

A Narrative Analysis of Teacher Attributions for English Language Learners' Successes and Failures in Mainstream Secondary Classrooms

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Background

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US

TEXAS

In 2005, 110 AC programs prepared 19% of all new teachers

47 states offer AC teacher programs

Between 2001 and 2006, the number of AC teachers tripled from 2,000 to 6,000

In 2005, AC teachers in Texas were 25% of all AC teachers

in 2010, 150 state-approved AC entities prepared 45% of new teachers

Between 2000 and 2004, the number of AC teachers grew from 15% to 35% of new teachers in Texas

In 2005, AC teachers were 40% of all teachers

Trends in Teacher Certification

Take Away



- ELL students make up 17-26% of students in major urban and suburban Texas public schools
- 122 languages spoken by Texas students and their families
- Though 91% of ELL students in Texas speak Spanish, many do not
- Teachers working in culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) classrooms must have knowledge & skills to teach all students

Constructivism (Richardson, 1996)

- Teachers construct knowledge through a variety of learning activities, prior knowledge and skills, and reflection

Narrative Theory (Ochberg, 1998)

- People naturally story their lives and thereby reveal their beliefs, perceptions, and an otherwise illusive “self”

Attribution Theory (Weiner, 1979)

- Explains how people attribute success and failure to various factors, comprised of 3 dimensions:
 - Internal (I) or External (E)
 - Controllable (C) or Uncontrollable (U)
 - Stable (S) or Unstable (US)
- Common Attribution Factors - effort [I/C/US], luck [E/U/US], task difficulty [E/C/S], ability [I/U/S]

Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this study is to:

- understand how mainstream teachers of ELL students describe and interpret success and failure in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms
- identify mainstream teachers' success and failure attribution patterns in narratives about teaching ELL students and ELL student learning outcomes

Purpose of the Study

Teaching and Learning

- How do teachers describe success and failure in **teaching** ELL students in mainstream classrooms?
- How do teachers describe ELL students' success and failure in mainstream classrooms?

Attributions

- To what do teachers **attribute** successes and failures related to teaching ELL students in mainstream classrooms?
- To what do teachers **attribute** ELL students' successes and failures in mainstream classrooms?

Research Questions



Methodology

A Narrative Analysis of Teacher Attributions for English Language Learners' Successes and Failures in Mainstream Secondary Classrooms

School Districts (ISD)

- Powell ISD
- 36,000 students; 22% ELL
- McClain ISD
- 57,000 students; 22% ELL

Teachers (n=4)

- 1 - Powell ISD
- 3 - McClain ISD

Research Context

Participants

	Ethnicity	State	Teaching Experience (years)	ISD	School	ELL (%) 2010-11
<i>Jane</i>	<i>Caucasian</i>	<i>California</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>Powell</i>	<i>East Powell</i>	<i>134 (5.0)</i>
Maya	Caucasian	Illinois	1	McClain	McClain HS	127 (5.8)
<i>Nina</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>Mexico</i>	<i>1+</i>	<i>McClain</i>	<i>Parker Heights</i>	<i>138 (5.1)</i>
Naomi	Haitian American	New York	3	McClain	McClain HS	127 (5.8)

Research Questions	Data Collection	Data Analysis
1. How do teachers describe success/failure in teaching ELL students in mainstream classrooms?	Narrative Interviews	Thematic Dialogic/Performance
2. How do teachers describe ELL students' success/failure in mainstream classrooms?		Thematic Dialogic/Performance
3. To what do teachers attribute success/failure related to teaching ELL students?		Thematic Dialogic/Performance
4. To what do teachers attribute ELL students' success/failure?		Thematic Dialogic/Performance

Data Collection & Analysis

Data Trimming

- **Transcript #1:** Verbatim
- **Transcript #2:** Combined & Reduced
- **Transcript #3:** ELL Focus



Narrative Analysis of Transcript #3

- Structural



Thematic & Dialogic Performative Analysis

- Phase 1: Identify narrative excerpts
- **Phase 2:** Code narratives as success or failure for teacher, student, and “other”
- **Phase 3:** Identify success and failure themes
- **Phase 4:** Code attributions in success and failure narratives
- **Phase 5:** Identify relationships between success/failure narratives, attributions, and dominant themes

Data Analysis



Findings

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Teaching and Learning

- RQ1: How do teachers describe success and failure in ***teaching*** ELL students in mainstream classrooms?

<i>Success</i>	<i>Failure</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being aware/noticing• Assessing what they know• Systemic agency (e.g., Getting services for ELL students that need them, etc.)• Having a reflective/learner disposition• Using multiple representations• Teaching “more than grams and atoms”• Accessing resources (e.g., other teachers, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited resources• Preparation/Training• Cultural differences

Teaching and Learning

- RQ2: How do teachers describe ELL students' success and failure in mainstream classrooms?

<i>Success</i>	<i>Failure</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skills (writing, reading, and listening)• Trying to Speak	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Standardized Testing• Lack of Focus• Language Barrier• Speaking• Being Quiet/Making Mistakes/Being Wrong

Attributions

- RQ3: To what do teachers *attribute* successes and failures related to teaching ELL students in mainstream classrooms?

<i>Success</i>	<i>Failure</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflective disposition• Knowledge of student• Skill (Effort)<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Classroom management• Assessing in multiple ways	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Environment<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited Resources• Lack of understanding<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training/Preparation• Cultural Differences

Attributions

- RQ4: To what do teachers *attribute* ELL students' successes and failures in mainstream classrooms?

<i>Success</i>	<i>Failure</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effort• Ability<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multilingual• Disposition<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Persistence• No fear of being wrong	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Task difficulty<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Standardized Testing• Language Barrier• Effort<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of focus• Home<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opportunities to speak English• Fear



Discussion

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● **Misconceptions** (Harper & de Jong, 2004)

1. Role of language exposure and interaction in English-language learning
2. Universality of the second language education method
3. Propriety of applying the teaching method for native English speakers to ELLs
4. Regard of ESL as a menu of pedagogical learning tools

Discussion

- **Varying amounts of ELL-specific narration**
 - Due to belief that instructional strategies they use are universally beneficial
 - Limited the number of narratives that could be included in this study (e.g., Jane's body demos)
- **Clarification of the narrative**
 - Unanticipated need to distinguish between actual, imagined, and generic narratives
- **Commingling of success and failure narratives**
 - Same narrative used to illustrate success for one and failure for another

Coding Limitations

- Compare/contrast mainstream teachers' definitions of instructional success with the literature on instruction for language learners
- Identify discrepancies as targeted points of teacher education intervention
 - L2 Acquisition
 - Language instruction in mainstream classrooms
 - Evaluating progress for language learners
- Explore relationships between attribution patterns for success and failure

Future Research

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