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ELEMENTARY ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER
CARE IN THE CLASSROOM

A Dissertation Submitted to Molloy University
The School of Education and Human Services
Ed.D. in Educational Leadership for Diverse Learning Environments

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by
CAROL BOODRAM-WRIGHT
Molloy University

Dr. Warren E. Whitaker,
Dissertation Chair

DECEMBER 2023

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2023



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES

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Abstract

English Language Learners (ELLs) experience care in the classroom based on prior experiences, teacher and student relationships, academic support, health support, and safety. The purpose of this study was to understand how ELLs experience care in the classroom with their classroom teacher as described by six ELL participants. A positive teacher-student relationship rooted in care, comfort, safety, and trust enhanced ELLs' engagement with their classroom teacher. The findings of this qualitative narrative study revealed that unconditional support and individualized quality time contributed to ELLs' well-being in the classroom. Interpretations of care from the ELLs' narratives depicted how experiences in the classroom informed wellness and motivation for learning. Daily classroom practices enabled ELLs to feel comfortable and safe and develop a sense of belonging. Teacher and student relationships can positively affect ELLs, allowing them to be engaged in their own learning. When teachers carefully consider ELLs' needs and support them unconditionally, ELLs can attain positive well-being. Further development of the teacher-student relationship can benefit all stakeholders because it provides a foundation for ensuring positive well-being for ELLs and academic success. Implications suggest that planning time, professional development, allocation of resources, and enhancing the home and school connection are crucial for educating ELLs and providing them with equitable opportunities. Nodding's Care Theory and Krashen's Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory were two theoretical frameworks used to support this qualitative study.

Keywords: English language learners, ethics of care theory, second language acquisition (SLA) theory, care, prior experiences, comfort, trust, well-being, academic support, health support, safety, teacher and student relationship

Dedication

This odyssey came with challenges and there are many to thank for standing by my side, supporting, and encouraging me, even during times when I met with frustration and tears.

My three children Jordanna-Carol, Devyn-Paul, and Chasydee-Daneka mean everything to me, and you are the motivators in all I strive to achieve. The sacrifices you endured to allow me to pursue this dream never went unnoticed. Nothing in life is easy but determination and hard work will prevail as you have witnessed in my experiences.

To my husband, Donnoto, you made me learn what self-perseverance is, and because of you, I championed this journey, despite the complexities.

My parents, mommy and daddy, your vision for the life you wanted your two girls to have, was the driving force behind your migration from Trinidad and Tobago to the United States. I hope I made you proud and thank you for the sacrifices you made to allow us to accomplish the American Dream.

I dedicate this dissertation to all the English Language Learners (ELLs) and their families who migrated the United States, and who were willing to endure obstacles in search of a better life for their families. You have left a mark that will remain with me forever.

Acknowledgments

I give all glory to God for giving me the strength and guidance to pursue and achieve this milestone. I believe I was chosen to make a difference in this life, and I am clear of my role. Acquiring my doctoral degree will allow me to be the voice of the unspoken and unheard in search of social justice for all.

Dr. Scott J. Comis, I am sincerely appreciative of your consistent support, encouragement, and belief in my abilities as an educational leader of diverse learning communities. Your support and my innate passion kept me aligned with my goals; never allowing me to shift.

My committee members Dr. Whitaker, Dr. Kress, and Dr. Mikulec, I am forever grateful to you for allowing me to be the storyteller for ELLs and how care impacts their well-being and learning. Your encouragement to follow what I aspired to identify allowed my passion to reveal the stories of ELLs. You have inspired me, and I am thankful!

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Chapter 1: Introduction

There has been an increase in the number of English Language Learners (ELLs) arriving in the United States, enrolling in school systems, who are placed in classrooms alongside general education students (Breiseth, 2015). ELLs are held to the same level of expectations as their peers. Before ELLs can reach the expected level of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) they must be immersed in the language and provided with equitable learning opportunities. Positive teacher-student relationships allow students to feel connected, cared for, and valued, resulting in increased motivation to learn (Davis, 2006).

If ELLs are expected to perform at a similar level as their peers, they need to receive individualized and unconditional support from their classroom teacher. Teachers need to be aware of past traumas, prior experiences and knowledge, language proficiency and skills that ELLs have when they enter their classrooms. Without the creation of a positive teacher-student relationship a teacher may find it challenging to ascertain the academic and social-emotional levels of the ELL. As the population of ELLs in United States classrooms continue to grow, it is crucial for educators to complete training to adequately support ELLs well-being and lead them to academic success.

Background of the Problem

Currently, in New York, there is an influx of migrants entering the state through New York City, and many of these migrants are k-12 students who have never attended school in the United States and who may not speak English. In the United States, the increase of migrants currently has no limit, therefore there are no limits to children entering the United States school systems. This puts pressure on school districts to provide equitable learning opportunities for

ELLs, and having the right resources or enough resources to provide the support that each individual ELL needs which presents a challenge for educators.

The influx of migrants to NYC is causing huge conflicts within the political and educational systems in New York. NYC schools are becoming overwhelmed with the number of migrant children enrolling in public schools. The children entering the schools have varied academic and health support needs (Garsd, 2023). The city's large number of ELLs enrolled comes with a deep concern to all stakeholders on how these students will be provided with an equitable education. Parents are concerned about the education their migrant children will receive, and state officials are mutually concerned about the lack of funding and resources needed to instruct these migrant students. Another major concern is the need for English as a New Language (ENL) teachers to work with these students. School systems in New York do not have enough ENL teachers needed to work with ELLs. The shortage of resources, training and educators who are equipped with the knowledge to deal with ELLs causes great concern in NYC school systems. According to Brachfield (2023) the number of migrant children attempting to enter NYC schools has caused a tremendous conflict amongst NY officials. Migrant children are entitled to a free public education despite the technicalities of illegal roadblocks with undocumented migrants and their residence status. The discriminatory policies are causing harm to the most vulnerable students.

Long Island, New York, is a suburban island outside New York City. Its proximity to New York City poses the same challenges for educators because many families are enrolling their children in Long Island, New York school districts. D' Iorio and Lane (2023) informed that in 2022, 800 migrant children were registered in Long Island schools. The influx of immigrant children in Long Island school systems is causing an uproar on Long Island, NY communities.

Long Island, NY school districts face challenges with providing over 2,200 school-aged migrant children with an equitable education. Ramos (2014) described the difficulty in meeting the individual needs of migrant children who are ELLs and who are affected by trauma. The resources needed are limited to stakeholders in charge of Long Island schools. Migrant children have a variety of needs and must be assessed to identify what these needs are. Some students require Second Language Acquisition (SLA), some need more intensive help from special educators. The needs of migrant children require educators to be trained in how to deal with and educate migrant children who are entering Long Island schools in large numbers each day. The migrant crisis forces stakeholders and educators to choose to redistribute resources when school budgets are already exhausted.

Care and Relationships for ELLs

ELLs need to be part of a relationship with a teacher which conveys the message that they are cared for and supported. ELLs need to feel valued and accepted as a means of making connections to their classroom teachers, peers, and learning. Teachers serve as the bridges that connect ELLs to adjusting to a new culture, school, and learning. When teachers convey messages of comfort and belonging ELLs feel like they are part of their class. These feelings enrich ELLs' confidence. ELLs depend on teachers to build relationships that serve their well-being and academic needs. Some ELLs may have experienced trauma or hardships that hinder the development of trusting relationships. Teachers who demonstrate care with ELLs provide an emotional lifeline that ELLs and migrant children depend on and need. Relationship building can serve many ELLs' needs. Friendships with a partner can provide ELLs with support on a level that makes ELLs feel comfortable with learning and sharing with a peer (WETA, 2023). Teachers are seen as the empowered figure who can foster care, acceptance, and non-threatening learning

environments. The teacher-student relationship serves many purposes in informing ELLs and migrant children's well-being and academic success.

Different learning styles require pathways to learning, created through positive teacher-student relationships. When ELLs feel valued by a teacher, there are many benefits to success in the classroom. Migrant children to the United States come with a plethora of experiences. Some leave their homeland to escape life's challenges. They must learn a new language and acclimate to a new environment, new culture, new educational system, new friends, and a new home. Feeling cared for and nurtured is crucial to ELLs and migrant students in school. Migrant children must be able to express themselves and share their stories. The stories told allow educators to provide equitable learning opportunities for them to learn. The cultural barriers, learning a new language, and having to meet new expectations can be overwhelming. Developing a strong support system through positive teacher-student relationships can help ELLs and migrant children feel comfortable in their new educational environment (Zinveliu, 2022). Creating a classroom that is reflective of culture, traditions, different ethnicities, and languages can enable ELLs to feel like a part of the class. Sharing stories about life's experiences can help ELLs and migrant children to feel welcome and accepted (Burnett, 2015). Memories of traumatic experiences, pain, loss, and death are all emotional baggage migrant children experience in arriving in a new country. Positive teacher-student relationships provide ELLs with an outlet to share these emotional challenges and receive the support needed to overcome barriers. They can express themselves and confide in their classroom teachers to offer advice and support. Teachers who support and connect to the stories of ELLs and migrants provide relationships that foster new experiences and learning that can be seen as a foundation for new learning and experiences in a fair and nurturing environment (Lutrell, 2013).

Challenges to Caring in Schools

Providing unconditional academic support, health support, safety, and building a positive teacher-student relationship that is centered around trust that breeds confidence can be hindered due to conditions that are outside of teacher and school's hands. Teachers dedicating time to testing, budgets being allocated at the end of the prior school year, and having multiple ELLs in a classroom that all need individualized support becomes a challenge for teachers and often negatively effects ELLs' learning, the development of a relationship, and a positive well-being.

The New York State English Language Arts (NYS ELA) assessment comes with many pressures. Teachers are held accountable for how their students perform and students are responsible for having the knowledge to score on grade level despite their level of English language proficiency. Educators are forced to teach to the test months prior to testing, making sure to cover all components of the test each day until students acquire the skills and strategies needed to pass the test. Teachers dedicate blocks of time to teaching how to answer multiple-choice questions, short-response questions and extended-questions. The limited time is accompanied by no flexibility to dedicate time and energy to educate ELLs, which can negatively impact the teacher-student relationship. The NYS ELA and other assessments require ample preparation time which takes away from individualized support.

Another barrier that keeps teachers from providing optimal levels of care in their classrooms is not having the resources and tools needed to provide equitable learning opportunities for ELLs because the funding needed upon the ELLs entry into the school system is not available. School budgets are determined prior to students enrolling in schools. ELLs are registered for school during the start of the school year, but many times after the start of the school year when budgets have already been allocated to diverse needs of the school. Schools

with low funding or resources must take on more students that have unique needs. Lack of proper resources can be detrimental because ELLs have greater needs not accounted for when funds were first allocated.

Not only does a budget that does not account for ELLs impact their learning and relationships, but having many ELLs in a classroom with specific needs poses a challenge to educators as well. Multiple ELLs are placed in the same classroom but their proficiency levels of reading, writing, speaking, and listening vary. The resources needed to provide equitable learning opportunities are limited. The lack of resources also comes with teachers not being equipped with the knowledge and experience on how to educate ELLs, how to meet their individual needs, and how to create positive teacher-student relationships with students and their families.

Statement of the Problem

ELLs who have recently migrated to the United States face many challenges and need particular attention and care to support them. While all students require care and positive teacher-student relationships, this is especially important for ELLs because they have encountered challenges in their homeland, such as trauma, violence, poverty, lack of shelter and food, which causes them to feel isolated in classroom environments. However, there is not enough research about what care looks and feels like for ELL students who have recently migrated, which may mean that schools are not providing as much or the kind of care that ELLs need as they transition to a new context and begin acquiring a new language.

Theoretical Framework

In this qualitative study, I used the conceptual frameworks of the ethics of care theory (Noddings, 2005) and Krashen's (1981) SLA theory as theoretical frameworks. The ethics of care theory is a framework that focuses on the value of relationships and how feelings of being cared

for can develop morality in human beings (Noddings, 1984). Ethical caring in the educational context is students having natural experiences in which they can be themselves. Ethics of care theory uses the notion of care and nurturing to examine the educational experience from student perspectives. This framework consists of four characteristics: (a) having conversations, (b) exploring lived experiences, (c) practicing and demonstrating care and concern, and (d) reaffirming positive behaviors and relationships.

The characteristics provided a basis for how caring relationships can be formed between teacher and student. Caring relationships allow children to feel healthy and safe. The outcome of students being involved in caring relationships results in developing social skills, wellness, and risk-taking skills that can prepare them for school and life (Maryland State DOE, 2022). Students can identify what care looks like, but more importantly, students can participate in healthy, caring relationships and care for others.

SLA refers to learning a second language after a first language has previously been learned. Krashen's (1985) Theory of SLA is a framework consisting of five main hypotheses that are key factors in the language acquisition process: The Acquisition-Learning hypothesis, the Monitor hypothesis, the Natural Order hypothesis, the Input hypothesis, and the Affective Filter hypothesis. Classrooms must be interactive and eliminate the discomfort of intimidation to increase motivation and encourage risk-taking. Krashen (1982) described the affective filter hypothesis as a barrier that can impede the ability to acquire language. Krashen (1985) believed that self-confidence, anxiety, and motivation attributes played an intricate role in SLA theory. Negative emotions or feelings form a space in the mind, causing disruptions in thinking and learning, which can hinder language processing. Teachers can foster language learning by creating purposeful ways to acquire language without focusing on the emotional stressors that

can affect ELLs' language growth in the classroom (Schutz, 1998). Acquiring a second language takes time to develop. Krashen's (1982) monitor hypothesis described two ways in which a second language is developed by learning in a conscious formal way and an unconscious informal way. The theories enabled me to understand how ELLs view caring teacher-student relationships and how this informs ELLs' well-being in their classroom. More importantly, they help uncover the stories ELLs share, enabling their voices to be heard and helping them to build relationships to make significant growth and progress during their academic school year.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative narrative research study is to learn more about how elementary ELLs who have recently migrated to the United States experience care in the classroom. This qualitative study aimed to identify the importance of teacher-student relationships and how they impact ELLs' well-being and learning in the classroom. This can help educators create optimal learning conditions that can provide ELLs with equitable educational experiences.

Significance

Knowing more about this topic may help schools and teachers create optimal conditions for ELLs to thrive by learning more about what care means to them and what it looks like from their point of view. Understanding how Elementary ELLs experience care in classroom.

Research Questions

In exploring how elementary ELLs are experiencing their education, this study was guided by the following research questions:

How do caring teacher-student relationships inform ELLs' well-being in the classroom?

1. How do Elementary ELLs experience care in the classroom?

- a. How do Elementary ELLs describe care?
- b. How are Elementary ELLs interpreting care in their classroom?
- c. To what extent do Elementary ELLs' experiences with care in the classroom inform their well-being?
- d. To what extent do Elementary ELLs respond to care in the classroom?

Research Design

This qualitative study sought to understand the stories of ELLs and how they experienced care in the classroom with their classroom teacher from their perspectives. Narrative analysis provided an opportunity for the participants to be active members through collaboration to tell their stories (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I was interested in learning more about how caring teacher-student relationships could impact ELLs' well-being and learning experiences. A purposefully selected sample of six ELL participants in grade four, age nine, who have resided in the United States. for one or two years, whose primary language is not English, and who are required to take the New York State English Language Arts (NYS ELA) assessment was explored. I collected the data for this narrative study via classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, field notes, and visual storyboards. I created a platform to collect data through understanding caring experiences ELLs had with their classroom teachers, which directly informed the themes of this study.

Methods

This study's narrative research took place from March 2023 through April 2023. There were six participants in this qualitative study, with the majority coming from Latin America and one student from Asia. All participants were nine years old and resided in the United States for less than two years. Five of the participants identified their primary language as Spanish, and one

identified theirs as Urdu. None of the participants spoke English upon arrival to the United States. The study took place in a K-6 elementary school on Long Island, New York, in a predominantly ELL school district. This qualitative narrative study examined how elementary ELLs experienced care in the classroom with their classroom teachers through classroom observations, field notes, semi-structured interviews, and visual storyboards. I conducted classroom observations during reading instruction and focused on observing ELLs' interactions with their teachers and peers.

I generated field notes during all classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and during the creation of storyboards. Notes included questions I had when working with ELLs, their responses and stories, and thoughts about the activities and interactions to provide a deeper understanding of how ELLs experienced care in the classroom with their teacher. I conducted semi-structured interviews in my reading classroom for three sessions. Each interview consisted of me and one participant. An additional session was used for member checking to confirm the accuracy of the stories told. Students created storyboards in my reading classroom in two groups. One group consisted of four participants in the same class, and the other group consisted of two participants, also in the same class. I provided explicit directions on how to create the storyboards. The directions stated that the participants had to show their relationship with their classroom teacher. I then asked participants to write about their pictures and the stories they told about their relationships with their classroom teacher.

My constructivist worldview lens enabled them to learn about and understand ELLs' feelings, experiences, and how they experience care in the classroom through academic support, health support, and safety. My high school experiences were more aligned with the cultural background of the study's participants. As a result, I felt comfortable and accepted by participants when conducting the study. I gathered that educators must develop an awareness of

the ELLs' needs, tailor instruction, and be willing to learn through personal interaction with ELLs and their families.

Site Selection and Sample

This qualitative study occurred at a K-6 elementary school in Long Island, NY. This location was known for having a diverse population of ELLs who were required to take the New York State (NYS) English Language Arts (ELA) assessment in grades three through six after residing in the United States for more than one year. According to NYSED (2020), a Nassau County, NY Union Free School District (UFSD) had a 72% Hispanic or Latino population, 9% Asian or Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian, 2% White, and 7% Black or African American. The population the researcher worked with for this qualitative narrative research was six ELLs in fourth grade. According to the district's website, the demographics of ELLs equate to 91% of the school district; 43% percent of the student population is Latino/Hispanic, 16% Asian, 17% White, Black/African American 21%, and Multiracial 3%. The participants in this study were ELLs of diverse cultural backgrounds whose language proficiency levels varied. The elementary school these ELLs attended had a greater population of ELLs than the other two schools in the district.

I used purposeful sampling in this qualitative study. The criteria for this study consisted of participants that were (a) native to another country, (b) resided in the United States for one year or more, (c) currently in fourth grade, (d) learning English as a new language, (e) attended this school for the first time or (f) transferred students. Participants' countries of origin included Pakistan, Dominican Republic, Honduras, and Guatemala. In 2019, the term formerly known as English as a Second Language (ESL) was changed to English as a New Language (ENL) (NYSED, 2022). Schools in NYS refer to students who receive ENL services. These students

work with an ENL teacher to acquire English language development while focusing on core content and skills to assist with acquiring the English language. In New York State (NYS) ENL students are given the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) yearly. The NYSESLAT was designed to assess the English language proficiency levels of ELLs in grades K-12 in NYS schools (NYSED, 2015). The proficiency levels for each student differ, and the time spent with an ENL teacher is dependent on the proficiency level. The levels of proficiency on the NYS NYSESLAT vary from Entering or the beginner level to commanding or the proficient level.

Data Collection

I collected data through classroom observations, field notes, semi-structured interviews, and visual storyboards that elicited emotions and feelings about the teacher-student relationship and the experience of care in the classroom. The building principal granted approval to conduct the study with fourth-grade ELLs to understand how ELLs experience care in their classroom. An ENL teacher assisted me in compiling a set of six participants. I provided a recruitment letter to participants and their families. Upon electing to participate in the study, I conducted an afterschool meeting to explain the study in detail to students and families. I obtained child assent for each ELL to participate in this study. After I obtained all completed consent forms, I met with participants to explain their role in the study. I explained the benefits of the study to participants, how I would interview the participants, observe in the classroom, and visual storyboard they would complete.

The purpose of observing ELLs in the classroom setting was to witness how classroom teachers interacted with ELLs and how ELLs experienced care in the classroom. The observations allowed me to see teachers and students in the classroom identifying attitudes,

behaviors, and social and emotional aspects associated with learning. I took field notes throughout the data collection process during classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and storyboard illustrations. I conducted semi-structured interviews between the participants and me during 30-minute sessions. Lastly, I introduced storyboards as the final part of the data collection process. The participants were encouraged to illustrate and write about what they illustrated on their storyboards. I instructed them to create an illustration that reflected their teacher-student relationship and how they experienced care with their teacher. Participants created storyboards that reflected the relationships they experienced with their classroom teacher.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Reflexivity was imperative in shaping the interpretation of data in this study. Reflexivity influenced my analysis of data based on past ELLs' experiences, which created a bias that was challenged and refuted by student descriptions, and care and comfort were visible, structured, and intentional when crafting teacher-student relationships. Data was collected and analyzed through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with six participants. I reviewed notes, transcribed audio recordings, and compared storyboards to decipher ELLs' experiences with care and to identify commonalities in student responses and experiences.

I conducted member checking to ensure that all data collected from participants was accurate. Participants met with me to re-confirm the meanings of responses to semi-structured interviews and storyboard illustrations. After I completed member checking, I developed initial stories for each participant related to their experiences with care. Then, I used a combination of deductive coding to generate codes from the framework of care and SLA and inductive coding after continued analysis revealed potential alternative interpretations of participant data. Use of deductive coding enabled me to identify care, comfort, well-being, safety, and trust as substantial

pieces of the teacher-student relationship and ELLs' experiences with care in the classroom. I also used inductive coding, more specifically, descriptive coding, during analysis of data. I used the codes to identify categories that ultimately generated thematic findings for this study. I coded all data using Dedoose computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software.

Assumptions

I developed three assumptions: trusting relationship with ELLs and teacher take time, all ELLs can learn if teachers create safe spaces for them and the United States will provide a better and more supportive life for ELLs and their families. The assumptions were made based on my experience and background as well as knowledge of ELLs and migrating to a new country.

The first assumption was that not all ELLs build trusting relationships with teachers over one academic school year, which I based on my experience with ELLs. ELLs arrive at educational institutes with challenges. NASP (2015) explained that ELLs, who may also be refugees, are traumatized from pre-migration and resettlement. They experience trauma that impacts their life from issues such as violence, poverty, malnutrition, and having to leave their home and families under unsafe conditions. Psychological trauma and mistrust issues may also play an intricate role in ELLs forming relationships. ELLs who arrived in the United States experienced hardships in their native home.

Krashen's (1985) affective filter hypothesis claimed that learners who experience self-confidence, high motivation, a positive self-image, and minimal stressors are more prepared to achieve second language skills. Krashen's (1985) affective filter hypothesis supports the assumption that ELLs can learn if teachers create a safe space for them. If learners are experiencing a negative self-image, a mental block is created, and the comprehensible input needed to acquire a second language is blocked. As a result, if being immersed in language

learning is interrupted. ELLs have invisible boundaries that cause them to refrain from engaging in class activities, peer interactions, or group activities. All ELLs can learn if teachers create safe spaces for them. This assumption was guided by the premise that ELLs know what a safe space is, and they felt comfortable being themselves in safe spaces. This assumption progressed with building relationships that enabled them to engage in partner and group work.

The assumption that America is the land of freedom and opportunity and ELLs, and their families will be well supported in the United States and have a better life because the prior challenges faced in their homeland do not exist in the United States. NASP (2015) stated that many ELLs have been living through combat in areas where violence and survival are part of their daily life experiences. Many of their traumas force them to relocate to the United States, and it is not done by choice.

Limitations

There were limitations discovered when I conducted this study. Most participants were from specific Latin American regions, and one participant was from Pakistan, not all over the world. The views of caring teacher-student relationships can look different in other regions of the world. Second, direct recollection of stories may not have reflected actual events or whole pieces of stories due to their age and limited memory. Familial influence could forbid students to disclose personal information that can present challenges for them in educational systems, thus not painting the entire picture. Trauma can contribute to limitations in the well-being and learning of ELLs. The influence of others' stories can impact how an ELL tells a story. Family members can condition perception of reality because of a fear of people knowing the truth. Lastly, the family members of ELLs were not included in this study, which could have been critical to the findings of how ELLs experience care.

Delimitations

This research study aimed to identify how ELLs experience care in the classroom with their classroom teacher and how caring teacher-student relationships inform the well-being of ELLs. I made conscious exclusionary decisions in conducting this study. One of the exclusionary decisions I made in conducting this study was to exclude participants from specific grade levels due to the number of parents who opted their children out of the NYS ELA standardized test. The other considerations were the grade and age of potential participants and their ability to describe lived experiences based on memories. The number of participants required for the study was at least five. Each participant was required to meet the criteria for this qualitative study so that I could gain insight into what they sought to uncover.

Worldview

My worldview as a literacy specialist invokes the responsibility to provide reading instruction that encompasses fluency, comprehension, and writing skills to students who perform below grade level and ELLs. I purposefully studied ELLs who have migrated from foreign countries for a better life in the United States because of personal experience with immigration and adaptation to United States school as a child. Because of this, the ELLs' stories resonated with me. My aim is to enable all students to become active readers in all aspects of reading no matter their country of origin, challenges, and experiences upon arrival in the United States, or their level of proficiency with the English language.

Definition of Terms

The definitions of key terms used in the qualitative research are listed below:

The acronym *ENL* represents English as a New Language (ENL). Instruction in this program, formerly known as *English as a Second Language* (ESL), emphasizes English language

acquisition. In an ENL program, language arts and content-area instruction are taught in English using specific ENL instructional strategies (NYSED, 2015-2022). This study supports students who need help acquiring English language skills to achieve academic success and English language proficiency.

The term *caring relationships* between teacher and student enables students to feel cared for and valued by their teachers. The teachers show interest in students' welfare, demonstrate respect towards students and their perspectives, encourage students by believing in them, and recognize their social and academic needs. In addition, teachers recognize students' social and academic achievements (Nishioka, 2019). In this study, caring relations between teachers and students are connections made through shared discussions and interactions, personal and academic discussions that enable students to feel valued and cared for by their teachers.

The term *trusting relationship* refers to having confidence in the reliability of another person. In schools, classrooms are best managed when teachers construct appropriate expectations, offer engaging and important lessons, celebrate milestones and accomplishments, and offer students choices. Educators must be thoughtful in their class preparation to intentionally create opportunities to build trust (Burns, 2022).

The term *classroom teacher* refers to an educator who teaches an academic discipline to the general student population. In elementary schools, these are grade-level teachers. In secondary schools, these are the academic subject-area teachers (Boivin, 2021). For this study, a classroom teacher is a primary teacher who spends the most time with all students. They provide instruction in various subjects.

The term *comfort* means feeling relaxed and calm in an environment or with a person and allowing one to feel at ease and the willingness to participate. Today, the importance of comfort

for student success is clear as schools create spaces where students want to learn rather than spaces where they are forced to learn. With a more comfortable environment, students can grow and learn without the challenges of an uncomfortable environment (The Importance of Comfort for Student Success, 2021).

The term *safe spaces* in a classroom means students can go to a location where they can relieve stress, calm down, and recharge their emotions before returning to learning. A safe space supports students' social-emotional learning by teaching these students to focus on their positive emotions and manage their negative emotions (Helean, 2021). This study describes a safe space as a setting where students feel comfortable expressing themselves, asking questions, and interacting with others without judgment.

The term *standardized testing* has been conceptualized as a test that is given to students in a very consistent manner, meaning that the questions on the test are all the same, the time given to each student is the same, and the scoring of the test is the same for all students (Burrows, 2022). In this research study, standardized testing is weighted with much value administered to all students in grades 3-8, except non-English speaking students residing in the United States. for the first time in less than one year.

Narrative research refers to a study that seeks to understand and encapsulate the human experience by using in-depth methods to explore the meanings associated with people's lived experiences (Ho & Limpaecher, 2020b). You can utilize narrative research design to learn about these concepts. Narrative research in this study is the storytelling that the ELL participants provide.

Conclusion

This study aimed to examine what caring relationships between teachers and students look like to ELLs and how experiencing care in the classroom with their classroom teacher could impact ELLs' well-being. Having a positive well-being in an educational setting allows for risk-taking without judgment, asking questions, and increased motivation to become an active participant in learning. Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (2020) stated teacher-student relations are critical to student learning. When students develop trusting and nurturing relationships with their teachers, they feel supported with learning. They are comfortable answering questions and respect what is taught in school because of the respect gained for their teachers. Learning environments that value the well-being of students create a foundation for growth and progress that overlaps with lifelong learning.

The findings would enable educators, leaders, and stakeholders to make informed decisions about ELLs and how they learn. ELLs face many academic challenges. This research could create modifications to current practices and policies that would provide all students with equitable opportunities to succeed in their educational careers. This chapter uncovered the research design of the qualitative study, identified the participants, expressed how data was collected and analyzed, and deciphered the assumptions of the study. Chapter Two will provide an examination of the literature related to ELLs' experience in education, teacher-student relationships, and a detailed explanation of ethics of care theory and SLA frameworks that guide this study.

Chapter 2 – Review of the Literature

Introduction

Chapter One introduced the study topic of how ELLs experience care in the classroom with their teachers. Stakeholders who understand the importance of how teachers provide care to ELLs can help to facilitate the methods used within schools and society to provide equitable learning opportunities for ELLs through experiences with care. This literature review is crucial because it provides insight into why teacher care is crucial when educating ELLs and how care informs ELLs' well-being. Learning from the stories told by ELLs, about how they describe care and interpret care through academic support, health support, and safety can impact how ELLs are supported in school.

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature related to the research topic. The frameworks of care theory and SLA theory are outlined and described. The review of the literature focuses on the following themes (a) ELL Population in Education, (b) Achievement Gap of ELLs, (c) Educational Achievement, (d) Educational Needs, (e) Intercultural Connections, (f) Teacher Preparation, (g) Teacher Perceptions, (h) Teacher-student relationships, (i) Learning and Relationships, (j) Educational Leaders Approaches to ELLs, (k) Educational Environments, (l) Noddings's ethic of care, (m) Krashen's SLA (n) Synthesis of Frameworks and (o) Gaps in the Literature. The themes explored allowed me to understand the background related to the research topic to proceed with the methodology of this study. I began with the ELL population in education.

ELL Population in Education

Katz (2013) stated that the number of ELLs is rapidly increasing in schools throughout the United States, with students coming from diverse backgrounds. The ELL population signifies

a population that speaks many languages from all ethnicities, nationalities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and cultures. In addition, the parents and guardians of these students migrate from other countries and speak a different language (Breiseth et al., 2015). The implications of language barriers cause challenges that impede ELLs' academic achievements because ELLs are expected to perform on the same level as native speakers (Goldenberg, 2008) without the proper amount of time needed to acquire English language skills. Katz (2013) explained that ELLs could take five to seven years to learn and master the English language.

Students often acquire knowledge via lived experiences developed in their home environments with family, culture and traditions, school, and communities. Educational systems serve as a foundation for academic learning (Zehr, 2018). When value is embedded in integrating background student interests' strengths, and challenges, ELLs feel safe and comfortable sharing their experiences and stories. A robust learning environment promotes an environment where students feel safe and valued.

Achievement Gap of ELLs

The achievement gap between ELLs and general education students can be broad and continue to widen. According to Bay Atlantic University (2020), an achievement gap is best described as educational attainment disparity between different groups of students. Achievement gaps can exist in many areas of learning. Standardized test scores, emotional well-being, reading proficiency, second language acquisition, and many other areas are potentially impacted, but the development of a position of well-being through experiencing care in the classroom impacts all of them. If ELLs experience a high level of care and grow a solid teacher-student relationship, it can impact the achievement gap and potentially reduce the gap because they are receiving the resources that they need to be successful. As an example, teacher-student relationships can

enhance their communication skills and, in turn influence SLA. The teacher-student relationship and the experiences with care in the classroom can close achievement gaps for ELLs.

Standardized testing is one of the main factors contributing to expanding the achievement gap between ELLs and their English-speaking peers. Thompson (2015) found that testing, more specifically state testing, broadens the achievement gap because it utilizes a one-size-fits-all approach to student academic performance. ELLs often need help with academic achievement when migrating to the United States because they usually do not receive an education that meets their unique needs (Sanchez, 2017). As a result, ELLs endure long-term academic gaps and face challenging educational experiences regardless of where they reside. Honigsfeld (2019) stated, “Focusing on what students can do as opposed to what they cannot do is more likely to make students feel empowered and able to learn English” (p. xv). Therefore, standardized testing does not allow students to feel good about themselves. ELLs recognize challenges with standardized testing and their inability to perform at grade level. Strade (2017) stated “ELLs still lack fair assessments, accommodations, quality instruction and proper resources to remain competitive with their counterparts” (p. 1). The lack of equitable resources results in ELLs scoring lower than their English-speaking peers on assessments.

Building positive well-being, enhancing the teacher-student relationship, and establishing care in the classroom can significantly impact ELLs’ learning. According to Boryga (2023), trusting teacher-student relationships are critical to classrooms that are immersed in academic learning. Licain (2023) explained that ELLs experience challenges with learning without individualized support. Differentiation must be implemented in lessons because ELLs master different skills and learn at various levels. Teachers who use differentiation as a guideline for instruction provide equitable learning experiences for students.

In the following section, I reviewed critical research studies related directly to Krashen's SLA theory and understanding the challenges ELLs endure with learning language.

Educational Achievement

ELLs face multiple challenges with academic achievement in their new educational careers. They face challenges with SLA that can cause many obstacles with peer interactions, participation in lessons, and understanding tasks in different subject areas (Haynes, 2007). ELLs require a multitude of methods when being introduced to lessons and activities in school. Educators must be aware of the different tools that they can use when educating ELLs, such as smartboards, headphones, Chromebooks, apps, games, iPads, and visuals. Using these technological devices provides extensive resources to understand language and skills, which can benefit ELLs because it provides techniques that students can learn from. Hand gestures and signals enable ELLs to visualize as they make meaning, which is beneficial when learning vocabulary.

Receiving support at home from their parents can enhance ELLs' academic achievement. Home and school connections are crucial to the success of ELLs. Teachers, parents, and students must work collaboratively to create optimum learning opportunities and environments for the academic success of ELLs (Hanus, 2016). Parents play an essential role in teaching language learning skills to their children. Butler (2013) stated that parents must demonstrate the importance of language learning with their children by presenting and helping their children practice language learning opportunities at home. ELLs who engage in reading activities and discussions with their parents understand the role education can play in their successes and well-being. Teachers need to support ELLs by coordinating with their parents and providing information to families in their primary language.

The teacher-student relationship provides an unconditional support system that encourages ELLs to be risk-takers without feeling judged by others. The support allows ELLs to participate and engage in their learning without hesitation, leading to academic achievement. ELLs become more willing to participate in group activities and work with partners, which allows for different opinions, exchanges, and perspectives to be shared about learning. ELLs depend on their teachers for academic support (Sung, 2014). This support helps ELLs feel a sense of belonging in classrooms that are culturally inclusive and supportive. When ELLs feel safe and comfortable, they are easily immersed in learning the language because they feel valued and accepted.

Educational Needs

ELLs need to encompass specific language instruction and a curriculum incorporating transnationalism, prior knowledge, experiences with new knowledge, and experiences with new knowledge to expand upon. Teachers must be versed in the different modalities that ELLs need to learn and understand concepts and skills. ELLs need to see pictures, charts, and have translators, which can be achieved through peer interactions and the use of manipulatives. These visuals help ELLs learn, but interpreters, such as peers, are equally important.

ELLs need to be immersed in the English language and have opportunities to read, write, listen, and speak in English without judgment and being penalized for doing something wrong. Time to become familiar with vocabulary and language is needed. Learning in a safe space where mistakes are encouraged is vital to ELLs' progress and growth. Alstad-Davies (2021) discussed strategies ELLs need to be successful with learning. These strategies include listening to stories that are read aloud. It is imperative that teachers link the background knowledge of ELLs with culture and learning as they learn new knowledge and make connections to text. ELLs need to

have a variety of opportunities to demonstrate skills learned through art, graphic organizers, drawings, and dramatic play. Opportunities that allow ELLs to demonstrate knowledge through varied outlets enable ELLs to feel successful. ELLs need to have explicit instruction from teachers when introduced to new skills and strategies with tasks. Vocabulary needs to be introduced in context with pictures and stories so ELLs can make associations and connections. Graphic organizers are helpful when modeling how to complete writing tasks step by step. ELLs taught with different resources allow them to feel successful because equitable learning opportunities are provided with learning. Though teachers are commonly aware of different learning styles in the classroom, it must be recognized that ELLs have that same need. However, they come with another layer of need because they are working toward mastering another language.

Intercultural Communication

Educators who have knowledge and prior experiences with cultural diversity can understand the stories of ELLs and how experiencing care is crucial to developing positive well-being and academic success. An educator who has experience with migration and the traumas that come with migrating to the United States. These educators understand familial needs and offer a safe space for ELLs to tell their stories and a stronger layer of trust to ELLs. From these experiences, the educators can understand and offer unique care and compassion to ELLs because they have overcome similar obstacles. This provides educators with a better understanding and insight into the different kinds of communication that are needed to talk with families and how to foster home-school connections and to make those connections even stronger.

Having prior knowledge, a unique lens, and an understanding of how the ELL feels when sharing information about their culture or their hesitation to share information can be beneficial to both ELLs and the educator. The educator may be more apt to attach ELLs past experiences and culture to classroom instruction to help foster their sense of belonging. Cultural diversity was not viewed as a deficiency but rather an asset of the student and something that can be built upon. Educators who are aware of their own culture can extend different approaches that meet the students of all learners that maybe someone who does not possess cultural awareness would consider.

Teacher Preparation

General education teachers need assistance from ENL teachers to learn about different methods they can use when educating ELLs. General education teachers must receive professional development opportunities that introduce and reinforce how ELLs learn and the best strategies and techniques to use when educating ELLs. The awareness of the challenges ELLs faced in their homeland must be recognized and learned by educators working with these students. Teachers must be mindful of the violence, trauma, and reasons why ELLs migrated to the United States. Home-school connections must be built to ensure consistent communication between parents and teachers sharing important information that can help ELLs experience a positive well-being in school with academic success. Teachers need to be informed of the possible situations and experiences that ELLs have encountered in their homeland that would impact their classroom behavior and achievement. Teachers should be encouraged to learn about each ELL and their individual needs to foster a better social-emotional state that results in academic achievement.

Building positive teacher-student relationships must be a part of the ELLs' experiences in

schools. Teachers need training on how to develop these relationships and the importance of these relationships. Teachers need to have resources that they can use when planning lessons involving all students, especially ELLs, where equitable opportunities are a part of all lessons and activities. Teachers need to develop a deeper understanding of the individual needs of ELLs and the best practices for educating them so ELLs can be autonomous learners who share and use their knowledge and experiences in their everyday learning. In today's educational society, educators must have the knowledge and resources required to reach their ELLs in ways that meet their needs and keep them feeling safe and protected.

Teachers Perceptions

Teachers' perceptions reveal that ELLs are not receiving instruction that is imperative to future success (Wright & Choi, 2005). Teachers recognize that standardized testing preparation hinders quality instruction in content areas and trickles down to the academic and social-emotional needs of ELLs not being met and impacting academic growth and the well-being of ELLs. Hudson (2015) described how emotions impact perception, motivation, critical thinking, and behaviors. Ergene (2003) noted that test anxiety impacts students' performance on standardized tests, which taints the test score as a true reflection of students' academic awareness and skill. ELLs experience heightened anxiety levels due to the added pressure imposed by standardized testing.

The literature review also indicated the importance of teachers learning about their students and their experiences through care and trust. ELLs need to be able to share and discuss their social-emotional needs. Teachers must take learning a step further by incorporating moments for transnationalism aligned with ELLs' past and present as it relates to their education

and learning. Teachers must view ELLs through the lens of an asset-based model where their experiences and prior knowledge can be incorporated into their learning.

Teacher-Student Relationships

ELLs' academic success is contingent upon the teacher-student relationship and feeling cared for, safe, and receiving academic support in the classroom. Educators must dedicate time to creating positive teacher-student relationships with ELLs. This will enable educators to lead students through the learning process, providing an equitable education for all students based on individual needs. Noddings (2012) described caring relationships as a goal educators and policymakers should strive to attain in an environment surrounded by care. A safe space should reflect care where teachers support students, develop knowledge about students, meet individual needs and encourage the development of good moral people.

Building positive teacher-student relationships during daily classroom practices and preparation for standardized tests is critical for teachers recognizing the impact on ELL's social-emotional and academic achievement (Montalvo et al., 2007). When students respect their teachers, they put forth a greater effort and demonstrate an increased motivation to complete their work.

Standardized assessments-focused classrooms evoke distress in students during testing, requiring assistance from school psychologists and further intervention from counselors. Koch (2021) stated that standardized tests are administered at all levels of schooling, from elementary to university. She described the testing as putting added pressure on students because test results impact promotion, acceptance, academic achievement, and placement for new students. ELLs new to the test become frustrated because they may not be able to comprehend directions read aloud by teachers or understand written directions. Winke (2011) stated that “educators

witnessed that standardized testing stressed and frustrated students and made them feel inadequate, humiliated, or embarrassed, or led them to question their self-worth” (p. 648).

Testing adds more pressure to an already challenging task of becoming acclimated in a new school setting for ELLs. When ELLs arrive at their new educational system, they are placed into classrooms where they are expected to fit in and perform similarly to other academic students (Ortiz-Marrero & Sumaryono, 2010). As a result, ELLs become overwhelmed with the expectations placed on them.

The support of classroom teachers is crucial to ELLs’ success. According to Yunus et al. (2011), "Factors such as academic achievement and student motivation are influenced by the quality of the relationship that the students and teachers have with each other" (p. 264). Teachers who extensively prepare for assessments months in advance may jeopardize opportunities to create and develop relationships with students in meaningful instruction-based environments. Many individuals disagree with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) initiative. Nelson (2015) described the CCSS as academic standards introduced in 2010 by the National Governors Association and Council of Chief State School Officers. The CCSS was developed to provide students in grades K-12 with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college and the workforce. Many have differing views on the amount of time spent on test preparation. The focus should be on ensuring that students learn and understand the material and can apply it to their future education and lives. Time is needed to develop and maintain the teacher-student relationship. Ensuring ELLs experience care and feel cared for should be weaved into the CCSS. CCSS must focus on students feeling good about themselves in the classroom and being able to participate, listen, speak, and articulate. Teachers who focus on ELLs’ well-being can help ELLs to acquire SLA and proficiency in the English language.

Test preparation and CCSS standards limit the amount of instructional time that teachers can provide to ELLs, which interferes with providing an equitable learning opportunity.

Educating ELLs requires educators to create safe spaces where students feel cared for and valued. Teachers encouraging ELLs to maintain traditions and cultures allow them to feel good about their identities. This can result in ELLs developing a sense of belonging in the classroom which is crucial to ELLs' progress and growth.

Learning and Relationships

Teacher-student relationships are imperative to student learning. Positive teacher-student relationships can help students to become motivated to learn within a safe classroom space. Classroom management is crucial to successful learning. Good and Brophy (2000) explained that positive classroom culture depends on teacher-student relationships. Leitao and Waugh (2007) described positive teacher-student relationships as relationships that consist of respect, care, mutual acceptance, trust, clear understanding, closeness, cooperation, and feelings of warmth. Teachers must make deliberate efforts to engage students in relationships by learning about their students' individual needs. When teachers provide differentiated instruction, students are actively engaged in lessons and perform at their academic level. Subban (2006) confirmed that learning is achieved when students actively engage in lessons. The advantages of teacher-student relationships are immeasurable. Hilliker (2021) believed that teachers who demonstrate the willingness to learn about their ELLs' cultures and diversity have better engagement with them. These students respond positively because of the effort and patience employed by their teacher. This is imperative for ELLs because it aids them in engaging in classroom activities without judgment, insecurities, or intimidation. It alleviates the discomfort when they know they trust their teacher and know that everyone's input matters and is celebrated.

Davis (2006) stated that teacher-student relationships provide opportunities for students to attain academic and social-emotional skills necessary for learning. Positive teacher-student relationships allow students to feel connected, cared for, and valued. As a result, students' motivation to learn increases (Davis, 2006). The bond between teachers and students must be valued because it serves as a platform for lifelong learning, especially for ELLs who are faced with many challenges entering a new educational environment. Patrick et al. (2007) examined the effects on students experiencing positive relationships with supportive teachers. These positive relationships promote ELLs' confidence in participating in activities and learning. Students viewed academic achievement as attainable because of teacher support and belief in them. Students were able to see learning as teacher and student-centered. This allowed both the teacher and student to feel valued because of the inclusion of their views, ideas, and perspectives in the process. Supportive teachers who foster an environment of acceptance, care, and respect overlap with the students' perceptions and love of learning.

Teacher-student relationships are imperative to successful student learning. Rimm-Kaufman and Sandilos (2015) explained that students with close ties with teachers generate a support system that encourages students to attain increased levels of achievement. Students who develop a personal connection with their teachers attain greater levels of accomplishment than students with increased relational challenges. When students feel a close personal connection with teachers that encompasses feedback, constructive critique, and guidance, trusting relationships develop and result in increased engagement in learning (Rimm-Kaufman & Sandilos, 2011). ELLs require time to build relationships with their teachers and classmates while becoming comfortable with teachers, school routines, and the environment (Staehr Fenner, 2014). Many ELLs experience feelings of distress when entering a new school. Colorin Colorado

(2009) explained that ELLs experience discomfort when adjusting to their new community, culture, and environment. Teachers play an intricate role in creating a safe environment for students. Salazar (2019) described her first-grade teacher as:

Stealing her humanity. I left my treasures behind when I moved to the first grade. I was mainstreamed into an English-only classroom. It was sinking or swim. I felt that I would sink if I held onto my treasures. When I recall the first grade, the words that come to mind are harsh, cold, frightening, and lovely. (p. 31)

Educators have a responsibility to their students. This responsibility encompasses ensuring students feel valued, respected, cared for, and appreciated in their classroom setting. As a result of a teacher meeting the needs of their students, ELLs can experience a positive well-being. Established a framework to inform educators on how to instruct culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students in a definitive way using the comprehensive five-tenet model. This model demonstrates how educators can prioritize care while ensuring they are meeting the needs of CLD learners. Educators are also invited to consciously evaluate their applications to guide more opportunities for social justice, equity, and inclusivity for all students (Salazar & Learner, 2019).

Creating safe spaces grounded in care and respect allows students to engage in lessons and peer interactions. ELLs become protected in sharing stories about their homeland and bringing cultural exchanges and traditions into discussions. Noddings (2012) described creating classrooms as a space where teachers and students build relationships that enhance knowledge, meet individual needs, and result in developing moral people. Therefore, teachers should not view creating safe spaces as another time-consuming endeavor but rather as a platform for positive learning exchanges and relations that manifest positive student well-being. When caring

relationships serve as the foundation for pedagogical activity, this earns students' trust, and as a result, students will be more accepting of what educators teach them (Noddings, 2012). When caring relationships serve as the foundation for pedagogical activity, this earns students' trust, and as a result, students will be more accepting of what educators teach them (Noddings, 2012).

Educational Leaders Approaches to ELLs' Education

Educational leaders and administrators in school systems have a significant role in facilitating how educators teach ELLs. Munguia (2017) described the role of a principal or school leader as the main person in helping ELLs reach academic success in their careers. Principals have a crucial role, and their role must include preparing general education teachers on how to instruct ELLs and what methods and resources need to be implemented when providing equitable learning opportunities to ELLs. The needs of ELLs vary due to exposure to SLA, prior knowledge, and positive and negative experiences. Teachers and trainers must consider these realities so that teachers know how to deal with ELLs and how to meet their needs.

According to Deussen (2015), principals are instrumental in creating an educational environment where high standards are maintained, curriculum is designated to be equitable for all students, and guidelines are implemented that promote a positive learning environment. Principals who build positive relationships with staff, families, and students create an atmosphere where trust and comfort live. Teachers see themselves as empowering when working with ELLs because they receive support from their administrators who are in the trenches with them, sharing the same beliefs, values, and conditions that foster learning (Munguia, 2017).

With the growing numbers of ELLs entering United States school systems, all educational staff members, including principals and administrators, need to be cognizant of how ELLs learn

and their individual needs. Reyes and Gentry (2019) discussed the importance of administrators witnessing and having an awareness of the curriculum used in their schools, especially with ELLs. This is important because educators are required to meet the needs of all students, but ELLs require multiple instructional methods that address their proficiency levels. Educators who experience support from administrators through classroom visits, data meetings, and parent engagement feel a sense of comfort knowing their leader is familiar with the resources and challenges faced but also recognizing the important educational components needed for SLA with ELLs. Administrators who attend professional development about expanding their knowledge of ELLs provide a support system for their teachers that benefits all stakeholders, including ELLs, teachers, leaders, and the school staff. The benefits of administrators modeling their willingness to deepen their understanding of ELLs and how to support their teachers serve as a foundation for progress and growth.

Educational Environments

Positive teacher-student relationships and unconditional support result in ELLs feeling a sense of belonging in their classroom. ELLs who develop ties to their teachers and peers and classroom experience a sense of belonging that impacts their well-being and academic success because they are motivated to learn. Hurtado and Carter (1997) described a sense of belonging as being connected to the classroom and to the class culture. This connection enables ELLs to feel an emotional attachment to their purpose in the classroom, and it serves ELLs' long-term well-being. ELLs who experience a close-knit connection have a positive attitude toward learning and their academic performance because they are motivated to learn in a safe environment without judgment. These students view school as a positive learning environment that heightens their role in their learning.

While the social-emotional aspect of an educational environment is significant, so is the physical space. ELLs benefit from rules and structure in the classroom. Having safe spaces can help ELLs regroup when they need a break instead of having an outburst. Knowing the rules for relocating to a safe space allows ELLs and other students to take a moment to think, reflect, and move forward, which positively impacts their well-being in a non-confrontational way. Teachers who create a mood in the classroom that provides peace and relaxation by playing classical and soothing music, dimming lights in the room, or creating opportunities to talk and share can be seen as caring and comforting to all students, which benefits everyone.

Noddings' Ethics of Care

The theories connected to this research study are the ethics of care theory and SLA. Conducting this research through the theoretical lenses of care and SLA framework helped me to understand and recognize the impact positive teacher-student relationships and ELLs experiencing care in the classroom can have on ELLs' learning and well-being. Ethics of care theory examines how relationships between the teacher and student impact learning for all students in safe, educational spaces. SLA theory examines how SLA improves students' understanding of written English, that is, to read better, use sentence patterns and words correctly when students are speaking, employ sentence patterns and words correctly when students are writing, and develop their ability to look at and think about topics in different areas when students are immersed in a new culture (Krashen, 1982).

Noddings (1984) described care as:

We listen to our students, we gain their trust, and in an ongoing relationship of care and trust. It is more likely that students will accept what we try to teach them. They will not see our efforts as “interference” but rather as cooperative work

proceeding from the integrity of the relationship. Second, as we engage us. students in dialogue, we learn about their needs, working habits, interests, and talents. Third, we gain essential ideas from them about building our lesson and planning for their progress. Finally, as we acquire knowledge about our students' needs and become aware of how much more than the standard curriculum is needed, we are inspired to increase our competence. (p. 205)

Noddings (1984) emphasized that care is a direct relationship between the one providing care and the one receiving care. The relationship requires two specific parties that give care and receive care. Each role satisfies each contributing party and fulfilling the two care needs. Noddings' (2005) ethics of care theory sought to educate students from care and nurturing perspectives.

Educating students from the care perspective has four components (a) exploring lived experiences, (b) having conversations, (c) practicing and demonstrating care and concern, and (d) reaffirming positive behaviors and relationships. Noddings (1996) stated that teachers show commitment, engrossment, and motivational displacement, allowing them to help their students flourish academically, socially, and emotionally to navigate the world. There is a connection between a student who is being cared for and the teacher who is providing care. This occurs when commitment, engrossment, and motivational changes happen to the cared-for student.

Engrossment happens when teachers prioritize students' experiences and use those experiences to develop caring relationships that make students feel valued by their teachers. Noddings (1984) described this concept as "engrossment and motivational displacement" (p. 154). When students can see, hear, and feel the care of their teachers. The commitment characteristic is the second characteristic of the ethics of care theory. Noddings (1992) explained that commitment was a non-negotiable attitude teachers presented to students by accepting their

views, feelings, thoughts, and ideas about a subject. Students felt secure in their teacher's genuine effort to meet their needs. Teachers are active listeners when working with students and demonstrate value in hearing students' experiences.

The third characteristic described by Noddings (1984) was a motivational shift.

Teachers inherit the role of a caretaker in education. They serve as role models for providing care to students, which enables their students to learn about care and apply care (Noddings, 2005). Educators must be caring role models, engage students in dialogue, and be a source of motivation for students through care. When students experience care, they become motivated and put forth effort in school. Glasser (1996) suggested that when children feel accepted and their interests are valued, they are motivated to learn and succeed in academic endeavors. Research shows that all positive teacher relationships are grounded in the ethics of care, and care is the common factor in students' success in school.

Camp (2011) conducted five case studies to investigate and identify teacher perceptions about teacher-student relationships and how those relationships impacted students' academic performance and behavior with kindergarten through fifth-grade students. Participants in this study were interviewed, observed, and participated in journal writing. The overlapping theme that continued to surface in these studies was care. The findings from this study revealed that caring relationships between teachers and students served as the foundation for student success.

Camp (2011) identified that effective teaching reflected caring, trusting, and respectful relationships between teachers and students. Teachers who engaged in dialogue with students respectfully exhibited care, which resulted in a desire to learn about their students from an academic and personal perspective. These engagements allowed students to feel comfortable when sharing and talking to their teachers about lived experiences. Positive teacher-student

relationships were necessary for academic progress and growth. Brophy (1987-a) urged school administrators to employ teachers willing to develop positive teacher-student relationships, enabling them to have countless opportunities, not part of what society defines as true academic success. All students benefit from teachers who exhibit warmth, understanding, kindness, and trust and are active listeners to their stories (Stronge, 2022).

Nodding (2005) expressed the need for students to feel comfortable and safe in their school environment. Students attain confidence when they feel cared for and safe, allowing them to be open and accepting of learning and new experiences. However, teaching them the necessities to navigate through life comes with challenges. Sharing stories enables voices to be heard.

Storytelling promotes the formation of relationships between teachers and their students. When students feel safe and comfortable with their teachers, a trusting relationship develops. This relationship fuels engagement and motivation in learning. Noddings (2005) described this as gifts with no gifts attached. When teachers share openly, a natural bond develops through powerful academic and social-emotional learning connections. Noddings (2002) highlighted, “All people everywhere want to be cared for” (p. 21) but stated that “caring for others” is not an innate behavior; it must be learned through reflexive modeling. Teacher educators, pre-service, and in-service teachers profess to value and practice modeling techniques with their students, but this needs to be done correctly. For example, educators must model “caring for” rather than “caring about” teaching. Noddings (1992) described the difference between the two. Cared for is when personal direct exchanges happen between two people, where one person cares for another person. Caring for is experienced when a teacher exemplifies concern about how a student feels, providing a safe space where he or she can be themselves and feel comfortable in their

environment and relationship with their teacher. Caring about is more generalized; it is transferred into the public domain where anything can occur. Caring about relationships represents a genuine feeling of importance, concern for one's well-being, and an interest in what happens to them because of a visible need. The notion of feeling cared for and cared about in educational systems by an educator helps to foster relationships that will encourage motivation and learning. Noddings (2002) stated,

‘We have to show in our modeling what it means to care’ by monitoring the effect one’s behavior has on others and asking, Is our response adequate? Could we have put what we have said better? Has our act helped or hindered? This is the only way teachers and students foster meaningful, caring relationships that enable ELLs to learn. (p.16)

Shevalier and McKenzie (2012) proposed a scenario involving 50 pre-service teachers that intentionally view the achievement gap during teacher preparation courses to identify specific pedagogies to close the gap. The 50 teachers would have different ideas of where they want to be placed. The choice was evident. They could be categorized as “carers” in the “cared about” achievement gap, where most teachers remained and sought to take advantage of professional development opportunities. Several teachers transferred to other schools over five years. Three teachers could not raise their students’ test scores even though they worked diligently with their students to help them increase their performance and were asked to transfer to different schools.

Only two of 50 pre-service teachers successfully built solid, caring relationships via the “caring for” approach. Instead, these teachers developed ways to assist their students socially, emotionally, and academically. When teachers demonstrate “caring for” tactics, such as conversations with students during class, sharing cultural backgrounds and experiences, and patience and understanding, students are drawn to building caring relationships with teachers.

The research has provided a framework that illustrates the significance of the ethics of care theory as it pertains to successful student learning. Care is the foundation for positive teacher-student relationships that impact students' academic and overall well-being. ELLs require relationships with teachers that are embedded in care. When students experience relationships with teachers who value their knowledge and experiences, they make them feel motivated to learn. As students feel motivated to learn, they become risk-takers who can speak freely and openly about experiences, questions, and academic demands like standardized testing. Educational, safe spaces encompass care, friendship, trust, and validation.

Students, especially ELLs, flourish in environments that reflect a safe space. Conteh et al. (2007) described safe spaces as a space where all students feel confident and can grow to be active participants in their society. He further explained that safe spaces are necessary for successful learning. Holley and Steiner (2005) proposed a safe space as an educational setting that enables students to feel comfortable and safe to take risks. Students who experience a safe space feel comfortable expressing their views and exploring their behaviors, knowledge, and attitudes without anxiety (Holley & Steiner, 2005). Teachers must recognize their impact on students and make every effort to provide a nurturing and caring environment where all learners can feel and practice positive social-emotional well-being.

Second Language Acquisition

SLA has been an important subject for researchers for many years. However, no definitive theory has been viewed as the most precise. Krashen's (1982) SLA theory consists of five hypotheses: acquisition learning hypothesis, affective filter hypothesis, input hypothesis, natural order, and monitor hypothesis. For this study, I used the affective filter hypothesis and monitor hypothesis. Krashen's (1987) affective filter hypothesis discussed the role of affect in experiences

of feelings or emotions that can vary from happiness to frustration. These varied emotions are the filters that hinder or promote language learning.

Krashen (1982) claimed the affective filter hypothesis occurs when learners who experience high motivation, confidence, positive self-image, and minimal stressors are more prepared to feel comfortable with who they are, where they come from, their culture, and learning language. This applies to ELLs, in particular, who arrive in educational school systems experiencing feelings of inadequacy because they cannot connect due to a lack of English language skills.

When students feel included in their classroom, they learn effectively and are comfortable at their independent level. However, ELLs still may experience anxiety when trying to learn English. They endure challenges caused by multiple factors, which include life experiences, physical health, and personality factors. Hashemi (2011) stated that language anxiety is created due to cognition, cultures, differences in language, and fear of losing identity in new environments. ELLs must be made to feel comfortable and accepted by their classroom teachers during transitioning periods.

Krashen (1981) stated that affective filter is the teachers' responsibility to make learning inclusive for ELLs. ELLs have active roles in their learning when teachers provide lessons and activities that promote learning in the targeted language in safe spaces where students do not experience discomfort and feelings of anxiety. Students experience comfort and safety with their teachers, and this encourages collaboration with new language learning where students and teachers can collaborate when learning aspects of a new language (Raju & Joshith, 2019).

Learners who had low motivation, high anxiety, and little self-confidence experienced a mental block, resulting in natural listening being impacted and learning happening at a slower

pace (Dulay & Burt, 1977). Kazumata (2023) suggested that not having a positive self-image can impact how students learn language. Low self-esteem has been associated with the success rate with SLA and ELLs. It is critical for all students to feel comfortable with who they are, where they come from, and their culture. This applies to ELLs, in particular, who arrive in educational school systems experiencing feelings of inadequacy because they cannot connect due to a lack of English language skills.

Krashen's (1981) monitor hypothesis assumes that when a student is learning a language for the first time, they are always on guard, monitoring their educational environment to adjust language based on experience. ELLs exhibit feelings of discomfort as they engage in the SLA attainment process. Morrison and Low (1983) stated monitoring hypothesis will "give awareness of what has been created, making it possible to check either before or after articulation for the frequent slips of the tongue grammatical errors, social insecurities, and other deviations from the intention that characterizes normal speech" (p. 228).

Krashen described the monitoring hypothesis as having three roles that ELLs employ over time as they strive to make fewer errors in their spoken or written discourse. ELLs created a self-checking plan in their minds that enables them to monitor how they speak and write (Entwistle, 2021). Acquiring a language has many steps. Language users need time to use and identify grammar rules effectively without focusing on form. Language users must foresee the form of the language by thinking about the appropriateness of the language. The last role of knowing the rules meant that the language users had to know the grammar concepts and language rules learned and practiced. The monitor hypothesis recognized the correlation between acquiring and learning and explained how each hypothesis was interconnected. Krashen (1982) stated that when ELLs learn syntax in the natural order, the rules of language are learned later.

When ELLs have learned grammatical structures, they can self-monitor and edit oral and written language. The development of grammatical structures takes time.

Affective filter hypothesis research has focused on how fear, embarrassment, or anxiety impact ELLs' SLA. When ELLs in this qualitative study experienced negative emotions during reading instruction, language acquisition was blocked because the stress of not knowing how to pronounce words or understand unknown vocabulary caused ELLs to become embarrassed and shut down. During classroom observations, I observed participants disconnecting with SLA, staying quiet, and shying away from engagement in language learning through reading activities. When the affective filter is lowered language learning happens without interference of stress (Krashen, 1985). I observed this behavior during classroom observations. Participants participating and engaging in group discussions as they felt more comfortable with language learning.

Sulistiyani (2014) conducted a qualitative study on the effect of the affective filter on ELLs' motivation. A group of college students from the English language teaching department at the Universitas Siswa Bangsa International was involved in the study. I sought to collect data via observations and interviews to gain insight into how affective filter could influence ELLs' motivation toward second language learning. The findings of the data collected from interviews and observations implied that ELLs believed the most crucial factor for SLA was the learning environment. ELLs interviewed disclosed to me that their learning environment should be a fun place for them to engage and acquire new knowledge. Their learning environment should be a place where they can relax and feel comfortable. A safe place where no judgment exists with learning. The classroom environment should reflect teacher support, peer support, comfort, and

safety, which are all important in SLA. ELLs revealed that an environment where they did not feel safe, supported, and comfortable would hinder SLA.

Yuhui and Sen (2015) described the affective filter as a mechanism that could allow or hinder second language input from happening. In the stages where the affective filter is minimal, input is increased. When the affective filter is high, the input is decreased. This further supports what Krashen (1982) explained that the emotional state of motivation, anxiety, and confidence can impact the filter positively or negatively.

Monitor hypothesis is described learning a language that encompasses vocabulary and the rules of grammar assist in monitoring language output. However, monitoring language output does not increase or improve language acquisition. Lewis (2020) stated that acquiring language is not a simple task like learning history or geography via reading a book. Knowledge of language occurs through an unconscious process called comprehensible input. The English language is the language that can be understood while language inputs are distinguished by reading and listening (p. 29).

As time progressed, ELLs became more fluid with grammatical syntax that assisted them in speaking and writing grammatically correctly. ELLs who were provided with the necessary time needed to learn and use correct grammar, focused on the form and appropriateness of language, and learned the rules of the language are of immense importance when acquiring a second language. Educators must make themselves aware of ELLs' needs and how to help them develop SLA. Learning a new language for ELLs brings a sense of discomfort because learning a new language comes with challenges. However, there are many benefits to learning a new language that can enable ELLs to achieve success. Students can communicate via oral and written skills (Gonzalez, 2020).

Krashen (1982) believed that language must be acquired and monitored as stages of SLA take place. The monitor hypothesis enables ELLs to gain knowledge of grammatical structures that result in them being able to read, write, and speak correctly in the new language. SLA has a prominent place with increased globalization. Language, diversity, and culture continue to grow and have increased relevance today. ENL and SLA can be challenging attainments for many. Krashen's Affective Filter (1984) has three specific factors that cause filter levels to fluctuate levels of motivation, confidence, and anxiety. When ELLs are immersed in a caring environment, they develop motivation, a willingness to learn, and the ability to take risks.

Synthesis of Frameworks Ethics of Care and SLA

There is an interconnection between care theory and SLA theory concerning ELLs and their success in school. These two theories are intertwined because they are both needed for ELLs to succeed in school. ELLs experience stress when acquiring a second language. Wyman (2023) described the affective filter as an emotional block caused by stress that hinders the mental processes needed to learn a new language. One's physical and emotional state can impede learning, causing frustration and stress for ELLs when learning. Krashen's affective filter (1986) and Noddings' (1992) care theory are connected because ELLs require the emotional component to feel trust and comfort with their teachers. The emotional aspect of learning must be met with success for ELLs to be active participants in their learning. Wyman (2023) urged educators to identify the anxiety caused by the affective filter and to create partnerships with these students to eliminate feelings of duress and fear.

When ELLs experience trusting relationships with teachers, they feel safe and valued. benefit from social-emotional support and direct academic support. Trust between teacher and student allows students to be successful in school because they feel accepted and valued. Positive

teacher-student relationships are developed when students experience care from their teachers for learning. The frameworks of care theory and SLA connect to how ELLs learn.

Motivational shifts occur intentionally because the teacher purposefully shifts the focus from themselves to their students. Teachers adopt their students' worldviews, which allows them to see the world the way their students do. Finally, these characteristics and modifications to the teachers; role form a caring teacher-student relationships. Commitment, engrossment, and motivational displacement are characteristics of this relationship, allowing teachers to help their students flourish academically, socially, and emotionally to navigate the world. Edmondson (2013) expressed that students and teachers need to create a bond of positive feelings where they are free to speak openly with each other and have trusting, respectful, and caring relationships. School systems in the 21st century have become increasingly challenged with standardized testing. Teachers and students need support from one another, which happens through communication. Teachers ask questions, and students share their thoughts, feelings, and challenges.

Noddings (2005) urged teachers to think about the "real, pressing needs" of their students, such as "homelessness, poverty, toothaches, faulty vision, violence, fear of rebuke or mockery, sick parents, feelings of worthlessness" (p. 151). Bolt (2016) stated that "every school curriculum must include ethics of care" (p. 5). Bolt emphasized the need for young generations to care about themselves and others, which is crucial to success. Teachers who demonstrate these traits foster support for their students to succeed.

Gaps in the Literature

Despite the significant number of studies written about the need for language development with ELLs and how standardized testing negatively impacts ELLs, there are limited

studies on how caring teacher-student relationships in safe spaces inform ELLs' well-being on standardized tests. The literature review indicated standardized testing impacts ELLs' academic achievement and well-being. High-stakes testing replaces quality teacher instruction and limits opportunities for teachers and students to build positive relationships. Popham (2001) suggested that ELLs are experiencing stress, anxiety, and consistent pressure because they have internalized the power standardized testing holds over school districts and teachers. Teachers live with the daily challenges of teaching to the test, affecting their creativity and joy in working with their students. ELLs are forced to be involved in test preparation activities despite their lack of vocabulary skills to understand passages. Walker (2014) described how reading curricula are narrowing because of test preparation resulting in students having limited experiences with authentic literature.

Transnationalism is a critical component to the progression and growth of ELLs and their immigrant families. However, educators and researchers still need to identify the importance of this lifestyle. Sanchez and Kasun (2012) stated that classroom connections to globalization must be a component of the school curriculum. Ottow (2021) urged teachers to “teach students, not just the content. Learning happens when the student connects with the content, so we need to start with our students, getting to know their strengths, backgrounds, and interests” (p. 1). Teachers must create learning opportunities embedded in lessons for transnational students to connect to learning via experiences, knowledge, and ties to their home country.

Some areas have considerable scope for additional research yet to be explored. This literature review exhibits the limited research done on this topic. Gaps in the literature extend when examining the relationship between teacher-student relationships, the impact on ELLs' well-being, and the support ELLs receive during the school year. Understanding the

interconnection between underperforming ELLs represented by standardized testing, the social-emotional well-being of ELLs, and the support systems in place for ELLs is crucial to minimizing the achievement gap between ELLs and English-proficient speakers. In-depth research in this area has yet to be explored. In addition, the information obtained needs to be more accurate to reach a concise conclusion.

Gaps in the literature reaffirm that policymakers are overlooking the well-being of ELLs. The research investigated demonstrated few studies that sought to learn how teacher-student relationships impact ELLs' well-being and how caring relationships fostered between teachers and students are crucial to ELLs actively engaging in their learning. There is a need for more research on how ELLs learn. Many layers exist in educating ELLs, including academic support, SLA, and the ELLs' overall well-being.

Conclusion

The literature review indicated the importance of ELLs having positive teacher-student relationships. The impact of ELLs feeling cared for by their teachers has substantial benefits. The literature discussed individualized support and quality instruction tailored by equitable learning opportunities. The literature also showed the value of teachers creating positive learning environments for ELLs as it relates to SLA being pivotal in language learning. ELLs that have positive academic learning experiences through positive teacher-student relationships are more receptive to teachers who learn about their students and their experiences through care and trust. ELLs need to be able to share and discuss their social-emotional needs.

In this chapter, I reviewed the body of literature related to their research topic. The frameworks of care theory and SLA theory were outlined and described.

This literature review covered the following topics (a) ELL Population in Education, (b) Achievement Gap of ELLs, (c) Educational Achievement, (d) Educational Needs, (e) Intercultural Connections, (f) Teacher Preparation, (g) Teacher Perceptions, (h) Teacher-student relationships, (i) Learning and Relationships, (j) Educational Leaders Approaches to ELLs, (k) Educational Environments, (l) Noddings's ethic of care, (m) Krashen's SLA (n) Synthesis of Frameworks and (o) Gaps in the Literature. I was transparent about the need for ELLs to experience care in the classroom.

While much is known about the needs of ELLs, the significance of this study was to understand how ELLs experience care in their classroom and how ELLs describe and interpret care through trust, prior experiences, academic support, health support, and safety. This study adds to the scholarly research of SLA theory and care theory by considering the views of ELLs. Understanding how teachers provide care to ELLs can help shift schools and society toward providing equitable learning opportunities for ELLs that meet their needs through experiences with care. The literature review reaffirmed that a disconnection between policymakers and the importance of ELLs well-being. The literature review showed that caring relationships are crucial to ELLs engaging in learning. There are limited studies that identify how caring teacher-student relationships impact ELLs with standardized testing. The next chapter describes the research paradigm and design of this qualitative study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

As stated in previous chapters, this qualitative study examines how ELLs experience care in the classroom with their classroom teacher. This chapter outlines the purpose of this study, research questions, research design, research context, participants, data collection, data analysis, limitations, and ethical considerations.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative study examines the personal stories of elementary school-aged ELLs and how they experience care in their classroom with their classroom teacher. Caring relationships between teachers and students have many benefits. ELLs feel safe and comfortable sharing and asking for help when they are supported. SLA and positive learning habits are perpetuated by safe spaces and nurturing environments teachers created. Pierson (2013) discussed the importance of demonstrating care when working with students and advised teachers to make every moment count regardless of testing results. When children feel treasured and appreciated for their efforts, they become motivated and excited to learn. Developing safe spaces for ELLs to share, build confidence, and create trusting relationships can foster positive well-being and affect student learning.

Overarching Research Questions

The following questions informed this study:

How do caring teacher-student relationships inform ELLs' well-being in the classroom?

1. How do Elementary ELLs experience care in the classroom?
 - a. How do Elementary ELLs describe care?

- b. How are Elementary ELLs interpreting care in their classroom?
- c. To what extent do Elementary ELLs' experiences with care in the classroom inform their well-being?
- d. To what extent do Elementary ELLs respond to care in the classroom?

Methodology

The research design employed was a qualitative narrative research study. Creswell (1994) defined qualitative research as "...an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting" (pp. 1-2). Stories were collected via classroom observations, field notes, semi-structured interviews, and visual storyboards to identify how participants experienced care in the classroom. Margolis (2011) emphasized narrative research as storytelling with no time limit. Six Elementary ELLs in fourth grade told their stories. Narrative inquiry provides storytelling vocabulary that allows humans to make sense of and meaning of the world around them. Narrative research is embedded in storytelling. Brown and Durrheim (2009) further described how the researcher's role is to examine how participants see the world and understand their lives.

Narrative research enables participants to detail lived experiences and relationships at home or in educational environments. Clandinin (2006) expressed the need for researchers to formulate a narrative structured via telling, living, retelling, and reliving. Conducting this study using a narrative approach allowed the documentation of participants' experiences to develop strategies for ELLs to experience care and be academically successful productive members of society. The stories shared could provide alternative perspectives on educational policies and practices that apply to ELLs. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) explained that by sharing stories of

marginalized people, people who are mistreated or exploited have a voice to facilitate a social change plan. The ELLs' stories could inform school leaders to revise current policies and practices to provide equitable learning opportunities for ELLs.

Role of the Researcher

Everyone has a story to tell, and we must allow ourselves to engage in storytelling to develop a shared understanding of the lived experiences of others. Brown and Durrheim (2009) believed researchers should be able to generate research questions that shape how information and findings are uncovered. Noddings (2005) advised that all caring relationships will result in successful educational endeavors. However, caring relationships are the foundation for successful teaching.

Critical analysis of my role in conducting a qualitative research study connected to my personal and professional identities as it related to ELLs because I was once a child who did not feel safe, valued, and cared for by stakeholders within their educational environment. As a result, I experienced internal challenges that often felt unsupported.

My educational experiences in the United States have been positive and negative. Nevertheless, these experiences were highly influential in molding me to be the person I am today, personally, and professionally. At a very early age, I learned that my cultural background and physical appearance positioned me in a different category than other children. I recalled wishing I was of a different ethnicity, either Black or White, to fit in with their peers. Instead, I viewed myself as being in the middle, not Black or White. There was no space for a student who did not identify as Black or White. School was supposed to feel like a second home, where children felt safe and cared for by all. Instead, P.S. 246 represented a harmful educational setting where I experienced fear and neglect because no one took the time to learn about me as a person.

For many, school was a job from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., and no one diverted from the structured routine, leaving me to feel isolated, lonely, and uncared for throughout the school day.

During lunchtime, the lunch monitors would comment on my caramel-colored complexion and long black hair. However, they never demonstrated care in knowing my family heritage. Daily encounters at school caused me to conform to how things were taught, learned, and traditionally done in schools in the United States. There was no one that cared to know who I was or what my interests, joys, and sorrows were. Instead, educators focused on what I could produce academically.

ELLs today encounter similar experiences because the pressures of producing high test scores remain a priority for school leaders to receive school funding. Schools must represent a safe place that embraces cultural diversity. Classroom settings serve as a second home where ELLs can share, talk, and introduce themselves without reservations. Caring relationships foster trust, active engagement, and positive learning experiences for all students. Barriers are broken when students experience care. Educators hold the key to facilitating caring relationships in safe spaces. When ELLs experience safety, they become open to learning and building relationships with peers and teachers.

Regretfully, elementary school forced me to resent my culture and heritage for many years because I was different from my peers. As a result, I often tried to downplay my background and the beautiful Indo-Caribbean culture that has enriched my life today. However, my experiences have afforded them the knowledge to want more for all learners and be an advocate for ELLs. The methods used in this study could be an extension of care for participants. Participants would be in a safe space where they could feel cared for and free to share their stories without hesitation.

Salazar and Lerner (2019) encouraged teachers to welcome all students, particularly ELLs, with all their treasures to create a trusting and safe environment. Students who feel valued and cared for leave their fears behind and embrace the opportunity to engage in positive teacher-student relationships. Eventually, ELLs slowly remove barriers, interact with peers, and become part of their classroom family.

The ideology of schools and curriculum was that education was a one-size-fits-all approach. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity (DEI) as we know it today did not exist in education, leaving ELLs to feel disconnected from teachers and peers. Instead, student diversity should have been acknowledged, and the curriculum was taught via textbooks in reading, math, social studies, and science to all students through whole class lessons.

Revolution and Ideology (2017) explained Gramsci's ideology and social control theory, which forced me to reflect on their educational experiences in Brooklyn, NY. Gramsci introduced the term hegemony. Hegemony is when dominating factors controlled by leaders that impact decision-making for all stakeholders that is based on the dominating position and their views or opinions (Revolution & Ideology, 2017). This explains that inequalities have existed within higher education for decades in the United States.

Scott (2014) discussed Gee's discourse theory grounded in cultural and social literacy views. Social and cultural views of literacy imply that context, history, culture, power, and beliefs influence teachers, literacy, and instruction. Standardized tests challenge the literary competencies of all learners. The language skills and reading strategies needed to perform well on standardized tests leave ELLs at a disadvantage. I sought to bridge the gap between ELLs' feeling inadequate to feeling comfortable and secure in who they, their culture, their prior knowledge, and experiences, and what each one represents.

My passion as a social justice leader and experiences as an educator have allowed me to gain insight into how ELLs feel about their educational setting. I recognize the need for students to feel accepted, valued, and cared for to promote positive well-being. ELLs were viewed as foreigners and identified as having deficiencies instead of being recognized for having an enriched background that facilitates knowledge of diversity. This philosophy has guided my study to uncover how caring teacher-student relationships inform well-being. Educators who foster an environment of care and love promote engagement and motivation with ELLs. Reading, writing, and comprehension are viewed as attainable goals, not impossible outcomes for ELLs. They become engaged in learning without hesitation. Learners actively engaged in reading activities when they exuded feelings of comfort and value.

Site Selection and Participants

I used purposeful sampling in this qualitative study. This qualitative study took place at a K-6 elementary school in Long Island, New York. This location is known for having a diverse population of ELLs who would be required to take the NYS ELA assessment in grades three through six after residing in the United States for more than one year. According to NYSED (2020), Valley Stream Union Free School District (UFSD) had a 72% Hispanic or Latino population, 9% Asian or Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian, 2% White, and 7% Black or African American. I worked with six elementary ELLs for this qualitative narrative research who were in fourth grade. According to the school district's website, ELLs make up 91% of the school district's demographics. 43% of the student population is Latino/Hispanic. 16% Asian, 17% White, Black/African American 21%, and Multiracial 3%.

The criteria for this study consisted of participants who were (a) native to another country, (b) resided in the United States one year or more, (c) currently in fourth grade, (d)

learning English as a new language, (e) attended this school for the first time or (f) transferred student, and (g) required to take the NYS ELA assessment in April 2023. The participants are native to Pakistan, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, and Guatemala. All participants receive daily ENL services with an ENL teacher. My decision to use purposeful sampling was intentional. I was intentional with the choice of participants because the age difference in participants in third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grade played a crucial role in the level of engagement during classroom observations, creating visual storyboards, the engagement in semi-structured interviews, and comfort in storytelling. Secondly, ELLs in fourth grade have limited experience with the NYS ELA. ELLs are introduced to the test preparation skills and strategies needed to receive a passing grade, but do not have experience taking a standardized test. Upper-grade students in fifth and sixth grades have had experience with the NYS ELA. This prior knowledge has resulted in more opt-outs for ELLs and less concentration and focus on passing this test. Parents' views and concerns about testing decrease as they become more familiar with the value of standardized testing. As a result, the number of parents who opt their children out of testing increases in the upper grades.

All teaching staff members have access to student records. This allowed the ENL teacher and I to identify fourth-grade students who receive ENL services. We identified students born outside of the United States and noted their native birth country. Then, we confirmed that the students had resided in the United States for one or more years by locating their date of arrival to the United States based on the student record card.

Students who transferred to this site from another school participated in the study if they were born in another country and resided in the United States for one year or more. The ENL teacher aided me in identifying students who were still learning English as a new language and

students who were successful with SLA. The ENL teacher serviced students from kindergarten to sixth grade. This provided the ENL teacher with in-depth knowledge of the students and their families. Finally, the ENL teacher and I identified ELL students, leading to the group of participants used in this study. Once confirmation of the criteria was met for all participants, I created a parent consent letter for the building principal to review and approve. After receiving verbal approval, I collaborated with the ENL teacher to translate a consent letter into the appropriate language for each parent. I sent letters home and made follow-up phone calls with the ENL teacher. I invited parents to visit the school so they could share more information about the study. I was transparent with parents about their child's involvement in the study and thanked them for allowing their child to participate in the study.

ELLs in fourth grade must become familiar with the components of the NYS ELA test because they will be taking the test for the first time in April 2023. The NYS ELA assessment is a standardized test administered to students in grades 3-8. The goal of the NYS ELA test is to provide students, families, and educators with credible measures of students' ELA skills and knowledge (NYSED, 2015).

ELLs prosper from engaging in positive teacher-student relationships. Rimm-Kaufmann and Sandilos (2011) described positive teacher-student relationships as crucial to progress and growth. A student that experiences a personal connection to their teacher exhibits comfort and trust by engaging in informal and formal conversations with their teacher. They view their teacher as a protector who cares for them and their well-being. Teachers are not viewed only as authoritative figures who offer criticism and not praise. The student is likely to trust their teacher more, show more engagement in learning, behave better in class, and achieve higher levels academically. Positive teacher-student relationships draw students into the process of learning

and promote their desire to learn (Rimm-Kaufman & Sandilos, 2011). These relationships make them feel valued and cared for and increase the effort put into their work.

There were six participants in the current study. Their countries of origin represented five nations and two continents. All the students were in fourth grade and had been in the United States for at least two years. The following table highlights demographic information for each student using pseudonyms. Following the table is a brief narrative of each participant's background and how they conceptualized the notion of care at home and in school. All participants perceived help as receiving support to complete a task or solve a problem or personal dilemma.

Table 1

Participant's Student Record Information

Participant	Level of Proficiency	Country of Origin	Primary Language	Entry Date into the United States	English or No English
Participant #1 Angel	Expanding	El Salvador	Spanish	1/12/2013	No English
Participant #2 Danna	Transitioning	Guatemala	Spanish	4/7/2013	No English
Participant #3 Bob	Transitioning	Dominican Republic	Spanish	7/14/2013	No English
Participant #4 Sean	Transitioning	Dominican Republic	Spanish	6/5/2013	No English
Participant #5 Astin	Transitioning	Pakistan	Urdu	5-22-2013	No English
Participant #6 Kristen	Commanding	Honduras	Spanish	11/12/2013	No English

Danna

Danna was a nine-year-old fourth-grade student who came to the United States from

Guatemala in 2021. Danna's primary language is Spanish, and she was required take the NYS ELA for the first time this school year. Care for Danna was being with her family who love her and helps her through talking or action when she has problems. In school, Danna said care was her teacher giving her individualized attention to help her with academic tasks such as identifying new vocabulary words or going through initial math concepts.

Angel

Angel was a 10-year-old fourth-grade student who came to the United States from El Salvador in 2021. Angel's conceptualization of care was unconditional support. At home, she described care as feeling protected by her parents. In school, she provided an example of how her teacher comes to her desk during math and listens to her and not get mad and say, "You should know this." Caring for her was having a teacher who listened and used a calming voice when students needed assistance.

Bob

Bob was a nine-year-old student from the Dominican Republic. He came to the United States in 2019. Bob perceived care as "someone who does things for him when he needs it." This could take place at home or in school. He mentioned his dad and aunt buying clothes and cooking for him. At school, his example was having the ability to ask questions to his teacher when he does not understand something. For him, his teacher cared because she would take time to make sure she answered his questions.

Sean

Sean was a nine-year-old, fourth-grade student whose family also came from the Dominican Republic. They had migrated to the United States a few years ago. At home, Sean said that care was someone playing with, having fun with, and taking care of him. He noted

spending time together was important. Care for him was someone who made sure they did not leave him out or alone. In school, Sean said care was his teacher asking how he was feeling and helping him make sure he understood reading or math. He thought his teacher cared for everyone because she would always go to their desks to make sure they understood what they were doing in class.

Astin

Astin was a nine-year-old student whose family migrated to the United States from Pakistan two years ago. For Astin, care at home was seen as someone protecting and keeping him safe. In school, he believed his teacher cared for him by explaining academic work to him so he could understand. He said his teacher cares because she “goes through each math problem step-by-step” with him when he is having trouble, and she sends him to the nurse if he is not feeling well. The more significant way his teacher cares for him is telling him that “everything is going to be okay” if he does not know the answer or is not feeling too good.

Kristen

Kristen was a nine-year-old student whose family’s country of origin was Honduras. Her family came to the United States four years ago. For Kristen, care overall was feeling happy and supported by adults. In school, she perceived caring by her teacher as unconditional support and response. She said her teacher helps her with math problems if “she gets stuck” but will also come over if she is talking with a friend. Her teacher will not get upset or say, “You shouldn’t be talking” but instead say “both of you are talking really well”, which makes Kristen happy.

Data Collection

I met with the building principal to obtain permission to conduct this qualitative study. I defended my proposal at the end of January 2023. In March 2023, I obtained Institutional

Review Board (IRB) approval to conduct research from Molloy University (see Appendix A).

After receiving IRB approval, I worked with the ENL teacher to recruit, identify, and obtain six ELL participants for the study, as described below.

I accessed the personal information required to recruit participants via student records in the school's main office. The student record card information consisted of proficiency level, entry date into the United States, primary language spoken, level of English language acquisition, and country of birth. See Figure 1 for a completed list.

Upon reaching out to potential participants' parents/guardians and obtaining written permission via consent letters, the ENL teacher and I met with the potential participants. We explained in detail via verbal explanation with translation and/or translated document in preferred language, if necessary: (a) what a study was, (b) why I was asking them to participate, (c) what I be doing, (d) what I wanted to learn about them, and (e) how their help in this study would help others. Having the ENL teacher present added to a feeling of safety for participants because the ENL teacher worked with these students consistently and has been with them since they first began attending this school. I provided students with a detailed overview of the study. They were informed about the study's two-month timeframe. The flexible guidelines of the study ensured each participant's comfort and safety. I informed the participants that the study revolved around them and their comfort level in sharing stories. They would share their stories without judgment or ridicule. Participants took breaks, went to the restroom, and ate snacks when needed. They shared what they were comfortable with, and if I offered them the opportunity to share with me independently, that I would arrange that to ensure comfort. Finally, I obtained child ascent for ELLs to participate in this study.

I collected data for this study through (a) classroom observations, (b) field notes (c) semi-

structured interviews, and (d) storyboards. I conducted weekly one-to-one, 30-minute semi-structured interviews (see Appendix D) in my classroom. I asked participants a series of open-ended questions to elicit emotions and feelings about teacher-student relationships and how they experienced care.

Classroom observations were conducted twice a week for 45 minutes in the classroom during reading lessons and test preparation (see Appendix B). I visited the classrooms during test preparation lessons. I sat in the back of the classroom and monitored students' interactions and behaviors during the reading of passages and when answering test questions. During observations, I took meticulous field notes about lessons, demeanor, test questions, level of passages, vocabulary, teacher and students' body movements, and facial expressions that would indicate how students felt about tasks (see Appendix C). The purpose of observing ELLs in the classroom was to witness participation, expressions, and interactions with test preparation before the test. I sought to ascertain how students demonstrated learning and comfort and verbally expressed their feelings about test prep with their classroom teacher. In addition, I observed how the classroom teacher interacted with all students and what modifications were made for ELLs during the lessons, if any. The direct exposure of witnessing students with test preparation allowed me to identify natural behaviors, attitudes, and social and emotional aspects associated with testing.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with one student at a time for approximately 30 minutes in my classroom to produce qualitative data. Saylor Academy (2012) described qualitative research as a method that will create a forum to exchange information between me and participants via in-depth interviews involving open-ended questions (See Appendix D). I initiated the interview by thanking the participant(s) for engaging in this

qualitative study. Then, I introduced myself and shared personal information as a researcher and teacher. I inserted opportunities for exchanges of information between the participants and me during the school day.

During 45-minute group lessons, I facilitated the process of participants creating visual storyboards. Storyboards are artistic illustrations that tell a story about a topic (see Appendix E, F, G, H, I, & J). Participants were encouraged to draw freely and to illustrate and write about their teacher-student relationship, expressing themselves without reservations. Sherman (2022) explained a storyboard as a “graphic organizer that plans a narrative. Storyboards are a powerful way to visually present information; the linear direction of the cells is perfect for storytelling, explaining a process, and showing the passage of time” (p. 4). A storyboard accompanies the participants’ thought processes as they disclose pertinent information about the teacher-student relationship. Storyboards encompass elements of storytelling that engage participants in openly discussing their narrative through artistic expression. Lynch (2023) emphasized how helpful visual aids can be for ELLs because they give a concise representation of the language and help them understand the feedback more effectively. Examples of visual aids include diagrams, charts, and images. ELLs enjoyed sharing their story via drawing and writing. I observed this during the activity.

Data Analysis

This qualitative study was analyzed using narrative analytical methods. The narrative analysis sought to identify themes and events that provided an in-depth understanding of care ELLs experienced in their classroom with their classroom teacher. First, I read all the data within a time sensitive timeframe. This helped me minimize interference with participants’ stories. Glesne (2011) stated that analyzing data within an adequate time allows for the emergence of

profound findings gathered through data collection. Next, I transcribed the interviews and examined them to find commonalities and differences that existed between participants. Then, classroom observations were analyzed, looking for significant commonalities, differences, and themes presented through transcripts. I used Dedoose to code themes presented through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, field notes, and the storyboards. I used a combination of inductive coding (descriptive coding), which enabled me to organize and filter data from the ground up using participants' stories, and deductive coding, which allowed me to generate predetermined codes based on frameworks used and research questions. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), "qualitative researchers work inductively. They build categories, themes, and patterns from the bottom up" (p. 37). The analysis described the patterns in the participants' stories while generating patterns and themes, ensuring that I included individual, unique experiences. I color-coded the critical themes. Examples of some of the codes included care, trust, comfort, safety, well-being, assistance, and unconditional support. I was able to develop four themes that best described the findings of the data based on the codes developed. Themes included trust, prior experiences, compassion through academic support, health support, safety, and confidence developed through care.

Reflexivity was imperative for me to reflect on as it relates to shaping interpretations based on the collected. Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated, "reflexivity is an approach the writer is cognizant of. The writer is aware of potential biases, experiences, and values that they connect to the qualitative research study (p. 300)." Analytic memos are crucial in qualitative research. The brief notes, questions, ideas, and thoughts that arose in my mind are vital in coding and identifying patterns in the data. My desire to learn more about how care and safety can impact learning piqued their curiosity in the findings of this qualitative narrative study.

Validity

Creswell and Creswell (2018) introduced multiple validities and trustworthiness procedures to check the accuracy of findings. One validity procedure I utilized with interview data collected was member checking. Member checking required me to revisit data with participants to confirm accuracy. Member checking was crucial to the data collection process because of the young ELL participants who participated in this qualitative study. According to Elo et al. (2014), validity must be clear in all qualitative studies. The goal of member-checking is to provide credibility to the data. I also used triangulation to increase the validity and accuracy of this qualitative study. MIM Learnovate (2022) described triangulation as using a variety of methods to collect data to get a clear understanding of an issue or problem. Triangulation requires the researcher to use three data sources in conducting research. In this qualitative study, I collected data using classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, field notes, and visual storyboards. The benefit of using triangulation was to hear the stories of ELLs through varied methods. Each method used to collect data enabled participants to give insight into their stories of experiencing care in the classroom. Triangulation enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of participants' stories about experiencing care in the classroom. Each participant presents a thick and robust description of how they experience care in the classroom. The authenticity is visible through the varied methods used to collect data about how ELLs received care from classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and storyboards. The data collected explicitly represented the compassion ELLs received through academic support, health support, and safety.

Limitations

There were several limitations in conducting this qualitative research study, First, this study was limited to ELLs from specific countries residing in the United States for less than one

year. Therefore, the personal narratives may differ from ELLs who have resided in the United States for more than two years or were born in the United States, but mobility occurs in their school career. Second, there were minimal participants in this study; therefore, the stories generated may not reflect the stories of a broader population of ELLs as there are a plethora of ELLs. Third, ELL experiences in one school may not reflect ELL experiences in another school because schools that serve the ELL population operate in different ways. ELLs in this study came from countries where violence occurred, causing traumatic limitations in well-being, and learning for ELLs.

The influence of others' stories can impact how an ELL tells a story. Family members may condition ELL's perception of reality because of a fear of people knowing the truth. Another limitation was not having the families of ELLs participate in this study. Research and experiences provide the knowledge that the family unit operates collectively in most families coming from Latin countries. I could not consider this factor because I did not collect data with family members of ELLs, which was a limitation of this study.

The stories of participants residing on Long Island may not have represented the stories of ELLs living in other parts of the United States. The languages spoken can differ from those of current participants. The needs could differ with ELLs entering the school during the next school year. Each school year brings new ELLs and challenges that may not reflect the 2022-2023 ELL population. The participants of this study recalled specific descriptions of lived experiences. If memories were limited, that could skew findings. Participants may have experienced memory challenges that could result in different interpretations of the lived experiences of ELLs. In this qualitative research study, honesty was evident. Participants were encouraged to retell authentic

experiences to the best of their ability with no pressure. Therefore, the limitations could vary and only reflect some of the participants in this qualitative study.

Delimitations

I aimed to identify how ELLs experienced care and safety in their classrooms and how this informed the well-being of ELLs in this study. I made conscious exclusionary decisions in conducting this study. An exclusionary decision made in conducting this study was to exclude participants from specific grade levels. There were several considerations made when identifying potential participants. I needed to recognize the grade and age of potential participants and their ability to describe lived experiences coupled with memories. The number of ELLs that met the criteria for participation in the study was crucial to narrative storytelling shared.

The number of ELLs in grade three was less than four. Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated, “in the narrative inquiry at least five participants should be studied to gain insight into the different knowledge and experience in personal and educational life.” Another reason I chose to exclude third graders from participating in the study was third graders have limited knowledge, understanding, and experience with the NYS ELA. Students are unfamiliar with the components and value placed on this standardized test, which causes blurred lines in understanding the impact it has on building teacher-student relationships.

Fifth and sixth graders at this elementary school had extensive experience and knowledge with the NYS ELA. Parents are also aware of the tests and the pressures students and teachers are under to achieve a high level of success. As a result, fifth and sixth-grade parents opt their children out of taking the test to relieve them from the pressure and negative effects of having an untimed standardized test that could last from the beginning to the end of the school day. These parents and students experienced the value placed on getting a high score together with the

individual effects on each student. Therefore, the percentage of fifth and sixth-grade students who opted out was extremely high, resulting in limitations in conducting a narrative study. I chose to conduct this qualitative study with fourth-grade ELLs. This grade had the required number of ELLs to participate in the study to gain insight into how ELLs experienced care with their classroom teacher.

Fourth graders at this site have been in the United States for one or more years and required to take the NYS ELA test in April 2023. The number of parents who opt for their fourth-grade child to take the NYS ELA test is minimal. These are some of the exclusionary decisions made in conducting this research. The perception of well-being impacted classroom and life learning because different ideas and thoughts about well-being existed. Different experiences influence knowledge of what well-being is and how this way of being impacts learning in the classroom and life learning.

Ethical Considerations

There were possible ethical concerns in this proposed qualitative study. Keeping all participants safe was a priority for me. Before the study, I collaborated with the ENL teacher to set up conferences with each participant's parents and guardians. I explained and provided a detailed overview of the study and the purpose of conducting the study. The ENL teacher was available to translate the same information for parents who did not speak English. Parents and guardians learned about the process and time allotted to conduct this study. Parents received consent forms in their native languages of English, Punjabi, and Spanish to ensure that all parents understood the study and its purpose with full disclosure.

All participants were required to provide child assent. Before the study, participants were informed about the flexible rules of the study to ensure their safety. Participants were very

young, and some interview questions could trigger negative feelings due to traumatic experiences, causing possible discomfort and unwanted memories of past events in a participant's life. I wanted participants to know in advance that this study revolved around them and their comfort in sharing stories. Having the ENL teacher present reinforced this notion because she, too, developed caring relationships with these students over time.

Participants could discontinue the study at any time. There was no negative connotation attached to the existing study. Participants were given breaks during interviews and group sessions. Participants were encouraged to let me know without hesitation if a bathroom break or stretch break was needed. Participants asked questions and were encouraged to speak freely and naturally. If aspects of personal stories shared made participants feel uncomfortable, they were encouraged not to share aloud but instead have the option for participants to share with me confidential. The participants' comfort and safety were imperative to the execution of this research study.

To ensure participants' stories were confidential, I excluded names, grades, or any personal information that would reveal their identity. Personal narrative stories were kept confidential between the participants and me. Classroom teachers and supportive reading teachers share students. However, the quality of the time spent between support services and students was more intimate. Support service teachers had one-to-one sessions with students and group sessions, which allowed for building trusting relationships of longevity to develop quickly. The intimate close-knit setting provided a caring and safe environment that was simple to establish from the start. I discussed the goals with students for an environment that promoted natural exchanges. Students saw support staff more as friendly teachers than the classroom teacher who manages an entire class. The classroom teacher was viewed as more of an authority

figure because they controlled the entire classroom daily, taught all subjects, assigned classwork, and engaged in parental communication.

Conclusion

The research design aligned with the qualitative narrative research study's purpose because it allowed ELLs to share their stories with me about how they experienced care, what a safe space reflects, and the impact of engaging in teacher-student relationships on one's well-being and learning. The interviews and observations provided insight into ELLs' interactions with classroom teachers and how care, prior experiences with care, and how compassion through academic support, health support, and safety were experienced. The next chapter provides a presentation of the study's findings.

Chapter Four - Findings

Introduction

In this qualitative study, I sought to examine and understand how ELLs experience care in their classroom through the lens of care and SLA theory. I believed that understanding how ELLs experienced care in their classroom with their classroom teacher would provide a vision for teachers, administrators, and stakeholders to implement the necessary modifications that would enable ELLs to receive an equitable education, which would result in positive well-being in school and academic success for all ELLs present and future. I came to understand the views of ELLs and how they experienced care in the classroom. I conducted seven classroom observations, two semi-structured interviews, one member checking session, and three group sessions to work on the storyboards used to collect findings to discern the perspectives of the six participants. Based on the established research questions, the six participants illustrated how they experience care in the classroom with their teacher.

Research Questions

How do caring teacher-student relationships inform ELLs well-being in the classroom?

1. How do Elementary ELLs experience care in the classroom?
 - a. How do Elementary ELLs describe care?
 - b. How are Elementary ELLs interpreting care in their classroom?
 - c. To what extent do Elementary ELLs' experiences with care in the classroom inform their well-being?
 - d. To what extent do Elementary ELLs respond to care in the classroom?

The following sections provide a synopsis of the stories of how young ELLs experience different forms of care within an educational environment. Four themes emerged from this

qualitative study. First, ELLs described care from the perspective of trust, prior experiences, direct academic support, health support, safety and compassion. Participants described academic support as their classroom teacher providing individualized quality time to work on specific tasks or discuss situations that impact their well-being. Participants described health support as the classroom teacher allowing them to navigate to different safe spaces inside and outside of the classroom when they needed breaks or alone time. Health support for ELLs also entailed physical health and mental and emotional.

Participants described protection as the daily classroom practices discussed and learned in the beginning of the school year. ELLs learned how to react during lockdown and fire drills, which made them feel protected. Second, ELLs viewed classroom teachers as vital necessities that informed ELLs' well-being in the education environment. Next, the teacher-student relationship proved to be the foundation of care and was needed to develop trusting relationships, provide academic support, health support, and protection in the classroom. Finally, participants relied on prior experiences to help translate care.

Overview of Findings

The main findings from the data were obtained through classroom observations, field notes, semi-structured interviews, and storyboards that were conducted during group sessions. Data collection revealed that elementary school-aged ELLs' perceptions of care were contingent upon building a trusting relationship and influenced by their prior experiences and receiving unconditional support in academics and health, feeling a sense of safety, and being in a classroom that fosters care and confidence. Teachers provided ELLs with trust in their classroom and a sense of comfort. ELLs' perception of care was interpreted based on teacher-student relationships in prior years. ELLs expressed receiving care when they needed academic support

when facing difficulties with reading with unknown words. ELLs perceived teachers' compassionate responses to ELLs health-related or safety challenges as care. Rules, structure/norms, and safe spaces enabled Elementary ELLs to navigate to different locations for different reasons when needed, which made ELLs feel safe and cared for. Caring classroom environments gave ELLs the confidence to take risks and attempt challenging tasks on their own without hesitation.

The standard definition of care can be described as “the provision of what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance, and protection of someone or something” (Oxford University Press, 2023, p. 1). The participants in this study described care as someone looking out for them, someone who provided safety, help, and support as well as aiding in the acclimation to their new environment. In all, positive well-being was achieved by this positive description of care. The participants' descriptions of care directly aligned with the standard definition of care. Noddings (1992) being cared for and cared about is learned at home first. All the participants learned their definition of care through past experiences and how they received care at home. They base their definition of care on examples from their home environments. These participants had a base for what care meant to them based on their home experiences and past classroom experiences. Their current experiences expanded their knowledge about what care truly is.

Finding # 1 – Trust

The foundation of how ELLs experienced care in the classroom was through trust built through the development of the teacher-student relationship. Participants expressed the importance of trust when feeling cared for. ELLs felt like they could confide in the teacher, and nothing would be shared, which was important to them. Trust was the basis of care and comfort

for ELLs, which stemmed from a positive teacher-student relationship. Their well-being was impacted in a positive way when trust was built because they looked at their teacher as a support system and went to them in times of need, both academically and personally. Cox (n.d.) explained that building trust, support, and respect in the classroom takes time. Being open and purposeful with developing a safe classroom environment is the first step. Since the classroom is where learners spend most of their school day, it is crucial that they have a space where they feel comfortable and supported. When teachers address both the physical and emotional needs of all students, the students will feel comfortable, have a sense of belonging, and be prepared to learn (para. 6).

It was important to reassure participants about the trust maintained between teacher and student. It was also crucial for participants to experience natural exchanges with their teachers over time. Participants believed that time deepens trust and allows participants to develop a trusting relationship where they are comfortable and feel safe to talk about personal issues without judgment. I ascertained these findings via classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and storyboard illustrations that represented teacher-student relationships.

ELLs began to trust only after they developed bonds over time and the removal of specific barriers. Teacher credibility is crucial to forming healthy, trusting relationships. Trust formulates the development of engaging, welcoming, and positive learning environments where all in the school building can thrive. When teachers create trusting relationships, students reap the benefits emotionally, socially, and academically. The development of positive teacher-student relationship occurs when both parties demonstrate gratitude and shared respect toward each other. Purposeful and intentional relationship-building tactics allow ELLs to experience a

transformational education, which reinforces the notion of creating successful learners who become successful citizens of society. Trust is the foundation of successful relationships between teachers and their students.

Participants expressed trust as a necessary component in the teacher-student relationship. When asked about trust, Angel expressed the same ideas and reflected that it is mutual. She said she knows that Ms. G. will not be upset with her if she does not know something about her homework, and she could share it with her teacher. Angel gave an example of a writing assignment that she had for homework. She had to write a short response and was confused, so when she came to school, she told Ms. G. she had trouble, and Ms. G. told her she would work with her on the question later and did not get mad at Angel. This made Angel trust Ms. G. even more. When completing homework assignments or not being able to finish, Sean expressed that he knew that Ms. J. did not think he was pretending or just trying to get out of doing work. He knew that Ms. J. would believe him, which made him trust her because she trusted him. Sean immediately stated, “You just don't trust someone first. You must get to know them.” At the beginning of the school year, Sean said that he did not know Ms. J., so he felt like he had to start all over with a new teacher, getting to learn about a new teacher and how she would act, and how she would treat him and his friends. He explained he had to talk to his teacher and learn about her. His teacher also got to talk to him and learn about him. This made them have a good relationship because, over time, their trust in each other grew. Sometimes Ms. J. would share personal information about her husband or her kids. Then, she would also ask her students to share personal information about what they did over the summer vacation or the weekend.

Relationships Matter

The teacher-student relationship played an integral role in how ELLs experienced care in

the classroom. This was an overwhelmingly significant and overarching facet of this study. Positive teacher-student relationships impacted ELLs academic participation and engagement, contributed to positive student well-being, and created conditions that promoted a sense of protection in the classroom. Creating a classroom environment where teachers make themselves accessible without conditions encourages students to express themselves without judgment and increases participation in their learning process (Eckels, 2023).

When both parties demonstrate gratitude and shared respect toward each other, they develop positive teacher-student relationships. Payne et al. (2022) explained that students believe good teachers demonstrate positive qualities. For example, good teachers are caring; they show love and affection towards students. Caring teachers provide individualized support to students, meeting their needs at different times. Students who respect and appreciate their teacher work diligently and put forth great effort in achieving academic goals to please their teacher.

Teachers who feel respected and appreciated by their students go out of their way to provide unconditional support to students, ensuring they feel cared for and valued. As a result, ELLs developed respect and gratitude for their classroom teacher via the unconditional support given. According to YUP Technologies (2020), “Respect in the classroom boosts teacher effectiveness and encourages active and appropriate participation in classroom activities. Positive, supportive, and respectful relationships between teachers and students even increase students’ odds of long-term academic success and social success (para. 27).” The connection formed between ELLs and their teacher serves as a foundation of academic support, health support and safety manifested during daily classroom practices from a facet of care, respect, and gratitude. Rose (2020) described care with teachers as:

having regard for students, and a commitment to their social and emotional well-

being. But there is another element to care about, one less frequently discussed, and that is a commitment to students' cognitive development. You are using your mind to foster the intellectual growth of others, to help them become better readers, writers, and thinkers. (p. 1)

Care as described by Oxford Languages (2023) entails protection and help from one person to another. It is recognizing the needs of someone through listening, recognizing, and understanding how they feel. The participants held care in high regard as it relates to their well-being in school.

Finding #2 – Prior Experiences

ELLs' perceptions of care were seen through the lens of prior educational experiences. Prior educational experiences impact ELLs learning and future learning and their view of other educators. It is a precursor for what comes next in terms of learning and provides the ELLs with a standard when comparing a new teacher to a past teacher based on their experience with educators in prior years. ELLs who have experienced care in the classroom will hold on to that prior experience and use those experiences to identify if a new or current teacher cares about them. Past experiences set ELLs up to be receptive to their caring teachers, disclose personal information, and impact their well-being. Their judgment of care is based solely upon what they experienced before.

Angel described her prior experiences with her third-grade teacher, and she expressed that her third-grade teacher took time to get to know the class by sharing information and personal stories about her family and her dog. The prior experience with her third-grade teacher led Angel to know that she should share information, too and take time to get to know the new teacher. When her fourth-grade teacher did the same things and shared personal information as her third-grade teacher, Angel identified similarities in the care and comfort they were creating.

She recognized similar qualities in her fourth-grade teacher that her third-grade teacher possessed, which provided a bridge and example of what care and comfort in the classroom looked like. She had prior knowledge and experiences that led her to understand that the more time you spend with someone, the more you get to know them, which allowed her to feel confident and comfortable. Prior experiences allowed her to be open to the new teacher and what she had to offer to her class. Angel was open to establishing a relationship with her fourth-grade teacher because of prior experiences in the classroom.

Finding #3 - Compassion

Teachers' compassionate responses to ELLs' academic, health-related, or safety challenges were perceived as care. Compassionate teacher responses were provided in the form of academic support, health support, and safety. The teachers demonstrated compassion when providing academic support by not negatively reacting when participants did not complete work; support was provided instead of discipline. Teachers provided health support when students shared personal information with the teacher, and the teacher was sympathetic to them and offered support. Many participants stated that they felt cared for and safe when their teachers' created rules, structure, and procedures of what to do in an emergency. Teachers used compassion to teach the students about the safe spaces they could relocate to in dangerous situations. They had their students practice moving to these spaces and walked them through scenarios because they knew that the ELLs have been in dangerous situations and the importance that an ELL may see in knowing what to do in these situations.

Academics – Experiences of Care Through Compassionate Responses

ELLs perceived teachers' responses to their academic challenges as care. Ms. G. provided

academic support by reviewing the sounds of the letters if Angel did not know them, which helped her to sound out a word. Angie became confused with the letters and their sounds like the letters K, C, and O. Ms. G will draw a picture with the unknown letter and sound to help Angie learn the letter and the sound that the letter makes. Angel explained that Ms. G. also uses clues, like how to look for other words in an unknown word. This helps Angel when sounding out the words she did not know. Angel explained how her classroom teacher helped her by stating that Ms. G. explained and demonstrated what was taught in class.

When asked about multiple-choice questions, Angel stated she is okay with those questions because she can go back to the story if she needs to and look for answers, but she always still feels nervous. If there is a vocabulary question and she cannot talk, she will try to remember what tips Ms. G. gave her and maybe use that if she remembers. She will try her best to sound out the word and if she does not get it, it is okay. Ms. G. provided students with techniques to overcome challenges with certain types of questions, so the students had a tool; even though they did not have it in front of them, they had seen or used the technique enough to use it now. The tips and techniques provide resources for ELLS to refer to when needed. These consistent resources can be utilized with ELLs to guide them through the steps for answering testing questions and restating a question in the answer, which must be included in any short-response question response.

Health Related – Challenges and Dilemmas

The participants' definitions of care included health support, which is related to physical, mental, and emotional health. Teachers demonstrated compassionate health support when they were available to talk to students about physical, mental, and emotional issues as they were experiencing them. The teachers showed compassion when recognizing that something was

wrong with the ELL before they even shared the information. This reiterated to them that the teacher was there to support and care about them.

Kristen described a time when she was sad about her mother not being at home with her anymore. At first, she was uncomfortable telling anyone that her mother was not living with her anymore, so she kept it to herself. According to Rimm-Kaufman and Sandilos (2011):

Students who feel a strong personal connection to her teacher, talks with her teacher. frequently, and receives more constructive guidance and praise rather than just criticism. from her teacher. The student is likely to trust her teacher more, show more engagement. in learning, behave better in class, and achieve at higher levels academically. Positive teacher-student relationships draw students into the process of learning and promote them desire to learn. (para. 2)

Kristen said that Ms. J. noticed during class that sometimes she looked sad, or she looked like her facial expressions always represented sadness or something happening or feeling blue, so Ms. J. tried to talk to Kristen. One day, when nobody was in the classroom, Kristen said that everyone was at lunch and Ms. J. just asked her if she could come back upstairs with her to do an errand. Ms. J. started talking to Kristen and asked if everything was okay because she noticed that Kristen was not in her usual cheerful and joyful mood. Kristen told her that she was sad because her mom had to leave, and she had to live with her dad and her little sister. Ms. J. told her that she understood how she felt and that there was a good reason that her mom had to leave, but Ms. J. knew that it was hard for Kristen's mom to leave her and her sister. Ms. J. let Kristen know she would be there for her if she ever needed to talk, give advice, and even help with homework. Ms. J. made Kristen feel she could depend on her because she reminded Kristen that they would be together every day and she did not have to hold anything back. Ms. J's

compassionate response to Kristen's sharing of her sadness made Kristen feel like she could share her story about feeling sad or not herself.

When asked to define care, Sean explained that there were times when he did not feel good. He experienced feelings of anger about something that happened at home or school, and he did not want to share it with Ms. J. because he thought he could handle it on his own. Classroom practices allowed students to leave the classroom to go for a walk, so they could release some tension. There was a detailed description of what the students had to do if they were in this situation. They would leave the classroom, make a left, and make another left into the hallway. The classroom teacher respected their time and did not question the participants about why they were angry or did not feel good. Participants knew that they could take this walk without explanation or judgment. She reminded the students that she was available if they wanted to talk. This was a compassionate way to encourage students to take a breather and clear their mind while also making sure that they knew she cared about them. Allowing the students to hold themselves accountable for their well-being provided a responsible outlet to let negative feelings out and return to the class ready to learn.

Safety

Students perceive and experience care from their teacher through compassionate responses to safety concerns/issues within classrooms or school. Participants stated that safety included a pattern of transparent interactions, which encouraged acceptance, belonging, and a judgment-free classroom. According to the ELLs, all these actions that were inclusive of the teacher were exemplary in providing a safe classroom climate in which ELLs felt safe. Safety in the classroom was an element of care for elementary ELLS and was repeatedly stated as removing the danger, implementing rules to follow, creating safe spaces, and receiving

individualized support. Providing safety and procedures to follow in dangerous situations allowed ELLs to feel safe with classroom teachers. Compassionate descriptions of what to do were considered by the teacher and practicing the movements to safe spaces reiterated this for the ELLs. Creating safe spaces for students made them feel safe. They knew what to expect, where to go, and where to go when seeking individualized support or a break from class. Astin described some safe spaces in his classroom where he feels comfortable. One of those places was his desk and his chair because these two things belonged to him. He could put his notebook, folders, and pencils on his desk; no one could go in there or take anything. The creation of individual safe spaces in the classroom further drove the feeling of safety for each student in the classroom. Participants expressed feelings of being cared for when the teacher removed danger from the classroom and made students feel safe. Astin interpreted safety as being protected and free of danger and free of any dangerous people or intruders that may hurt him. For example, in his classroom, the teacher asked what to do during a fire drill, so Astin and the rest of the students felt comfortable knowing exactly what they had to do during a fire drill. Astin associated safety with the teacher protecting him and other students. Teachers demonstrated compassion by taking the time to walk students through procedures and doing it frequently.

Finding # 4 – Confidence and Care

Confidence and caring classroom environments provided ELLs with the confidence and self-initiative to attempt novel and challenging tasks. The standard definition of care is “the provision of what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance, and protection of someone or something” (Oxford University Press, 2023, p. 1). The participants in this study described care as teachers providing environments conducive to students’ transition and acclimation to their new learning environment. It was often based on and connected to previous family and educational

experiences. The description of care centered on increased feelings of confidence that ELLs could be successful in their education. Well-being is defined as experiencing a combination of feelings to include happiness, good mental health, positive emotions and feeling good (Ruggieri et al. 2020).

Building confidence in students is developed through teachers providing a caring classroom environment. Eckels (2023) stated that teachers must make themselves available to their students. Creating a classroom environment that encourages students to express themselves without judgment enables students to engage in their learning. ELLs feel welcomed and valued in their role as a member of the class. Teachers who circulate the room to provide visual signals informing students that they are available if needed, create confidence in the students and show that the teachers care about their students. Physical demeanor coupled with tone when communicating transcends a message of care and concern to ELLs and allows ELLs to engage in their learning without hesitation when attempting tasks and participating. Purposeful and intentional relationship-building tactics allow ELLs to experience a transformational education, and this reinforces the notion of creating successful learners who become successful citizens of society. Trust and support are the foundation of successful relationships between teachers and their students, which can instill confidence in their students and provide an optimal caring environment.

Danna said, “Ms. G. tells us to go back to the story and gives us a highlighter to underline the important information and to look for two details in the story.” This provided Danna with the confidence to attempt challenging tasks and self-initiate, feeling comfortable with reading lengthy passages, answering numerous multiple-choice questions, and answering extended and short responses. Ms. G. gave her tools to use when she faced challenges working independently.

Going back, using highlighters and repeating readings gave students the skills to skim through stories and highlighting to help them answer questions at the end. Ms. G. provided students with the confidence to attempt novel and challenging tasks by creating a caring classroom environment. A caring classroom environment allowed ELLS to feel a sense of belonging in their classroom where they were free to engage in instructional activities, participate in group discussions, work with a partner, and share their perceptions and thoughts on the designated lesson. This allowed ELLs to experience learning without judgment and to build confidence as English language learners. The caring classroom environment needs to be a place where ELLs can attempt challenging tasks and self-initiate without ridicule or consequences. The creation of a caring classroom environment is crucial to growing confidence and self-initiation with ELLs.

Surprise Findings

The findings that surprised me most were learning how safety, knowing protocols, rules, and strategies enabled ELLs to feel comfortable and valued members of their classroom dynamic. Participants learned about safety protocols at the beginning of the school year with their classroom teacher and peers. This knowledge helped them to feel safe and prepared for possible dangerous situations. For example, ELLs learned about lockdowns and fire drills early on, which prepared them with the skills to know what to do if an intruder tried to enter the school and classroom. I was surprised because safety protocols are standard precautions implemented to keep everyone safe. I did not anticipate the ELLs' connections with feeling safe and protected as being cared for by their teacher.

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the findings of this qualitative narrative research study and provided insight into how ELLs describe and interpret care in the classroom with their classroom

teachers. I explored ELLs' descriptions of their experiences of care to determine how care impacts their well-being. Responses to the care received in the classroom were shared, and how developing a positive teacher-student relationship fosters a support system for ELLs that can enable them to actively engage in learning. ELLs identified teachers' compassionate responses to academic challenges, health challenges, and the need to feel safe as key components to building a trusting and positive teacher-student relationship. By building a strong relationship and creating a caring classroom environment, teachers were able to instill confidence in the ELLs and feel accepted and valued in the classroom, fostering a sense of belonging and possessing a positive well-being. The major findings of this paper stated in Chapter 4 enabled me to identify gaps in the educational system that may require future professional development for all stakeholders and areas of future research on how ELLs experience care in other educational settings. The findings suggest that better connections need to be made with families to further impact ELLs' well-being and success.

Chapter Five – Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how Elementary ELLs experienced care in the classroom with their classroom teacher. In Chapter one, I presented an overview and background information and context. In Chapter two, I provided a review of the literature with an in-depth explanation of theoretical frameworks in care and SLA. Chapter three highlighted the methodology used for this qualitative study. Chapter four identified the findings from the study with rationale and data to provide further explanation. In Chapter five, I will discuss the implications and recommendations of this qualitative study, limitations of the study, and considerations for future research with elementary ELLs. The implications connected to how policy, practice, and research can inform educators to meet the needs of ELLs to enhance their growth and progress, ensuring that they are given all the tools and resources necessary to sustain a productive and successful journey through the education system and classroom. During the first encounter, ELLs began to identify the caring qualities of their teacher. I discovered that care was a component of all learning. Care is the key to trust, comfort, safety, and a positive well-being with ELLs in school and is provided through the knowledge of prior experiences, academic support, health support, and safety. All four themes are interconnected. ELLs experience care when their classroom teacher spends individualized quality time with them and offers unconditional support within the safe spaces in their classroom. ELLs benefit from feeling a sense of belonging created through teacher and student interactions and daily classroom practices.

Teachers often struggle to establish time with elementary ELLs to focus on teacher-student relationships. ELLs need special individualized attention and support that differs from general education students. The day-to-day responsibilities of a teacher leave little time to create

equitable learning opportunities for ELLs. Teachers are not afforded the flexibility to plan and prepare lessons that directly support ELLs.

Another obstacle during the school year is test preparation. Test preparation is a barrier that hinders teachers from having the time to provide the care and support that ELLs require to succeed in school. Levitan (2023) explained that:

Teachers need not only, instructional time, but also planning time: time to review and upcoming lessons, evaluate students' work assess where students have grasped content and where they struggle, and adjust future lessons accordingly. Setting aside time for teachers to do this work, both on their own and in collaboration with their peers, may support higher-quality instruction, with the important added benefit of reducing stress on teachers. (p. 1)

I recognize the need for students to have a positive well-being, which is achieved through academic support, health support, and safety in addition to having a strong teacher-student relationship to promote academic excellence. ELLs should be given equitable access to the curriculum by extending accommodations with limited reading loads, vocabulary instructions, and social opportunities to make connections with teachers and peers.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

While there is much literature about the importance of creating caring and positive teacher-student relationships, ELLs feeling a sense of belonging and comfort in a safe learning environment is critical. This qualitative study's purpose was to discover how ELLs experience care in their classroom with their teacher. As previously mentioned, the six participants were learning English as a new language. They resided in the United States for less than two years and

took the NYS ELA standardized test for the first time in April 2023. Through the framework of care theory and SLA theory, I sought to answer the following research questions:

How do caring teacher-student relationships inform ELLs' well-being in the classroom?

1. How do Elementary ELLs experience care in the classroom?

a. How do Elementary ELLs describe care?

b. How are Elementary ELLs interpreting care in their classroom?

c. To what extent do Elementary ELLs' experiences with care in the classroom inform their well-being?

d. To what extent do Elementary ELLs respond to care in the classroom?

Methodology

I conducted this qualitative study at a K-6 elementary school in Long Island, New York. This location is known for having a diverse population of ELLs who were required to take the NYS ELA assessment in grades three through six after residing in the United States for more than one year. Purposeful sampling was used in this qualitative study because fourth grade is a testing grade where ELLs are required to take the NYS ELA; there are a large population of ELLs in fourth grade, and fourth-grade students benefit and want to have teacher-student relationships. Data for this narrative study was collected via semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, field notes, and the utilization of a visual storyboard during group sessions to identify how participants experienced care with their classroom teacher. The data analysis demonstrated how essential positive teacher-student relationships are to ELLs because they provide outlets for developing trusting relationships, using prior experiences, academic support, health support, and protection, which are central elements in establishing a positive well-being.

Findings

Four significant findings in this qualitative study reflected how ELLs experienced care in the classroom through the lens of care and SLA. The participants in this study experienced care in the classroom by receiving unconditional support from their classroom teachers. ELLs described care as being able to trust and confide in their teacher and feeling supported, safe, and protected. ELLs interpreted care based on positive prior experiences with family members and teachers. They found comfort in similar experiences with their classroom teacher. ELLs felt cared for when their classroom teacher demonstrated compassion by providing academic support during the challenges, they faced with test preparation and SLA. The health support and encouragement classroom teachers provided to ELLs were crucial because it enabled ELLs to engage in learning and take risks. Experiencing care through safety provided by the classroom teachers gave ELLs a sense of belonging in their learning environment, allowing them to develop a positive well-being in school. Teacher-student relationships are vital to the success of ELLs and positive well-being. All participants exhibited how important trust, prior experiences, compassion demonstrated through academic support, health support, and safety were in fostering caring teacher-student relationships conducive to learning. These findings create a pathway for future research and provide implications for ELLs in educational practices, which I discuss in Chapter 5.

Implications for Practice

Two important implications from the findings of this study are the importance of teacher-student relationships and the need for educators to use trauma-informed approaches when educating ELLs. Students perceived their relationships with teachers as a benefit and catalyst for success in the classroom and interactions with peers. The facets of care ELLs connected to were

support, comfort, safety, and trust. ELLs need individualized time with their teacher to feel successful and engaged in learning. ELLs benefit from having prior experiences with care, trust, academic support, health support, and safety. An equitable education revolves around providing ELLs with what they need to learn.

Educators who teach ELLs should learn about them to develop best practices for teaching them. Learning about ELLs' unique needs comes with benefits. The University of San Diego (2023) discussed the benefits of learning about ELLs resulted in improved and easier lesson planning and progress monitoring. Colorin Colorado (2009) suggested that teachers should plan instruction for ELLs. First, building background knowledge is crucial in helping ELLs access their prior knowledge coupled with new knowledge. Lesson planning must include opportunities for tapping into prior knowledge and new knowledge. Initiating this process requires extensive planning. For example, teachers must identify the prior knowledge required for the lesson and ascertain the background knowledge ELLs have. Teachers need to help students by assisting them in building background knowledge by creating instances for them to scaffold new material. Vocabulary building is essential to learning for ELLs. Teachers need to identify words crucial to understanding text across all areas for ELLs and then teach them these unknown words in context. Structural analysis, such as prefixes and suffixes, can be critical to understanding unknown words. Teachers must instruct ELLs in this content and immerse them in this language during consistent daily practices. Robertson (n.d.) stated that teachers need to evaluate and assess the lessons they are implementing with ELLs who are performing on different academic levels. Teachers cannot present one lesson to six ELLs with the same outcomes and mastery of the same skills. teachers need to build on ELLs' skills and provide differentiated strategies that work for each one.

Introducing multiple concepts can be challenging for ELLs. Lesson planning is a process that involves a significant amount of time dedicated to differentiation when instructing ELLs. Teachers may encounter obstacles along the way because ELLs may not master the skills needed right away; however, teachers who present concepts in differentiated ways can help ELLs to attain the skills needed to be successful. According to Robertson (2023), introducing different concepts and subjects at the same time may not be remembered or understood by ELLs. Robertson (2023) explained that knowledge is socially constructed, meaning learning is retained when it encompasses interactions with others. Identifying and establishing the tools needed for ELLs to be successful takes time. Teachers must prioritize the ELLs' instructional plan by researching resources and strategies that build background knowledge and support ELLs' language development. This planning and instruction will foster an atmosphere where ELLs feel safe and comfortable learning to make mistakes and take risks without judgment. Only this can set the stage for authentic learning.

Participants benefit from classroom structure and processes that provide them with autonomy in addressing their mental health and wellness. In this study, students had the opportunity to take a break from learning and go to a designated space if they were experiencing negative feelings. Meador (2019) stated:

Most students respond positively to structure, especially those who have little structure and stability in their home life. A structured classroom often translates to a safe classroom, one where students can enjoy themselves and focus on learning. In a structured learning environment, students are more likely to thrive and experience personal and academic growth. (para. 1)

ELLs require accommodations during instructional time. When participants need individual time or space during the school day, they know how to attain this. The classroom teacher established rules for navigating different spaces at the beginning of the school year. ELLs could navigate to a safe space for independent time, teacher time, or peer time to help them overcome negative feelings they were experiencing. Going out for walks appears to be a beneficial practice ELLs can utilize when needing space away from their teacher and class. Trusting teachers was crucial to the success of ELLs.

The educators in this qualitative study emphasized the relationships they had with ELLs. They understood that educating ELLs had to be a mutual partnership. The teachers recognized the impact care, trust, prior experiences, academic support, health support, and safety had on ELLs. Brownlow et al. (2021) stated: “A core facilitator for enabling positive educational experiences was the establishment of positive relationships and respectful communication between teachers and students” (para. 3). The teachers in this study established positive relationships with their ELLs, which was evident from classroom observations, field notes, semi-structured interviews, and visual storyboards with all six participants.

When teachers exposed ELLs to emphasis learning, where they had to work independently on a specific task, they were able to implement language skills taught by their classroom teacher. For example, students could break larger words up into two or more smaller words when struggling to pronounce large and unfamiliar words. They were able to work with the teacher to sound out unknown words. Being immersed in the English language with connectionism enabled ELLs to become familiar with certain words and strategies that could help them form simple sentences to respond to literature. When ELLs feel comfortable and prepared for standardized testing, they are mentally equipped with the skills and strategies to

take the test without feeling uncomfortable, stressed, and overwhelmed with anxiety about the test.

Levitan (2023) suggested that direct feedback enhances the language acquisition process. Teachers can focus on inaccuracies and provide support with language so that students can identify and understand their errors and make required corrections as they are immersed in all aspects of reading. Direct praise and communication embedded in respect and care make ELLs feel valued and accepted.

This study illustrated how the role of the teacher goes beyond academic instruction. ELLs saw teachers as caregivers, confidants, medical experts, and interpersonal interaction facilitators. Teachers established a well-rounded student who knows how to function in everyday life in the classroom, outside the classroom, and along their future journey. The teacher is not only the provider of academic learning but social-emotional learning as well. Rimm-Kaufman and Sandilos (2011) found students who received unconditional feedback from teachers and, regardless of situation, had positive feelings toward their teacher and classroom experience.

Teacher-student relationships have long-lasting implications for social development, which can positively impact achievement levels. When teachers choose to be facilitators instead of critics, students are more engaged in learning and behave better in class because the teacher is releasing the ownership to the ELLs. The importance of positive teacher-student relationships is undeniable. Research shows that there are many positive aspects to teachers and students having a close-knit relationship, including being more successful in the areas of social-emotional well-being, math, and reading. Coristine et al. (2022) highlighted the advantages of positive teacher-student relationships including wellness, increased academic success, and assisting students in recognizing their self-worth and pride when making strides in school. Kirk (2022) explained that:

Having a positive relationship with a teacher can impact how well a student learns. Studies have shown that a strong teacher-student relationship leads to higher academic engagement, higher grades, and fewer disruptive behaviors. In contrast, students who have a negative relationship with their teacher can feel stressed, and it could lead to poor academic performance and negatively impact a student's social and emotional development. (para. 2)

The teacher-student relationship fosters success through academic support, health support, and safety that serves ELLs. The relationship between teachers and students must first be established for support to exist. If ELLs do not experience trust and care, they do not believe or engage in the relationship. Students view teachers as counselors, advisors, and a friend who provides advice or a listening ear when needed. Students trust their teachers with personal information and seek their advice and support. The teacher's role has many facets. The primary responsibility of an educator is to create an environment where ELLs feel safe and comfortable being themselves and learning without ridicule and judgment. Teachers wear many hats from day to day. Their responsibilities include decision-making, collaborating with colleagues, and participating in day-to-day decision-making in schools. (1997) described the role of a teacher as versatile. Their most important role is to get to know each student as an individual and learn about their needs, interests, background, and abilities.

Teacher demeanor and compassion are prerequisites for communication with ELLs. It is the foundation of the relationship. Teachers see themselves as more than just providers of education. They see themselves as nurturers, protectors, and caregivers of care and attention that promotes healthy teacher relationships. These traits foster ELLs' feeling of safety and comfort to feel good about themselves and learning. According to Stipek (2006), students who have a close

bond with their teachers attempt challenges and stay focused on the goal. They do not give up easily. These students ask questions, seek clarification, and put in extra effort to complete tasks to please their teachers. ELLs who experience a bond with their teacher develop an awareness of their self-worth. The teacher-student relationship elevates the views ELLs have about themselves. They feel a sense of belonging and begin to believe in their successes and accomplishments by being a member of the class who makes worthwhile contributions. Students see their teachers as more than someone who teaches them.

Internalizing challenges that ELLs face when migrating to the United States need to be considered by educators. Migrant children face traumas surrounding instability, homelessness, sexual assault, kidnapping, violence, abuse, facing intruders, and hiding from others. Teachers need to understand the challenges and the hardships ELLs have faced in coming to the United States. These negative experiences can lead ELLs to feel unprotected or unsafe. This is why providing a safe space, a safe environment, and a safe relationship is crucial to the ELLs' success. When working with ELLs, educators must take a trauma-informed approach when educating students to resist retraumatizing ELLs. Educators must be aware of the traumatic experiences that ELLs endured in their homeland before migrating to the United States. Trauma-informed teachers provide a psychologically and physically safe learning space where all students are members of the classroom community. Teachers who are trauma-informed get to know their students and build relationships based on their knowledge of individual students' needs (Hanlon, 2022).

Teachers must recognize the traumas their ELL students experience and make allowances in the daily practices implemented. Teachers must examine how they can contribute to creating safe spaces and provide unconditional support to students, which enables ELLs to have a positive

and safe well-being. Celebrating ELLs' successes encourages them to take risks. Teachers who modify homework policies, lateness policies, and possible outbursts demonstrate care for students and learning about the conflicts they face while also creating a space where students have confidence in asking for help and taking risks without consequence.

Teachers who recognize warning signs can serve as the bridge from negative to positive behaviors with ELLs. Levings (2020) discussed the importance of ELLs being part of a trauma-informed classroom where the teacher recognizes the difficulties ELLs have encountered, which can impact their attribute and behaviors in the classroom. Teachers need to be aware that negative behaviors such as acting out, stem from traumatic experiences or ELLs current challenging situations. These students are not trying to be intentionally disrespectful but rather exhibiting behaviors that require compassion from their teachers.

Importance of Language and Tone

The use of language and tone are critical when instructing ELLs. Hostetler (2023) claimed that:

Voice tones are more positive, body language is warmer, and there just seems to be an understanding that you are in the process of learning. This scenario may lead to you feeling more confident, curious, and open to trying new things. (p.8)

Ferlazzo (2020) described tone of voice as a powerful resource used in teaching. He describes that tone conveys an indirect message of care, indifference, or disapproval, which is conveyed by tone, facial expression, or body language (para. 12).

Communication can happen without words. ELLs interpret body language as a means of communication, especially because they may not understand a second language. Gestures, hand signals, and movement can be demonstrated in positive nurturing ways between teachers and

their students within the classroom as language acquisition is developed. Teachers who practice lowering the affective filter with ELLs help to reduce stress and anxiety associated with SLA. Krashen's affective filter discusses the importance of ELLs feeling comfortable with language learning and not embarrassed or scared. The ramifications of negative feelings heighten the affective filter resulting in mental blocks with SLA. There is a direct connection between a teacher's tone and language to ELLs feeling cared for and valued. Teachers who communicate in positive ways verbally or otherwise allow ELLs to experience positive well-being and academic success.

Administrator Support

Teachers need to be supported by administrators who provide professional development opportunities, equitable resources to instruct ELLs at their independent levels, and time for collaboration between teaching staff. Equity-based perspectives must be at the forefront when educating ELLs. Gaining support from administrators will enable teachers to foster classroom environments welcoming to ELLs.

Administrators should provide teachers with adequate resources to support ELLs. Teachers need training on how to ask questions embedded in cultural sensitivity. Asking an ELL, a question can be very intimidating as new student arriving to the United States. Administrators that provide collaboration time between the ENL teacher and general educators can be very helpful in learning how to communicate and foster relationships with teachers and ELLs. Ottow (2021) stated that teachers must teach the whole child, not just academics. Teachers need to get to know their ELLs by interacting and showing their interest in who ELLs are as a person. These personal connections extend far beyond the classroom and foster social and academic success for ELLs in years to come. Administrators must allocate funds for teacher training and purchasing

resources such as technology and visual aids that assist ELLs with SLA. Learning about migration causes, life experiences, and the homeland where ELLs came from can provide teachers with the necessary knowledge about ELLs' culture and background to build relationships. Teachers can have conversations and prepare lessons and activities that encompass transnationalism, which brings students' former homeland connections together with new homeland connections. Letting ELLs know both are important and can be celebrated.

Professional Development

Administrators need to provide professional development to teachers as it is a vital part of educating teachers and advancing them with different modalities and ways of instructing ELLs. ENL teachers should not be the only teachers attending workshops and training for ELLs. Educating ELLs must be an inclusive effort made by educational leaders and school staff. Strategies to incorporate daily classroom practices that involve reading, writing, speaking, and listening in every lesson must be prioritized. The National Education Association (2020) explained that:

Curriculum design and lesson planning must be clear and based on sound pedagogical principles, practices, and high standards. Research-based training on theory, culture, diversity, social status, and policy of language acquisition must be made a priority if teaching staff are going to be successful with educating ELLs. (p. 2)

Learning about the different modalities to utilize with ELLs, such as visual aids, computers, headphones and recordings, and Smartboards can be helpful when working with ELLs and SLA. Kaplan (2019) talked about teachers writing on the board, using hand movements like touching parts of the face or body when learning language use of multiple modalities help ELLs to learn new vocabulary and understand word meaning.

Differentiation plays an intricate role in how ELLs learn. Ferlazzo and Hull Sypniewski (2018) discussed the importance of teacher training and how vital it is for teachers to learn and recognize that instruction can happen in different ways. ELLs benefit from learning that happens using differentiated methods. Teacher training must occur for teachers to become aware of their role and how they can foster learning with ELLs.

Administrators have a responsibility to provide professional development to educators and school staff on how to educate ELLs. Implementing strategies that foster a positive learning environment for ELLs ensures that they are not afraid to engage in learning but rather believe their knowledge, prior knowledge, and experiences are valued and add to the learning experiences of their teacher and classmates. Teachers should not view ELLs as having a language deficiency that makes them challenging to teach. This mindset creates a barrier when educating ELLs. Nagl (2023) stated that students must attend school in an environment that promotes and models cultural diversity. District leaders are instrumental in creating this message with all staff. Principals and school staff must reinforce that culture is valued, accepted, and appreciated in school. Celebrating diversity throughout the school year is a straightforward way to recognize students and their connected traditions and customs. Establishing meetings encouraging students to share their stories enables ELLs to feel appreciated and accepted. Teachers must have tools and resources and the appropriate guidance needed to create equitable opportunities that are meaningful to ELLs and can rapidly assist with SLA.

Time

It is the responsibility of administrators to provide adequate planning time for teachers to collaborate. According to Straessle (2014), colleagues benefit from having time to talk about their students, share what is working and what they need help with and their personal well-being.

Teachers benefit from sharing their successes and challenges with colleagues. This is a significant part of self-care and is a substantial part of being an effective teacher. Talking about challenges and knowing support is accessible is crucial for teachers who face the day-to-day challenges of teaching. Reflecting with colleagues and administrators provides a support system needed for all.

Planning time is imperative when educating ELLs. Administrators need to implement flexibility within individual teacher schedules so equitable planning for ELLs can be implemented with co-teachers and teachers. Flexible schedules are needed to provide classroom teachers and co-teachers with planning time. Gonzalez (2014) stated that having time to communicate with ENL teachers creates a strong relationship between general education teachers and ENL teachers. This relationship works as a resource for both teachers because they can share and exchange ideas, skills, and strategies with ELLs. The general education teacher can observe ENL teachers to learn about different resources for teaching ELLs. Najarro (2022) further discusses how ENL teachers can share lesson plans with general education teachers and other staff members as a support system.

General education teachers working with ELLs would benefit from working with and observing the daily practices of the ENL. Administrators could initiate this connection amongst teachers to further support ELL students. ENL teachers have specialized training with SLA and other resources used when working with ELLs with different proficiency levels. Connecting them to typical general education teachers can provide support from different perspectives. General education teachers could also benefit from learning about strategies and techniques that are respectful and appropriate to working with ELLs. Building principals could create professional development opportunities and co-teach opportunities to provide teachers with

proper support to teach and care for ELLs. This would enable general education teachers to adapt their practice to the needs of the ELLs and provide them with an equitable education needed for success. All teachers working with ELLs can benefit from being prepared with positive approaches encouraging ELLs to feel valued and accepted as learning occurs.

Educational leaders can implement a practice of having permanent floating substitute teachers that can cover classes while classroom teachers and co-teachers dedicate time to review data and individual student progress and growth to provide differentiation in lessons and equitable education. In addition, administrators need to implement meeting times for teachers across grade levels to interact across grade levels. Sharing data, progress, and challenges is beneficial for teachers because they can use the information to guide their instruction and share ideas on meeting the needs of their students. Administrators need to provide time to allow teachers to identify instructional goals and goals for SLA. Classroom teachers need to understand the best practices for educating ELLs.

Without understanding how to meet the needs of ELLs, the achievement gap continues to widen. What contributes to the achievement gap widening is the need for general educators to learn the tools and strategies needed when educating ELLs. Samson and Collins (2012) highlighted the achievement gap widening due to the lack of skills, teacher knowledge, and support to address the needs of ELLs. ELLs must be immersed in SLA. Educators must understand the achievement gap and the factors that contribute to its widening.

General education teachers lack the resources required to create lessons that teach oral language skills, grammar, phonics, and vocabulary. Administrators have an obligation to support general education teachers with the resources needed to teach ELLs. Educator preparation is essential when working with ELLs. Teachers must engage in professional development that

provides them with the knowledge and tools to work effectively with ELLs. The building principal needs to be aware of these goals, and the needs of students, and generate a plan on how the needs of ELLs will be met. Levitan (2023) suggested that district leaders need to recognize the value of providing teachers with planning time to review curricula, evaluate where students are with content, review data, and plan targeted instruction to meet the needs of all students. Providing planning time to collaborate with colleagues can afford teachers the opportunity to incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion components (DEI) into their lessons. Differentiation provides equity, which teachers need to embed into lesson planning. Academic needs should drive the curriculum.

Home and School Connection

Administrators should encourage the home and school connection. Creating school and home connections is crucial to the success of ELLs. Administrators, teachers, and parents must collaborate and build relationships. Everyone must be on board and share the same goal of ELLs attaining positive well-being in school and academic success via positive learning experiences developed in the school and classroom. Witte et al. (2021) stated:

Family-school partnerships provide a connection between the two most influential contexts in which children's learning and development occur. The belief that families and schools are both essential and must share responsibility for student success is a key part of all successful family-school partnerships. Such partnerships emphasize the development of an intentional and ongoing relationship between families and schools. Through this relationship, both parents and teachers can enhance children's learning and development, as well as address any obstacles to learning (para. 5).

Breiseth et al. (2011) described school leaders as the main ingredient needed for effective relationships between parents and teachers. Engaging families is a commitment made by all stakeholders for the purpose of educating the whole child. Home and school connections have many benefits. Administrators who value the home and school connection model effective communication with parents and families for their staff. They have meetings, family night events, and communicate via emails, texts, phone calls, and memos that go home in different languages. This takes dedication and hard work; however, the goal of strengthening home-school partnerships is critical to ELLS. Success will enable parents to become more informed about support systems for their children and the school. Sustaining Reading First (2009) discussed school leaders taking initiatives to include parent involvement and advocacy of ELLs. Parents must be familiar with the schools' missions and how their efforts can assist in achieving the mission. Epstein et al. (1997) identify that students learn and progress at school, home, and in the community through parent involvement. Parents who are invited or volunteer in classrooms serve a dual purpose for the parent and student. The parent and child feel welcomed and valued. Parents who serve on PTA experience a direct connection to teachers and the community, fostering progress and growth through collaboration. Parents are stakeholders in the community that have voices to advocate for schools and families. Involving parents in recruiting local businesses to serve as volunteers or mentors, even translators demonstrate how vested community members are in school, student, and family success. This creates a strong bond between the school and community. Another positive aspect of welcoming parents into the school forum is that parents can witness what learning looks like for their child, and the student experiences positive well-being knowing their parents/guardians can watch them achieve learning firsthand. Parents can see how they can help their children at home.

Resources of support in the primary and English language must be provided and be readily available and known to parents so that they can collaborate with other stakeholders to achieve the goals and mission of a successful school. Century and Levy (2002) stated how crucial it is for teachers and school staff to learn about and maintain the core beliefs of the diverse population of students that continue to flood the United States. Programs and resources are essential to connect with parents and stakeholders. When this is achieved, schools improve, and success grows over time. Partnerships and collaboration are key factors in getting parents on board with the vision and goals for student success.

Recommendations

I provide the following suggestions and recommendations to ensure ELLs are afforded meaningful educational experiences in schools and classrooms. First, teacher-student relationships must be developed to establish care. Next, academic support, health support, and protection must be implemented into daily classroom instruction. Finally, after establishing the relationship and providing care, the ELL can engage in their learning without hesitation in taking risks, and SLA can be achieved. My recommendations connect to the notion that ELLs need to feel cared for by their teacher in a safe and comfortable environment. When teacher-student relationships are developed, ELLs experience feelings of acceptance and value, which allows them to feel safe with a sense of belonging without hesitation. One recommendation is that teachers must take the time to get to know their ELLs and spend quality time with them, not only to achieve academic goals, and promote positive well-being that will serve as the foundation for all learning. Teachers play an integral role in fostering an environment where ELLs can engage in learning.

Creager (2022) explained how teachers knowing their students has many benefits. For

example, a teacher who knows their students can help them more easily, because they identify students' needs. Learning about a student's needs, including strengths and weaknesses, can enable teachers to plan instruction with specific interests in mind, grasping students' attention. Progress and growth can be fostered in their academic setting. When teachers become aware of the whole student, learning opportunities can be developed through instructional tasks and interactions. Breiseth (2021) discussed the importance of teachers learning about ELLs' background knowledge and accessing teachable moments in the lesson that connect to what they know about the topic being introduced. Making these connections enables ELLs to feel good about learning. Accessing ELLs' background knowledge and being able to support students can have a positive impact on student well-being and learning.

Another recommendation is to create a structured classroom environment grounded in rules, protocols, collaboration, and respect for one another to help everyone flourish. Teachers must recognize and understand their role and empowerment concerning ELLs becoming acclimated and feeling a sense of belonging in their classroom. A structured classroom often translates to a safe classroom where students can enjoy themselves and focus on learning.

Meador (2019) informed:

Structure starts on day one. Rules and expectations should be laid out immediately, and possible consequences should be discussed in depth. Provide students with specific scenarios and walk them through your expectations as well as your plan for dealing with issues in the classroom (p. 1).

All students benefit from becoming familiar with rules and expectations early in the school year. The established daily practices enable students to navigate the expectations and their responsibilities in class.

ELLs must feel valued in their classroom. White et. al. (2023). described how teachers can foster ELLs feeling valued in their classroom. Creating a welcoming environment can be as simple as a teacher learning how to say an ELL's name correctly and getting to know them by cultivating a classroom where all students feel comfortable sharing their culture and language with the class. When ELLs can trust their teachers, they feel comfortable participating and engaging in classroom activities and group work. Noddings (2002) discussed how important it is for students to feel cared for by their teachers. Noddings (2002) also discussed how teachers who demonstrated care for their students provided an extra layer of support that ELLs needed to feel important and valued, which results in growth and progress in school. Cao Central (2021) explained that students that experience feeling valued and safe are crucial to the development of children. When students experience discomfort or are concerned about their safety, their academic progress suffers. In a healthy, supportive climate, students are engaged and take intellectual risks. When participants feel cared for, they feel comfortable being themselves, asking questions, and taking risks knowing they are in a no-judgment zone. When they feel comfortable, they begin to trust and open to their teacher and engage in classroom activities during lessons. The hesitation fades away, and participants begin to experience a sense of belonging.

Limitations

I identified a few limitations in this study. First, participants represented only a small number of ELLs, and most of the participants came from Central America, the Caribbean, and Asia. ELLs are very diverse and come from all around the world, not just Central America, the Caribbean, and Asia. The participants in this study were only nine years old. Due to the young age of participants in this study, recollection of exact events may be limited. As mentioned in the

previous section, future research should be conducted with classroom teachers of color to identify how ELLs experience care similarly or differently with them. The limitation of only using six participants does not fully represent how all ELLs experience care. Participants of such a young age have limited long-term memory and minimal experiences with care. Only including participants with students from similar parts of the world influences one's experiences with care. If the study included more ELL participants from various backgrounds, age levels, and cultures the representation of how ELLs experience would be more well-rounded. Experiences with care would encompass more perspectives on what care is and how ELLs experience care, and what influences care. A comprehensive quality study could have stretched for the whole academic year to understand further how the relationships were built and how they changed throughout the year.

Future Research

Future research should examine how care is perceived in alternate areas, including other schools on Long Island. Looking at diverse educational school systems can enhance knowledge about how ELLs experience care in the classroom, and knowledge of this can help educators in the United States. When ELLs from different countries enter schools that are different from where they attended, educators should ask the following: Is the level of care provided in schools acceptable to parents/guardians and families of different countries of origin? Educators must be aware that what is promoted and accepted by one culture may not necessarily be welcomed in another as it relates to teacher-student relationships and sharing.

Future research must examine how to help support ELLs in the United States. With the influx of immigrants swarming the borders, more comprehensive knowledge and plans must be explored. According to Breiseth (2021), educational systems must research and learn about the ELLs, the countries in which immigrants derive from, and the challenges they have faced

concerning pre-migration experiences and stressors that impede the well-being of ELLs. Educators have direct contact with ELLs and their families. This direct communication can serve as the foundation for communication between the school and families. Teachers can learn about their ELLs, their culture, and country of origin by interviewing parents and learning about background, culture, customs, family life, trauma, and transition modes. This information is essential in educating ELLs. The information gained enables teachers to become culturally responsive to ELLs and the education provided to them. Teachers learn about the barriers ELLs have endured and find ways to dismantle these barriers to provide equitable learning opportunities. The nurturing teacher-student relationships that can be developed work as a foundation for learning and positive well-being.

Research can also include parent and family networks of Elementary ELLs. The family unit is a very integral component of ELLs' lives, and finding a way to include it may be beneficial. Parental involvement partnerships with teachers are crucial to the home and school connection. Schools must take the initiative to recruit parents for the PTA, Advisory Boards, DEI committee, Board Meetings, and hosting school events (Turner, 2022). Doing so will increase parent involvement in their child's learning. Representation on these committees is imperative because it establishes the inclusion of all families and cultures in the school community.

Further research can be conducted by interviewing parents and families about their feelings and beliefs about teacher-student relationships as they relate to experiencing care in the classroom to enhance research in the future. Information could be gathered on whether the teacher-student relationship is accepted by ELLs as a positive or negative relationship or if these relationships were encouraged or discouraged. The limitation of time hindered me from gathering extensive information when conducting this study. In the future, a longitudinal study

could be conducted to see how care is maintained, enhanced, or lost over time with participants. The question of how being cared for in elementary school impacts participants' well-being and academic performance through future grade levels with different teachers and different school experiences could be answered.

I did not include family members in this study, which could have provided insight into how ELLs experienced care in the classroom in their home countries. The limitation of only including participants from Valley Stream, New York, and no other school districts on Long Island only painted the picture for a few ELLs' stories. In the future, educators need to understand all the facets of care that contribute to how the ELLs feel about standardized tests. The interconnectivity built from the start of the teacher-student relationship continues to deepen as all the facets become interchangeable. If a student felt cared for, they felt they could trust their teacher. Academic support, health support, and safety affect ELLs' well-being, which affects their learning.

Conclusion

General education teachers encounter students with different learning styles and needs. The general education teachers in this qualitative study understood the importance of creating a classroom environment conducive to promoting positive well-being and learning for the students they were teaching. ELLs rely on their teachers to provide the tools, resources, and unconditional support to encourage progression via care and SLA. It is the responsibility of the classroom teacher to foster an environment where ELLs feel cared for, trusted, comfortable, and safe with them. Creating this environment is the only way ELLs will feel comfortable and accepting of taking risks and building relationships that will enable them to progress in school. With the continuous migration of immigrants to the United States and an increase in student population,

the educational system and educators need a greater understanding of ELLs and more tools and resources to address their educational needs. While academic content and standardized testing may be prioritized, caring practices such as building trust through relationships with ELLs is vital in ensuring they have access to an optimal education. Teachers cannot provide an optimal education to ELLs without academic support, health support and safety, establishment of trust, and a positive teacher-student relationship. Educators need to work to support ELLs fully. ELLs need to be celebrated and cared for individually to ensure the development of a trusting relationship to allow them to take risks, engage with their educations, form relationships with teacher and peers and to feel valued and a sense of belonging in the classroom. Colorin Colorado (n.d.) states that creating a comfortable, welcoming environment where ELLs can share their cultural backgrounds instills value in the classroom. Teacher-student relationships are vital to the growth and progress of ELLs. Trust, prior experiences, academic support, health support, and safety influence ELLs' well-being and are interdependent on one another. One cannot exist without the other.

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Appendix A - IRB Approval Letter



**MOLLOY
UNIVERSITY**

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Patricia A. Eckardt, PhD, RN, FAAN
 Chair, Molloy University Institutional Review Board
 Professor, Barbara H. Hagan School of Nursing and Health Sciences
 E: peckardt@molloy.edu
 T: 516.323.3711

DATE: March 10, 2023

TO: Carol Boodram-Wright
FROM: Molloy University IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [2023804-2] Elementary English Language Learners' Perceptions of Teacher Care in the Classroom.

REFERENCE #:
SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: March 10, 2023
EXPIRATION DATE: March 8, 2024
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this project. The Molloy University IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

You may proceed with your project.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on applicable federal regulations.

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

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

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

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

This project has been determined to be a MINIMAL RISK project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this

procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of March 8, 2024.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Patricia Eckardt at 516-323-3711 or peckardt@molloy.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

Sincerely,

Patricia Eckardt, Ph.D., RN, FAAN
Chair, Molloy University Institutional Review Board

This letter has been issued in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Molloy University IRB's records.

Appendix B - Classroom Observation Form

Name of Teacher: _____

Name of Student: _____

Class: _____

Date: _____

Lesson/Activity:

Teacher and Student Engagement:

Researcher's Observation Notes about ELL -

Appendix D - Interview Questions

Care

- What does care mean to you?
- What does care look like to you?
- How does feeling cared for make you feel?
- Do you feel cared for by your teacher?
- How does your teacher show you she cares about you?
- Does having a caring teacher help you to learn? If so, how does having a caring teacher help you to learn in the classroom?
- Does having a caring teacher help you to feel good about yourself? If so, how does having a caring teacher help you to feel good about yourself?
- Does feeling cared for by your teacher help you to feel happy about learning?
- Can a person talk in a caring way?
- How does your classroom teacher talk to you?
- Do you feel cared for by the tone your teacher talks to you in?
- How does the way your classroom teacher talks to you make you feel?
- How would you describe your classroom teacher?

Safe

- What does safety mean to you?
- What does a safe space look like?
- How does being in a safe space help you to learn?
- Does your classroom teacher provide a safe environment for you?
- What does it mean to feel safe in your classroom?
- Do you feel safe in your classroom with your teacher?
- What are you able to do in a safe classroom space?
- What does your teacher say to make you feel safe?
- Does having a safe classroom make you feel good about learning?

Trust

- What does trust mean to you?
- Can you explain and give me an example?
- Can you trust your teacher?
- How do you know you can trust your teacher?
- What does she say to make you feel like you can trust her?
- Does trusting your teacher help you to learn?
- How does having a trusting relationship help you to learn if you do have a trusting relationship with your classroom teacher?
- Can you describe your relationship with your teacher?
- How do you know when a teacher is trustworthy?
- What does your teacher do to let you know you can trust her?
- How is trust gained or earned?
- Does trust in your teacher get deeper? If so, how does trust get deeper or bigger?
- If you trust your teacher, does it help you to learn?

Comfort

- What does it mean to be comfortable?
- Are you comfortable in your classroom?
- Are you comfortable with your classroom teacher?
- How does being comfortable make you feel when learning in your classroom?
- What does your teacher do to make you feel comfortable?
- What does your teacher say to make you feel comfortable?
- Does your teacher call on you to answer questions during a lesson?
- How do you feel when your teacher calls on you to speak in front of the class?
- How do you know it's okay to ask questions or say something in class with your teacher?
- How does your teacher make you feel?
- Can you tell me how it feels to be learning a new language?
- What does your teacher do to help you?
- Are you comfortable letting your teacher know you don't understand something?
- Are you comfortable asking for help?
- Are you comfortable sharing your feelings with your teacher?
- Is there a unique space in your classroom that makes you feel comfortable? If so, why does this space make you feel comfortable?
- Do you like coming to school?
- If yes, is it because of your teacher?
- If not, why don't you like coming to school?

Standardized Testing

- How do you feel about preparing for the NYS ELA standardized test?
- What are your thoughts about the ELA test?
- How does test-taking make you feel?
- How do you feel about answering multiple-choice questions?
- How do you feel about answering short-response questions?
- How do you feel about answering essay questions?
- Do you talk to your parents/guardians about how taking the test makes you feel?
- Does your classroom teacher ask you how you feel about test preparation?
- How do you feel before school on the day of the test?
- How do you feel the night before the test?
- How do you feel the morning of the ELA test?

Appendix E – Bob's Storyboard

Directions: Draw a picture in each box of the Storyboard that shows the relationship you have with your classroom teacher. After drawing your picture write about your picture and the story it tells about your relationship with your classroom teacher.



I got heat m...
The nurse to help me



I trust Mrs. J. I tell my
secret to her. she never
tell



a hard sleep



in a... put me
save me for the... Ms. J.
save me



I am so thankful to all
my teachers



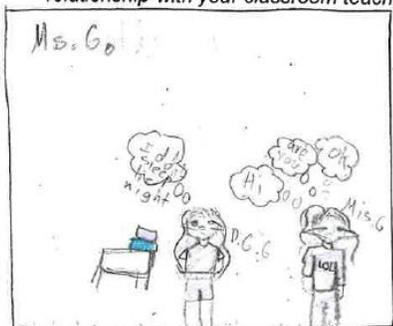
When I don't know what
to do in Math

Appendix F - Angel's Storyboard

Ok i



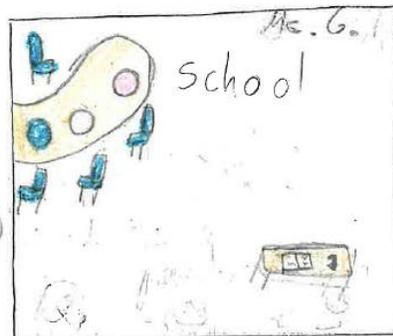
Directions: Draw a picture in each box of the Storyboard that shows the relationship you have with your classroom teacher. After drawing your picture write about your picture and the story it tells about your relationship with your classroom teacher.



I feel safe when Mrs. G. asks me if I am ok.



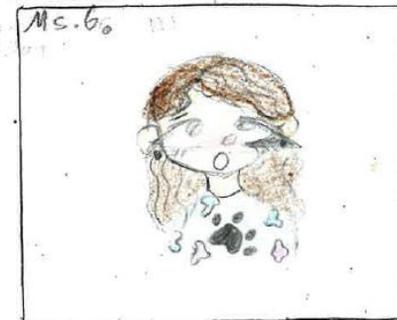
I feel good telling Mrs. G. the things I have problems. She listens to me.



I feel safe at school because I know this teacher in school. I know where to go.



She always makes me feel comfortable. Mrs. G. tells me she likes my drawings.



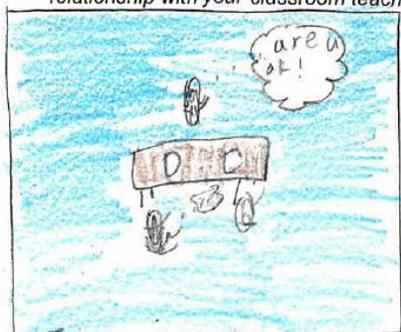
I feel big and aware about the test.



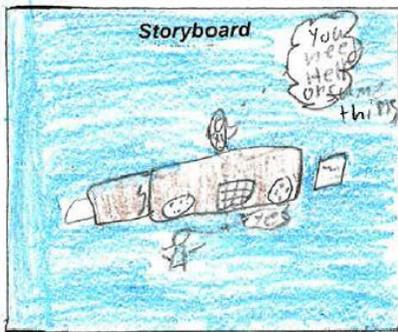
She always try to help me.

Appendix G – Kristen’s Storyboard

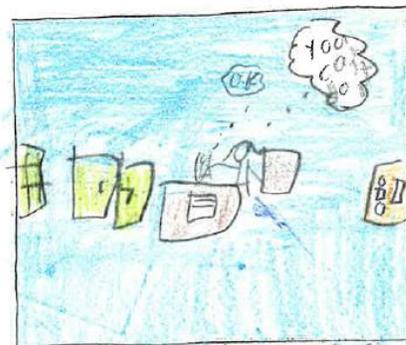
Directions: Draw a picture in each box of the Storyboard that shows the relationship you have with your classroom teacher. After drawing your picture write about your picture and the story it tells about your relationship with your classroom teacher.



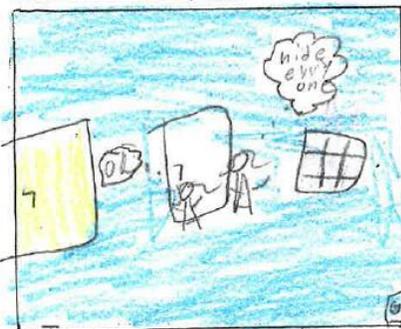
The picture shows that Mrs. G. cares about me when I have the bump in my back.



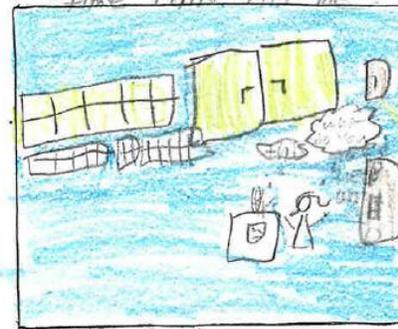
And in this shows that that I trust her so I can talk to her about my problems one time when I had me.



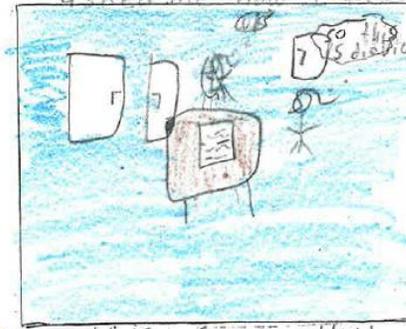
this picture shows that she patting my hand on my salary that shows how she asked me how I was.



This picture shows that she cares about me so we hide behind her desk.



this picture shows that I am comfortable raising my hand and asking questions.



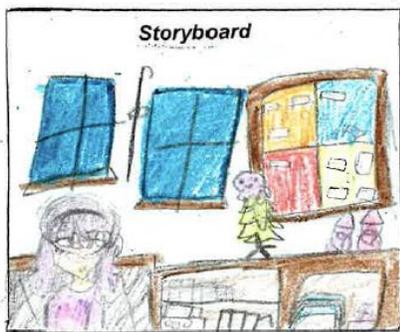
this shows that she is being kind to me by helping me with reading a word.

Appendix H – Danna’s Storyboard

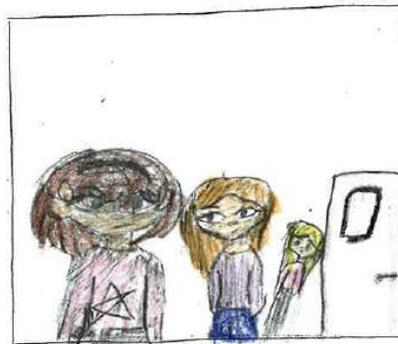
Directions: Draw a picture in each box of the **Storyboard** that shows the relationship you have with your classroom teacher. After drawing your picture write about your picture and the story it tells about your relationship with your classroom teacher.



I was confused in a math problem but then Mrs. Go helped me.



I was choosing a book to read. Mrs. Go helped me choose a book.



This is Mrs. Go. I love the book because we were having a lesson.



This is Mrs. Go helping me in math class.



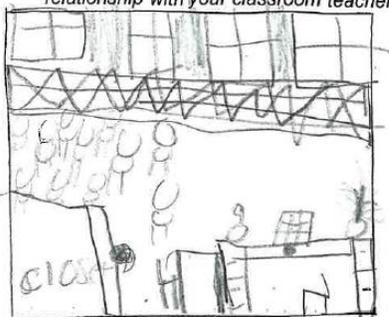
I was super confused in ELA.



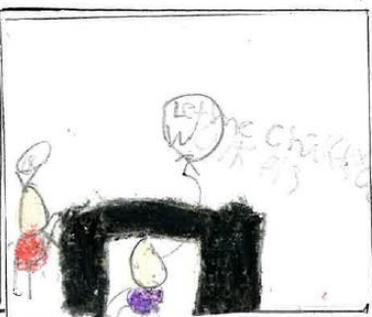
I was doing a project and Mrs. Go was helping me. I was doing great.

Appendix I – Astin’s Storyboard

Directions: Draw a picture in each box of the Storyboard that shows the relationship you have with your classroom teacher. After drawing your picture write about your picture and the story it tells about your relationship with your classroom teacher.



We go to the side desk
old desk desk in



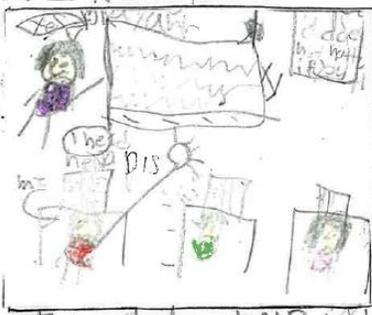
I want to what to do
if I don't for her to
work



I can tell something
upset by the time I
talk to Ms J



Some one think me down
of the work to me, help
me get up, send me to



I needed help with
work so Ms J came
to help me



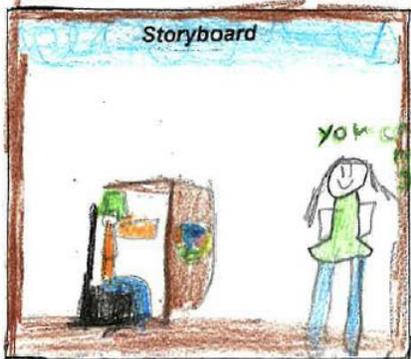
that I can tell my
and the what to do
good making

Appendix J – Sean’s Storyboard

Directions: Draw a picture in each box of the Storyboard that shows the relationship you have with your classroom teacher. After drawing your picture write about your picture and the story it tells about your relationship with your classroom teacher.



A kid is about to eat something not so good but the teacher said to not eat that.



the teacher said you can have snake and a student got that snake out and



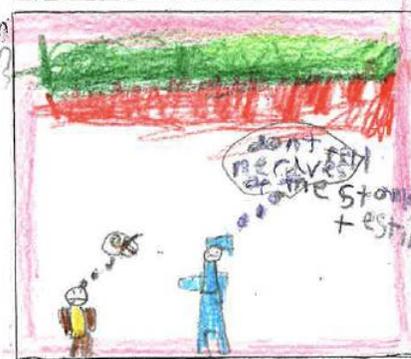
my teacher picks a crate for me because so I can be safe and hide



my teacher tells me what to do so I can trust her.



my teacher makes sure am ok because she care about me.



my teacher makes sure am not nervous for the standardized testing. we practice in the time with