

## When Preparation Matters: A Mixed Method Study of In-Service Teacher Preparation to Serve English Learners

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*In this mixed methods study, we examine the role of self-efficacy in relationship to in-service teachers' capacities to serve English learners (ELs) based on their years of teaching experience, professional development preparation and English as a Second Language (ESL) licensure. Through the use of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, findings demonstrate that teachers with high levels of preparation and related English as a second language (ESL) licensure have the highest levels of efficacy and are able to address the needs of ELs within their curriculum selection, instructional differentiation and interpretation of classroom-based assessments. In contrast, those that only have episodic ESL professional development show lower levels of self-efficacy. These findings are of immediate value as many US states have limited to no requirements of ESL licensure for practicing ESL teachers and no expectation of general education preparation, producing an ineffective and under qualified teacher pool for ELs.*

*Keywords:* efficacy, equity, linguistic diversity, professional development, teacher certification, teacher preparation

Scholarship on the teaching of English Learners (ELs) demonstrates the critical need for teachers to be well informed and prepared to meet the complex needs and rights of ELs as it has a direct impact on their schooling success. Together, years of teaching experience and specialized knowledge of ESL teaching practices moderate how ELs are educated (Harris & Sass, 2011). Research demonstrates that while general education teachers may be skilled in classroom management and basic instructional strategies, it is not the same as educators who are especially trained, licensed or have advanced degrees in EL education (Krull, Oras, & Sisask, 2007). Yet years of teaching experience and quality general education teaching assumes that effective general education teachers' skillsets can transcend to best practices in ESL teaching (Harper & deJong, 2005). This orientation, however, overlooks students' different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, which requires different sets of skills and knowledge to address the needs of ELs (Morita-Mullaney, 2019; Harper & deJong, 2005; Peter, Markham, & Frey, 2012). A closer examination of the transferability of general education skills in relationship to years of teaching experience and extensive training in relation to English as a Second Language (ESL)<sup>1</sup> teaching contexts is a needed area of inquiry (Liu, Jones, & Sadera, 2010).

In addition to years of experience, this study examines the related construct of self-efficacy in relationship to ESL teaching competence among ESL and general education teachers. Self-efficacy refers to one's belief in one's ability to achieve a task. One of the sources contributing to self-efficacy is mastery experience. In other words, one's mastery skills for particular types of students shape one's self-efficacy, informing the pursuit of competency, even when teachers may

be uncertain (Bandura, 1979). Further, a high level of self-efficacy is domain specific, meaning transferability of self-efficacy to all contexts is not automatic. By bringing the concept of self-efficacy and mastery experience into the area of ESL teaching practices, this study investigates different and/or similar impact of teachers' efficacy in ESL teaching competence developed through either number of years of teaching experience and/or extensive training by a certified ESL program and/or professional development or both. In the context of this study, ESL teachers are state ESL-licensed with coursework from a certified university program or only prepared through professional development.

Most states have a requirement for ESL licensure or preparation during pre-service training. Yet Indiana, the site of this study is a new immigrant gateway state where teacher preparation and policy requirements for ELs are underdeveloped (Hilburn, 2014). Further, Indiana is one of 15 states that has no requirement for any EL pre-service training for teachers and administrators (Tanenbaum et. al, 2012). Indiana state policies also do not have any requirement that teachers holding the title of ESL teacher are actually licensed in ESL education (Indiana Department of Education, 2014). General education certification is regarded as adequate.

To examine how years of teaching experience and ESL licensure preparation inform the development of one's efficacy in ESL teaching competence (mastery experiences), ESL teachers with both types of preparation (ESL licensed or professional development only) are analyzed using a two-phase, multistrand, mixed methods study. Focusing on instruction, curriculum and assessment, we examine these differently prepared ESL teachers in this Midwestern context and how they mediate these three components in their teaching with ELs. We ask these three central research questions.

1. What are the differences in self-efficacy in ESL teaching competence among differently prepared teachers? (quantitative/questionnaire)
2. How do teachers with different levels of self-efficacy in ESL teaching competence describe their capacity to teach ELs? (qualitative/interviews)
3. How do different levels of self-efficacy relate to ESL teaching competence among differently prepared teachers? (mixing)

### **Literature Review**

Many studies have indicated that years of teaching experience impact classroom teaching practices. Specifically, studies have identified key differences between more experienced teachers and beginning teachers who have less teaching years (less than 3 years) by looking at how those two groups of teachers complete and respond to the various tasks (Tsui, 2009). Drawing from Tsui's work (2009), Huang and Li's (2012) examined mathematical instructional noticing among experienced teachers who have taught for ten or more years versus less experienced teachers who have taught for less than three years. Huang and Li concluded that both teachers' groups demonstrated similar noticing patterns in instructional practices. However, the experienced teacher group with more than 10 years of teaching tended to focus on the learning process, whereas, less experienced teachers spent more time on classroom management. Characteristically, the more experienced teachers are generally more sensitive to task demands

and classroom climate, and more flexible about instruction than their inexperienced counterparts (Berliner, 2001).

Apart from teaching experiences, teaching expertise or specialization requires specific competencies both in knowledge and skills. In other words, competent and specialized teachers know how to direct and monitor their students' learning growth (Bright, 2012). However, many teachers prepared as general education teachers, specifically in the context of Indiana have been trained with little or no additional pre- and in-service professional development about ELs. Consequently, teachers teaching ELs are often found to lower their expectations, having remedial learning expectations for ELs (deJong & Mescua-Derrick, 2003). Teachers who have completed and obtained an ESL-related degree including graduate degree, certificate, or licensure, which generally consists a year-long study or longer, are considered to be more competent in specific EL-related knowledge and skills than those who have not, irrespective of years of experience (Polat, 2011). In summary, years of experience and areas of expertise, like ESL teaching describes teachers' capacities to effectively teach ELs. We now examine the construct of self-efficacy and its roles in effectively teaching ELs.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This study uses the related construct of self-efficacy, specifically in the domain of ESL teaching practices. Self-efficacy is described as one's perception about their capacity or ability to accomplish a particular aim, which includes beliefs about their abilities. These perceptions can lead to actions that inform significant social or behavioral changes (Bandura, 1974; Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003), potentially and positively impacting student achievement (Croninger, Rice, Rathbun, & Nishio, 2007; Klassen & Tze, 2014; Mohamadi & Asadzadeh, 2012) and informing effective instructional approaches for ELs (Tsui, 2009). Those who have high self-efficacy thrive on a task even after a perceived failure. High resiliency leads to facing complex challenges until resolution is reached.

Self-efficacy is also domain specific (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). A teacher may have a sense of competence teaching their elementary grade level class and able to tackle complex tasks with resiliency. But, when that same teacher shifts to a secondary setting, competence is likely reduced and one's efficacy may be insufficient in addressing the challenges of the new domain.

This study closely examines teachers' self-efficacy in ESL teaching competence, which is one's belief in their capacity to achieve given goals (Messer & Harter, 2012) in ESL specific teaching contexts. Individuals monitor their attempts at mastery, assess their attempts using their internal criterion of mastery and learn how to reinforce future mastery attempts. This internal mechanism directs individuals to refine, discard or differentiate until a level of competence is reached.

Mastery is not an automatic condition and not solely moderated by years of experience, but a body of specialized knowledge and skills that is acquired and developed over time through professional training. When foundational ESL skills and knowledge are developed during preparation, certification and accounted for during evaluation, significant educational outcomes for ELs can materialize (Polat, 2011; Samson & Collins, 2012). When teaching competence is

not strong for a particular domain of teaching, such as teaching ELs, teachers may resist accommodating or modifying for ELs because their self-efficacy is not sufficiently developed in the area of ESL teaching (Polat, 2011; Reeves, 2006; Youngs & Youngs, 2001). Our study intends to address the differences of differently prepared ESL teachers and how this moderates their self-efficacy within ESL teaching.

### Method

This study employs a mixed method, sequential design beginning with a survey and followed by semi-structured interviews to ascertain how preparation, types of teacher licensure and years of experience impacts teachers' capacities to serve ELs (Creswell, 2014; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Quantitative and qualitative findings are equally weighted (Figure 1).



*Figure 1.* Mixed Methods Sequential Design.

First, at the conceptual level, we considered the scope of the inquiry and resolved that two phases were needed; a quantitative and qualitative portion, making the study a multistrand design (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006). Second, we examined the types of data sources (questionnaire and interviews) needed to answer the research questions and identified two types of collection: Quantitative (teacher efficacy survey) and qualitative (interviews with a sampling of survey respondents). Third, we analyzed the data sequentially. From the analysis of the survey, which included teacher licensure type and years of teaching experience, emerged questions related to their perceived teaching capacities within the areas of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. A semi-structured protocol was developed following the calculation of questionnaire responses to address these three areas.

### Data Collection

**The participants.** Participants in this study attended the 2016 Summer Professional Development Workshop for ESL teaching in Indiana. The workshop was a one-day workshop for practitioners who are working with ELs. At the conclusion of the workshop, the questionnaire was electronically distributed by the researchers via a Qualtrics survey.

**Survey instrument.** Using an adapted version of the English Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (ETSES), which was informed by the OSU Teaching Confidence Scale (TSC), we employed 13 survey questions by these three subscales of a) instruction; b) curriculum; and c) assessment. The ETSES has been used to measure teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching ESL in different settings over an extensive period of time, between 1990-2008 (Tschannen, & Hoy, 1990; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990; Woolfolk, Rosoff & Hoy, 1990; Woolfolk & Holy, 2008). The scale is considered a reliable and valid instrument to measure teachers' sense of self-efficacy in the context of ESL teaching (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk, 2001; Woolfolk, & Hoy, 2008).

Although the ETSES survey was adapted for this ESL teaching context, the central construct of self-efficacy, the unit of analysis remains intact.

The items in the questionnaire measure “how confident an individual is” in regard to the above three areas and is displayed in Table 1. Instruction is defined as the capacity to take related resources (curriculum) and embody that curriculum in consideration of ELs grade level and level of English proficiency. Curriculum are the resources that are appropriately suited for the content area and language learning objectives specific to ELs’ grade levels (content focus) and levels of English proficiency (language focus). For assessment, we define this area as being able to assess and evaluate what is produced by ELs in consideration of content objectives and language learning goals. All of these areas are contextualized within their roles as ESL teachers and specific to the construct of self-efficacy in ESL teaching competence. Participants voluntarily responded to the questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale with the rating of—1) very unconfident; 2) somewhat unconfident; 3) neutral; 4) somewhat confident; and 5) very confident. Questions included items as to what informed their decision and/or assignment to the ESL teaching role and how their perceived capacity in ESL teaching.

Table 1

*Survey instrument (Adapted version of the English Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale: ETSES)*

<b>Survey Items</b>	
<b>Instruction</b>	1) How confident are you in selecting and locating resources to use with EL students in the classroom? 2) How confident are you in implementing alternative teaching strategies in your classroom? 3) How confident are you in providing an alternative explanation or example when EL are confused? 4) How confident are you in identifying the academic and linguistic needs for EL students?
<b>Curriculum</b>	5) How confident are you in incorporating different activities and curricula into ESL teaching practices? 6) How confident are you in integrating language teaching into content lesson? 7) How confident are you in implementing a variety of language teaching strategies that incorporate inquiry-based learning? 8) How confident are you in developing learning materials that facilitate ELs language learning?
<b>Assessment</b>	9) How confident are you in using a variety of assessment techniques by gauging EL students’ learning progress? 10) How confident are you in developing an assessment rubric for EL students at different levels of English proficiency? 11) How confident are you in providing appropriate challenges for EL students at different levels of English proficiency? 12) How confident are you in explaining and interpreting the meaning of standardized test scores and evaluations?

## Interviews

On the questionnaire, the last question invited participants to a follow up interview. Participants supplied their email and a follow-up was sent to those indicating their willingness to contribute. The interview included specific questions related to their responses on the questionnaires in the categories of their self-efficacy in instruction, curriculum and assessment (Table 2). Each consenting educator participated in two interviews. All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Table 2  
*Interview protocol*

	Sample questions
<b>Instruction</b>	How do you differentiate your instruction for children at different levels of English language proficiency? What supports do you put in place before, during and after instruction to support content and language learning? Give us an example.
<b>Curriculum</b>	When you are looking for resources for students, what do you consider? Give us an example of how you identify resources for ELs.
<b>Assessment</b>	How do you determine that students have met content and language goals given their level of English language proficiency?

## Data Analysis

This study includes three stages of analysis: quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis, and mixing the quantitative and qualitative data sources. Based on the questionnaires of ESL teaching competence (quantitative) and follow-up interviews (qualitative), we analyzed teaching self-efficacy in the areas of ESL instruction, curriculum and assessment. These three areas are key principles of effective teaching for all ELs (TESOL, 2012).

**Quantitative analysis.** Simple descriptive statistics including means, variances, and item-total scores of the questionnaires were computed using SPSS. All data from the questionnaire were recorded into the SPSS program and computed by four groups (Groups A-D). We first clustered two groups by their years of teaching experience: Group 1 (Low Exp) with less than four years of teaching experience and Group 2 (High Exp) with more than four years of teaching experience. Next, the two groups (Group 3 and 4) were computed by another variable, EL related training: Group 3 (no Licensure) with Not EL certified teachers and Group 4 (Yes Licensure) with EL certified teachers. After that, two variables; years of teaching experience (Group 1 and 2) and ESL related training (Group 3 and 4) were re-clustered into four groups based on the mean of their ESL teaching competence. Four groups were established 1) Group A (Low/No): low years of teaching experiences with ELs (<4 years) and no ESL licensure; 2) Group B (Low/Yes): low years of teaching experiences with ELs (<4 years) and with ESL licensure; 3) Group C (High/No): moderate to high years of teaching experiences with ELs (>4 years) and no ESL license; 4) Group D (High/Yes): moderate to high years of teaching experiences with ELs (>4 years) and with ESL license (Figure 2). The clustering by four groups was established based on the responding participants to the interview portion of the study (N=8). In short, the

participants were not purposefully selected, rather representative of those that volunteered to complete the survey and the follow up interviews.

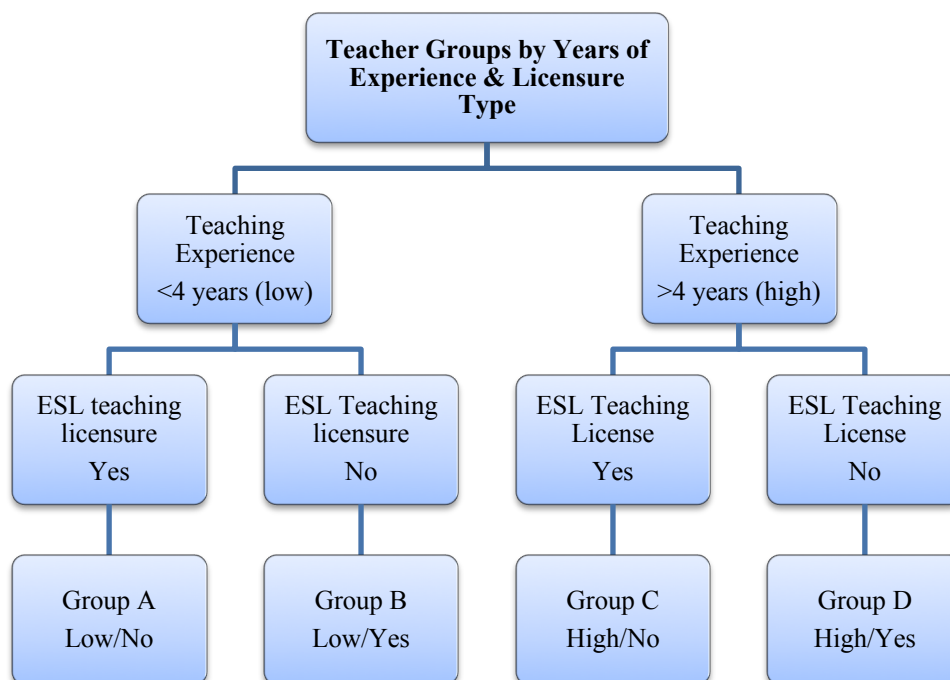


Figure 2. Teacher Groups by Years of Experience & Licensure Type

After generating a simple statistical description of all participants, we compared total scores of each of the four groups. Based on statistical descriptions of participants, we categorized them into four groups and compared and contrasted statistical descriptions, specifically means and total scores of the questionnaire of four groups. The result of the simple statistical analysis gives a general overview of the participating teachers' level of teaching competence in relationship to serving ELs.

Groups were categorized as follows: 1) Low/No (Group A): low years of teaching experiences with ELs (<4 years) and no EL licensure; 2) Low/Yes (Group B): low years of teaching experiences with ELs (<4 years) and with EL licensure; 3) High/No (Group C): moderate to high years of teaching experiences with ELs (>4 years) and no ESL license; 4) High/Yes (Group D): moderate to high years of teaching experiences with ELs (>4 years) and with ESL license.

**Qualitative analysis.** Transcribed interviews were imported into Nvivo 12 for qualitative analysis (QSR International Pty Ltd., 2018). After an initial read through of transcripts, field notes were consulted for additional nuances not captured during the transcription process. Next, open codes were created and employed during the first phase of qualitative analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Themes were determined by recurrence as well as emphasis among the participants. Thereafter, axial coding was applied, and open codes were condensed. Qualitative data provided in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the responses of the questionnaire that the individual interviewee made.

**Mixing of data sources and their analysis.** In the final interpretive phase, survey and interview data were mixed. In short, quantitative and qualitative findings were reviewed together in the interpretation of findings; a process called integration (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The four characteristics of each teacher taken from the questionnaire of 1) Group A (Low/No): low years of teaching experiences with ELs (<4 years) and no EL licensure; 2) Group B (Low/Yes): low years of teaching experiences with ELs (<4 years) and with EL licensure; 3) Group C (High/No): moderate to high years of teaching experiences with ELs (>4 years) and no ESL license; 4) Group D (High/Yes): moderate to high years of teaching experiences with ELs (>4 years) and with ESL license was connected to their interview around their instruction, curriculum, and assessment practices.

This triangulation improves the depth and rigor of the inquiry (Stewart, Makwarimba, Barnfather, Letourneau, & Neufeld, 2007). While quantitative data based on a Likert scale generally fails to offer thorough descriptions of each participant's responses, the qualitative analysis helps view the data more holistically.

### **Limitations**

Although this study recruited from a large N size of 300 educators, and 80 responded and completed the entire survey, only 8 participated in both components of the study (survey and interviews), which is the focus of this inquiry. Thus, the results are not generalizable given the small sample size. But, the equal weighting of quantitative and qualitative results addresses this limitation. Secondly, the type, number and proportion of different participant typologies (Group A-D) was imbalanced. A larger and more balanced pool of participants would create greater possibilities for generalizability. Despite these limitations, it provides a localized interpretation to the Indiana site of study. We now furnish background on the Indiana context, the focus of this inquiry.

### **Background**

This Midwestern Indiana study takes place in a policy context where preparation for educators to serve EL students happens through two different mechanisms which vary in content, time and rigor. Such methods include an 1) ESL add-on teacher license; or 2) professional growth (PGP) points earned external to one's school district.

The first method is through an add-on ESL license to a general educational license. Teachers with a general education license in elementary or secondary education can add the ESL license on during their pre-service preparation or thereafter, as in-service teachers. There are 28 accredited ESL-licensure programs throughout the state and the majority operate at the graduate level, allowing teachers to add it toward a graduate level degree, such as Masters in Education (Morita-Mullaney, 2014; Morita-Mullaney, Renn, Garcia & Wright, 2020). The 28 programs are approved by the Indiana Professional Standards Board, but after rigorous external review (Morita-Mullaney & Stallings, 2018). Course content is focused on current research in the field of second language acquisition and most programs follow the criterion established by the national organization, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL, 2012). Content following the TESOL standards include second language acquisition, applied linguistics,



academic English and/or academic language, materials preparation for ELs, English language proficiency standards, and teaching methodologies. All include clinical practicums where candidates apply their knowledge in a classroom setting. Accredited programs range from 12-21 credit hours (Morita-Mullaney & Stallings, 2018).

The second method is through professional growth points or PGPs (Indiana Professional Standards Board, 2018). Each clock hour of professional development activities is worth one point and a teacher must have a total of 90 points or more over a 5 year period to qualify for licensure renewal. In order for PGPs to be countable, the content must be framed as 1) mentoring; 2) attending a conference; 3) curriculum development; 4) conducting and publishing research; and/or university courses. None of the above content has to be related and PGPs could be a series of unrelated workshops and experiences that do not lead to a cohesive corpus of ESL knowledge. Thus, the 90 hours of PGPs could be one ESL workshop along with developing a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade curriculum or a technology activity. Further, there is no assurance that the ESL corpus is based in research nor coherently conceived, differing from an ESL licensure program, where content is research based, congruent across required courses, and externally vetted through professional accreditation (TESOL, 2012).

As all general education teachers need to renew their state teaching license every five years, most elect the PGP option due to its low to no cost. Attending an accredited university is not cost effective to the individual and thus, most opt for the PGP point collection over a 5 year period to ensure their licensure renewal. In this study we reference the two types of preparation for ESL teachers as those that are 1) State-ESL licensed; and 2) PGP-prepared.

## Results

In this section, we first present quantitative findings from the survey, which are focused on teachers' self-efficacy in ESL teaching practices for the three areas of 1) instruction; 2); curriculum; 3) and assessment as these are the central practices of ESL teachers. Simple descriptions of statistical results from the questionnaire are reported. Next, we introduce the portrayal of participants who completed follow-up interviews focusing on two variables; years of teaching experience and ESL licensure. Thereafter, we expand to qualitative findings. Lastly, the two data sources are mixed and analyzed.

### Participants

As a review, participants attended a 2016 ESL workshop and were sent a survey at the conclusion of the day. Eighty (N=80) out of 300 attending educators participated in the survey, representing a high rate of return at 27%. The participants who completed the survey have various teaching experiences ranging from one (1) year to twenty (20) years as a generalist (classroom or content area teacher) or an ESL teacher.

A follow-up email encouraging participation for a follow-up interview was sent to those indicating their willingness to contribute. Among those who were interested in a follow-up interview; twenty-eight (28) out of 80 survey respondents showed an interest in the interview, yet only eight (8) participants successfully completed their interview with us. The other twenty

(20) participants failed to complete the interview because of the time conflicts although they initially indicated a participation in the interview. This voluntary-based participation for the interview resulted in an imbalanced number of types of participants, in terms of years of experience, licensure types and professional development training.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 8 of the 80 participants to extend their descriptions of their teaching competence with ELs. Teachers were given their previous completed questionnaire as a point of reference during the interviews.

The eight participants in the study all serve and have the title and responsibility of ESL Teacher and each has a distinct pseudonym. One teacher has no teaching license (Hannah), whereas the other seven participants are general education licensed or are general education *and* ESL licensed. Their years of teaching experience are also identified. They are classified as Groups A-D (Table 3). All eight teachers, regardless of preparation or licensure hold the title and role of ESL teacher in their schools.

**Table 3**  
*Participant's Teaching Profile*

<b>Participant (Pseudonym)</b>	<b>Teaching Position</b>	<b>Years of Teaching Experience</b>	<b>Teacher licensure areas</b>
<b>Hannah (Low/No) Group A</b>	ESL Teacher	<4 years <i>3 years</i>	No teaching license
<b>Delia (Low/Yes) Group B</b>	ESL teacher	<4 years <i>4 years</i>	General education and ESL license
<b>Gretchen (High/No) Group C</b>	ESL teacher	>4 years <i>17 years</i>	Special education license
<b>Sharon (High/No) Group C</b>	ESL teacher	>10 years <i>40 years</i>	General education license
<b>Renita (High/No) Group C</b>	ESL Teacher	>10 years <i>10 years</i>	General education license
<b>Marcy (High/Yes) Group D</b>	ESL Teacher	>4 years <i>7 years</i>	General education and ESL license
<b>Barbara (High/Yes) Group D</b>	ESL teacher	>10 years <i>10 years</i>	General education license and working on her ESL license
<b>Jeneva (High/Yes) Group D</b>	ESL Teacher	>10 years <i>7 years</i>	General education license ESL license

### **Phase I: Quantitative results of teacher's efficacy based on licensure type and years of teaching experience**

This section shows brief summaries of descriptive statistical analysis on the years of teaching experience as well as EL related degrees/professional training among two groups. (Table 4).

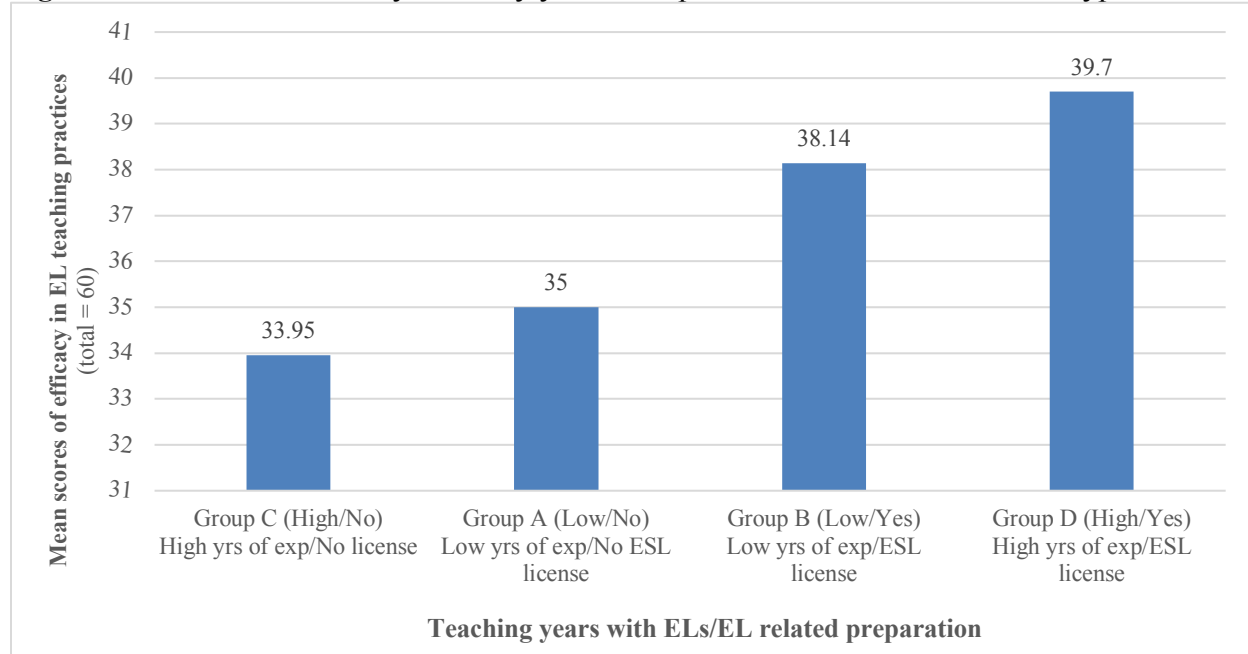
Table 4

*Compiled years of teaching experience with ELs with EL related degrees*

<b>Years of Teaching Experience with ELs</b>	<b>ESL licensed/PGP</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Grouped Median</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>
<b>4 years &lt; (less than 4 years)</b>	No (Group A)	35.0	11	6.83	36.0	24.0	44.0
	Yes (Group B)	38.14	7	4.67	37.5	31.0	45.0
<b>4 years &gt; (More than 4 years)</b>	No (Group C)	33.95	45	8.8	35.2	11.0	45.0
	Yes (Group D)	39.7	17	4.52	40.0	27.0	45.0
<b>Total</b>		35.0	80	7.79	37.11	11.0	45.0

According to simple comparison of the means among four groups composed of the two variables, Group D (High/Yes) who has more than four years of teaching experience with an ESL-related degree marks the highest score ( $M=39.7$ ). The second highest rank was found in Group B (Low/Yes) who has less than four years of teaching experience with an ESL-related degree ( $M=38.14$ ). Group A (Low/No) who are less experienced teachers in ESL teaching and have no ESL related degree ( $M=35.0$ ) was followed by the Group C (High/No) ( $M=33.95$ ). Although the statistical description was simple and brief, it led us to further investigate how each group actually describes their self-efficacy in ESL teaching competence in relation to years of teaching experience with ELs and/or ESL related degrees/professional training. For example, the difference between Group A and C was not as significant compared to the difference between Group B and D. More specifically, we were curious about how differently and/or similarly Group B and D who are certified ESL teachers perceive their self-efficacy in ESL teaching competence from Group A and C who are not ESL certified teachers (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Teacher self-efficacy levels by years of experience and teacher licensure type



## Phase 2: Qualitative results

In Phase 2, we described qualitative results from follow-up interviews in order to answer the question raised from the quantitative analysis and qualitative portion including semi-structured interviews with eight (8) participants was conducted to understand how teachers with different levels of ESL teaching experience and different levels of EL related trainings influence their teaching competence within instruction, curriculum and assessment for ELs.

As stated before, the Indiana participants ranged in experience from 3 to 40 years and are all Indiana certified teachers (Table 5). All eight participants are their school's ESL teacher, but only three have ESL licenses and one is nearly done with her ESL license.

Self-efficacy is based on teaching competency and is indicative of an internal locus that motivates teachers to apply, improve and refine their profession. Thus, we examined the teacher's interviews for themes related to instruction, curriculum and assessment. Definitive patterns emerged around the distinctions between ESL teachers with ESL licenses (Group A and C) and without ESL licenses (Group B and D).

### Instruction and ESL licensed teachers (Group B and D)

Three participants, Barbara, Delia and Jeneva described their internal locus of ESL teaching performance. Barbara, a certified ESL teacher with 10 years of experience discussed the need to be adaptive and responsive when teaching her EL students within general education classrooms, using a growing approach called co-teaching. She stated, "I'm pretty good on my feet, if they need a different explanation, we try to use technology too." Barbara clearly

Table 5  
*Participant's self-efficacy in ESL teaching*

Participant (Pseudonym)	Teaching Position	Years of Teaching Experience	Teacher licensure areas	Self-reported score on self-efficacy in ESL teaching competence (Sum=60)
<b>Hannah (Low/No) Group A</b>	ESL Teacher	<4 years <i>3 years</i>	No teaching license	49/60
<b>Delia (Low/Yes) Group B</b>	ESL teacher	<4 years <i>4 years</i>	ESL license	56/60
<b>Gretchen (High/No) Group C</b>	ESL teacher	>4 years <i>17 years</i>	Special education license	47/60
<b>Sharon (High/No) Group C</b>	ESL teacher	>10 years <i>40 years</i>	General education license	50/60
<b>Renita (High/No) Group C</b>	ESL Teacher	>10 years <i>10 years</i>	General education license	50/60
<b>Marcy (High/Yes) Group D</b>	ESL Teacher	>4 years <i>7 years</i>	ESL license	49/60
<b>Barbara (High/Yes) Group D</b>	ESL teacher	>10 years <i>10 years</i>	Working on her ESL license	54/60
<b>Jeneva (High/Yes) Group D</b>	ESL Teacher	>10 years <i>7 years</i>	ESL license	54/60

demonstrates her capacity to respond to “on the spot” with confidence, when she pushes into general education classrooms. She continued,

If the [classroom elementary] teacher is trying to ask them to write a summary, my students that are at a level 1 or 2, would be asked to orally tell somebody what they need—so a lot of times, it’s in the finished product.

Barbara went on to explain that she was able to defend the final product as consistent with their level of English proficiency. Further, Barbara did not want a general education teacher instructing ELs in a way that would make the content inaccessible to them. Barbara demonstrated her leadership among her general education colleagues by showing them how to make their instruction accessible to EL students.

Delia, also ESL licensed and with four years of teaching experience, discussed the need to understand second language learning theories.

It [theory] has to be grounded in her ELL teaching. Language learning is not going to happen overnight, and teaching is not going to happen overnight... There will be more

and more ways for me to learn and grow. I'm the type of person, I will never be 100% in this skill.

Delia demonstrates the developmental nature of English language learning and that it is a long process for students. But, most notable is her commitment to her continuous improvement and honing her expertise as an ESL professional, demonstrating her efforts toward mastery.

Jeneva, also certified in ESL education with seven years of experience talked about how she developed her own lessons. "My lessons are based on Indiana State Standards and WIDA<sup>2</sup> Standards. In each lesson, I focus on one or two language domains to build students' proficiency." Using the WIDA framework [English language development standards], she was able to make lessons considering the different language domains and English proficiency levels of her students.

The English language development standards are a required component of teacher preparation for ESL-licensed teachers and competency in this area must be demonstrated in their clinical experiences and in a pedagogy exam they take at the conclusion of the ESL licensure studies. As the WIDA English language development standards focus on domains of language (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and levels of English proficiency (levels 1-6), Jeneva plans her lessons based on what each of her ELs needs by language domain and by overall English level. Jeneva is not only familiar with these standards, but can articulate specifically how she is using them as a tool for instructional planning.

### **Instruction and The 'doing less' Among Non-ESL Licensed Teachers (Group A and C)**

As self-efficacy involves an internal meter, supported by an educator's knowledge of second language praxis and pedagogy, those not certified had different responses that were technical, pragmatic and external in nature, meaning they relied on their existing teacher paradigms drawn from general education teaching. Renita, licensed only in general education and with 10 years of experience shared,

...trying to limit vocabulary or taking some of the words out... I just talked to a teacher, for the ISTEP+ prompt [standardized state test]... it gives them all these directions and all these examples and going over their head and they are so frustrated, so part of it is eliminating some of the English of it...

Renita uses the notion of doing "less" language and content to reduce complexity and not about creating "access" to the content, creating a problematic remedial instructional context for ELs. Instead of focusing on the English language development standards (WIDA standards), she is reducing the content and language demands, meaning the original content focus will be reduced. Renita's response shows how remedial instruction is privileged when teaching competency in ESL is less developed.

### **Curriculum is Guided by English Language Development Standards Among Those ESL Licensed**

For educators with a higher level of self-efficacy and ESL licensed, they examined the curriculum in relationship to grade level and English language proficiency standards. Barbara, nearly ESL-licensed with 10 years of teaching experience shared,

ELL... it's not a whole different curriculum that you need necessarily... it's more of a style.... I think of the [English] proficiency level of student, their grade level. I think about teacher talk and ask, 'is there a way to add more visuals, more peer work?... making the curriculum more accessible?'

For Barbara, we see how she intersects instruction with curriculum in consideration of content and English language development (ELD) standards and not on the adoption of an external resource. Marcy, ESL certified with 7 years of experience stated,

What helped me frame curriculum, is when we became a part of the WIDA consortium and from there, I just really just thought of units that would be great for our kids to explore for all the different levels of WIDA...

As self-efficacy rating with curriculum was higher than those non ESL-certified, her knowledge and capacity draws upon a framework of English language development versus relying on an external curriculum. Ultimately, a curriculum has to be instructed and it is the role of the ESL teacher to examine curriculum resources and represent it in a way that makes sense to their ELs at different English proficiency and grade levels.

### **Curriculum 'Contracted Out' Among Non-ESL Licensed Teachers**

Gretchen, certified as a general education teacher and with 10 years of experience shared on her survey that her level of efficacy in this area was moderate. She shared,

Because I've got a few things from the lead teacher and we use Common Lit—it is free, it is wonderful! It's a program that's available on the web and you sign up and you put in your class.

Gretchen continued to identify two other web-based sources that were free and accessible, but did not align with academic content nor ELD standards. Her strategy for identifying resources was simply "googling" it and finding it and seeing if it worked, not really use a meter of discernment for selection of curriculum.

Hannah served as an ESL high school teacher, but she had no teaching licenses. Like Gretchen, she relied on available resources, not designed for ELs. Hannah stated,

We are using like Achieve 3000, and a program that is called Rosetta Stone, but it's not a curriculum, but a support for them... And we are using a reading program A-Z...

These computer programs were designed for struggling readers, but not empirically based for ELs. Unlike those with higher ratings in efficacy, we see that Hannah relies on what the school

has furnished for remedial literacy instruction and Gretchen privileges free and easy findable web resources.

Sharon, also not certified in ESL, but with 40 years of teaching experience used what was made available by her district, the reading basal series. She stated,

I use the readings series as a basis and we bring in all kinds of things and stories. I taught 1<sup>st</sup> grade for 10 years and I've taught every grade up to 6.

Sharon used the readily available reading series with little adaptation, shows little connection to theory nor how it creates a schema that is reflective of students' levels of English proficiency. But, Sharon relies on her extensive experiences teaching different grades as available resources for ESL students, even if such resources are what she called, "below grade level." Instead of creating access to target content, she lowered academic expectations based on students' lower levels of English proficiency, meaning ELs were not receiving grade appropriate instruction and the related grade level resources and related instruction.

### **Assessment: Managing, Modeling and Differentiating for ESL-Licensed Teachers**

All ESL licensed or nearly ESL licensed teachers (N=4) rated their ESL teaching competence as moderate to high in the area of assessment for ELs. ESL teacher, Barbara shared,

I put confident with that, because I know my kids really well. I can tell when they are still confused... typically, I model something first and I ask them to do it with a partner.

Barbara demonstrates her adaptiveness when ELs do not understand, demonstrating her competence in formative assessment in the context of teaching ELs. She also recognizes that interaction and the enactment of 'conversation', which employs the domains of listening and speaking are necessary for ELs to understand the target content and to use the English language of the content.

Delia talked about how assessment informed her instructional differentiation for her ELs at varying levels of English. She shared, "I've grouped my students purposefully to where their levels are, so that has made it really easy for me." Not only do we see her confidence, she also identifies how and why she employs heterogeneous groupings.

### **Assessment 'Contracted Out' to Online Tools Among Non-ESL Licensed Teachers**

All non-licensed ESL teachers rated their teaching competence in ESL teaching practices lower on the survey. Reliance on computer generated and summative assessments to inform instruction was evident among teachers not licensed in ESL. Hannah who had no teaching license and three years of ESL teaching shared,

With Achieve 3000 I can assess their writing, their comprehension, and then, the program in itself has an assessment and if pass the assessment with a good grade and it gives you grade from 0-100 ... the program tells you what articles ... that's why I use that one.



This assessment then selects the appropriate curriculum and the teacher has little input into what could be more tailored to the EL student. Hannah clearly puts her trust into this product demonstrating her external locus of control around assessment. Renita, not certified in ESL and with 10 years of experience shared how she accommodated tests for other classroom teachers, which informed EL students' grades. Renita, not ESL licensed, stated,

We have some educators who are giving them an A or B [on assignments] and if you give that on their test on your own, they wouldn't get an A or a B... I'm not sure if I'm assisting too much.

Instead of focusing on what content the EL students understood, we see how Renita is chasing outcomes on behalf of students, but it is about modifying other teachers' behaviors around grading and not around EL students' mastery of content and language.

### **Quantitative and Qualitative Results**

Drawing upon survey results and interviews, we increase the descriptive strength of teaching competence in ESL teaching practices in relationship to the studied ESL teachers (Stewart et al., 2007). Survey results demonstrated varying degrees of teaching competence and those with ESL licenses had the highest levels and their interviews provided additional evidence that supported their ratings (Table 6).

Certified ESL teachers, regardless of teaching experience, showed higher levels of self-efficacy in teaching ESL competence in comparison to three of the four teachers with no ESL related licenses. Specifically, certified teachers were cognizant of ELD standards and used them to frame and prepare instruction and curriculum. Further, ESL certified teachers were able to discern ways that students could express their understanding in consideration of their level of English proficiency, while not lowering the grade level standards. We see that their instruction, curriculum and assessment practices are coherently tied to the student, the content and the language.

One ESL certified teacher, Delia, had a reflexive approach, noting that her expertise was always evolving and she would never be "100%," demonstrating an internal mechanism that drove her continuous improvement. Further, she talked about needing to know 'theory' to inform her responsive practices.

Renita, rating was higher (4.79), even though not certified in ESL and with 10 years of teaching experience. While Renita could not comment on instructional frameworks, such as the ELD standards, she did allude to instructional access, although not directly. What is central in her interviews is advocacy. While she confronts her general education colleagues who are failing students based on their low levels of English proficiency, she is not able to provide specific alternatives to her teachers. However, she knows that failing an EL student merely for their lack

Table 6

*Data mixing and analysis of quantitative and qualitative components.*

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS				QUALITATIVE FINDINGS
Participant (Pseudonym)	Years of Teaching Experience	Teacher licensure areas	Instruction, Curriculum & Assessment Scores from self-efficacy survey (Sum=60)	Interview content
<b>Hannah (Low/No) Group A</b>	<4 years <i>3 years</i>	No teaching license	49.0	Using school-sponsored curriculum that are remedial in nature and trusting its effects
<b>Delia (Low/Yes) Group B</b>	<4 years <i>4 years</i>	ESL license	56.0	References theory and continuous improvement as an educator
<b>Sharon (High/No) Group C</b>	>10 years <i>40 years</i>	General education license	50.0	Using literacy basal series furnished by her district to direct her instruction and assessment
<b>Renita (High/No) Group C</b>	>10 years <i>10 years</i>	General education license	50.0	Chasing general education teachers about poor grades for ELs Teaching to the 'test'
<b>Marcy (High/Yes) Group D</b>	>4 years <i>7 years</i>	ESL license	49.0	References the ELP standards for planning instruction and assessments
<b>Barbara (High/Yes) Group D</b>	>10 years <i>10 years</i>	Working on her ESL license	54.0	References the ELP standards for planning instruction and assessments Discusses being good on her feet: adaptive and responsive
<b>Jeneva (High/Yes) Group D</b>	>10 years <i>7 years</i>	ESL license	54.0	Create own lessons based on students' academic and ELP levels References the ELP standards for planning instruction and assessments

of proficiency is a poorly conceived assessment practice.

Non-certified ESL teachers rated themselves lower than their ESL-certified peers. Interviews demonstrated their use of readily available materials and those that were easily searchable on the web, but with no empirical base for EL students. They praised the resources that they had, including computer programs that made the content seemingly accessible to the students and clear for the non-certified ESL teachers. There was no mention of the ELD standards nor any theories related to language learning.

### Discussion and Implications

This mixed methods study demonstrates the importance of ESL licensure and how it positively moderates higher levels of self-efficacy in teaching EL competence, which can inform continuous improvement of those already specialized. For ESL teachers not certified, most are duplicating the instructional and curricular goals of their schools with little to no discussion about different levels of English proficiency and how this shapes instructional and curricular approaches, reproducing remedial contexts for ELs (Polat, 2011; Reeves, 2006; Youngs &

Youngs, 2001). The results of this study point to two important areas in the field of ESL teaching education, followed by directions for future research.

### **Prioritize Licensure over Training**

As Indiana has no historic requirement of ESL licensure to be an ESL teacher, like many other states (Ballantyne, Sanderman, & Levy, 2008), training or professional development is privileged over ESL licensure. Current federal and state funding is limited and mainly focuses on professional development of its educators, so most districts use such funding for ESL professional *training*. Such sessions are often episodic ESL workshops and conferences that are readily available. Districts can metaphorically check the box that their ESL teachers are *trained*. Yet, our findings demonstrate that the four teachers with no ESL licenses (Hannah, Gretchen, Sharon and Renita) have lower levels of self-efficacy in the three areas of instruction, curriculum and assessment and also use readily available materials versus a careful selection and conceptualization of their instruction, potentially producing substandard instructional contexts for their ELs (deJong & Harper, 2005; Reeves, 2006; Youngs & Youngs, 2001).

### **Licensure Matters**

As this study demonstrates, ESL licensure does moderate higher levels of self-efficacy in the three areas of instruction, curriculum and assessment for ELs. Further, qualitative data demonstrates that ESL teachers with higher efficacy (Delia, March, Barb and Geneva) employ the English language development standards to inform how they plan for instruction, related curriculum and interpretation of assessments. For district and school administrators, ESL licensed professionals have a comprehensive and coherent focus within the areas of instruction, curriculum and assessment and they hold higher levels of self-efficacy, moving them toward continuous improvement in these areas. Those trained episodically at workshops only, like the non-licensed ESL teachers (Hannah, Gretchen, Sharon and Renita) had lower levels of self-efficacy and their interviews demonstrated a duplication of general education efforts not suited for ELs (Harper & deJong, 2005), demonstrating lower levels of teaching EL competence (Polat, 2011).

### **Impact of this Study on Policy and Praxis**

As a result of this inquiry and the collective work of Indiana's professional educators (Morita-Mullaney & Albrecht, 2017; INTESOL, 2018), ESL licensure will be required of any named ESL teacher. The title of ESL teacher must be associated with a body of accredited, university-furnished courses that lead to ESL licensure by the Year 2022 (Indiana Department of Education, 2019). This move toward specialization provides greater assurance that teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy and mastery competence are serving the EL student community.

While this is a positive move for teachers serving as ESL teachers, the preparation of in-service teachers still requires more careful analysis for the types of professional development (PGP points) they receive. Districts and universities can work in tandem to identify the core knowledge needed and design carefully aligned professional development opportunities that lead to a more cohesive and congruent corpus of ESL teaching methodology. Current Indiana policy does not

encourage nor require this type of partnership between universities and schools, yet some Indiana districts are seeking such school-university partnerships in light of their growing EL communities.

### Conclusion

In this study, we demonstrated that higher levels of self-efficacy in tandem with ESL licensure creates the conditions for higher quality learning experiences for ELs. Teachers appropriately situate the student's grade level and level of English proficiency, lacing together academic content standards and related English language development standards. In contrast, those with lower levels of self-efficacy and a diet of professional development sessions who are not ESL licensed, employ remedial strategies and use commercially available products used with non-EL students who are underperforming. The conflation of remedial practices that are "best" for EL students demonstrates the conditions for perpetuating less opportunities and outcomes for ELs. As demonstrated in this study, ESL licensure creates more equitable conditions for ELs through quality-grade level instruction, curriculum and assessment as access and outcomes are consistently considered by the more efficacious and ESL licensed teachers.

### Author Notes

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### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> English as a Second Language (ESL) references the profession held by ESL teachers. ESL is also used in the context of the actual language programming. In contrast, English Learners (ELs) are the students that are served by ESL teachers.

<sup>2</sup> WIDA is a consortium that has developed 5 English Language Development (ELD) Standards to help students understand English in both social and academic contexts. These ELD standards focus on general and specific language areas and are organized by the language domain of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, grade cluster, and a conceptual framework. They are intended to inform academic instruction in all major content areas for English Learners (WIDA, 2019).