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The Back Burner: A Case Study of a Teacher's Dilemmas when Working with English
Learners

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Abstract

Increasingly, mainstream classroom teachers are working with English Learners (ELs), however, little is known about what dilemmas these teachers face in their practice with ELs. Using a dilemmatic spaces framework, this case study explored the dilemmas a fourth grade teacher negotiated while working with ELs in her low-incidence school. Drawing upon multiple data sources, (i.e., observations, interviews, and artifact analysis), and using iterative and thematic analysis techniques, three dilemmas were identified. These included: (1) a lack of professional experience with ELs, (2) lack of support from the ESL teacher, and (3) conflicting administrative expectations. These findings pose important considerations for the teaching community regarding how to support mainstream teachers when teaching of ELs.

Introduction

The number of students who are simultaneously learning English and academic content, i.e., English Learners (ELs), is growing in the United States (García, Arias, Harris Murri, & Serna, 2010; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2015). This demographic imperative is complicated by the fact that ELs are increasingly enrolling in schools that historically have served no or few linguistically diverse students, i.e., low-incidence schools (Capps et al., 2005; García et al., 2010). At the same time, policy mandates, e.g., the No Child Left Behind Act (2002), have marginalized English as a Second Language (ESL) and bilingual education programs by reducing the resources available for such programs (Harper, de Jong, & Platt, 2008). Given these demographic and policy dynamics, ELs are increasingly being educated in mainstream classrooms.

Scholarship regarding the experiences of ELs in classrooms has found that these diverse students often experience isolation due to state policies, teachers' practices, and interactional norms in and out of the classroom (e.g., Fu, 1995; Gándara & Orfeld, 2012; Iddings, 2005; Koyama, 2004; Yoon, 2008). At the same time, it has been shown that teachers' beliefs can influence their practice with students (Farrell & Ives, 2015; Molle, 2013; Pajares, 1992). Since ELs are increasingly spending more time in mainstream classrooms, their daily schooling experiences are concomitantly being shaped by their mainstream classroom teachers' pedagogical practice and their beliefs about language learners and language learning. While much has been learned about the experiences of identified ELs in schools today, scholars such as Pettit (2011) argue that there still remains a need to understand better the experiences of ELs in low incidence schools. To clarify, low incidence schools are schools where linguistically diverse students represent a relatively small percentage of the total student population. This study was designed to contribute to this call for scholarship regarding the experiences of ELs in low incidence schools through the lens of one mainstream classroom teacher's practice with the sole EL in a classroom population primarily made up of monolingual English speaking students.

Specifically, we focus on the dilemmas that one teacher negotiated in her practice with the sole EL in her mainstream classroom. We hoped to understand better what dilemmas were most prevalent for this mainstream classroom teacher and how she negotiated these dilemmas so that teachers can be better prepared to work with ELs in their mainstream classrooms. This study was guided by the following research questions: (1) what, if any, dilemmas does this teacher encounter in her practice with ELs, and (2) what factors contribute to shaping these dilemmas?

Literature Review: Mainstream Classroom Teachers' Conceptions of ELs

The field of teaching and teacher education has long documented the potential impact of teachers' beliefs and attitudes on their interactions with students as well as their pedagogical practice (e.g., Farrell & Ives, 2015; Molle, 2013; Pajares, 1992; Pettit, 2011; Richardson, 1996). Specific to working with ELs, it has been found that mainstream classroom teachers express welcoming attitudes toward ELs in schools (Reeves, 2006; Walker et al., 2004), while also being uncertain in their ability to work effectively with linguistically diverse students (English, 2009; Pettit, 2011; Walker et al., 2004; Yoon, 2008). One of the most frequently documented reasons for this teacher uncertainty is the lack of time and resources available to work effectively with ELs (Gándara, Maxwell, & Driscoll, 2005; Reeves, 2006; Youngs & Youngs, 2001). Moreover, mainstream teachers express misgiving about their own professional knowledge of second language

acquisition, possibly due to a lack of professional development (Clair, 1995; Cummins, 2000; Pettit, 2011; Reeves, 2006). Yet, it has been found teachers positioning of ELs, and specifically their role in the education of linguistically diverse students, can be an influential shaping factor in what types of accommodations mainstream teachers feel they could or even should offer to ELs in their classrooms (English, 2009; Yoon, 2008).

Teachers in low-incidence schools are in a unique context in that they may have little to no experience teaching ELs (Walker et al., 2004). When compared to teachers in high influx or immigrant serving schools, Walker and colleagues (2004) found that teachers in low-incidence schools held the most optimistic and positive beliefs regarding ELs while also expressing the most reluctance toward actually teaching ELs in their own classroom. Additionally, teachers in low-incidence were the least likely group to want professional development for teaching linguistically diverse students, possibly because they did not feel an urgent need as they had only taught a few or no ELs (Walker et al., 2004). Ultimately, Walker and colleagues (2004) argued that teachers in any schooling context, i.e., high influx, low-incidence, or migrant serving, can develop negative attitudes toward teaching ELs when “unprepared and unsupported teachers encounter challenges in working with ELLs” (p. 153).

From these studies, it can be argued that mainstream classroom teachers often hold varied and complicated beliefs about teaching ELs. While much of the extant scholarship has focused on mainstream classroom teachers’ beliefs regarding teaching ELs, less is known about how these teachers navigate their daily classroom practice with ELs and, specifically, the challenges that mainstream teachers negotiate as part of this practice. Moreover, more needs to be known about the influence that specific schooling contexts, i.e., low-incidence schools, has been on the practice of mainstream classroom teachers working with ELs. Therefore, I framed my study with the theoretical framework of dilemmatic spaces in order to explore the dilemmas that one mainstream classroom teacher navigated in her teaching of ELs in a low-incidence school.

Conceptual Framework: Dilemmatic Spaces

Philosophers have long debated the nature of dilemmas and how dilemmas can best be navigated (e.g., Williams, 1973). Some have argued that dilemmas are instances in which “two values, obligations, or commitments conflict and there is no right thing to do” (Honig, 1994, p. 568). Others have pointed out that when individuals negotiate dilemmas they are often left in the “grey zone” where there is not a clear-cut distinction between a right and wrong choice (Kakabadse, Korac- Kakabadse & Kouzmin, 2003). Honig (1994) expanded this ongoing debate on the nature of dilemmas by arguing that dilemmas are not just single, finite events but actually integral and influential components of who we are. In other words, dilemmas are not just outside forces that must be “resolved” but inside negotiations and adjustments that individuals constantly revisit without ever fully resolving.

Scholars in teaching and teacher education have recognized that teachers navigate dilemmas on a regular basis. For example, teachers may negotiate dilemmas related to high-stakes testing and accountability measures (Singh, Märtsin, & Glasswell, 2015), collaboration among colleagues and mentors (Turner, 2016), conflicting policy mandates and pedagogical values (Jonasson, Mäkitalo, & Nielsen, 2015), as well as ethical dilemmas of practice (Ehrich, Kimber, Millwater, & Cranston, 2011; Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2011). It has been argued that multiple forces shape how teachers

conceptualize and navigate dilemmas including: political and societal contexts, professional ethics, organizational culture of schools, institutional contexts, personal beliefs and values, and the beliefs and values of trusted confidants (Ehrich et al., 2011). However, Ehrich and colleagues (2011) argued that while all of these forces may contribute to a teacher's perception of a dilemma and available courses of action, the actual dilemma is not realized until the moment when the teacher must make a decision. In this moment, teachers must find a "good-enough compromise" (Cuban, 1992) given these competing forces and values. In the end, these compromises leave "reminders" that teachers carry with them into their future practice (Fransson & Grannäs, 2012).

One particularly illuminating lens for exploring pedagogical dilemmas is Fransson and Grannäs' (2013) conceptual framework of dilemmatic spaces that applies Honig's (1994) framework to schools and schooling. Specifically, Fransson & Grannäs conceptualized dilemmatic spaces in educational contexts as "social constructions resulting from the structural conditions and relational aspects of everyday practices" (2013, p. 7). By including the relational category of space, Fransson & Grannäs (2013) argued that a dilemmatic space could be conceptualized as occurring within the relationships of "two or more positions." In other words, the concept of space allows scholars to explore how dilemmas are created in relationships between an individual and larger contextual factors (e.g., policy or school climate), as well as relationships between various individuals (e.g., teachers, parents, students, or colleagues). The recurring negotiation of dilemmatic spaces leads to the constitution and reconstitution of teachers' identities as they react in relation to ever-present dilemmas. Ultimately, Fransson & Grannäs argued that the framework of dilemmatic spaces allows scholars to unpack "the complexity and dynamics of teachers' work and how teachers are defined, positioned, and related to others" (p. 9) as well as how interactions in ever-present dilemmatic spaces influence teachers' evolving professional identities. I believe that the framework of dilemmatic spaces is particularly suited to this study because it allowed me to explore the various factors that contributed to one mainstream classroom teacher's negotiation of how to best teach ELs in a low-incidence school.

Methods

For this study, I utilized a qualitative case study design to explore the dilemmas that one teacher navigated while working with the sole EL in her mainstream classroom. To provide the methodological details of this study, I first provide an overview of the study's context and participant. Following this, I detail my data sources and analytical techniques.

Study Context and Participant

This case study is drawn from a larger study focused on the educational experiences of ELs in a low incidence school, i.e., a school with few or no ELs. In the state under study, policy mandates require that ELs in low-incidence schools spend the majority of their school day in mainstream classrooms with pullout ESL services provided at the school's discretion. As part of licensure requirements, all classroom teachers in the state were required to obtain Structured English Immersion (SEI) endorsements to prepare them to work with students who are simultaneously learning English and academic content.

At the time of this study, Cordova Elementary (pseudonym) was a Title I school with 847 total students (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2014). Of these 847

students, 17 students, or 2% of the total student population, were identified as English Language Learners. These students received pullout English instruction for half an hour a day, four times a week where they primarily worked on English syntax and vocabulary development. Otherwise, the education of ELs in Cordova Elementary fell primarily under the purview of the mainstream classroom teachers. This case study focused on one such fourth grade teacher, Mrs. Gershner. I purposefully sampled (Creswell, 2009) Mrs. Gershner because she was the only teacher participant in my larger study who regularly discussed dilemmas she faced when working with ELs. Therefore, her case has the potential to illuminate the larger dilemmatic space encountered by this teacher when working with the sole EL in her mainstream classroom.

Mrs. Gershner self-identified as a White woman and a monolingual English speaker. During this study, Mrs. Gershner had one EL in her fourth grade classroom. This student, Anja, immigrated to the United States from Russia when she was in kindergarten. Anja spoke Russian at home and was assessed as having an intermediate level of English proficiency during the yearly state mandated testing of ELs' English proficiency. Mrs. Gershner reported that she did know "a few Spanish words" but was "completely unfamiliar" with Russian.

Data Sources

In keeping with a qualitative case study design, I used multiple data collection tools over the four months that I was present at Cordova Elementary (Creswell, 2009; Stake, 2013; Yin 2013). Data sources included weekly, full day classroom observations (16 days total) coupled with formal (2 total) and impromptu (15 total) interviews. Observational fieldnotes focused on interactions between Mrs. Gershner and the EL present in her classroom, classroom norms and procedures, lesson structures and content, and language use and linguistic modifications during lessons. Additionally, curricular artifacts and school handouts were collected and served as a means of triangulating emergent findings from classroom observations.

Formal interviews were conducted with Mrs. Gershner at the beginning and end of the study. These two-hour interviews were audio-recorded and focused on her teaching trajectory, teaching experience with linguistically diverse students, and dilemmas that emerged as part of her work with the EL in her mainstream classroom. In addition to these formal interviews, 15 impromptu interviews with Mrs. Gershner took place during weekly observations. The majority of these impromptu interviews were initiated by Mrs. Gershner and focused on her interactions with the EL present in the classroom. As these interviews were spontaneous, they were not audio-recorded, but a detailed summary of the discussion was included in the day's fieldnotes.

Data Analysis

During data analysis, I employed multi-phase and iterative data analysis techniques (Creswell, 2013). While all the data collected was designed to explore the participants' experiences, challenges, and evolving professional ponderings related to working with ELs, data collected through fieldnotes and artifacts was methodologically different than data collected through interviews. Specifically, fieldnotes were concrete descriptions of what the researcher observed in the field, while interviews were the site of mutual knowledge construction between the participant and researcher regarding the topic under study (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Therefore, I initially coded formal interviews and records of impromptu conversations separately from fieldnotes and

artifact data to better understand the compendium of collected data. In the first phase of data analysis, interviews were coded for references to the participant's teaching trajectory, beliefs about language learners and language learning, and supports or dilemmas when working with ELs. Fieldnotes were coded for classroom norms, instructional strategies, language modifications, and interactions with ELs (e.g., content, length, initiator). In order to triangulate emergent finding from the fieldnotes, artifacts were then analyzed for content focus, languages used, and connections to families or communities.

From this extensive coding, I then wrote detailed analytic memos (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). During this phase, I used iterative and thematic qualitative analysis techniques, e.g., constant comparison methods (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003; Lichtman, 2012), to identify emergent patterns present across the compendium of data sources. From these analytic memos, I identified three distinct but related dilemmas that Mrs. Gershner negotiated as part of her work with ELs in this low-incidence school. I outline these dilemmas in the following findings section before discussing how these individual dilemmas contributed to the larger dilemmatic space experienced by this mainstream classroom teacher when working with ELs in her mainstream classroom.

Findings

This section details the three dilemmas navigated by Mrs. Gershner in her work with ELs, including: (1) teaching ELs with little previous experience with linguistically diverse students, (2) teaching ELs with limited support from ESL teacher, and (3) managing conflicting administrative expectations related to student talk.

Dilemma 1: Teaching English Learners with Little Previous Experience with Linguistically Diverse Students

Mrs. Gershner started her teaching career as a middle school language arts and social studies teacher before taking a leave of absence to stay at home with her children. After two years at home, Mrs. Gershner returned to teaching when she opened her own preschool. After her experience as an early childhood educator, Mrs. Gershner decided that she wanted to work with elementary aged children. She had been working as a fourth grade teacher at Cordova Elementary for the past three years. While Mrs. Gershner had been an educator for 8 years, she had little previous experience working with ELs. She reported, "I had one [EL] this year and I had one last year, so that's really it" (Impromptu interview). Given her lack of experience, Mrs. Gershner reported that she primarily drew upon her early childhood experience when working with ELs. Specifically, vocabulary development became a core focus for Mrs. Gershner during her early childhood experience, and this focus carried into her current fourth grade classroom. In her words:

It's [early childhood experience] really shaped the way that I think about, well actually language in the classroom and just how important the vocabulary is that you use. I mean, I know that I think that way, I don't know in practice if it really comes out as much... it definitely has influenced the way that I think about arranging the classroom...I just know that the vocabulary that you use and that the vocabulary that students are exposed to is really important. (Introductory interview)

Mrs. Gershner stressed the importance of vocabulary development with her fourth grade students, and particularly ELs. However, in the same excerpt, she chided herself for not

implementing this belief in practice. It is important to note that during observations there were no observed whole class vocabulary development opportunities or language modifications to the lessons that Mrs. Gershner presented. Rather, all of the observed language clarifications or modifications were given in response to a question from the EL in her classroom (i.e., “What is barbecue?”). In other words, language and language modifications were not a consistent focus in Mrs. Gershner’s planning and instruction. Mrs. Gershner explained, “language is not my main focus in the classroom” because of the relatively small population of ELs in her classroom (Exit interview).

Overall, Mrs. Gershner reported having previously worked with only two ELs during her 8-year career. Reportedly, she built her pedagogical plan of action for ELs on her experiences as an early childhood educator working with monolingual English speaking children. This previous experience in early education led Mrs. Gershner to focus primarily on the acquisition of vocabulary for her English learning students, a strategy that can narrow the curriculum to language lessons rather than supporting ELs’ academic *and* linguistic development. While Mrs. Gershner was attempting to provide instructional support for the sole EL in her classroom she was challenged by her lack of professional experience with students who were simultaneously learning academic content and English. In negotiating this first dilemma, Mrs. Gershner professed a focus on vocabulary from her experience as an early childhood educator, but in practice provided no language support for the EL in her classroom.

Dilemma 2: Teaching English Learners with Limited Support from the ESL Teacher

Since Cordova Elementary was classified as a low-incidence school by the state, the administration was able to design an individualized support plan for ELs. Classified ELs in Cordova Elementary went to an ESL classroom for half an hour a day, four days a week. During observations, instruction in the ESL classroom primarily focused on vocabulary development and English grammar in academic writing, and the ESL teacher did allow students to bring work from their mainstream classroom if they had questions. Outside of the ESL pullout services, the mainstream classroom teachers were responsible for the academic and language development of the ELs. Mrs. Gershner praised the ESL teacher for her work with Anja, the EL in her classroom, and Anja’s language development during the year. In her words:

I’ve seen Anja grow so much this year and I think so much of it has to do with her feeling comfortable that she can really talk with [the ESL teacher] and have her one on one time and really focusing on, well I honestly don’t know exactly what they focus on. (Introductory Interview)

Mrs. Gershner felt the ESL program helped Anja, even if she was unsure of what the ESL teacher actually did during pullout classes. However, Mrs. Gershner did not feel she received extra support outside of these pullout classes. Reportedly, the only ESL specific support that Mrs. Gershner received for her classroom planning and instruction was when the ESL teacher provided a copy of the ESL standards at the beginning of the year “so that we’re aware of them” (Introductory interview). Reportedly, Mrs. Gershner did not meet with the ESL teacher to discuss Anja’s progress or specific needs. Compounding this lack of ESL support, Mrs. Gershner shared that she felt “pressure to keep pace” with the curriculum calendar from her administration and colleagues. Since she had only one EL in her classroom, she did not always feel that she “had the time” to modify lessons for

this student because she had to “move on to the next objective” (Impromptu conversation).

On a school-wide level, Mrs. Gershner attributed this lack of support to the fact that the education of ELs was not a pressing concern at Cordova given of the relatively small population present. In her words:

It's [education of ELs] an issue but it's not our main issue...because there aren't as many [ELs] here, it just is kind of on the back burner.... I wish I had more support in knowing how to implement those [strategies to support ELs]. (Exit interview)

The symbolism of placing the education of ELs on the back burner is open to multiple interpretations. On the one hand, the back burner indicated that Mrs. Gershner has received the message that the education of ELs can be set aside or de-prioritized. On the other hand, the back burner alludes to a larger marginalization of ELs in this school because there are relatively few ELs when compared to the entire school population. Ultimately, Mrs. Gershner was navigating the dilemma of how to best support the academic and linguistic development of the sole English learning student in her classroom with limited support from the ESL teacher.

Dilemma 3: Managing Conflicting Administrative Expectations Related to Student Talk

In this third dilemma, Mrs. Gershner reported that she found it challenging to navigate disparate expectations from her school level administration and from the district level administration. Specifically, Mrs. Gershner expressed uncertainty of how to meet the conflicting expectations for language use held by her district and school level administration. From Mrs. Gershner’s perspective, classroom management concerns were the most pressing issue for Cordova’s administration (Introductory interview). For example, she reported that during the two classroom observations that her principal completed for her yearly evaluation, her principal primarily focused on classroom management strategies (e.g., reward systems) rather than instructional strategies (e.g., modifications for diverse students). Moreover, Mrs. Gershner reported that when her principal “casually walks through the classrooms” she felt that her principal expected to see “quiet and orderly classrooms” rather than collaborative discussions. Mrs. Gershner expressed discomfort with this expectation for “control over students”, partly because of her experience as an early childhood educator when she learned how important “language practice” was for children (Exit interview). In her words:

I know that having the discussions in class is really important [based on my early childhood experience] so I feel that tension but there's also the management piece of it, I sometimes struggle with. How do we get to be able to talk to each other more, but also keep focus, I want them to be able to work together as much as possible but at the same time there are expectations placed on me [by the school administration]. (Exit interview)

Here, Mrs. Gershner alluded to the ongoing tension that she had experienced when trying to implement her professional principles while still meeting the expectations of her school administration. It should be noted that Mrs. Gershner only incorporated partner or small group discussion during math flashcard practice and when students were with her in reading groups.

When planning and implementing lessons, teachers in the district were expected to use a direct instruction model. The instructional sequence included: (1) an anticipatory set to connect to students' prior learning or spark student interest, (2) a teacher-led demonstration of the knowledge or skill, (3) guided practice for the students to practice with the direct support and feedback from the teacher, (4) independent practice for students, and (5) a closure where students reflect on or synthesize what they have learned. Within this lesson format, Mrs. Gershner explained that there were further expectations from her school administration for implementation, in her words:

I have some flexibility with how I implement the direct instruction, but they [school administration] really want you giving them [students] direct instruction where the kids are watching and you are instructing.

(Introductory interview, March 23, 2015)

These dual expectations for classroom control and a highly teacher directed lesson sequence left Mrs. Gershner feeling that she could not create lessons that built in discussion time for students. Rather, Mrs. Gershner felt that she had to give students information while the class listened quietly. This classroom norm had pedagogical and linguistic implications in that students were expected to spend most of their instructional time listening to the teacher's explanations rather than discussing content.

In contrast, Mrs. Gershner reported that her district office emphasized collaborative learning and student interactions in the classroom (Introductory interview). To explain this district level expectation, Mrs. Gershner referenced the weeklong intensive professional development seminar that she attended as an introduction to the district's systems, culture, and pedagogical philosophy at the district office. During the week, district level administration encouraged new teachers to utilize instructional strategies that have students talk to each other in order to increase their understanding of content. Mrs. Gershner reflected on the contrasting viewpoints about classroom management and instruction held at the district level and her school's administration level. In her words:

Especially being newer to the district, all through [the induction professional development] they [district level administration] talked a lot about cooperative groups and structuring things so kids can interact with each other... and I was [thinking] this is going to work, this is going to be great and then when I got back into the classroom, it just was the [administrative] expectations were different. So they [school administration] would say, "Yes, that's good but...we really want to make sure that your classroom management is strong and you know, that everything is under control." So I feel like the expectation is quiet and not a lot of movement, not a lot of discussion. (Introductory interview)

Mrs. Gershner reflected on the dilemma of having students discuss their learning collaboratively as advocated by the district level administration and the expectations of "classroom control" placed on her by her school level administration. Ultimately, Mrs. Gershner felt that she could not create lessons that emphasized student interactions in case her school administrator "happened to walk through" her classroom (Informal interview). Rather, Mrs. Gershner felt that she had to "give students instructions while they listen quietly" in alignment with her school administration's focus on direct instruction (Informal interview). This classroom and instructional norm had dilemmatic implications for Mrs. Gershner in that she was conflicted about the expectation that

students should spend most of their time listening to her explanations rather than discussing content.

Discussion

This study explored the dilemmas that a mainstream classroom teacher in a low-incidence school negotiated when teaching the sole EL in her classroom. I framed my study with Fransson and Grannäs' (2013) conceptual framework of dilemmatic spaces because it is particularly suited to exploring how relationships between individuals and contexts contribute to a teacher's ever evolving negotiation of dilemmas. Specifically, I found that this teacher's larger dilemmatic space related to teaching ELs consisted of multiple dilemmas, including: (1) how to work with ELs when she had little previous professional experience, (2) how to work with ELs little support from the ESL teacher, and (3) how to navigate conflicting administrative expectations related to student talk.

Educational researchers have found that mainstream classroom teachers express uncertainty in their ability to teach ELs partially due to a lack of professional development (Clair, 1995; Cummins, 2000; Pettit, 2011; Reeves, 2006), I found that another contributing factor was a lack of professional experience working with ELs. This lack of actual classroom experience with ELs is understandable in the case of Mrs. Gershner because she had always taught in low-incidence schools, and had only worked with 2 classified ELs over her eight-year career. To negotiate this dilemma, Mrs. Gershner's "good-enough compromise" (Cuban, 1992) involved drawing upon her early education experience where she reported learning the value of language in her classroom instruction. However, in practice, she did not provide language modifications unless asked by the EL in her classroom.

While Mrs. Gershner did not express a desire for more professional development during this study, she did express a wish for more support from the school's ESL teacher. The lack of collaboration with the ESL teacher placed the onus of responsibility on Mrs. Gershner when planning and instructing the EL in her classroom. This may have been another contributing factor for why she was not observed making intentional language modifications, given documented teacher concerns about a lack of time and resources available to mainstream classroom teachers when working with ELs (Gándara et al., 2005; Reeves, 2006; Youngs & Youngs, 2001). In the end, Mrs. Gershner did not identify a resolution to this dilemma; rather, she expressed a desire for more collaboration without a specific plan to move forward. This lack of resolution highlights the appropriateness of the dilemmatic spaces framework for this type of research because in the reality of classroom practice, there will be dilemmas that are still evolving and will continue to shape teachers' ongoing practice.

An important contribution of our work relates to the power of administrative expectations on this teacher's practices with ELs. This particular dilemma illuminates how teachers might be forced to negotiate school level and district level expectations. While Mrs. Gershner's professional beliefs aligned more with district level expectations of classroom interaction and cooperative learning, her school level administration's expectation for classroom control and highly structured lessons was clear. Ultimately, Mrs. Gershner's good-enough compromise resulted in a classroom with little time for student talk and highly teacher-directed lessons. The proximity of school level administration and the more pressing possibility that her school administrators might walk in to her classroom influenced Mrs. Gershner's evolving dilemmatic space. The

intensity of influence exerted by school level administration versus district level administration left Mrs. Gershner with a good-enough compromise that contradicted her own professional beliefs about how ELs should be taught in the mainstream classroom.

Implications

Before discussing the implications of this study, I would like to address possible limitations of this work. One limitation of this study is that I followed the practice of one mainstream classroom teacher in a low-incidence school; therefore, these findings must be considered in the context of this specific school. More research is needed into teachers' practice with ELs in low incidence schools so that we can better understand the dilemmas that these teachers encounter as part of their daily practice. This work is particularly pressing given that ELs are increasingly entering schools that have historically served no or few linguistically diverse students. Another limitation of this study is that I do not have reports from the administration, ESL teacher or ELs regarding their experiences and expectations. However, I intentionally chose to focus on how the classroom teacher constructed and perceived her practice with the sole EL in her classroom. Future work is needed to explore this issue from the perspectives of the multiple actors who are present in schools.

Despite these limitations, I believe that these findings engender specific considerations regarding what types of professional development activities would be most beneficial for mainstream classroom teachers in their practice with ELs. To address a lack of professional experience, teachers could be given opportunities to modify actual lessons for language learners as well as practice strategies to facilitate classroom interactions between students in lesson simulations. As two of the dilemmas for Mrs. Gershner involved relationships with people, i.e., the ESL teacher and her school level administration, I believe that teachers should be given space to discuss the reality of their schooling context, administrative expectations, and support services. This time could be used as a time to discuss how to navigate these expectations while still providing effective instruction for their language learners or as a time to discuss how to advocate for ELs in low-incidence schools. Ultimately, how teachers negotiate the larger dilemmatic space related to teaching linguistically diverse students in schools where they have been placed on the "back burner" has the potential to (in)equitably shape the access and educational experiences of ELs in mainstream classrooms.

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