual platform. She said (May 9, 2020; group Blackboard Collaborate meeting), “I’m the tech, I’m r- real (stutters and hesitates) low on the tech totem pole...” Erica’s hesitation implied that she is uncomfortable with her new technology responsibilities and is not confident teaching in this new virtual setting.

Our CAR collective discussions revealed that many teachers do not feel prepared to instruct virtually and use new online platforms. Most teachers simultaneously had to learn how to use the platform as they were also figuring out how to plan lessons for online delivery (Sayer & Braun, 2020). Teachers reported that they are now in charge of supporting all of their students in using these online platforms and navigating technology issues virtually. It is evident in Jenny’s next quote that this new responsibility for teachers has put a strain on her, professionally and emotionally. She said (June 13, 2020; group Blackboard Collaborate meeting), “Here’s how you do it, and sitting there talking them through it, having them share their screens, but it didn’t seem to matter. Sorry, I’m gonna get emotional now (starts to cry)...” Jenny’s tears showed how overwhelmed, frustrated, and stressed she felt trying help her ELs learn online when she struggles herself with the virtual platform. Jenny’s experience represents the immense new role ESOL teachers have been given during the time of the pandemic.

***Ways to Engage ELs Online.*** Many teachers reported difficulty *engaging with ELs online*. According to the teachers, many ELs refused to turn on their microphones and cameras for weeks and therefore never opened assignments and completed work. The following quote by Kathy demonstrated how difficult it was for some teachers in our collective to engage ELs with interrupted schooling online. She explained (April 5, 2020; group Blackboard Collaborate meeting), “...won’t talk to Google (students won’t turn on microphone)...so kids can’t access assignments (students don’t ask for help)...” When Kathy said her students *won’t* turn on microphones and *won’t* talk, this implied that her ELs were not only uncomfortable understanding the online platform, but they also showed a form of rebellion in not participating in virtual learning because of their discomfort with the process. This signified that many ESOL teachers across the United States may also struggle with the same challenges and need more support in how to engage and help ELs with interrupted schooling access online learning. The testimonies from ESOL teachers in this section bear witness to their struggles when it comes to quickly learn new technology themselves while trying to keep ELs with interrupted schooling engaged in learning.

**Challenges for Students.** Throughout this study, the collective reported in online discussions and journals that they saw how ELs with interrupted schooling experienced serious technology challenges when trying to access education virtually. Teachers voiced that ELs struggled the most in the following two areas: *adequate access to internet and equipment* and *technology knowledge and support needed*.

***Adequate Access to Internet and Equipment.*** The collective shared that many of ELs with interrupted schooling lacked basic technology skills and access to properly working Wi-Fi. Some ELs with interrupted schooling may be disenfranchised when it comes to technology because many do not have access to computers at home (Benson, 2013; Waters, 2007). Without technology supports such as Wi-Fi, teachers felt online learning was impossible for ELs and put them at a disadvantage. This exposes a larger problem that many of our EL populations historically have been without the necessary technology and equipment needed to support their learning.

The following quotes by Betsy and Rebecca embodied our collective's feelings that during this time, ELs struggled with obtaining basic technology access and supports. Betsy teaches in a rural region of the United States. She said (June 13, 2020; group Blackboard Collaborate meeting), "I don't know, but we have to do something because we're not gonna be able to get Wi-Fi and computers, and training to every single EL in my county... we live in a rural area." Rebecca, who teaches in a suburban area of the United States, also voiced the same concern. She said (April 5, 2020; group Blackboard Collaborate meeting), "We're struggling a lot in our district...just to get Wi-Fi out to the kids..." These findings indicate that technology and Wi-Fi access were challenges in many areas across the United States.

***Technology Knowledge and Support Needed.*** The collective reported that ELs with interrupted schooling had very limited knowledge of how to use technology and were most affected by the shift to online learning. Teachers voiced that these students needed additional *technology knowledge and support*. The collective agreed that due to

the needs in this population's education, many students with interrupted learning already had limited exposure to how to use a computer or how to access online platforms, and struggled with home access to technology. The CAR collective shared that many of ELs had only been in the country for a few months before everyone was forced to stay home. The findings suggested that many teachers felt ELs with interrupted schooling were simply not prepared with the proper training and technology knowledge to successfully learn virtually.

Jenny wrote (March 15, 2020; Blackboard Collaborate discussion board), "I am...trying to set up...meeting so students could check in, but I just don't know how to best make that accessible to newcomers with limited tech knowledge." It is clear that Jenny's ELs needed face-to-face technology training prior to being asked to successfully complete classes online. The next quote by Jenny captured the way our teachers felt—that even the most skilled online teachers in our collective struggled to prepare students to learn online with the proper technology, access, and directions. Jenny said (June 13, 2020; group Blackboard Collaborate meeting), "See it over here or be able to move between tabs and pause that video so that you can go over here and do that thing (referencing ELs struggling online). Because they forgot how to do everything." Teachers voiced that their students had significant trouble with the move to online instruction and needed technology training. Teachers in our CAR collective voiced that student technology training and access to technology and Wi-Fi for students were critical components that needed improvements to make online and/or concurrent learning successful for all students, not only ELs.

## **Chapter Four Summary**

The voices of the teachers in this study provided a representation of the successes and challenges as viewed by current ESOL teachers around the United States who work with English Learners with interrupted schooling. The findings presented in Chapter Four showed in detail how important the ESOL teachers felt it was for educators to deeply understand students with interrupted schooling and their unique needs. Overall, the data provided the perspective that these ESOL teachers and others may possess special dispositions that include deep care and empathy for their students and their students' well-being. Our findings shared the skills and strategies identified by these educators that ESOL teachers need to have in order to accelerate students with interrupted schooling toward graduation.

Additionally, interwoven throughout the data were continual discussions surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and teachers' perceptions of its impact on education, particularly for ELs with interrupted schooling. Throughout these discussions, our findings focused on the emotional implications for both teachers and students, as well as the direct educational impact from the pandemic. Finally, the data represented the assertion that it is of the utmost importance that teachers know how to teach virtually and students know how to learn virtually. Chapter Five includes discussion, conclusions, and implications, and addresses considerations and limitations. A set of recommendations identified by the teachers is also included.

## **Chapter Five**

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding—from the perspectives of those who work with this population every day—of the knowledge, dispositions, and instructional strategies that are now needed as the population of ELs with interrupted schooling increases and changes in the United States. The findings of this study provide insights into the unique needs of this student population and its teachers. This study also emphasizes ways educators can improve their practices and, by so doing, improve the outcomes of ELs with interrupted schooling.

### **Research Questions**

The CAR collective agreed upon two research questions to guide this research. A third research question was added later after we saw that much of the data we gathered related to teaching ELs with interrupted schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. What knowledge, skills, dispositions, and instructional strategies do experience ESOL teachers identify as being important for ESOL teachers to now possess in order to best support the development of ELs with interrupted schooling in their classes?
2. Given current demographic changes in the ESOL population, what expanded knowledge do these ESOL teachers identify as being needed (or optimal) to support their work with ELs with interrupted schooling?

3. What unique challenges emerged from the ESOL teachers' experiences for the education of ELs with interrupted schooling during the COVID pandemic?

The finding presented in Global Themes One, Two and Three address the first two research questions. Most teachers in our collective did not feel prepared for—or even aware of in some cases—the unique differences of ELs with interrupted schooling. This indicated that teacher preparation for future ESOL teachers may not be sufficient. Additionally, data showed that the U.S. school system is not set up to adequately address the unique educational needs of older ELs with interrupted schooling. The need for systemic and policy level changes became evident.

Beyond the urgency for greater understanding of the unique needs of ELs with interrupted schooling, our findings were clear that caring dispositions should be fostered among educators who work with ELs with interrupted schooling. In addition, teachers who work with students who have had interrupted schooling are in positions of *supporting socioemotional needs* as well as *academic needs*. In general, teachers in our CAR did not feel they were fully equipped with the necessary strategies, skills, and knowledge to best support individual academic needs of ELs with interrupted schooling.

Clearly, COVID-19 had an observable impact on the *emotional needs of teachers and students*. In line with other findings that address the first two research questions, this study found that both teachers and students endured some form of extreme stress and trauma during the pandemic. The study illustrates the importance of keeping students' emotional needs at the forefront of instructional planning. During the COVID-19 pandemic, some of our districts made exceptions to the graduation requirements for ELs,

annual expected growth, and state testing requirements. Some ELs with interrupted schooling graduated during the pandemic who most likely would not have met these requirements had it been a normal school year. This is significant because it amplified the academic barriers ELs with interrupted schooling have historically faced. Finally, this study found that teachers and students both need added skills for online teaching and learning.

## **Conclusions**

This section elaborates on the main conclusions of this study. Following the conclusions, I detail implications of these conclusions related to practice, research, and policy.

### ***New Necessities for Teacher Professional Development***

All teachers in this CAR study had 10 or more years of teaching experience. The collective mutually agreed in online conversations and blog entries that their preparation programs did not provide the knowledge and skills they needed to understand and be successful teaching ELs with interrupted schooling.

This study echoes the findings of Shelton and Melchior (2021), identifying the need for specific additional knowledge for teacher professional learning post-licensure. Our findings further emphasized Shelton and Melchior's research, which indicated that it is essential for school divisions and graduate programs to better support and enhance PD on current curriculum knowledge for veteran ESOL teachers. While the Shelton and Melchior research addressed needs for veteran teachers, in general, the current study adds specificity to their results by providing further evidence that ESOL teachers need to seek

opportunities for ongoing professional development that specifically addresses the needs of students who have experienced some form of interrupted schooling. The collective identified two major areas in which they saw the need for more intense work to help teachers be responsive to current student needs: *foundational literacy* and *socioemotional needs*.

**Foundational Literacy.** Findings point to the intense need for education programs to rethink their content and to include responsive changes regarding the foundational literacy instruction that is provided to ESOL teachers in order to better prepare them to work with ELs with interrupted schooling. Both the collective and Hickey's (2015) study voiced that earlier teacher preparation programs may not have seen a need to provide secondary level educators with foundational literacy preparation because the demographics did not warrant this need in the past. This supports Shelton and Melchior's (2021) research indicating that veteran teachers need to be kept more current as the educational landscape continues to change over time, especially in the area of foundational literacy (Hickey, 2015).

This study shows that teachers would benefit from additional professional development in how to tap into students' prior knowledge and how to better work with students whose schooling in their home country may not have provided much, if any, strong literacy skills in their first language. Swain and Deters (2007) and Zuengler and Miller (2006) have revealed how important it is to support a student's ability to transfer knowledge from their first language to their new language. The current study expands on this research by showing how traditional language transfer from the first language to the

L2 is more challenging for their ELs with interrupted schooling who have differing literacy skills.

This study also shows that teachers with elementary experience may have had an advantage when working with students with interrupted schooling because they were provided more extensive foundational literacy instruction during their preparation programs. These results identified a potential gap that may exist in many teacher preparation programs and the importance of deepening teacher knowledge in the area of foundational literacy instruction, especially for secondary level ESOL teachers. The experiences of the collective underscored and supported the work of Potochnick (2018) and Rothstein-Fisch et al. (2009). Ten percent of ELs now have interrupted schooling (Potochnick, 2018), and most students with interrupted schooling need more targeted instruction in literacy and numeracy (Rothstein-Fisch et al., 2009). The collective's voices shared a current perspective that literacy and numeracy skills are areas that need improvement among this population and need to be a priority in educational planning.

To meet the reading and writing development needs of ELs with interrupted schooling, changes need to be considered in the literacy supports and interventions used with this population (Hickey, 2015). The findings of this study support research that shows that academic literacy must be effectively and explicitly addressed for students with interrupted schooling, especially for students at the middle and high school age levels (Fry, 2005; Hickey, 2015; Menken et al., 2012). This study acknowledges that there is a clear need for deeper foundational literacy knowledge for ESOL educators, and

shows that this foundational literacy is needed for all educators teaching all ages of learners.

**Socioemotional Needs.** Expanded knowledge around how to respond to the emotional needs of students is essential for ESOL teachers in order to best instruct ELs with interrupted schooling. Free and Križ (2016) as well as the work on MALP by DeCapua and Marshall (2009) have both found that prior experiences and an understanding of culture are crucial in helping students reach academic success. This study supports the findings of CRP (Gay, 2013), the research on MALP by DeCapua and Marshall (2009), and research by Browder (2014) that find socioemotional needs must be addressed first before students with interrupted schooling are able to learn in a new country. The consensus of the collective underscored the work of Chang-Bacon and provided an additional 2021 perspective: that more targeted PD that specifically addresses the socioemotional needs of ELs with interrupted schooling is now more relevant than ever.

Results drawn from this study pointed to the extended needs today for all teachers, in particular veteran teachers, to have expanded knowledge in order to be best qualified to work with ELs with interrupted schooling. We included all teachers in this conclusion, not just ESOL teachers, since all teachers will soon have ELs with interrupted schooling in their classrooms if they do not already.

### ***Technology in Teaching and Learning***

The findings brought to light the critical need for school divisions to understand the teacher knowledge and supports that are needed now, given the changes to education

for ELs with interrupted schooling in the wake of a pandemic. In a study that might have been conducted during another time, technology might not have had a strong role, but because of COVID-19 it has now jumped to the forefront.

This study showed that, like most teachers who experienced the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers of ELs with interrupted schooling struggled. Yet, these teachers faced challenges in unprecedented ways because most virtual platforms being used were not designed with ELs in mind because they were not adapted to meet the needs of students who needed enhanced literacy or technology support (Sayer & Braun, 2020). Additionally, technology obstacles were amplified when dealing with students who have interrupted schooling.

Teacher attrition is a serious consequence of teachers feeling inadequate and underprepared while teaching during the pandemic (Page, 2020). By the summer of 2020, one out of five U.S. teachers reported they were unlikely to return if schools were to reopen since they felt unprepared to do their jobs properly (Page, 2020). This study shows that attrition may be more pronounced among teachers of ELs with interrupted schooling if their needs are not met.

This study also shows that a lack of technology knowledge and access is a broader challenge across the United States for those more disadvantaged socioeconomically. This finding was in line with the most recent study from Chang-Bacon (2021), whose work also indicated that there has been an existing need for technology supports and added knowledge for ELs with interrupted schooling.

In many contexts, ELs with interrupted schooling have traditionally not received the support they need, such as technology, to facilitate their educational success (Montero et al., 2014; Potochnick, 2018). Benson (2013) and Waters (2007) have also shown that some ELs with interrupted schooling may be disenfranchised when it comes to having access to technology. This research indicated that there is a global need for better technology support from school districts. Additionally, this study shined a spotlight on the intensified needs that ELs with interrupted schooling have for these technology resources and education.

This study offered real-time experiences of ESOL professionals teaching ELs with interrupted schooling virtually during a pandemic, a concept novel to the educational research field. This research points to the effectiveness of CRP, which is part of the theoretical framework informing this study. The knowledge of CRP is essential for teachers who work with diverse students, since it affords teachers the opportunity to show appreciation and value for all of their students' past experiences, culture, and identity in order to remove barriers to academic success (Ball, 2009; Gay, 2010, 2013; Paris, 2012; Warren, 2018). However, it was clear in our study that teachers in the collective struggled with making connections, understanding prior student experiences, and how to show value for their students in an online setting. The COVID-19 pandemic interjected an added dimension to our study that pushed us to focus on improvements to virtual learning for teachers and students. School divisions across the United States must now make a more concerted effort to promote systemic changes that support teachers' and students' technology and online education needs in a post-pandemic learning environment.

### ***ESOL Teachers as Voices for Change***

During the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for teacher advocacy was amplified. Suddenly, teachers had to advocate for their school districts to provide technology, internet, curriculum changes, and new accommodations in order for ELs with interrupted schooling to academically succeed in a virtual environment. Teachers shared that many ELs had previously been denied support in obtaining necessary technology, including Wi-Fi. ESOL teachers noted that, historically, federal and state testing mandates and necessary accommodations for ELs with interrupted schooling were generally barriers to ELs' academic success.

The global pandemic highlighted inequities that have been common for many EL students with interrupted schooling. During the pandemic, extensive accommodations were offered to ELs, such as the suspension and reduction of testing mandates, the distribution of free computers and internet access (RAND Corporation, 2020), and exceptions to graduation requirements (Vigdor & Diaz, 2020). This study documented that accommodations were implemented at unprecedented scales during the pandemic, and in ways that were deemed impossible for EL populations in the past. Chang-Bacon (2021) posited that there needs to be less emphasis on standardized testing. This view has been shared by many ESOL educators. However, this position was met with opposition according to certain state and federal mandates (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015b; Menken, 2008). Yet, the COVID-19 pandemic pushed the education system to rethink the educational structure and find ways to provide an equitable education for ELs with interrupted schooling. This study provides evidence that it is essential that ESOL teachers

and school districts advocate to ensure these accommodations and resources that were implemented for ELs during the COVID-19 pandemic remain in place. Although research surrounding education during the COVID-19 pandemic is just now surfacing, it is critical that a call to action be made to ensure that future research additionally include the education of ELs, specifically those with interrupted schooling, during a time of crisis.

This study emphasized the importance of ESOL teachers having the necessary skills to advocate and be the voice for their ELs with interrupted schooling (Howard et al., 2007). Teachers in our group affirmed the work of Fenner (2013), who also shared that to be effective advocates for ELs with interrupted schooling, educators must recognize areas in which advocacy is needed and understand actions needed to improve programs and services for ELs and their families. Additionally, teachers must be a voice in their buildings to help create school cultures that support ELs with interrupted schooling and produce high academic achievement (Howard et al., 2007). This study illustrates that effective ESOL teacher advocates must have an increased knowledge base, ownership of EL programs, and be collectively responsible for student success (Ortiz & Fránquiz, 2017).

This CAR study attempted to add to the existing research on teacher voice and advocacy and fill the gap that exists on specifically advocating for ELs with interrupted schooling. These historical injustices exist because school practices were designed around the cultural norms of the dominant social group (Lee, 2010). Teachers who have a strong knowledge of CRP are more likely to advocate for reducing needs and barriers to

academic achievement for diverse populations (Carter & Welner, 2013; Gay, 2010, 2013).

Additionally, knowledge of MALP can give teachers a voice to advocate for the needs of their ELs with interrupted schooling. This addition of cultural knowledge will assist teachers in advocating to reduce the need between the home cultures of diverse populations and traditional school culture, which is just now starting to address social inequities in education (DeCapua & Marshall, 2015b). The experiences of teachers during this study indicated the COVID-19 pandemic forced their education communities to realize that systemic changes were achievable when schooling interruption was normalized.

### **Implications for Pedagogy and Practice**

Teachers in the CAR collective identified four major implications for pedagogy and practice drawn from this study that will be discussed in the following four subsections in greater detail.

#### ***Preparation Needed in Socioemotional Pedagogy and Responsive Curriculum***

Members of our CAR collective faced similar concerns regarding the socioemotional education needed for ESOL teachers. Implications from this study suggest that socioemotional pedagogy may now be critical in ESOL teacher education.

These teacher experiences supported existing literature that also emphasized how positive support systems, such as CRP, help students feel valued in their school buildings (Ball, 2009; Gay, 2010, 2013; Paris, 2012; Warren, 2018). In some stories shared by teachers in the collaborative, underlying racial tendencies emerged that indicated there is

a critical need to ensure all educators have the knowledge and expertise to welcome, understand, and connect and build relationships with diverse learners. One way to address this need is to now provide all educators, not just ESOL teachers, PD in responsive pedagogies such as CRP or MALP.

Another way to improve teacher education and ongoing teacher PD is to include trauma-informed practices (Bruce et al., 2018) for all educators working with ELs who have had interrupted schooling. Due to the growing number of students with past trauma, Carello and Butler (2015) made a case for applying the essential elements of Trauma-Informed Care to education and created guidelines for what they call Trauma-Informed Educational Practice (TIEP). This would involve bringing in clinical educators to teach trauma courses in teacher preparation and in school buildings (Carello & Butler, 2015). Current studies support that integrating trauma courses for educators has led to maximized student resilience, as well as reducing student risk (Black, 2006; Cunningham, 2004; Graziano, 2001; Mattar, 2011; McCammon, 1999; M. Miller, 2001).

### ***Preparation Needed in How to Connect with and Instruct ELs Virtually***

Teaching will never be the same again in a post-pandemic world. It is highly likely that continuing forward, technology and virtual instruction will remain in place and even increase. Findings from this study pointed to the importance that all teachers now be adept in comfortably delivering and accessing instruction virtually. These findings may be indicative of trends across programs because the collective felt inadequate in understanding how to engage their ELs with interrupted schooling online. Teachers made a recommendation for enhanced PD in how to engage their ELs with interrupted

schooling in online instruction. Preparation and plans for this should be put in place now to educate all educators—especially ESOL teachers—in how to best connect with and instruct ELs in a virtual world successfully.

### ***Skills and Accommodations Necessary for ELs to Learn Virtually***

Virtual learning can be particularly challenging for students who are learning English as an additional language (Bonar et al., 2021). Therefore, the findings brought to light the immediate need for students to also have preparation in how to best and effectively learn online. The pandemic changed the way teachers teach and students learn, and technology will be more prevalent in education moving forward. We cannot predict whether another global event might occur, but school districts can take action now to fully prepare their ELs with interrupted schooling as they enter the school systems so they are more comfortable seeking ways for students to engage.

### ***Preparation Needed to Teach Foundational Literacy***

Findings also indicated those in the CAR collective who had backgrounds in elementary education felt they may have had a greater advantage when working with students with interrupted schooling because they were provided more extensive foundational literacy instruction during their preparation programs. This implied there may be a gap in teacher preparation in the area of foundational literacy instruction, especially for secondary level ESOL teachers. Teachers need to better understand how to help students make specific connections between their home language and their L2 of English in multiple ways to tap into their prior knowledge. Teachers must be able to understand specifically what needs the student has and where students are on target. This

is an area of expertise that teachers possess who have an understanding of how to teach foundational literacy skills.

This study implies that teacher preparation programs and ongoing PD for current ESOL teachers across the United States should be expanded to include more comprehensive foundational literacy instruction for all teachers working with ELs with interrupted schooling. Additionally, teachers should be provided improved preparation to teach this population of ELs online and be equipped with the necessary resources to teach foundational literacy virtually.

### **Implications for Research**

Teachers in the CAR collective identified two major implications for research drawn from this study that will be discussed in the following two subsections in greater detail.

#### ***Research Needed in all Areas on Meeting the Needs of ELs with Interrupted Schooling***

Implications from this study suggest that more research in general is needed in ESOL teacher education. This study suggested that socioemotional pedagogy, SLA, responsive teaching, literacy pedagogy, virtual learning, and many other areas may be critical now in ESOL teacher education. One way to address this research need is to compare our U.S. educational system with other systems in the world and gain a deeper perspective of how they have responded to this new wave of learners and understand what knowledge they feel is most critical for their educators.

In addition to enhanced research in all areas for ELs with interrupted schooling, findings suggested that how to address socioemotional needs for ELs is now a key area

needed in research that has moved to the forefront following the COVID-19 pandemic. To make this possible, research should be focused on the socioemotional needs of this population of ELs, specifically in a post-pandemic learning environment. Research shows the benefits of TIEP (Carello & Butler, 2015) in the K–12 school systems when working with ELs who have had interrupted schooling. This future research might then show a need for teacher preparation programs and school systems to provide this necessary trauma training for all educators who may be in contact with ELs with interrupted schooling.

### ***Research Needed in How to Engage ELs Online***

Testimonies from the collective expressed feelings of inadequacy in understanding how to engage their ELs with interrupted schooling online and felt this implied that additional research was needed in this area. Our collective recommended that further research be done in the area of online instruction for ELs with regard to engagement and how to address emergent literacy needs for ELs online, specifically ELs with interrupted schooling. This CAR study afforded us the opportunity to share our teacher voices from the classroom and represent areas of needs and strengths that may exist and need to be addressed across the United States. This study demonstrates how important it is now for researchers and policy makers to advocate to hear more teacher voices and learn about their research from inside their classrooms regarding the education of ELs with interrupted schooling.

## **Implications for Policy**

Drawn from this study are several implications that address policy changes that are needed to move towards desired structural changes that will improve the education of ELs with interrupted schooling. These changes will be discussed in the following two subsections in greater detail.

### ***Advocacy Needed to Continue Changes Put in Place During the Pandemic***

This study has now brought awareness to the barriers for ELs with interrupted schooling, and we now need to make changes to provide more equitable academic plans for success and implement necessary structural changes for ELs. Additionally, more advocacy was needed to make a call for change and urge policy makers and stakeholders to revise the academic requirements, implement improved accommodations, and provide more appropriate curriculum, resources, and teacher preparation.

During the pandemic, many districts altered the graduation requirements for ELs and temporarily suspended state testing mandates, which historically have been impossible to change. This was highly relevant because it amplified the barriers to success for ELs with interrupted schooling. Following the pandemic, I saw many of these changes return to what was considered normal for ELs prior to the pandemic. For example, my district reinstated the traditional diploma requirements for ELs and yearly state exams. I was disheartened to see policy makers shift back to the inequities that existed for the education of ELs prior to the pandemic. It is essential now that research like our CAR study share the outcomes, stories, and successes that the COVID-19 pandemic afforded when it came to making quick changes for the educational

requirements for ELs. We cannot go back to educational injustices for migrant students that existed in a pre-pandemic world. This study will hopefully push policy makers to see how powerful these education changes were for ELs and how they broke down academic obstacles that existed for far too long.

### ***Funding Needed for Improved Curriculum and Resources for ELs***

This study revealed a need for appropriate curriculum and instructional resources to be provided to schools in order to better educate their ELs with interrupted schooling across the United States. All members of the CAR collective struggled with having school funds to acquire essential curriculum, resources, and technology that was appropriate for the changing needs of the ELs with interrupted schooling within their classrooms.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed an additional need for teachers to have access and funds to purchase virtual content that included accommodations appropriate for ELs with interrupted schooling. Most of the virtual platforms being used were not designed with ELs in mind (Sayer & Braun, 2020). The collective felt our findings implied that there was a gap in the educational resources created for ELs with interrupted schooling learning virtually and face-to-face across the United States. The struggles shared by members of this CAR collective implied that policy makers at all levels need a better understanding of the needs of ELs and must be urged to allot more funding and support for improved curriculum and instructional resources for teachers who work with ELs with interrupted schooling.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought to light the lack of resources in general for ELs with interrupted schooling. This study implies that policy makers should understand the essentiality of this need, provide funding, and make changes to ensure that the education field is prepared with the necessary teaching tools to instruct ELs both in the classroom and virtually so that all ELs can have a more equitable education and the same opportunities as all students in U.S. schools.

### **Considerations**

The conclusions and implications drawn from this study are not the definitive answer to solve the dilemma of finding the best instruction for ELs with interrupted schooling. However, this study does provide a strong, broad, experienced voice from a knowledgeable set of teachers who work with students with interrupted schooling every day. It is important to remember that this group agreed to participate in this study and showed a common interest in working toward fixing the problem.

It cannot be overlooked that the COVID-19 pandemic became widespread in the United States close to the start of this research study. Due to pandemic and financial reasons, it was never possible for the collective to all be together to discuss topics face-to-face. Our online meetings were conducted judiciously and with purpose; however, in-person dialogues may have yielded even richer data for analysis. Had COVID-19 not interfered during this study, it is possible that additional findings may have surfaced if we had had more time together and an opportunity to meet in person.

Fifteen ESOL teachers initially committed to participate in this study, but stressors from the pandemic caused five teachers to leave the study prematurely.

Nonetheless, our group of 10 members, including myself, felt we produced rich data and suggestions for the future. Because we were living through unfamiliar situations while teaching virtually through a pandemic, we were able to have lengthy conversations about our concerns, needs, and successes when working with ELs with interrupted schooling online. No life-altering event is ideal, but the timing of the pandemic and this research study afforded us the opportunity to share our insights for the future of education when it comes to teaching through a pandemic and navigating virtual platforms with ELs who have had interrupted schooling.

Lastly, it would have been preferable to have more elementary school representation among our group members. Only three out of the 10 group members were currently working in an elementary school. However, four of the group members had experience working with ELs who had interrupted schooling at the elementary level. Our group members who taught elementary school reported they had only one or two students with interrupted schooling on their case load. The majority of the group members worked at the secondary level. The needs of ELs with interrupted schooling are greater at the secondary level since ELs often arrive as older learners; therefore, ESOL teachers need the most support in how to help their ELs with interrupted schooling close their academic needs at the secondary level.

### **Final Thoughts**

This CAR collective involved a group of 10 experienced ESOL professionals, including myself, from school districts in nine states across the United States. These ESOL educators came together because we shared a common interest in improving the

education for ELs with interrupted schooling. Our original conversations focused on ELs with interrupted schooling but quickly expanded to include discussions about education for ELs in general and, most particularly, on educating ELs during a pandemic. The choice for the design of this study was to empower teachers to work together to improve the education for their ELs with interrupted schooling.

Over the course of the study, our group discovered that the events of 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic added a deeper understanding of the needs of ELs with interrupted schooling and filled in needs in the educational community by showing areas that need expanded teacher preparation, ongoing PD, and further research to better prepare teachers and enhance the knowledge of pre-service and in-service teachers. Additionally, this CAR study added new research to inform ways to improve the education of ELs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study amplified the need for teachers to have a more critical lens so that they might see and understand the underlying challenges faced by the social injustices that surfaced during the COVID-19 pandemic. The global pandemic and voices of the CAR collective highlighted the inequities that are far from unprecedented for many students with interrupted schooling. However, our findings show accommodations, resources, and changes to educational requirements for ELs were implemented at large scales during the pandemic, and in ways that were deemed impossible for EL populations in the past. It is critical now that educators continue to advocate for the continuation of these changes in education for ELs that must be forthcoming in order to disrupt the barriers to academic success that have existed for far too long for ELs.

The pandemic exposed the societal and systemic inequities for ELs with interrupted schooling that have long needed to be addressed by policy makers. Currently the educational system is not set up to promote the highest academic success for ELs with interrupted schooling. Teachers can gain all the knowledge and professional development needed, but if the educational system remains the same, barriers will still prevent ELs with interrupted schooling from achieving their highest potential. I hope that this study will motivate an overdue call to change for systemic improvements to the education for ELs in the United States.

Following this study, my next steps will be to share this research on a smaller scale in shorter papers and at local and national conferences. My hope is to raise awareness for ESOL teachers to understand the need for their advocacy to become voices that encourage policy makers to continue making changes to break down the social inequities that exist among a diverse population. I also wish to conduct another CAR study with teachers who are working with ELs with interrupted schooling once they are back in the classroom either fully or in a hybrid setting. It is my hope that this next study might help to explore the unanswered questions of how we shift ELs back into the classroom following a global pandemic and what issues now exist and need to be addressed. Lastly, many areas of systemic racism were brought to the surface as a result of the events in 2020 and 2021. It will be beneficial to conduct another CAR study in a more focused area of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and systemic racism in an attempt to help teachers identify their own biases and assumptions following the events and social injustices that were brought to light in 2020 and 2021.

## Appendix A

### IRB Approval Letter



#### Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

Research Hall, 4400 University Drive, MS 6D5, Fairfax, Virginia 22030  
Phone: 703-993-5445; Fax: 703-993-9590

DATE: December 16, 2019

TO: Rebecca Fox, PhD  
FROM: George Mason University IRB

Project Title: [1532733-1] Teachers Who Work With English Learners Who Have Had Interrupted Schooling: A Collaborative Action Research Study

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED  
APPROVAL DATE: December 16, 2019  
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited review category #7

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The George Mason University IRB has APPROVED your submission. This submission has received Expedited Review based on applicable federal regulations.

Please remember that all research must be conducted as described in the submitted materials.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form unless the IRB has waived the requirement for a signature on the consent form or has waived the requirement for a consent process. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by the IRB prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to the IRB office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed (if applicable).

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to the IRB.

This study does not have an expiration date but you will receive an annual reminder regarding future requirements.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of five years, or as described in your submission, after the completion of the project.

Please note that department or other approvals may be required to conduct your research in addition to IRB approval.

If you have any questions, please contact Katie Brooks at (703) 993-4121 or kbrook14@gmu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

GMU IRB Standard Operating Procedures can be found here: <https://rdia.gmu.edu/topics-of-interest/human-or-animal-subjects/human-subjects/human-subjects-sops/>

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within George Mason University IRB's records.

**Appendix B**  
**Recruitment Message**



**TEACHER NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY**

Do you currently or have you previously worked with English Learners who have had interrupted schooling?

If so, are you interested in joining a network of teachers who work with students who have had interrupted schooling? I would love to hear from you!

Please contact me with any questions or if you are interested in collaborating.

**Greer P. Mancuso, M.Ed., & NBCT**  
PhD Candidate, George Mason University  
Primary Specialization: Teaching and Teacher Education  
Secondary Focus: Multilingual/Multicultural Education  
ESOL Teacher, Fairfax County Public Schools  
[gmancus2@masonlive.gmu.edu](mailto:gmancus2@masonlive.gmu.edu)

## Appendix C

### Electronic Correspondence

*This message was to be sent to all participants who initially showed interest and contacted me following preliminary message sent in Appendix B.*

Hello,

As part of my dissertation in the PhD program at GMU, I am facilitating a Collaborative Action Research study with a group of educators who have worked with or currently work with English Learners who have experienced interrupted schooling. The purpose of this study is to reveal current ESOL teachers' knowledge, experiences, needs, and successes when working with students who have interrupted schooling in the U.S. This research has the potential to produce more information about the pedagogical skills and knowledge base current ESOL teachers need to have in order to make students with interrupted schooling most successful. During this study, our group will work in collaboration with each other to share resources, materials, and discuss experiences to better support our students with interrupted schooling.

**This project will be conducted fully in an online setting.** We will engage in weekly online communications and write a bi-weekly journal entry that is shared among the group to help us identify and tackle common needs and experiences.

As part of this study **our group will meet online synchronously for one hour monthly** to discuss and support each other with current situations, needs, and successes when working with our English Learners.

All data collected will remain confidential and all information you provide will remain anonymous.

The projected duration for this project will be one academic school year, beginning in January 2020 and concluding in June 2020. **All participants who participated throughout the entire study will be awarded a \$200 gift card from Amazon.** Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please fill out the following survey to answer a few questions regarding your teaching experience with students who have experienced interrupted schooling. I will be in touch with you following your survey submission regarding the selection process. Please feel free to share this opportunity with any additional educators you think might also be interested in this collaborative study. Thank you for your support.

#### **SURVEY LINK:**

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd54HiECXUA\\_EUGG7oVV6cbcI89MK0d7m7GSiNIaARpu-cv-yg/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd54HiECXUA_EUGG7oVV6cbcI89MK0d7m7GSiNIaARpu-cv-yg/viewform)

Greer P. Mancuso, NBCT  
Doctoral Candidate  
George Mason University

## Appendix D

### Participant Interest Survey

*This introductory message was to be shown at the top of the Google survey participants took.*

#### PARTICIPANT INTEREST SURVEY

As part of my dissertation in the PhD program at GMU, I am facilitating a Collaborative Action Research study with a group of educators who have worked with or currently work with English Learners who have experienced interrupted schooling. The purpose of this study is to reveal current ESOL teachers' knowledge, experiences, needs, and successes when working with students who have interrupted schooling in the U.S.

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Please feel free to share this opportunity with any additional educators you think might also be interested in this collaborative study. Thank you for your support.

Greer P. Mancuso, NBCT  
Doctoral Candidate  
George Mason University

*These are the open ended questions that were listed in the Google survey linked in Appendix C.*

## **SURVEY QUESTIONS**

What is your name?

What is the best e-mail to reach you during this study?

What is your personal definition for **students who have experienced interrupted schooling**?

Do you have a licensure or teaching certification equivalent to that of an educator who is trained to work with students who are learning English as an additional language in the U.S.? Please explain.

Do you currently or have you previously worked with students who have had interrupted schooling? Please explain.

How many years of experience do you have working with students who have had interrupted schooling?

If you worked with students who have had interrupted schooling in the past but are not currently, how many years has passed since you worked with this population of students?

What states and counties do you or did you work in where you teach or taught students who have had interrupted schooling?

What are or were the age groups of students who you work or worked with that experienced interrupted schooling?

What countries are the students with interrupted schooling from that you currently work with or worked with in the past?

## **Appendix E**

### **Acceptance Correspondence**

Hello,

Thank you so much for taking my survey and expressing interest in my Collaborative Action Research project. I think you would be an excellent member of our collaborative group and you have been selected as a participant. If you agree to participate this project, would you please sign the attached informed consent form and send it back to me electronically? You may scan and attach the signed form or take a picture and attach it. Thank you so much for participating. I am excited for all the knowledge we will share together over the next school year that will ultimately help our English Learners who have experienced interrupted schooling. I will be in touch soon regarding how we will get started and who is part of our collaborative team.

Warm regards,

Greer P. Mancuso, NBCT  
Doctoral Candidate  
George Mason University

## **Appendix F**

### **Informed Consent Form**

#### **Teachers who work with Students with Interrupted Schooling: A Collaborative Action Research Study**

##### **RESEARCH PROCEDURES**

Selected participants will engage in a Collaborative Action Research study. The purpose of this study is to reveal current ESOL teachers' knowledge, experiences, needs, and successes when working with students who have interrupted schooling in the U.S. During this study, the group will work in collaboration with each other to share resources, materials, and discuss experiences to better support our students with interrupted schooling. This project will be conducted fully in an online setting. Participants will engage in weekly online communications and write a bi-weekly journal entry that is shared among the group to help us identify and tackle common needs and experiences.

As part of this study, the participants will meet online, synchronously for one hour monthly to discuss and support each other with current situations, needs, and successes when working with our English Learners.

The projected duration for this project will be one academic school year, beginning in March 2020 and concluding in June 2020. All participants have permission to drop out of the study at any time.

##### **RISKS**

There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research.

##### **BENEFITS**

There are no benefits to you as a participant other than to potentially access to new resources, ideas, and knowledge gained from fellow educators. There may also be further additions to research in what ESOL teachers now need to know in order to work with students who have experienced interrupted schooling.

##### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The data in this study will be confidential. Participant names will not be included anywhere in this research. Participants will be identified by a number or letter in all field

notes, transcripts, and formal papers. Only the researcher and supervising faculty will have access to view the data. All data has already had all personal identifiers removed. All data has been de-identified and may be used for future research without consent from participants.

At the conclusion of the study, if the group creates some type of educational product to share outside of the group, participants will be asked if they would like their names on the product for authorship or if they wish to remain anonymous.

### **PARTICIPATION**

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits aside from no longer being eligible to receive a gift card. There are no costs to you or any other party.

### **CONTACT**

This research is being conducted by Greer P. Mancuso in the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) at George Mason University. She may be reached at (703) 509-7259 for questions or to report a research-related problem. The faculty advisor of this project is Dr. Rebecca Fox. She can be contacted at (703) 993-4123. You may contact the George Mason University Institutional Review Board office at 703-993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

### **CONSENT**

I have read this form, all of my questions have been answered by the research staff, and I agree to participate in this study.

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Signature

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Date of Signature

## **Appendix G**

### **Denial Correspondence**

Hello,

Thank you so much for taking my survey and expressing interest in my Collaborative Action Research project. At this time, your teaching experiences with students who have experienced interrupted schooling did not fit the parameters for participation in this project. However, I hope we can stay in touch regarding our common educational interests. If you wish, I will gladly share our research results with you at the conclusion of the project. I appreciate your time and interest.

Warm regards,

Greer P. Mancuso, NBCT  
Doctoral Candidate  
George Mason University

## Appendix H

### Initial Journal Prompts

*Below are initial journal prompts to guide the Collaborative Action Research collective in reflecting and brainstorming on potential needs for their pedagogy and knowledge. These are intended to be a jumping off point and may or may not all be used. Future journal prompts will emerge as the study progresses and the members identify areas of need and a focus for their inquiry.*

1. Could you please tell me about a time where you felt very successful or confident working with students who have had interrupted schooling? Why do you feel that you were successful, and what were the results?
2. Has there ever been a time when you felt that you needed help or were not as successful in meeting the needs of your students with interrupted schooling as you would have liked? What did you do?
  - a. Is there anything that you do differently for these students versus your usual instruction for ELs?
3. Can you tell me about how you might identify or suspect that a student has had interrupted schooling?
4. How might you adjust your instruction to help a student with interrupted schooling?
5. Tell me about a time you felt particularly challenged working with a student with interrupted schooling?
6. What strategies or tips do you think are important for teachers to know when working with students with interrupted schooling?
7. What has been the most useful professional development you've had in relationship to working with students who have had interrupted schooling?
8. Do you feel your teacher preparation program has effectively prepared you to work with students who have had interrupted schooling and our current trend of ELs?
  - a. Are there any types of PD or courses that wish you had had?
9. What advice would you give to new ESOL teachers when it comes to working with students who have had interrupted schooling?
10. What types of resources have been most useful for you when working with students with interrupted schooling? What types of resources do you wish you had in order to better work with these students?

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## **Biography**

Greer P. Mancuso teaches ESOL in Virginia public schools. She has worked at the elementary, middle, and high school level for over 15 years. She is a Nationally Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) in the area of English as a New Language. She currently is a reviewer for NBCT candidates and has been an instructor for NBCT cohorts. She has taught courses at George Mason University (GMU) as an adjunct instructor. Her primary research interests focus on English Learners with interrupted schooling.