
Helping Preservice Content-Area Teachers Relate to English Language Learners: An Investigation of Attitudes and Beliefs

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In the United States and Canada, as in many other countries, it has become common for teachers not specifically trained in English as a second language (ESL) to have immigrant and minority language students in their classrooms. These students, who are generally learning English along with the culture of their new countries, present many challenges for their teachers, who are often not appropriately trained to meet their needs. Often teachers of mathematics, science, and other content-area courses feel less than prepared for these students and lack the skills needed to accommodate instruction to their unique needs. In addition, these same teachers often harbor attitudes and beliefs about immigrant students that are not conducive to the development of a safe learning environment and are difficult to alter. This article describes how a community-based service-learning project (CBSL) was used to begin to investigate the attitudes and beliefs of preservice content-area teachers toward English language learners (ELLs). In this study many participants exhibited some level of change in their attitudes about working with ELLs.

Il est maintenant courant, aux États-Unis, au Canada et dans bien d'autres pays, pour des enseignants qui n'ont pas reçu de formation en ALS d'avoir des élèves immigrants et de langues minoritaires dans leurs classes. Ces élèves, qui apprennent souvent l'anglais en même temps que la culture de leur nouveau pays, représentent autant de défis à leurs enseignants qui n'ont généralement pas reçu la formation nécessaire pour répondre à leurs besoins. Les enseignants de cours à contenu (tels les mathématiques et les sciences) ont souvent l'impression de ne pas être en mesure d'adapter leurs pratiques pour répondre aux besoins particuliers de ces élèves. De plus, ces mêmes enseignants entretiennent souvent, à l'égard des élèves immigrants, des attitudes et des croyances tenaces qui ne sont pas propices au développement d'un environnement d'apprentissage sécuritaire. Cet article décrit l'emploi d'un projet d'apprentissage reposant sur le service communautaire (CBSL) pour étudier les attitudes et les croyances de stagiaires (destinés à enseigner des cours à contenu) face aux apprenants de l'anglais. Lors de l'étude, plusieurs participants ont manifesté un certain changement d'attitude face au travail avec les apprenants de l'anglais.

Introduction

Banks (2001) writes that teachers must “develop reflective cultural, national, and global identifications themselves if they are to help students become thoughtful, caring, and reflective citizens in a multicultural society” (p. 5). In this article, Banks posits that preservice teachers must develop reflective intercultural processes in order better to meet the needs of diverse learners. However, because most teachers are representatives of the dominant majority culture (Banks), it is difficult for them to relate to the thousands of diverse students in classrooms today. In a recent survey conducted in the United States, it was reported that over 40% of all teachers had English language learners (ELLs) in their classrooms during the 1999-2000 school year, but only 12.5% had received eight or more hours of related training (Gruber, Wiley, Broughman, Strizek, & Burian-Fitzgerald, 2002). In another study, the President’s Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans (2000) reported that approximately 70% of teachers felt only moderately or not at all prepared to address the needs of students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

In Canada, Gunderson (2000) wrote that many secondary teachers need to do more to help ELLs, reporting, for example, that many teachers did not consider the teaching of reading skills to be their role. In this same article, the author concluded that ELLs in Canada would continue to fail if secondary teachers did not take a more active role in helping them. In addition, Kubota (1998) found that teachers often fail to recognize cultural, ethnic, and linguistic differences. An example of this inadequate consideration was discussed by Derwing, DeCorby, Ichikawa, and Jamieson (1999). Derwing et al. found that nearly 46% of ELLs in Alberta did not complete their K-12 educations, often due to age caps that limited the number of years students were allowed to remain in public education and a lack of appropriate integration and orientation of ELLs in the school system. When this noncompletion rate is compared with the 70% graduation rate for all students in Alberta, it becomes obvious that more could be done for ELLs.

In order to face the challenges of teaching ELLs more effectively, more and more universities in both countries are moving toward the inclusion of intercultural (also referred to as multicultural) education and classroom strategy courses designed to help preservice teachers learn more about diverse populations. However, there is controversy surrounding the effectiveness of these requirements. Phuntsog (1999) writes,

Teacher diversity programs may, at their best, barely scratch one’s deeply rooted cultural beliefs ... The current conceptualization of teacher preparation for cultural diversity seems to exist on an optimistic plane that assumes that a single dose of multicultural education is effective to prepare the teaching force to narrow the academic

achievement and drop-out gaps between students from dominant and dominated cultures. (pp. 98-99)

All too often single courses in intercultural or linguistic diversity tend to encourage preservice teachers to accept a one-size-fits-all mindset. Others argue that one course is not sufficient to alter long-held beliefs and biases (Grant, 1981). According to Bartolome (1994), teachers tend to look for straightforward strategies that can quickly be applied to classroom learning without really understanding the theoretical underpinnings of each strategy.

Although many preservice teachers are required to take courses in interculturalism, often the information presented is either dismissed as irrelevant or used to victimize minority groups further and encourage deficit-model thinking (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001) in majority culture students. These factors are borne out by Marullo (1998), who found his students willing to discuss issues related to interculturalism but noted,

the students did not seem to comprehend the sociological theory and concepts because they tended not to incorporate them into their discussion. Or, worse, they would spout off an uninformed opinion or repeat a commonly held misconception about racial matters, while inappropriately using a statement they had read. (p. 260)

Marullo found that students often saw immigrants' individual failures as personal faults, something immigrants have brought on themselves or something deserved. This deficit-model thinking is consistent with the opinions of many preservice teachers who believe that ELLs would learn English quickly if "they really wanted to."

This attitude represents a belief that some preservice teachers have about immigrants and ELL students: the responsibility for learning and adapting to new cultural patterns rests solely on the ELL and his or her family. Although intercultural education courses hope to dispel many of these beliefs, this change is often a difficult task. According to many, preservice teachers' past experiences and prior beliefs exert a powerful force on their attitudes and are extremely difficult to alter through coursework alone (McDiarmid & Price, 1993; Sleeter, 1992; Tatto, 1996).

It is critical that we examine the beliefs of preservice teachers. Belief systems tend to be influential and can have a great effect on how teachers interact with students (Kagan, 1992; Nel, 1992; Van Hook, 2002). Nespor (1987) proposes that beliefs are so strong that they are more influential in determining actions and behaviors than is learned knowledge. Knowledge systems are much more open to critique and reexamination than are belief systems. In fact the strength of belief systems makes them extremely difficult to alter. Nisbett and Ross (1980) write that even inaccurate beliefs are difficult to change, even when it is deemed logical and necessary to do so. Others have found that teachers sometimes have difficulty integrating class content

into their belief systems when there is no direct match between the two (Matanin & Collier, 2003; Olsen & Singer, 1994). Therefore, even when preservice teachers learn about the necessity of accommodating ELLs in the classroom, unless their belief systems support these accommodations, they will be unlikely to implement them effectively. Finally, Ghosh and Tarrow (1993) conclude that “if education is slow to respond to social needs, teacher education institutes are perhaps, the most conservative and unlikely to change” (p. 90). Yet this change is exactly what must happen to improve the academic outcomes for ELLs effectively.

In this study, I examined the beliefs and attitudes of preservice content-area teachers about language minority students. I collected data throughout nine semesters and provided hands-on experiences for participants with ELLs that tested these attitudes and beliefs. Through reflective journals I looked for evidence of change or alteration of these attitudes, specifically noting where the preservice teachers themselves noticed a change in their own beliefs. Generally, preservice teachers who held less than positive beliefs experienced at least slight changes in the ideas they held about immigrant children, hopefully opening their minds to further exploration. Other preservice teachers, however, experienced more profound changes that were evident in their journal entries. Preservice teachers who already held positive beliefs about immigrants and ELL students found those beliefs reinforced through the experience.

Theoretical Frameworks and Tools

Situative Perspective

One of the main objectives of the class associated with this study is to put participants in a position of critical examination in which they come away with the understanding that “language is not simply a means of expression or communication; rather, it is a practice that constructs, and is constructed by, the ways language learners understand themselves, their social surroundings, their histories, and their possibilities for the future” (Norton & Toohey, 2004, p. 1). Finally, it is hoped that the participants will begin to identify themselves as teachers of ELLs as opposed to teachers who have ELLs in their classrooms. The study I conducted is framed in the situative perspective (Greeno, 1997; Greeno, Collins, & Resnick, 1996; Putnam & Borko, 2000), which examines how preservice teachers and ELLs fit into and create communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Using this perspective, “cognition is a) situated in particular physical and social contexts, b) social in nature; and c) distributed across the individual, other persons and tools” (Putnam & Borko, p. 4). In effect, our classroom became a community of practice where beliefs, ideas, and concepts were exchanged, examined, and reevaluated in a particular context: the world of the ELL. This experience

was situated in a critical-thinking perspective, in which preservice teachers were asked to examine critically their roles in creating learning environments for ELL students at the PreK-12 levels. It was social in that the participants were not only learning within the limited confines of the university classroom (in which the professor's voice takes a dominant perspective), but also were functioning in the ELLs' environment, actively participating in their existing social/academic communities through one-on-one tutoring sessions. Finally, it was distributed across the individual, other persons, and tools in the sense that the student's personal experiences, beliefs and attitudes were shared with me as the instructor and with other preservice teachers in the classroom. In line with Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development, preservice teachers expanded their cognitive understanding of ELLs through their interactions with each other and ELLs in the community at large. This combination of experience, controlled fieldwork, classroom instruction, and reflection creates a learning experience powerful enough to transform, or at least challenge, existing beliefs in a safe environment.

Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of legitimate peripheral practice also adds to this theoretical framework. According to Lave and Wenger, learning can be conceptualized as increasing participation in communities of practice that allows individuals to internalize concepts based on situated negotiation and renegotiation of the interdependency between personal agency and the world. In this study, preservice teachers examined their roles as future teachers of ELLs in communities of practice and began to see their participation as legitimate, necessary, and desirable. From this point of view, the preservice teachers looked closely at the existing, often unequal and unresponsive communities of practice in which ELLs find themselves. Participants also engaged in the process of problematizing practice (Pennycook, 2001), in which they challenged current assumptions and employed a critical examination of the social, academic, and affective world of the ELL.

Intercultural Sensitivity

My classes are designed to prepare preservice teachers to work with ELL students, and there are goals related to teaching concepts and theories related to second-language acquisition and the use of scaffolding techniques to help preservice teachers apply these concepts. Yet I cannot always assume that the preservice teachers involved are ready and willing to apply these concepts.

When an individual enters a university to become a teacher, he or she chooses a content area based on his or her own interests and talents. In our university, preservice teachers may enter our College of Education prepared to teach mathematics or science. Yet when faced with our state requirement to learn how to work with ELLs, preservice teachers find themselves trying

to understand the complex relationship between language development and content learning, and why they are—suddenly and without their consent—also language teachers. These preservice teachers face a situation in which they are being forced to learn how to work with a population of students with whom they have little experience. Hence the first step in learning to work with ELLs is often for teachers to examine their own beliefs about interculturalism. In my classes I use Bennett's (1993) model of intercultural sensitivity to provide a framework from which they can examine these beliefs in a relatively nonthreatening environment. This model is not meant to be a stair-step type of organizer, but rather a point of departure from which individuals can examine their own beliefs and attitudes. I use this model not only because it allows individuals to reflect on their own concepts of intercultural sensitivity, but also because it does not insinuate that they are bad people if they recognize themselves in any particular viewpoint: because the model gives participants a depersonalized voice with which to engage in classroom discussions, they are able to reflect on each aspect of multiculturalism without making value judgments about people who might hold views from any of the perspectives outlined by Bennett.

In Bennett's (1993) model of intercultural sensitivity behaviors, individuals with the least exposure to interculturalism are characterized by feelings of denial, defense, and minimization. These descriptors all fall into the category Bennett refers to as ethnocentric, meaning that individuals in this category tend to view all their intercultural experiences through the lens of their own culture, unable to step outside their own cultural perspective. While taking this ethnocentric perspective, individuals often express feelings of denial or dismissal of differences ("We're all the same underneath"). As individuals become more empathetic toward a more intercultural view of the world, they become more accepting of differences and more respectful of others who seek to maintain their own cultural identity. This ethnorelative category is subdivided into acceptance, adaptation, and integration. The ethnorelative category is characterized by a valuing of difference rather than a mere acknowledgment of cultural variation. An objective of my class is for the participants to become more accepting of and empathetic to cultural and linguistic differences on a practical level and to express attitudes and beliefs that are a part more of the ethnorelative category than of the ethnocentric category. The CBSL project seeks to increase an individual's intercultural awareness and ability to see ELLs as in need of accommodation, not as victims of their linguistic diversity.

Yet although service learning has often been used to alter attitudes and beliefs about diverse populations, the definition of what constitutes a diverse learner has been broad and not commonly focused on English-language learners. This ongoing study seeks to investigate whether this method, suc-

cessful in other situations, can be used to promote positive beliefs and attitudes about ELLs.

The Study

Participants and Site

Participants in this study included over 130 preservice content-area teachers from a variety of disciplines including, but not limited to, mathematics education, science education, elementary education, social science education, and school psychology. The participants were predominantly white, middle-class, monolingual, and monocultural with fewer than 10% being from minority backgrounds. Participants ranged in age from 19 to over 45. They came from a variety of content areas and were diverse in their past experiences with ELLs, although none had ever worked as a self-contained ESL teacher. The most important factor that they had in common was that on graduation they would all be expected to be ready to work with ELL students based on the preparation they received in this course. All participants gave their informed consent to participate in the study.

All the participants were enrolled in a required class designed to help them understand how to work with ELLs in the mainstream classroom. The class focused on five main components including cross-cultural communication, ESL methodology, ESL curriculum design, assessment, and applied linguistics. As part of the class requirements, these preservice teachers were required to spend 10 hours working with an ELL partner in the community. As a part of the class, all students were required to study and learn concepts related to Bennett's (1993) model of intercultural sensitivity. The concepts of ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism were often discussed in class along with the corresponding subdivisions in each category.

The site for this study was a large US university in Florida with over 35,000 students. Although the university itself has a significant number of international students, the immediate surrounding area is rural with few immigrants; the average international population of the College of Education itself averages less than 5%. All the preservice teachers in the class were required to take this course; it was not an elective for any.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected over a three-year period and came in the form of reflective journals that preservice teachers completed as part of a class assignment. The course, required for all preservice content area teachers in the state of Florida, was designed to introduce these teachers to the field of English as a second language (ESL) and help them learn how to adapt their instruction to the needs of ELLs in their classrooms.

As part of the course, preservice teachers were required to spend 10 hours with an ELL partner (usually a student) in a tutoring situation in a community-based service-learning (CBSL) assignment. CBSL sites were arranged at a local public school, library, or community college, or at the university itself. The stated objective for the assignment indicated that students would become familiar with an ELL on a one-to-one level in order to increase their understanding of the unique situation of a second-language learner. Most ELL partners were students at the K-12 level, but some were adult ELLs taking English classes in the community. Preservice teachers were asked to complete one journal per week or two journals every other week. It was stressed that they could average only one journal a week, so that the experience was distributed over the entire semester. Potential journal topics were listed as suggestions and centered on reflection about interaction and self-exploration, but there was no requirement to write about the suggested topics. In fact few participants took them directly into consideration as they were writing, except for the first topic, which focused on what it means to be American.

A total of 10 reflective journals were turned in weekly and were graded based on the critical, reflective ideas expressed in each journal, not on the participant's opinion. In other words, participants were free to express any opinion they desired as long as it demonstrated critical thinking about the project. As I read the journals, I responded to each participant, providing feedback and probing for further discussion on important points. Thus the journals themselves became sources of dialog. Although preservice teachers were graded on most of the journals turned in, the last journal was turned in sealed. In fact these final journals, which consisted of preservice teachers' final thoughts on the project, were not opened until I had submitted my course grades.

Journals were analyzed throughout the semester. Emerging topics of interest would be brought into class for discussion, and as the semesters progressed, themes began to appear across iterations of the course. Although suggested journal topics were available for students' use, individuals were always free to write about any topic of their choice. Some topics were integrated into the discussion (i.e., fears and concerns). However, other topics emerged from the journals themselves. Main themes that came up in every class included fears and concerns about working with ELLs, and issues of legitimacy as teachers of ELLs. Although this topic was included as a suggested journal topic, many expressed these concerns beyond this first journal. In addition, preservice teachers were asked to think about how classroom concepts were reflected in the class, but this theme also appeared repeatedly in the journals depending on when the preservice teacher noticed it. Themes that were not engineered into the journals included personal

biases, cultural expectations, sentiments about immigrants in general, and the inclusion of ELL students in classroom activities.

Results

Participants' CBSL experiences were varied, but their final opinions of the assignment were usually positive. Most commented on the applicability of the concepts they had learned in class and the usefulness of the personal experiences they had had with their ELL partners, and many expressed curiosity about where their partner would be after a few more years. Some regretted leaving their partners behind, and others were relieved to be finished with what can be an emotional and awkward experience. Each participant was asked to write about how he or she felt about the CBSL experience and whether it altered his or her views of ELL students.

The excerpts from the reflective journals concentrate on the intercultural *aha* moments that the preservice teachers in my classes experienced as evidence of changes in attitude and/or beliefs. However, I also include excerpts that demonstrate how these preservice teachers made connections between classroom concepts in second-language acquisition and their CBSL experiences. The excerpts were chosen based on their ability to reflect major themes that were presented in the journals and do not highlight individual beliefs or attitudes that were only expressed once. Pseudonyms are used in all cases where a name is mentioned.

Getting Started

Most preservice teachers began their CBSL project experience with trepidation associated with a lack of knowledge about ELL students. These concerns are seen in the following example.

I must admit that I'm a little nervous about interacting with an ESOL student. I have a fear that I will unknowingly say or do something that offends the person from the other culture—unbeknownst to me!

Other entries revealed a certain amount of bias against certain language backgrounds. Here this participant places special emphasis on the fact that she was not assigned a Spanish-speaking ELL student and places more value on being placed with a student from a more acceptable cultural background.

I was glad when I was assigned my student because he wasn't just an ELL student speaking Spanish; he was from Saudi Arabia.

On the other hand, some participants made assumptions about their ELL partners based on their own expectations.

I have had quite a few bad experiences with students who speak different languages ... for me it was hard to listen to a teacher teach a

lesson in both English and Spanish in order for them to understand. This really bothered me, but I was told there was nothing I could do about it. Isn't there something we could do with these students? Aren't there supposed to be classes for students like this [sic]?

Others were able to recognize their own biases and by the end of the semester were able to see changes.

First Journal:

I want to be a great teacher, but I will always have a self who is well-rounded [sic] and defends her free time against needy time-moochers. So I guess my point is that I have a small prejudice against ESL students, seeing them as potentially needy and pushy.

Last Journal:

As a teacher, I will definitely be more understanding, patient and happy to make necessary accommodations for my ESL students. Now I think I feel mainly a sense of common humanity and eagerness to see what works for them. So, thanks for the attitude adjustment ... I think I can say I am in a much better position to be a good teacher for ALL of my students.

The following excerpt is from a participant who consistently expressed anti-immigrant opinions in class and finally seemed to feel that his ELL partner was a victim of his own family.

Apparently, the teacher/parent meetings have had limited success in discussing the best educational present and future for Hong; the parents' lack of English skills and limited valuing of education have been stumbling blocks. I actually know one of the girls in the ESOL class: a 7th-grade African girl named Wenda whose parents are here to study at [the university]. Hong's parents are not here for education.

This same preservice teacher went on to make several recommendations about his ELL partner, but still tended to blame the bad situation on the student and his family. Instead of the school and the teachers accommodating the cultural differences, the family must conform to the dominant culture in the US.

His parents need to get in touch with the school system. I don't want to hear any excuses about "they don't know the culture, they don't speak the language." They have at least one friend who can act as an interpreter (this has been confirmed), so those lines of communication need to be open. I'm not saying they have to come to midday parent/teacher meetings, but right now there is nil communication and it's not from a lack of effort by Hong's teachers.

Others did not express anti-immigrant sentiments, but rather feelings of apathy that were based in their own lack of experience with ELLs.

I was also surprised at how little I know about these children and their experiences in the classroom. I consider myself to be very sensitive to the psychological needs of children. However, I have to be quite honest and tell you that I have not been sensitive toward this specific group of students.

Yet other participants were surprised to find that their expectations and beliefs were inaccurate.

My expectations of what the class would look like were not exactly correct. I thought there would be more Hispanics and Haitian students. When I walked into this class I realized how small-minded I could be when stereotyping ESL students.

Interactions With Mainstream Teachers

Some participants commented on the interactions that ELL students had with their mainstream teachers, positions they would shortly occupy themselves. These encounters were extremely interesting because many of the participants were shocked at the lack of interaction taking place in the mainstream classroom.

The teacher doesn't seem to be excluding the ESOL students, but she didn't seem to be including them either. I think that when I came into [sic] help the students the teacher was glad that I could take Angela aside and give her one on one attention.

Another preservice teacher commented that outside of the mainstream class, her ELL partner seemed confident and sure of herself, but in the mainstream classroom, she was withdrawn and silent.

It was totally different to see her in a class setting ... She does not follow along with what the class is doing; she is always way behind ... Some of the time she is simply off-task and some of the time, she just can't keep up. I feel that if I was not sitting with her in class today she would have gotten nothing out of today's lesson ... Her teacher does not seem to care much about her. She is not really concerned with her or how she is doing. I feel like she's going to slip through the cracks if her teachers do not pay close enough attention to her.

Some noticed the participation/learning patterns of their ELL partners and attempted to project into the future, predicting their own behaviors.

He does ask questions but in a shy manner. He seems to understand the lecture but I cannot really tell because his eyes stay focused on his desk.

His actions make it hard for me as a teacher to judge his understanding of the presented material. I would need to work on focusing his attention to an overhead or other visual material so I could watch his reaction. I could ask him questions during the lecture to ensure his comprehension.

Still others contrasted their own ideas about a classroom with the ESL classrooms to which some were exposed.

The whole atmosphere in this ESOL class is so different than any other classroom I've been in. The students help each other all the time.

Changing Attitudes?

As mentioned above, a goal of this CBSL experience was to encourage university preservice teachers to think beyond ethnocentric perspectives of interculturalism to more ethnorelative points of view, to begin to value differences between cultures and see not only the challenges of working with ELL students, but also the benefits. In some ways, every participant who goes through the CBSL project expresses some sense of change, even on a minor scale. However, some have more significant experiences.

Although many of the participants felt in some way altered by their experiences, a few specifically articulated their changing attitudes toward ELL students and immigrants in general.

I wonder if maybe I have not had the right attitude about immigrants and maybe without my conscious knowledge of it have stereotyped them to some degree. I recognize now more than ever what hard work it takes for these immigrants to learn English.

Others remarked that they had reexamined some of their opinions.

I feel that I am becoming more understanding and empathetic toward the Mexican immigrants, and migrant worker population in general through this experience. While before I do not think I was completely insensitive, I think that I have become more sensitive now that I have been taken away from the pure theoretical and intellectual environment of classroom discussion and the whole middle class environment.

Still others were struggling with conflicting emotions about ELL students, moving away from open hostility, but still perhaps caught in deficit thinking.

My feelings of contempt for these students are slowly subsiding. I am beginning to understand that it is not their fault for being in their situation. Above all, I now know that these kids are very intelligent, although handicapped by their language deficiency.

This participant is realizing that bad things do happen to good people, but still sees his ELL partner's language minority status as a deficiency.

Still other participants were surprised that some of their expectations about ELL students were not confirmed when they worked with them, as with this preservice teacher who was surprised that his ELL partner was more prone to imitate his peers than the English model provided by his classroom teacher.

It was interesting that he knew the correct ways to say sentences. It frustrates me that he knows the correct way to do something, yet he feels the social need to do it incorrectly.

Another significant revelation took place in a class discussion conducted after the CBSL experience when one preservice teacher shared a particularly profound change of opinion.

I could never understand why they [ELL students] couldn't just learn English before they came here. Now I know that's not realistic. I had never thought about it like that before.

Language Learning Comes to Life

In addition to realizations about diverse cultures, many participants remarked that their concepts of language learning had been altered or that ideas and concepts learned in class had been confirmed. In fact many of the preservice teachers who had had significant intercultural experiences in the past seemed to take more advantage of the opportunities to examine second-language learning more closely because they were not dealing with intercultural issues for the first time. Some remarked on aspects of language-learning that they had not thought about before or had taken for granted.

I never realized how hard some words in English are to identify and pronounce for a new learner. From now on, I will be more patient in communicating with a person who is learning or wants to practice his/her English.

Others remarked on how certain strategies they were learning in class were reflected in the actual classroom.

I had the opportunity to implement some of the learning strategies from class in addition to the mathematics techniques. What I learned was that using both strategies together actually made the problems go by more smoothly.

A preservice teacher from science education commented on the varying levels of language abilities that ELL students bring to the mainstream class.

This experience [proctoring an exam] was an excellent example of how ELL students enter the classroom at varying language levels. I know that this has been mentioned repeatedly in class, but it is a very different experience to have personal interactions with people who truly are at different places in the language learning process.

Saying Goodbye

Many participants found it difficult to end their CBSL projects. They realized that they had formed bonds that were not easily broken, even though those bonds were formed in nontraditional ways. Others remained separated from their ELL partners because of cultural, linguistic, and time constraints. One preservice teacher made a powerful statement in the following comment.

When the students returned to class they had story time and Mi-sung seemed to enjoy the story. She was looking at the book and sitting still. I said good-bye to her as I was leaving. She has never spoken to me; I have no idea what her voice sounds like. She looked at me for a second and then focused on her friends. I wasn't angry or disappointed. I understand that I didn't spend enough time for this shy little girl to feel comfortable with me.

Most participants expressed a combination of sadness and relief that the project was coming to a close and included such statements. However, other goodbyes were more statements of personal growth.

You learn that they're real people, not unlike yourself. It cuts back racial barriers and false stereotypes and it comes down to you and the child working toward a common goal. The effect is powerful.

Discussion

Although many of the preservice teachers came to this project with indifference or guarded concern, some did harbor serious misconceptions about immigrants and language-learning or obvious anti-immigrant sentiments. However, through the CBSL experience, many of these same university preservice teachers were able either to alter their views or at least to look at the situation from a different perspective. This expansion of perspective is critical considering the influence that a teacher's beliefs have on classroom actions. Many participants expressed a heightened sense of awareness that would now indicate more of the acceptance and adaptation that are part of the ethnorelative perspective (Bennett, 1993). This change is evidenced by journal entries that indicate limited or no acceptance of difference in the beginning and more accepting attitudes at the end of the semester.

Some preservice teachers held beliefs that could be detrimental to ELLs in their classrooms. Some viewed their future ELL students as an extra burden

on their time. Others had adopted a deficit model (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001) that views the home life of the ELL student as deficient and in need of remediation and assimilation to one more consistent with the dominant culture. In addition, preservice teachers can engage in negative thinking and social mirroring that supports their belief that certain minority groups, most notably Latinos, are inferior and not deserving of instructional accommodations.

However, the journal entries presented above demonstrate a marked difference in some participants' thinking about immigrants in general, especially ELL students in schools. Participants began the project nervous and unsure of themselves and finished with a sense of confidence that I hope they will carry into their professional classrooms. Many have begun to self-identify as legitimate teachers of ELLs, although others still express doubts about their potential effectiveness with ELLs. Preservice teachers who resisted interactions with ELLs because of biases or prior negative experiences have now come to see them as interesting individuals with whom they look forward to having conversations and interactions. These authentic, situated experiences were much more powerful than any concept I could have taught in class. In addition, participants who had previously not thought much about teaching ELLs began seriously to consider strategies and actions that would aid this particular population of learners.

Limitations

As with any research, several limitations must be taken into consideration when reviewing the data and results. Perhaps the most important limitation involves the nature of the class. From the beginning of the semester, it was a stated objective that the participants would become more sophisticated in their knowledge and application of intercultural concepts. Hence participants may have felt pressure to become more tolerant and accepting of intercultural concepts and ideas. They may have felt that their grade was contingent on their responses, although it was made clear that this was not the case. I reinforced this nonjudgmental stance by asking participants to turn in the last journal in a sealed envelope to be opened after I had submitted my grades.

It is possible that additional time spent with ELL partners may aid learning. In fact the current project requires only 10 contact hours with ELL partners, and ideally participants would spend more time on the project. As evidenced by the participant who had never heard her partner's voice, sometimes 10 hours might not be enough.

An additional limitation is the precarious nature of the change in attitudes and beliefs. Dweck (2000), among others, has argued that beliefs are difficult to alter. Hence it is possible that although these preservice teachers

may be advocating more tolerant views now, they may well fall back into older, more established patterns of behavior after graduation.

Conclusions

In this article I provide evidence that through a community-based service-learning experience conducted over the period of a one-semester course, preservice teachers enrolled in a class focusing on ELLs in the mainstream classroom can alter their beliefs and attitudes about these learners. I used data from student journals to support this conclusion. This study is not meant to provide conclusive support that these activities can permanently change participants' attitudes and beliefs; rather, its purpose is to provide a glimpse into how valuable hands-on experiences may be for these mainstream preservice teachers.

Service Learning as a Tool of Change

Service-learning-type projects such as the CBSL are excellent methods of achieving these goals and have been used often in the past (Sleeter, 1995; Tellez, Hlebowitsh, Cohen, & Norwood, 1995). Quoting Salman Rushdie, Koulisch (2000) argues that service learning projects provide university preservice teachers with "a migrant's-eye view of the world" (p. 170). In addition, these programs allow students an alternative, more reflective and analytical method of demonstrating their own growing knowledge of diverse learners through classroom discussions and reflective journals (Koulisch). Service learning programs also help university preservice teachers examine their own feelings and beliefs in a controlled environment (Dunlap, 1998).

Service learning experiences offer more meaningful ways to help preservice teachers develop professional competence than do traditional field experiences or traditional volunteer programs for several reasons (Erickson & Anderson, 1997). First, service learning offers direct and reciprocal benefits to preservice teachers and to the community (Wade et al., 1999): in fact the process is mutually beneficial not only to the university preservice teachers themselves, but also to the community that they serve. Second, service learning experiences involve structured projects or activities rather than open-ended field experiences and include reflection that results in an enhanced sense of understanding of the ELL community and the complexity of the task of learning English as a second language subject matter (Eyler & Giles, 1999). In this way, preservice teachers' learning is scaffolded in a more structured manner. Third, because service learning is directly linked to course requirements, the products of service learning receive feedback and are an integral part of course credit. This process of including the service learning in the class accountability system in effect increases the value of the experience in the eyes of many university preservice teachers. Fourth, service learning

experiences anchor student learning by allowing them to practice in authentic settings (Wade, 2000). Critical for any situated learning environment, this real-world experience encourages participants to see the effects of their actions on the community at large. Fifth, service learning products may form an important element in preservice teachers' portfolios. As preservice teachers leave the university setting, potential employers can see that graduates from such programs have been involved in many varied authentic learning environments. Finally, the increased confidence that comes from tutoring ELLs could increase the likelihood of graduates choosing to work with diverse populations or in high-poverty schools where the need for qualified teachers is crucial.

A goal in requiring a CBSL component in my classes is to help preservice teachers expand their intercultural awareness, participate in a legitimate peripheral learning experience, and have an opportunity to see class concepts in a real-world situation. In most cases, participants achieved substantial growth in their understanding of ELL students. In many cases, there was evidence of more ethno-relative thinking as opposed to an ethnocentric approach to working with these learners. Furthermore, they were able to see the concepts taught in class brought to life.

As mentioned above, for this course the last journal is always submitted in a sealed envelope, and usually it is one of the more forthcoming entries. The following excerpt comes from one of these entries.

The CBSL experience was good for me. It put names and faces on a problem that I had not humanized in the past. Before the CBSL experience I had a very hard line approach to the education of ELL students. I did not feel that ESL students should be allowed to attend English-speaking schools in the first place. Now that I have worked directly with ESL students, I have softened my approach concerning their education. I have realized that it is not Juan and Angela's fault. They didn't choose their situation. They are children, like thousands of other ESL students that need to be educated within our schools. I know that I will face the ESL predicament during my teaching career. The CBSL experience has given me a better understanding of the needs of ESL students.

Although I do not believe that this student has transitioned into a completely intercultural sensitive individual, it seems that he has begun to see ELL students and become more concerned about their futures instead of dismissing them and is showing evidence of attitudinal change.

Future studies that stem from the CBSL project will be long term and follow preservice teachers into their classrooms in order to determine whether there are any lasting effects of the project. However, perhaps the

most important implication of the project at this point is that the preservice teachers are questioning their own views and beliefs.

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