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Using an Ecological Framework to Understand English Language Arts Educators' Beliefs and Practice about How Students Learn and Develop Comprehensive Literacy Skills

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This dissertation has been read and approved as fulfilling the partial requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Leadership.

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USING AN ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK TO UNDERSTAND ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS EDUCATORS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES ABOUT HOW STUDENTS LEARN AND DEVELOP COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY SKILLS

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my sweet family. During this process, you have listened and learned more about socioeconomic status and pedagogy than you ever cared to know. However, I am grateful because you were always willing to listen and learn more.

Llewellyn, you are my husband. We have grown a lot through this process. Indeed, we are better together. You understood my passion for this research topic, and your support was unwavering. I am eternally grateful. To my beautiful children, Gavin and Chrsyten, you all are the reasons I strive to reach perfection each day. There is no limit to the value you add to my character and existence. Both of you were a part of this process as I worked to balance home and school. The patience and autonomy each of you developed never went unnoticed. I hope one day you all can look back and see a champion in me. All my worth belongs to the both of you.

Mother, you are my champion of choice. Your hard work and dedication to excellence served as a model for me throughout my life. You are my friend, cheerleader, and confidant. For everything you aspired to do but neglected to do because your children were the priority, this is for you.

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No one developed greatness overnight, but greatness takes time. I venture to say the accomplishments of any individual occur through the dedication and support of great people. My feat has not been any different. The support, dedication, and insight of my dissertation committee and a particular CSU faculty member guided me through this process.

First, I would like to thank the chair and methodologist of my dissertation committee, Dr. Patricia Patrick, for her constructive feedback and encouragement. I presumed this process would be challenging. With this understanding, I found the need to identify a strong leader as paramount. She demonstrated the strength, knowledge, and commitment to excellence I desired to have for this journey. I want to thank Dr. Mark McCarthy, my content specialist, for his availability and continuous encouragement during the beginning stages of my dissertation process. His knowledge of literacy and current research served as a guide to me. The insight he provided to me helped me conceptualize my ideas into a study relevant to current research and the education community. Dr. Thomas Hackett, a committee member, sparked my interest in doctoral studies and demonstrated continuous support. He made me believe I had something of value to contribute to the world of education and research.

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Each of these great individuals contributed to my success as a student at Columbus State University. More importantly, they contributed to my development as a doctoral student and educator. I am better because they were there to help me grow as a novice researcher.

ABSTRACT

Third grade students who cannot read at grade level are more likely to experience difficulties throughout their education. This intrinsic case study examined the epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices of six third grade English Language Arts (ELA) educators on developing students' comprehensive literacy skills (CLS) in two Title I schools. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological and ecological theories of human development postulated the theoretical framework. Educators' epistemologies were examined through their decision-making processes during ELA instruction. Pedagogies were evaluated through educators' use of culturally relevant instructional practices. Data were collected in three phases through semi-structured interviews, photographs with descriptive narratives, and an open-ended questionnaire. In Phase I, inductive coding was used to identify themes and subthemes. NVivo was used to upload data and organize coding. During Phase II, axial coding was used to link the codes from semi-structured interviews to descriptive narratives. Inductive coding was used in Phase III to analyze the open-ended questionnaires. Hierarchy figures and tables were used to illustrate the findings. The study results revealed literacy instruction and student performance were consistent across all three phases of data collection. Educators recognized the experiences provided during literacy instruction were related to students' CLS development. Evaluating students' performances provided educators with opportunities to monitor students' progress and evaluate their needs for individualized instructional support. Educators' beliefs matched their instructional practices. The findings from this research study may be beneficial to district leaders and other educational stakeholders.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation reports an intrinsic case study focusing on third grade (eight to nine years old) English Language Arts (ELA) educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices involving the development of comprehensive literacy skills (CLS) within ELA classrooms at two Title I schools. CLS include characteristics possessed by third grade students utilized for reading and writing. Specifically, CLS require reading and writing skills, which develop through literacy instruction. According to Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015b), educators should provide literacy instruction through developmentally appropriate practices and explicit instruction associated with the acquisition of reading and writing skills.

Students' abilities to read and write are connected to literacy learning and future school success. Conversely, students who are not on grade level by the end of third grade are more likely to experience learning difficulties throughout their education (Casey Foundation, 2011). Murnane, Sawhill, and Snow (2012) found students' literacy challenges generated concerns regarding their preparedness for the 21st century. Due to the critical need for third grade students to be on reading level by the end of third grade, further research is needed to examine the development of CLS in third grade ELA classrooms. Additionally, a lack of research focused on elementary educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices on the development of CLS substantiates the need for this research study. Moreover, ELA educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices may influence students' abilities to develop CLS. This

proposed research aids in understanding why students may not be at grade level by defining educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices during ELA instruction.

I collected qualitative data (semi-structured interviews, photographs with descriptive narratives, and an open-ended questionnaire) from third grade ELA educators to examine their epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices related to how students learn and develop CLS. Epistemology and pedagogy are historical topics in educational research. As a result, I framed this study through Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of human development, which supports examining educators' epistemologies and pedagogies on the literacy development of students for CLS (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Guhn & Goelman, 2011). Additionally, this research study included components of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development to support the exploration of environmental systems within an ELA classroom (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) identified students' developmental outcomes by examining individuals' interactions within and across environmental settings related to proximal processes, person characteristics, context characteristics, and time characteristics. The bioecological framework in compilation with the ecological theory was used to examine how educators' participation in the process-person-context-time model influences CLS development within two Title I ELA classrooms. I present a further explanation about the inclusion of bioecological and ecological components of Bronfenbrenner's theories in the theoretical framework.

I examined a quota sample of third grade ELA educators about their epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices related to the process-person-context-time model of development through ecological structures: microsystem, macrosystem, exosystem, and chronosystem. Bronfenbrenner (1979) argued individuals' environments influenced development and learning. Furthermore, the interconnectedness or lack of interconnectedness within an individual's environment affected their development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Bronfenbrenner identified an understanding of an individual's development and learning processes required observations of the learner beyond their existing environment, including considerations from multiple settings and the relational systems between each environmental setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The influence of the environment on students' development in Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory supported a further examination of educators' beliefs and pedagogical practices on CLS development.

Noddings (1998) revealed epistemology in education is relevant to educators' pedagogical practices for three reasons: (1) a consideration of epistemology in education requires educators to determine the accuracy and relevancy of content used during instruction; (2) educators' pedagogical practices are influenced by knowledge acquired from educational research, and (3) educators' epistemologies about education and their pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) require them to analyze curriculum for the appropriateness of content for all students in an educational setting.

Apfelbaum, Norton, and Sommers (2012) described multiculturalism as recognizing and celebrating racial differences. The researchers indicated that educators' inclusion of multiculturalism into pedagogical practices improved students' willingness

to understand individuals from different cultures with various views (Apfelbaum et al., 2012). Similarly, educators' abilities to understand students' environments, cultures, and varying points of view could impact their epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices. In the literature review, I present an examination of multiculturalism, including sections on elementary level ELA and CLS pedagogy.

In Chapter One, I frame the problem for this study by explaining the effect of low socioeconomic status on students' ELA academic performance and how educators' beliefs about poverty impact their teaching. The United States (U.S.) Social Security Office of Policy and Research and Analysis (n.d.) defines socioeconomic status as the income, level of education, employment, health, and access to resources associated with all individuals. Individuals from low socioeconomic backgrounds include those whose income is lower than the identified amount necessary to support an ascribed family size (U.S. Social Security Office of Policy and Research and Analysis, n.d.).

Darling-Hammond (2013) found students in the United States were most affected by socioeconomic status when evaluated for student achievement. Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds demonstrated more subpar academic performances on standardized assessments than their peers who were not from impoverished backgrounds (Anderson & Leventhal, 2014). Johnson (2015) identified students from poverty are provided fewer opportunities for student-centered learning because of educators' negative beliefs about poverty. In some cases, the effect of educators' pedagogical practices on student achievement among students from poverty was identifiable as early as kindergarten (Jung, 2014). Students' socioeconomic status and educators' beliefs about their backgrounds influenced educators' pedagogical practices and students' learning

experiences. This finding supports the significance of examining educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices on CLS development among students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. I frame the issues of educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices through the statement of the problem, theoretical framework, purpose of the study, the significance of the study.

In Chapter Two, I present an extensive review of the literature on the epistemology and pedagogy of ELA. Moreover, I contextualize the literature on early childhood education and CLS in elementary schools related to students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The literature review frames the gap in research related to educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices on CLS development.

Background of the Problem

The problem for this study is little is known about educators' beliefs and practices related to how students learn and develop CLS. Students will continue to struggle if they are not reading at grade level by third grade. Many of the obstacles to students' abilities to read at grade level are social and systemic, not merely cognitive. Educators' use of culturally relevant pedagogies might support some students who are not developing literacy skills at grade level.

There is limited research on educators' epistemologies and pedagogies involving CLS development. Researchers conducted studies related to epistemology and pedagogy. However, studies lacked examining educators' beliefs and practices on how students learn and develop CLS in ELA classrooms.

Even though studies exist examining the relationship between educators' epistemological beliefs and their preferred pedagogical practices (Huling, 2014; Ismail,

Nur, Raman, & Purnomo, 2019; Lee, Zhang, Song, & Huang, 2013) the studies did not focus on elementary educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices related to literacy development. This research study intends to address the gaps in the literature by examining educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices on the development of reading and writing skills in elementary schools. My study reports the findings of educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices on how students learn and develop CLS during ELA instruction in two Title I schools.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development presented the environment contributed to an observer's learning (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Seemingly, the observer's performed behaviors for direct or indirect learning based on the environment. In an educational setting, educators fulfill the primary role of model. Correspondingly, students fulfill the role of observer. Figure 1 demonstrates an educator's role beyond a model and provides a graphical representation of theorized connections to CLS development, which includes an educator's epistemological beliefs and PCK. The topics in Figure 1 are also representative of signature pedagogies.

Shulman (2005) discovered educators' pedagogical practices included an educator's decisions about the most effective instructional methods to organize and implement knowledge. Shulman also recognized an educator's decision-making abilities included evidence of their willingness to implement different methods for instruction. Furthermore, the influence of an educator's personal beliefs, professional attitudes, and dispositions about teaching and learning linked to their pedagogical practices (Shulman, 2005).

Figure 1 presents educators' epistemologies as their personal beliefs about literacy, pedagogy, educator preparation experiences, professional learning, and practices associated with literacy instruction and skills. Additionally, Figure 1 is discussed further in Chapter II, explaining the relationship between ELA, PCK, and CLS. Moreover, a further theorization on educators' beliefs and pedagogy on CLS development are discussed in the theoretical framework.

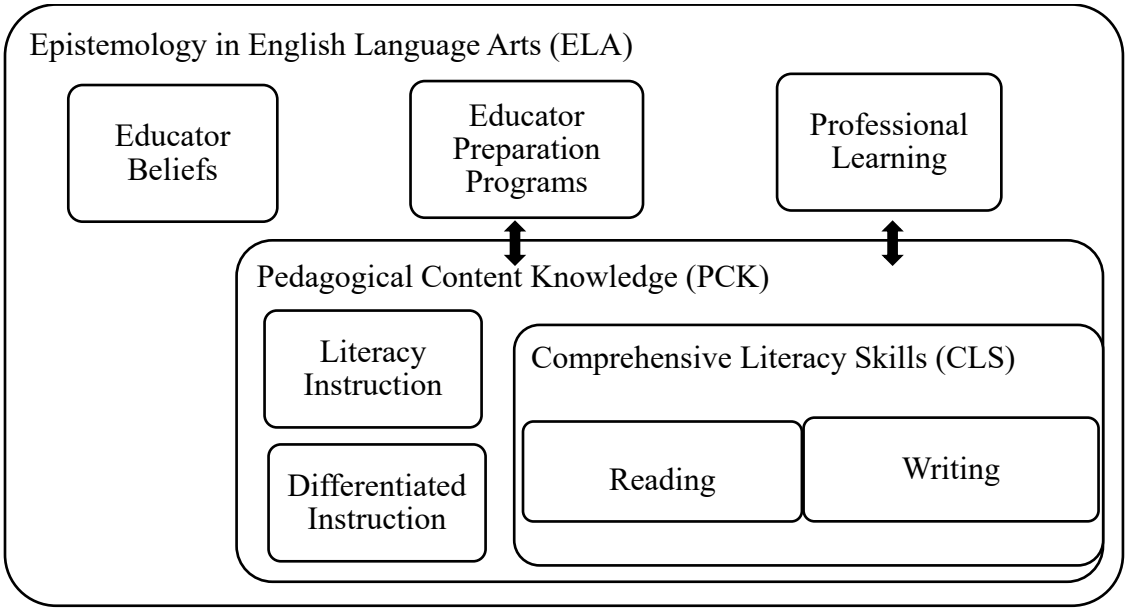

Figure 1. Qualities related to students' development of comprehensive literacy skills inclusive of an educators' epistemologies and pedagogical content knowledge.

Shulman (1986) defined PCK as "the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction" (p. 18). PCK includes pedagogical practices associated with literacy instruction and opportunities for differentiated pedagogical practices.

I examined third grade ELA educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical on how third grade students in two Title I schools learn and develop CLS. I include a

comprehensive analysis of ELA instruction to include reading and writing. The term comprehensive is selected based on a descriptive provided in ESSA, which states, "… [educators'] comprehensive literacy instruction plans that, when implemented, ensure high-quality instruction and effective strategies in reading and writing from early education through grade 12 …" (ESSA, 2015b, p. 1936). The focus points in comprehensive literacy instruction include educators' pedagogies with whole and small group settings for the implementation of explicit and systemic practices related to reading and writing instruction (ESSA, 2015b).

Statement of the Problem

The problem for this study is there is a limited amount of research about educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices related to the development of CLS within elementary schools. The problem is essential, because educators' epistemological beliefs influence teacher education and student learning (Brownlee, Schraw, & Berthelsen, 2012). Furthermore, most studies focus on educators' content knowledge and literacy instruction not epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices concerning CLS development within elementary schools (Guo, Connor, Yang, Roehrig, & Morrison, 2012; Kelcey & Carlisle, 2013). Gay (2013) recognized educators demonstrated resistance to incorporating culturally relevant teaching practices, because they may not have understood the effect of different knowledge forms on teaching and learning. Educators are trained to incorporate PCK, but training does not necessarily address students' obstacles when reading and writing at grade level.

Theoretical Framework

The assumed roles of educators as models and students as observers perpetuates the need to analyze educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices on CLS development through Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of human development. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) argued research on human development should include a simultaneous review of the process-person-context-time model. However, Bronfenbrenner (1988) acknowledged many researchers could not examine the process, person, context, and time within one study. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) criticized researchers for not exploring the interactions between the components in studies where applicable. This research study includes an examination of third grade ELA educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices on CLS development related to the process-person-context-time model of development and through the ecological system, which includes microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 1988).

Educators' epistemological beliefs influence teacher education and student learning (Brownlee et al., 2012). Figure 1 includes a graphic of theorized qualities associated with educators' epistemological beliefs and PCK. The figure illustrates my examination of educators' beliefs about knowledge and knowledge acquisition. The examination included a closer look at their preparedness to teach reading and writing from participation in educator preparation programs and professional learning. Furthermore, this examination supported an analysis of educators' PCK through a review of their pedagogical practices related to literacy and differentiated instruction on the development of CLS. Correspondingly, Figure 2 provides a graphical representation of

the proposed topics from Figure 1, epistemology and PCK, as cyclical process on CLS development. Figure 2 illustrates the examination of my research study and applicable practices associated with epistemology and PCK through Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

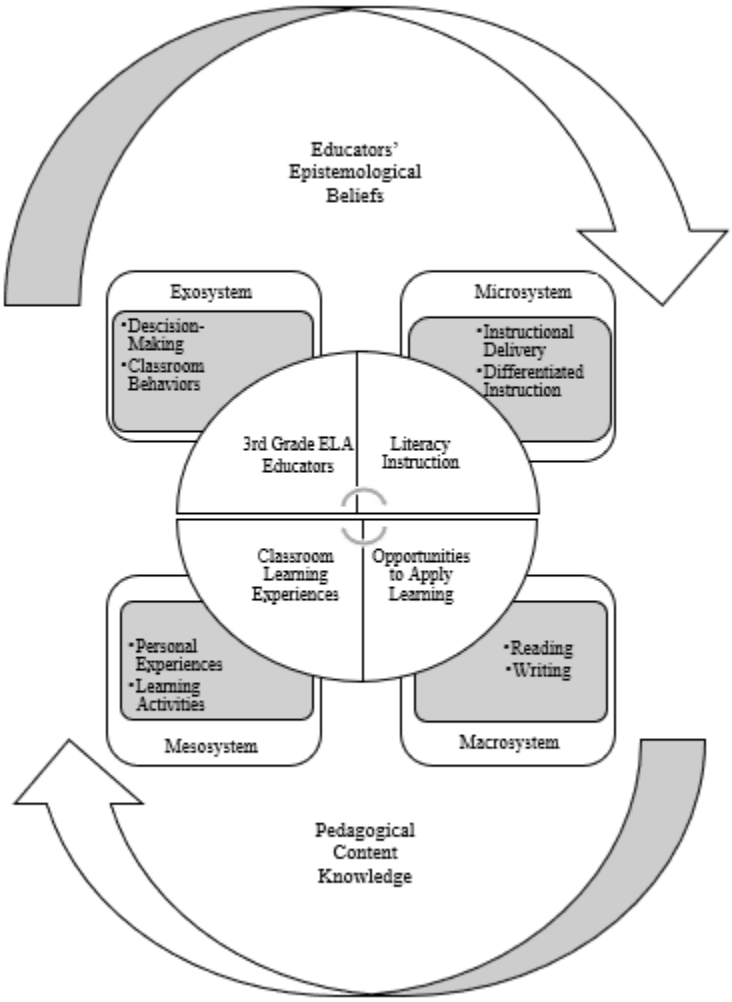

Figure 2. Graphical display of the interconnected relationships between environmental factors, educators, students, and participants' experiences in the development of CLS (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

The ecological system of human development includes the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner (1979) identified the microsystem represents the environment or

established processes experienced by the model or observer. For this research study, the model was the educator, and the student was the observer. This study included data collection from models only. Bronfenbrenner refers to the mesosystem as the connections between two or more environments for the educator or student. In contrast, the exosystem includes the connections between two or more environments for the educator or student that does not directly include either participant. However, the processes within the environment of the excluded participant affect their microsystem. Comparatively, the macrosystem represents patterns identified through examinations of the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem, which develops the culture of the educator or student. The chronosystem includes recognizing sequential processes or events contributing to the development of the educator or student (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For this research study, each component of the ecological system of human development was applicable.

The microsystem in this study represented the processes associated with an educators' instructional delivery and implementation of differentiated instructional practices during ELA instruction. Educators' personal experiences and the learning activities provided to students for CLS development supported the mesosystem. In like manner, the exosystem represented educators' decision-making and classroom behaviors connected to literacy instruction, classroom learning experiences, and opportunities to apply learning.

Educators' epistemologies were examined through their described participation in educator preparation programs and professional learning, which does not directly include students. Correspondingly, the macrosystem included patterns identified among the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem related to educators' epistemologies and

pedagogical practices on CLS development during ELA instruction. The macrosystem was evaluated for cultural or other social contexts among educators related to their epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices during ELA instruction. Comparatively, the chronosystem included a consideration of the number of years participants served as an ELA educator. In further explanation of the theoretical framework, the process-person-context-time model contributed to the cyclical processes illustrated in Figure 2.

Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) indicated proximal processes include systemic interactions between participants and their environment. Bronfenbrenner and Morris also specified the person component of the model include the educator or students' characteristics demonstrated during social interactions, which comprise proximal processes. Furthermore, the researchers explained context characteristics include the different environments occupied by the educator or student, representing the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Time characteristics include the sequence of events within an educator or student's life (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). I examined educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices on CLS development with considerations of the interconnected relationships represented through Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of human development.

The proximal process was examined through educators' beliefs about interactions and pedagogical practices during ELA instruction. The examination of proximal processes included descriptions and explanations of educators' beliefs about their practices related to pedagogy for CLS development. In connection, the context of

characteristics was examined by analyzing educators' responses related to their beliefs about epistemology and pedagogy on CLS development as represented in Figure 2, which includes components associated with the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem. Additionally, educators' responses were examined to compare their epistemologies and pedagogies to their years of experience as an educator.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative intrinsic case study was to describe and explain third grade ELA educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices on the development of CLS in two Title I schools. Specifically, the study focused on third grade ELA educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices involving CLS development. The Casey Foundation (2011) determined students who did not perform on grade level by the end of third grade faced challenging learning obstacles for the remainder of their education. An updated report by the Casey Foundation (2013) capitalized on findings from the initial report and reiterated third grade was pivotal in students' literacy learning as the complexity of texts students encountered after third grade increased. A review of students' CLS development supported an inquiry into the school day's instructional processes and educators' epistemologies.

Hoyer and Sparks (2017) described third grade students in public schools participated in approximately 33.1 hours of schooling during a full work week. Hoyer and Sparks also discovered educators spent most of the instructional time on literacy instruction and mathematics compared to social studies and science. For the most part, literacy instruction included English, reading, and language arts. The researchers determined there was an increased focus on literacy instruction compared to mathematics (Hoyer &

Sparks, 2017). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore educators' epistemologies and pedagogies during literacy instruction. An examination of epistemology and pedagogy provided more detailed information about the utilization of specific pedagogical practices during instructional time.

Omer (2016) discovered individuals' positionalities were related to their perception of self and their role in the world. Omer further recognized individuals' positionalities also affected their epistemologies. As a result, the researcher proposed educators' epistemologies and the connection of positionalities on students' epistemologies required further exploration (Omer, 2016). Seemingly, positionalities between educators and students co-exist and contribute to individuals' epistemologies (Omer, 2016). Thus, epistemologies vary and differ between educators and students (Kolomitro, 2017; Omer, 2016). This study addresses Hoyer and Sparks' (2017) and Omer's (2016) work by focusing on third grade ELA educators' epistemologies and defining what they believe about learning and how they apply their beliefs to CLS instructional practices.

Definitions of Terms

1. *Comprehensive Literacy Skills*: literary competencies required for reading and writing in early grades (ESSA, 2015a).
2. *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*: instructional practices utilized by educators to support students from minority groups in accessing curriculum with attention to the areas of academics, cultural awareness, and interpretations of social order (Ladson-Billings, 1995; 2006).
3. *Epistemology*: an individual's beliefs about the meaning and development of knowledge (Schraw, 2013).

4. *Pedagogy:* a practitioner's organization and implementation of practices supportive of teaching and learning, which includes ideas about the use of best instructional methods and the ability of individuals to implement methods representative of their personal beliefs and professional dispositions (Shulman, 2005).
5. *Pedagogical Content Knowledge:* representations used by educators to demonstrate the synthesizing of educators' knowledge about content and pedagogy (Shulman, 1986).
6. *Third Grade:* the third year of primary education (Hamdan, 2017).
7. *Title I School*: schools with high percentages of students from low-income families, which includes school populations with 10% of families and 5% of school-aged students who are identified as impoverished based on the poverty census and the cost of education in each state (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).
8. *Socioeconomic Status*: the income, level of education, employment, health, and access to resources associated with individuals from a shared family for the identification of provisional resources to sustain living (U.S. Social Security Office of Policy and Research and Analysis, n.d.)

Significance of the Study

This study may be of interest to state and local educational stakeholders responsible for curriculum development and postsecondary educators in educator preparation programs. The data provided in this study may reform curriculum

development, professional learning, and educator preparation programs across the state and nation.

Research related to educators' epistemological and pedagogical practices describes educators' beliefs and instructional practices during literacy instruction. Educators were provided an opportunity to share how their beliefs about how students learn and develop CLS. The detailed descriptions allowed educators to share their PCK about literacy instruction and pedagogical practices. A review of educators' epistemological beliefs and PCK was explored by examining theorized qualities represented in the interconnected relationships between environmental factors, educators, students, and participants' experiences on the development of CLS.

The findings from this research study could change the way educators plan for and teach reading and writing skills to students from low socioeconomic backgrounds based on their epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices. Educators may become more aware of their own biases about CLS development. The increased awareness associated with epistemology and pedagogy could reform the way educators present content for reading and writing instruction.

Similarly, educators may become more aware of personal biases in planning instruction and selecting culturally relevant pedagogies for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Even though the focus of my study is third grade ELA educators, educators from various content areas and grade levels may employ the findings to examine their epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices. In order to examine educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices related to students' CLS development, I collected data for the following three research questions.

Research Questions

1. What are the epistemological beliefs of third grade educators in two Title I schools about how students learn CLS?
2. What are the pedagogical practices of third grade educators in two Title I schools as they develop students' CLS?
3. How do third grade educators believe they address the epistemological needs of students through their CLS pedagogical practices?

Methodology Overview

I implemented a qualitative intrinsic case study. Creswell (2014) described qualitative research as exploring the understandings and meanings of individuals or groups related to a social or human problem. The qualitative method of study provided detailed information about third grade ELA educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices on CLS development. An intrinsic case study supported the examination of third grade ELA educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices on CLS at two Title I schools. The research topic of interest developed through a review of the literature and my experiences as an elementary educator. These experiences increased my desire to know more about educators' beliefs and instructional practices during reading and writing instruction.

Pelto (2017) stated qualitative data should be triangulated through various data collection techniques. Therefore, I collected data through individual semi-structured interviews, photographs with descriptive narratives, and an open-ended questionnaire. Data were integrated during the data analysis process to describe educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices on the development of CLS. There

were three points of focus: (1) educators' beliefs about how students learn CLS, (2) educators' roles in the development of CLS, (3) and educators' beliefs about addressing the epistemological needs of their students through their pedagogical practices. The variation in data collection methods supported data triangulation and provided answers for the research questions.

Research Design

I used a qualitative research design, because qualitative research provided the structure for the examination of third grade ELA educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices on CLS development. Further, a qualitative research design supported the utilization of data collection tools selected for this study. Data were collected in three phases.

During Phase I, I conducted semi-structured interviews with third grade ELA educators who volunteered to participate in this research study. Pharm (2014) suggested semi-structured interviews should be used in qualitative studies to allow participants an opportunity to answer preset questions within a timeframe of 30 minutes. Pharm stated interviews should not last longer than 60 minutes. The researcher recommended recording interviews to support the accuracy of information (Pharm, 2014). Jamshed (2014) identified the use of recordings allowed a researcher to focus on the interviewee and provide verbal prompts during the interview if needed. Questions in the semi-structured interview were connected to educators' personal beliefs about how students learn CLS. Semi-instructed interview questions provided additional information about the educators' epistemologies and processes during ELA instruction.

In Phase II, I collected photographs with descriptive narratives to examine educators' pedagogical practices during ELA instruction. Educators provided one photograph of whole or small groups during ELA instruction. The photograph captured educators' pedagogical practices and the interactions among educators, students, and peers within ELA classrooms during instruction. Harkness and Stallworth (2013) disclosed photographs supported the within-case and cross-case analysis of photographs and interviews. I selected photographs to document third grade ELA educators' pedagogical practices. Additionally, photographs were implemented to compare educators' responses from their semi-structured interviews to their pedagogical practices. Educators provided one photograph and a descriptive narrative detailing how the selected photograph answered three prompts associated with their role and pedagogical practices for CLS development.

During Phase III, I used an open-ended questionnaire to gather data about educator' beliefs on addressing students' epistemological needs through their CLS pedagogical practices. Researchers indicated open-ended questionnaires are used to identify patterns in participants' responses (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, and Liao, 2004). Correspondingly, the patterns that developed across the open-ended questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and photographs with descriptive narratives allowed me to view educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices.

Setting and Participants

The participants included six third grade ELA educators with three or more years of teaching experience. The participants in this research study taught reading instruction in self-contained classrooms. This sample included traditional compared to non-

traditional educators. Figure 1 depicts educators' epistemology and PCK, which encompass epistemology in ELA with educator preparation programs. Non-traditional educators do not possess the same experiences as traditional educators to include undergraduate preparation programs. Thus, this research study does not include non-traditional educators.

Similarly, participants represented a group of educators, including Caucasian and African American educators. The six participants were divided into two groups. Three educators were from each cooperating school site. Group one participants were identified at one school site, and group two participants were identified at another school site (Blatt & Patrick, 2014). Participants with less than three years of teaching experience or who possessed an undergraduate degree in a field other than education were excluded. There were no other exclusion criteria.

Procedures

I obtained permission from the Board of Education and Superintendent before emailing the qualitative study proposal letter (Appendix A) to principals of Title I schools with third grade educators. Administrators interested in participating in the study received a follow-up email for a meeting date to discuss the research study. Following, I contacted third grade ELA educators via email (Appendix C) to solicit volunteers for participation in the study.

***Semi-Structured Interviews*.** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six participants following the collection of a participation survey (Appendix D) and consent form (Appendix O). All participants participated in virtual meeting due to the Coronavirus. Individual semi-structured interviews lasted for two weeks. All semi-

structured interviews were recorded. Interview questions provided data related to participants' epistemological beliefs about how students learn CLS. I posed five prompts during the semi-structured interviews. Follow-up questions were based on participants' answers. Interviews lasted for approximately 30 minutes, and the longest interview was 45 minutes.

Photographs with Descriptive Narratives. Three topics related to pedagogical practices on CLS development were identified: (1) the processes during literacy instruction, (2) the educator's role during reading instruction, and (3) the educator's support of differentiated practices during literacy instruction. Participants were provided three prompts related to the three topics. Thus, research participants captured one image inclusive of each topic using the camera on their cellular telephone. Hunter (2014) wrote photo elicitation allows participants to capture descriptive information through photographs. Participants used the prompts to create a descriptive narrative detailing how the preselected photograph addressed each question prompt. The photograph and descriptive narratives described educators' pedagogical during ELA instruction. Participants submitted their photographs and descriptive narratives electronically through email.

Open-Ended Questionnaire. One week after submitting the photograph and descriptive narratives, participants received the open-ended questionnaire to their work email address. The open-ended questionnaire included four questions on a Google Form. The questionnaire provided data on participants' beliefs about their abilities to meet students' epistemological needs through their pedagogical practices. Furthermore, the questions required participants to include details about their use of multicultural activities

during ELA instruction. The incorporation of multiculturalism supported the inclusion of culturally relevant pedagogical practices. Participants submitted their open-ended questionnaires electronically through email on the Google form following completion.

Data Analysis

The semi-structured interviews, photographs with descriptive narratives, and open-ended questionnaires were coded using inductive and axial coding processes. NVivo was used to analyze data and generate coding (O'Neill, Booth, & Lamb, 2018). Codes were used to support the identification of common and shared knowledge among participants' responses (Haradhan, 2018). Iterative categorization (IC) was used to identify themes for photographs (Neale, 2016). A colleague and I established codes through inter-rater reliability. I created a coding book for the final coding process. The coding process allowed me to understand participants' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices during ELA instruction. The findings collected through the semi-structured interviews, photographs with descriptive narratives, and open-ended questionnaires provided a better understanding of educators' epistemologies and pedagogies entailing CLS development.

Limitations and Delimitations

I have been an educator for seventeen years. Predominantly, employment included Title schools for grades K-12. The previous years of employment may present an inherent bias due to a knowledge of CLS pedagogies. Equally, this may cause anticipation of participants' practices based on personal experiences. Hence, I employed a qualitative study to limit the impact of bias through the triangulation of data.

The research was conducted in a school district located in east Alabama on the Alabama and Georgia border. The potential for lack of diversity among participants based on gender and race was a limitation. Due to the school district's demographics, the participant sample did not represent a gender diverse group of participants. Two data collection instruments, photographs with descriptive narrative and open-ended questionnaire, allowed the participants to self-report. The utilization of another data collection instrument, a semi-structured interview, was utilized to incorporate multiple data sources and to support the triangulation of data.

Summary

Research shows a student's ability to read at grade level by the end of third grade is a predictor of future school success. Students, who are not reading at grade level by the end of third grade, are more likely to experience difficulties throughout their education. However, students' acquisition of reading and writing skills exceed cognitive barriers. The socioeconomic background of students may contribute to their inadequacies for educational resources and high-quality learning. Consequently, educators may need to reform their pedagogical practices and include culturally relevant pedagogies. There is limited research identified on educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices related to CLS development. Thus, I implemented a qualitative intrinsic case study to examine third grade ELA educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices on CLS development. I collected data through semi-structured interviews, photographs with descriptive narratives, and an open-ended questionnaire.

Chapter II defines the review of literature on epistemology and pedagogy for ELA instruction. Additionally, Chapter II includes content on education policies and CLS in

elementary schools, specifically for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Furthermore, I include content on CLS development and the implementation of culturally relevant pedagogies in elementary schools.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an extensive review of epistemology and pedagogy through a focus on ELA. The literature review provides perspectives on education policies, epistemology and pedagogy related to CLS, CLS development in Title I schools, early childhood programs related to CLS, and CLS development in elementary schools. The organization of content in the literature review is reflective of Figure 1 from Chapter I, which illustrates qualities related to students' development of CLS. In conjunction, literature connected to epistemology in ELA includes educators' beliefs about CLS, educators' preparedness for teaching reading and writing through the implementation of culturally relevant pedagogical practices, and professional learning on literacy instruction. Literature on the pedagogy of ELA describes educators' pedagogical practices and educational multimedia utilized during literacy instruction. Accordingly, the literature review builds a case for the research needed to examine educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices on CLS development.

Learning is a process (Hofer, 2004). Consequently, the historical influence of educational stakeholders, which comprises policymakers and educators, are critical to consider in the evaluation of America's educational system and students' literacy challenges. Therefore, an unbiased study of educators' epistemologies and pedagogies should include an examination of different epistemologies in education.

Hofer (2004) and Omer (2016) both identified epistemologies varied between educators and students. Furthermore, this finding was supported in previous research.

Researchers discovered epistemology included three different categories: (1) a developmental approach, (2) a system of beliefs, and (3) a personal perspective (Perry, 1970; Shommer-Aikins, 1990; Hofer & Pintrich, 1997). For example, Hofer and Pintrich (1997) indicated personal epistemology included individuals' personal beliefs, knowledge, dispositions, and reasoning skills. Hence, considerations for epistemology to include development, systemic beliefs, or personal views required a closer review of the processes for acquiring knowledge.

Kidron and Monaghan (2009) discovered an individual's acquisition of knowledge required educators to possess an implied epistemology into their pedagogical practices. Thereupon, Kidron and Monaghan (2009) described an educator could not teach without an epistemology. As a result, understanding different types of epistemologies provided a comparison for examining educators' epistemological beliefs within this study.

Hofer and Pintrich (1997) discovered epistemology included an individual's thinking and rationale about human knowledge. However, personal epistemology included three components for descriptions: (1) the processes an individual used to acquire knowledge, (2) the theories and beliefs an individual possessed about knowledge, and (3) the influence of epistemology on an individual's thinking and reasoning (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997). Accordingly, an understanding of epistemologies related to the acquisition of knowledge is needed for this research study to analyze educators' epistemologies and pedagogical practices on the development of CLS. Three epistemologies were determined for further discussion: (1) empiricism, (2) pragmatism, and (3) constructivism.

Kuhn and Weinstock (2002) described empiricism is connected to the belief an individual learns through experiences, primarily connected to their senses. Saunders (2015) detailed in pragmatism an individual acquired knowledge through a problem and solution method for informed practice. For example, an individual's experiences and reasoning skills were used to support a reflexive thinking process for knowledge acquisition (Saunders, 2015). Conversely, Neubert and Reich (2006) acknowledged constructivism supported knowledge acquisition through an individual's abilities, personal experiences, and active participation in cultural and systemic practices within their environment. Correspondingly, the theoretical framework for this study, as illustrated in Figure 2, represents some of the proposed interconnected relationships between environmental factors, educators, students, and participants' experiences on CLS development. Accordingly, constructivism is the most appropriate epistemology for this study. The selection of constructivism is supported by Figure 1, which includes systems inclusive of an epistemology of ELA and PCK as qualities connected to CLS.

Savani (2017) determined the incorporation of different pedagogical practices was important to consider as policymakers identified the combining of political and pedagogical sciences to improve America's educational system and combat students' literacy challenges. Gorski (2007) acknowledged improved learning opportunities for students in poverty reduced the inequities for quality of education and educational resources among students from low socioeconomic backgrounds compared to students not from disadvantaged backgrounds. The epistemology of policymakers and educators is essential to consider in connection to acquiring knowledge as they contribute to educational stakeholders' positionalities (Omer, 2016).

Historical Perspective of Education Policies on ELA

The socioeconomic background of students contributes to inadequacies in educational resources (Darling-Hammond, 2013); therefore, student achievement is impacted (Broer, Bai, & Fonseca, 2019). Education policies are developed to provide funding for early childhood programs and to improve curricular standards for grades preschool-12 (ESSA, 2015a). For these reasons, there is an increased focus on the literacy development of students from disadvantaged backgrounds (ESSA, 2015b).

Policymakers presented a national focus on improving literacy development required changes to curricular standards and an examination of educators' pedagogical practices during ELA instruction (ESSA, 2015b). Conversely, previous education policies addressed eliminating poverty and combating illiteracy but neglected considerations for the revision of curricular standards (Hauptli & Cohen-Vogel, 2013). The presumption for change related to students' literacy outcomes was presented through the development of education policies over time.

The National Defense of Education Act of 1958 (NDEA, 1958) identified a significant need to improve and develop the American educational system, specifically public education. The NDEA presented reformations in the American educational system were essential to the United States' national security. Policymakers focused on education development through increased instruction and governmental resources to support the areas of science, mathematics, foreign languages, and technology. Despite the focus to improve public education, the policy implementation unveiled disparities in education and resources among students from different socioeconomic backgrounds within America (NDEA, 1958). Education policies were developed to eliminate poverty (Hauptli &

Cohen-Vogel, 2013). The education policy on poverty identified for this research study is the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA).

The ESEA (ESEA, 1965) was designed to address disparities in funding among local education agencies, categorically agencies serving students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Policymakers aimed to provide quality education to all students to reduce achievement gaps between students who were and were not meeting state academic standards. Local education agencies were provided funding for the development of early childhood education programs among communities serving large numbers of students from poverty. Likewise, financial assistance was provided for special education services to improve education for disadvantaged students. The need to improve the quality of education and accessibility to resources were the primary points of focus in the pursuit of an equitable education for all students (ESEA, 1965). However, aspirations for the American educational system to improve achievement outcomes for students through previous education policies were thwarted by a review of students' academic performances.

In 1983, President Ronald Reagan's administration published a report, A Nation at Risk 1983, detailing dyer conditions in the American educational system (U.S. National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The report highlighted concerns associated with the literacy performance of students from minority subgroups. In fact, the report indicated approximately 40% of students from minority subgroups were identified as functionally illiterate (U. S. National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Educational stakeholders' concerns related to disparities in literacy prompted an increased focus on early intervention and Title I schools (Hauptli & Cohen-

Vogel, 2013). Nonetheless, the literacy crisis among America's students continued to plague the educational system. The preparedness of educators to effectively provide kindergarten through third grade reading instruction became a concern for educational stakeholders.

Senate Bill 105-208 (1998) also known as the Reading Excellence Act was developed to improve the reading and literacy skills of students in early elementary grades, kindergarten through third grade. The Reading Excellence Act targeted improvements in professional learning, specifically for educators who taught reading instruction. In like manner, the role of a student's family was considered in the evaluation of literacy development. The bill included support for the development of family literacy programs to improve the overall American literacy crisis. Respectively, efforts were developed to ensure students were able to read independently by the end of third grade (S. 105-208, 1998). The proposed efforts to ensure students were reading at grade level promoted the inclusion of increased accountability for students' performances on standardized assessments. The need for increased accountability was observed through the education policy, No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

NCLB (2001) outlined the need for accountability assessments to document the performance of students on standardized assessments. Likewise, NCLB aimed to ensure all students demonstrated minimum proficiency on state content standards. Policymakers focused on assessments, educator preparation programs, curricular standards, and instructional resources for the improvement of America's educational system. The policy presented improvements through the following concepts:

> (1) ensuring that high-quality academic assessments, accountability systems, teacher preparation and training, curriculum, and instructional materials are aligned with challenging State academic standards so that students, [educators], parents, and administrators can measure progress against common expectations for student academic achievement; (2) meeting the educational needs of low-achieving [children] in our Nation's highest-poverty schools, limited English proficient children, migratory children, [children] with disabilities, Indian [children], neglected or delinquent [children], and young [children] in need of reading assistance; (3) closing the achievement gap between high- and low- performing [students], especially the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students, and between disadvantaged [students] and their more advantaged peers…. (NCLB, 2001, pp. 1439-1440).

Policymakers supported the opportunity for all students in grades three through eight to demonstrate grade level reading proficiency (Hauptli & Cohen-Vogel, 2013). Moreover, policymakers presented the concepts of increased accountability and student achievement through a systemic curriculum design (Kolomitro, 2017). However, limitations developed in members of local education agencies' abilities to ensure all students met minimum state content standards. Thus, the focus to improve students' literacy outcomes was promoted through the new education policy, Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA).

ESSA (2015b) included revisions to criteria instituted by the NDEA. ESSA also included revisions to the literacy content standards for reading and writing in grades K-

12. Furthermore, policymakers promoted changes in the analysis of state assessments. As a result, members of state and local education agencies were provided more autonomy in the selection of assessments. Representatives of local education agencies were encouraged to use multiple forms of data to measure students' growth compared to the individual use of standardized assessments. Educational stakeholders continued to analyze achievement gaps among subgroups as initiated by NCLB (ESSA, 2015b). The development of new education policies and revisions of previous education policies were initiated to reduce disparities in America's educational system and to improve students' literacy outcomes.

The goal to improve America's educational system remains. Education policies were designed to provide an equitable and quality education for all students. Conversely, policymakers neglected the consideration of educators as individual beings with personal epistemologies and pedagogies, which may contribute to the implementation of reading and writing instruction. Comparably, there was no consideration of the effect of educators' beliefs and pedagogical practices on the development of students' reading and writing skills.

Epistemology of ELA

Educators' epistemologies in education supported their decision-making and pedagogical practices. Irby, Brown, and Jackson (2013) found epistemology in education required the identification of education as absolute understandings about knowledge. The study identified educators' epistemological beliefs supported the facilitation of students' learning by evaluating the relevancy of knowledge, analyzing curricular content, and identifying the best methods to measure knowledge (Irby et al., 2013).

Brownlee et al. (2012) revealed educators' epistemologies influenced student learning. Brownlee et al. also determined educators' beliefs about knowledge influenced their pedagogical practices. The study revealed previous studies in education examined educators' epistemological beliefs on student learning. In contrast, there was limited research on educators' epistemological beliefs and teaching (Brownlee et al., 2012).

A deeper understanding of educators' epistemologies is required to learn more about their pedagogical practices and how they are used in students' environments for CLS development. The epistemological beliefs between educators and students may be necessary to consider. Accordingly, this research study focused on educators' epistemologies and pedagogies.

Crooks (2017) indicated there were conflicting understandings of epistemology between educators and students. Crooks also recognized educators perceived knowledge is developed through processes of inquiry. Conversely, students viewed knowledge as information possessed by authorities. Wherefore, the conflict between varying views of epistemology affected students' abilities to become acclimated with their learning environment (Crooks, 2017). These varying perspectives supported the assumption that educators served as a model for learning in an educational setting and potentially contributed to the development of learning for students (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

A continued interest in educators' epistemologies and pedagogies related to students' development of reading and writing skills serves as the foundation for this research study. Maravilla and Gomez (2015) observed a comprehensive analysis of epistemology included an examination of educators' epistemologies about learning and

how they apply those beliefs during ELA instruction. A further analysis into educators' epistemologies is needed to better understand their beliefs about learning and development.

Educator Beliefs

Educators' perceptions related to students' abilities to learn were conveyed through their attitudes and gestures (Nieto, 2012). This finding further supported the need to analyze educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices on the development of CLS. Maravilla and Gomez (2015) found educators' personal epistemologies were associated with their practices in classrooms. The possibility for educators' actions in the classroom to impact students' learning supported the need for additional inquiry.

Nieto (2012) acknowledged students possess an intrinsic ability to recognize if an educator did or did not care about them. McCormick and O'Connor (2014) discovered students who possessed positive relationships with their educators demonstrated success in reading achievement. In contrast, students who lacked connected relationships with their educators demonstrated lower levels of reading achievement (McCormick & O'Connor, 2014). Tschannen-Moran (2014) determined there is an increased need for student achievement to increase within America's public schools. Subsequently, the propensity for educators to impact student' learning through their epistemology and pedagogical practices precipitated an interest in educators' beliefs about literacy instruction and the pedagogical practices used for CLS development.

Vaughn (2018) suggested educators should facilitate opportunities for student agency or autonomy in classrooms to support students as developers of their learning.

Vaughn also recommended the inclusion of student agency required educators to adapt their pedagogical practices. The researcher proposed educators examine their curriculum and classroom structures for the inclusion of students to exercise autonomy in their learning. Due to the requirements of educators to reform their pedagogical practices for the inclusion of student agency, the systemic processes of educators to utilize learning opportunities supportive of student agency was limited in elementary schools (Vaughn, 2018). In connection, the role of the educator on the development of student learning required further examination, specifically for analysis on students' development of literacy skills.

The examination of educators' roles in student learning development began with a review of the literature. Table 1 displays a concept analysis chart of empirical articles used for the preliminary research of this study. Table 1 also provides a synopsis of the empirical articles and the outcomes for each study. The concept analysis chart provides a generalized view of contents associated with epistemology and pedagogy. Below, I discuss how each of these articles relate to my study.

Table 1

Concept Analysis Chart for Literature Review

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/Analysis	Outcomes
Matsumonto & Tsuneda (2019)	Examine early childhood educators' beliefs about the development of early literacy skills	349 early childhood educators and 45 primary school educators	Quantitative: exploratory factor analysis	Early childhood educators perceived students' environments contributed to the development of early literacy skills; Early childhood educators and primary educators viewed the development of early literacy skills differently
Broman (2018)	Investigate the relationship between pre-service educators' beliefs and their preferred reading orientation	One literacy methods course professor and three pre-service educators enrolled in a literacy method course	Qualitative: case study with interviews and observations	Pre-service educators' life experiences, literacy method course, and practicum experiences influenced their reading orientation; Pre-service educators reading orientation changed over time; inconsistent data related to pre-service educators' beliefs and practices
Guo, Connor, Yang, Roehrig, & Morrison (2012)	Examine the pedagogical practices of ELA educators based on self-efficacy, education, and years of experience	Educators and students who participated in the NICHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development longitudinal study: 1,043 students and their designated educators	Quantitative: data analyzed using the structural equation model	Self-efficacy positively impacts fifth-grade literacy outcomes
Bahcivan & Cobern (2016)	Investigate the relationship between the beliefs of science educators' and their PCK, which includes pedagogical practices	30 in-service science teachers	Qualitative: multiple case study with semi-structured interviews and video recordings of teaching	Educators' PCK and practices were not related to epistemology about science
Kelcey & Carlisle (2013)	Improve the collection of classroom observations data during literacy instruction	87 second and third grade classrooms	Quantitative: observation data compared using variance, interclass correlations coefficients, and model fit	Concentrated pedagogical practices in literacy instruction positively impacts students' literacy achievement

Kimathi & Bertram (2019)	Evaluate the influence of professional learning on three educators	3 educators enrolled in professional learning from the Advanced Certificate in Teaching program	Qualitative case study with video recordings of teaching	Two educators' practices changed; Educators' participation in professional learning affected pedagogy
Rodas & Elizabeth (2019)	Examine the influence of Title I comparability funding on teacher quality gaps in public schools	4, 640 ELA and math educators	Quantitative t-test	Teacher quality gaps between Title I and non-Title I schools
Doyle, McEntee, & McNamara (2012)	Examine the relationship between school reading scores and socio-economic status	12 educators who serve students in their first year of formal schooling	Quantitative: EDI student assessments compared using standardized Cronbach alpha coefficients	Parental education negatively impacted students' emotional maturity; Interventions should target all students from disadvantaged communities
Begeny, Yeager, & Martinez (2012)	Examine students reading performance between small group and one-on-one reading	Six second grade students	Quantitative: analyze the percentage of non-overlapping data; evaluated differential effects between single-case designs	Fluency intervention positively impacted reading

Early childhood educators considered the relatedness of students' different environments on the development of their literacy skills. For example, Matsumonto and Tsuneda (2019) evaluated educators' epistemological and pedagogical beliefs about literacy instruction within early childhood classrooms. Matsumonto and Tsuneda (2019) discovered early childhood educators perceived students' early literacy development was acquired through an ecological view of learning. Likewise, Bronfenbrenner (1988) proposed in his ecological theory of human development individuals learned from different environments. Matsumonto and Tsuneda (2019) indicated educators in early childhood classrooms did not assume students' literacy development was their sole responsibility. Moreover, educators' beliefs about their role and responsibility on students' literacy development were connected to their pedagogical practices. In the final analysis, Matsumonto and Tsuneda (2019) concluded early childhood educators' views on literacy instruction differed from elementary educators.

Yoshikawa, Weiland, and Brooks-Gunn (2016) described children developed language and literacy skills through interactions within their home environment, child-care settings, and communities. Environmental influences on students' literacy development varied, but additional consideration can be placed on educators' pedagogical practices during literacy instruction, as indicated in this research study.

Early childhood pedagogical practices related to CLS did not include a comprehensive approach to literacy instruction. McKenney and Bradley (2016) found the focus of educators during early literacy instruction primarily included teaching students how to decode words. McKenney and Bradley also acknowledged the instruction on

decoding was implemented with students having limited accessibility to books, which limited the orientation of instruction on concepts of print. The study showed there was limited instruction on the construction of writing (McKenney & Bradley, 2016). Seemingly, educators' beliefs about the development of literacy skills for students lacked the continuity of instruction and the opportunity for students to observe skills needed for literacy development through authentic pedagogical practices. Students were unable to observe how decoding supports reading and writing.

The role of elementary educators in developing students' literacy skills has been debated through education research. Educators' beliefs about pedagogy impacted students' learning (Egloff, Förster, & Souvignier, 2019). Egloff et al. (2019) discovered educators' global beliefs about instruction positively affected students' reading fluency. The ascertain of educators' global beliefs related to students' learning and development supported findings on positionalities (Omer, 2016).

Egloff et al. (2019) identified educators who possessed global beliefs about pedagogical practices demonstrated them in different content areas, which was beneficial for students. In contrast, educators who demonstrated an increased epistemological view for reading were more likely to only impact students in reading (Egloff et al., 2019). The study indicated an isolated focus on reading potentially limited the overall academic progress of students, because reading was required for all content areas (Egloff et al., 2019). Moos and Ringdal (2012) determined students' individualities impacted how they learned. Hence, students' learning and development could be impacted by educators' beliefs and practices.

Educators who demonstrated direct-transmissive beliefs about teaching did not impact students' reading comprehension growth (Egloff et al., 2019). The relationship between educators' constructive beliefs about teaching and students' progress in reading comprehension was influenced by students' prior reading skills (Egloff et al., 2019; Waldfogel, 2012). The research study generated queries on the importance of students' development of reading readiness skills and the role of educator preparation programs in providing educators with opportunities to develop different beliefs about instruction for diverse learners.

Educator Preparation Programs

Before educators enter their classrooms, they participate in educator preparation programs to prepare them for their responsibilities to develop and educate students for academic success. Training provided through educator preparation programs are connected to the development of pre-service educators' epistemologies in education (Taşkin, 2019). Therefore, the responsibility of members of educational institutions to understand the content presented to pre-service educators in educator preparation programs is essential for the sustainment of professional learning beyond enrollment in post-secondary education (Taşkin, 2019).

Pre-service educators' theoretical preferences, epistemological beliefs, and pedagogical practices contributed to their decision-making during reading instruction (Broman, 2018). As shown in Table 1, Broman (2018) ascertained pre-service educators' theoretical preferences were shaped by their personal life experiences, training during educator preparation programs, and experiences as a practicum student. Subsequently, Broman concluded there were inconsistencies between pre-service educators'

epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices. The researcher initiated pre-service educators' theoretical preferences were observed to change over time (Broman, 2018). Similarly, I investigated third grade ELA educators' beliefs and practices on CLS development.

The recognition of pre-service educators' abilities to change their theoretical preferences on reading instruction demonstrates a need for educational stakeholders to provide continued training for future educators (Broman, 2018). The sustained support during the preparation processes of educator preparation could facilitate an improved understanding of pre-service educators' epistemologies and pedagogies. The process of challenging the way pre-service educators orientate during reading instruction may require them to evaluate their dispositions about literacy practices.

Valtierra and Siegel (2019) perceived the implementation of inclusive literacy practices could provide opportunities for diverse learners to participate in an equitable learning environment. Valtierra and Siegel also noticed preservice educators' dispositions about literacy instruction could be reformed through support and the implementation of practical teaching methods. The study indicated preservice educators' knowledge and skills were demonstrative of the instructional practices they would implement in their classrooms as educators (Valtierra & Siegel, 2019).

Valtierra and Siegel (2019) resolved three epistemological constructs were used to support the development of dispositions for inclusive literacy: (1) beliefs, (2) values, and (3) attitudes. Valtierra and Siegel continued preservice educators demonstrated the belief that all students could demonstrate literacy. Further, educators were encouraged to identify the value in providing students with opportunities for inclusive literacy, which

required them to possess an attitude of commitment to continue the implementation of reformed pedagogical practices beyond the educator preparation program. The study concluded providing preservice educators with an opportunity to develop dispositions connected to inclusive literacy could foster their continued implementation of pedagogical practices supportive of diverse learners in different educational settings (Valtierra & Siegel, 2019).

Fang (2014) identified students' abilities to use advanced literacy skills were present in environments where they were able to interact socially and participate in learning with rigorous content. However, Fang also noted most educators were not trained to have deep pedagogical knowledge and skills for implementing collaborative learning. The researcher suggested leaders in educator preparation programs reform their curriculum to include collaborative opportunities between content area educators and literacy educators. The study indicated both groups improved their PCK and conceptual knowledge. For example, literacy educators improved their pedagogical knowledge through increased conceptual knowledge, and content educators improved their literacy instruction (Fang, 2014).

Professional Learning of ELA

Santos and Miguel (2019) recognized:

> …[Educators] develop a personal understanding, beliefs, and expectations about the direction, mission, planning, and objective of their teaching. Therefore, learning in any teaching and learning setting is influenced by a few comprehensive factors and elements. These elements include

> [educators'] beliefs, [educators'] professional development through training, as well as their teaching and learning style (p. 10).

Correlatively, educators' epistemological beliefs were associated with their pedagogical practices. Santos and Miguel (2019) resolved educators' learning was affected by their epistemologies and participation in professional learning. Educators' learning was aligned with their pedagogical preferences (Santos & Miguel, 2019). Understanding learning concerning epistemology and pedagogy provides a clear need to consider the professional learning opportunities offered to educators on literacy instruction.

Educators' understandings of epistemology and pedagogy are needed for literacy instruction. The development of their beliefs and instructional practices was supported through professional learning (Santos & Miguel, 2019). Dagen and Morewood (2016) suggested professional learning be an on-going process for educators. Dagen and Morewood also presented the Literacy Leadership through National Board provided an on-line collaborative format for professional learning on literacy instruction for early childhood educators. The study revealed a collaborative environment was provided for prekindergarten educators to plan and collaborate for the implementation of early literacy instruction. The collaborative forum supported the development of early educators' PCK. The National Board Certification standards for reading were used to improve educators' PCK. Professional learning was structured in three phases: (1) collaborative sessions, (2) independent work, and (3) work reflection. The construction of all three phases were provided to support an increase in professional learning, collaboration, and educator reflection. For example, collaborative sessions were designed to provide educators with

opportunities to share pedagogical practices related to the curricular standards. Independent work was used to provide educators with opportunities to implement their instructional activities. Furthermore, work reflection required educators to reflect on their pedagogical practices and identify methods for improving instruction. The cyclical process of planning, implementing, and reflecting was shown to be beneficial for participating educators. Moreover, educators discovered the support of professional collaboration and mentorship was beneficial to the development of their pedagogical practices for literacy instruction. Thus, early childhood educators reported the additional resources provided through the on-line collaboration forum and increased accountability from scheduled meetings contributed to their overall professional learning experience (Dagen & Morewood, 2016).

The responsibility of educators to develop and educate students can be an overwhelming task. In addition, educators' perceptions of their abilities to meet students' epistemologies needs during ELA instruction can also be difficult. Hastings (2012) determined professional learning, which included vicarious experiences and enactive attainment were found to improve educators' self-efficacy for reading instruction. Bandura (1997) described vicarious experiences included an individual's ability to learn through observation. In the study, Hasting (2012) acknowledged educators experienced vicarious reinforcement through various ways: (1) demonstrations during in-house professional development, (2) collaborative discussions with colleagues formal and informal, (3) peer-to-peer observations, and (4) modeling demonstrated by colleagues. Further, educators experienced enactive attainment through their perceived abilities to master tasks associated with reading instruction (Bandura, 1997). Hastings (2012)

concluded educators demonstrated increased enactive attainment when describing their roles during literacy instruction to support students' development of literacy skills through decoding, reading comprehension, assessments, and classroom management practices.

Educators experienced increased self-efficacy in environments established to facilitate collective opportunities for professional learning through the demonstration of observation and skill mastery. In connection, each of the occasions for educators to participate in professional learning was not presented through formal training sessions. As aforementioned by Santos and Miguel (2019), educators were able to partake in professional learning opportunities where learning and teaching were interchangeable.

As shown in Table 1, Guo et al. (2012) submitted educators' beliefs about their abilities to affect students' academic achievement impacted literacy scores. In the study, Guo et al. also resolved six predictors to determine the effect on students' literacy development: (1) educator experience, (2) educator preparation, (3) educator self-efficacy, (4) educator support for learning, (5) time in academics, and (6) students' previous third grade reading scores. The study disclosed educators' self-efficacy had the most impact on fifth grade literacy outcomes. Comparably, educators' support of students' learning had the same impact as educators' self-efficacy in phonological decoding skills and comprehension. The study showed educators' support of students' learning demonstrated slightly larger benefits in vocabulary skills compared to educator self-efficacy. In addition, educators' self-efficacy demonstrated there was a connection to students' literacy outcomes. Educators with higher self-efficacy provided more support to students and established positive classroom environments for learning. The research

concluded students' literacy skills were impacted by educators' reading instruction and classroom practices (Guo et al., 2012). Similarly, this research study examined third grade ELA educators' pedagogies during reading instruction through Bronfenbrenner's bioecological and ecological theories of human development.

Hicks and Turner (2013) concluded educational multimedia included resources for literacy education through opportunities for social integration and guided practice. Hicks and Turner also disclosed educators decreased student motivation for digital learning when technology was used as an extension to assignments compared to a resource for increased contextual learning. As a result, educators received professional learning for improved pedagogical practices on technology integration. The research showed that educators applied concepts from professional learning and begun to utilize educational multimedia to develop students' literacy skills. These changes allowed students to use learning blogs for information and communication. Hence, students improved their content knowledge through class assignments. Subsequently, using educational multimedia as a resource for literacy learning supported students' acquisition of skills for digital success at school and home (Hicks & Turner, 2013).

Hamre et al. (2012) found educators who participated in professional learning related to effective teacher-child interactions improved instructional discourse between educators and students. Hamre et al. also revealed educators who participated in the professional learning became more responsive to their students' needs. The study indicated teacher-child interactions included the daily exchange of communication between educators and students for social and instructional purposes. In connection, the interactions between educators and students were evaluated by three categories: (1)

emotional support, (2) classroom organization, and (3) instructional support (Hamre et al., 2012).

The research described professional learning was used to train educators on language and literacy development (Hamre et al., 2012). Hamre et al. (2012) evaluated educators' participation in professional learning sessions by examining educators and students' interactions related to language and literacy performance. In the study, language and literacy development were shown to occur through interactions between educators and students, which included emotional, organizational, or instructional contexts (Hamre et al., 2012). Correspondingly, targeted activities within the contexts of educators' emotional, organizational, and instructional practices were used to improve their abilities to support students' development of literacy skills. The study concluded educators who participated in professional learning enhanced students' language and literacy skills with effective instructional discourse (Hamre et al., 2012).

Professional learning designed to improve students' literacy skills can represent different points of focus. Similarly, changes to educators' epistemologies and pedagogies can also be changed by professional learning. The willingness of educators to implement content learned during professional learning opportunities could impact the effectiveness of their pedagogical practices.

Kimathi and Bertram (2019) presented educators' willingness to learn, and the demographical make-up of a school could determine changes in their pedagogical practices. Kimathi and Bertram indicated three educators participated in professional learning designed to improve PCK and pedagogies for literacy instruction. Standards were used from Advanced Certification Teaching and English and the First Additional

Language as guides for training effectiveness. Data from six video recordings, field notes, and interviews were analyzed. The study showed two of the three educators demonstrated a deeper understanding of reading instruction and changed their pedagogical practices. In contrast, the third educator increased PCK but did not implement principles learned from the program during literacy instruction (Kimathi & Bertman, 2019).

Kimathi and Bertman (2019) confirmed educators' willingness to implement changes in their pedagogical practices and the environment of the school could impact the level of engagement during the study. Furthermore, educators who demonstrated changes in pedagogical practices were more motivated and taught in schools where the conditions were more favorable to implement change. Kimathi and Bertman considered the third educator were close to retirement and served in a school where English was a second language for students. Thus, these factors may have impacted the participant's willingness to implement new pedagogical practices (Kimathi & Bertman, 2019).

There were some barriers to consider when examining educators' pedagogical practices. The demographics and native language of students for participating educators were important to consider in the analysis of the effectiveness of professional learning (Kimathi & Bertman, 2019). Additionally, the perceptions of educators' motivations toward the implementation of reformed pedagogical practices were also necessary to consider. However, barriers to the implementation of transformed pedagogical practices can extend to educators' perceptions of their abilities to educate students as referenced in this research study.

Lehman (2017) reported preservice educators identified a lack in their abilities to educate diverse students. Lehman also described preservice educators perceived they lacked the awareness, knowledge, and skills needed to educate diverse students. Preservice educators participated in professional learning to improve their competencies in multicultural education (Lehman, 2017).

Henceforth, preservice educators' minimal competencies in multicultural education were connected to four concepts: (1) lack of practice, (2) multicultural knowledge, (3) multicultural skills, and (4) assessing needs (Lehman, 2017). Lehman (2017) presented variations in professional learning helped preservice educators to increase their multicultural education in all four areas. Wherein, preservice educators learned about classroom instructional strategies for diverse learners (Lehman, 2017). Furthermore, preservice educators were provided with opportunities to improve their communication skills with diverse families (Lehman, 2017).

Lehman (2017) detected the implementation of effective communication skills facilitated the attainment of preservice educators' cultural knowledge about their students. Lehman also determined preservice educators increased abilities to communicate with diverse families supported the acquisition of participants' cultural awareness and knowledge. Moreover, an understanding of differences among students indicated preservice educators could use a needs assessment to identify curriculum appropriate for all students and the best differentiated instructional practices to support the inclusion of diverse learners. The researcher concluded improving preservice educators' multicultural competences was critical for them to educate students from diverse backgrounds (Lehman, 2017).

Despite the differences in educators' pedagogical practices following professional learning, some literacy challenges could be combated by a connectivity of literacy instruction between early childhood and elementary grades. There are multiple factors for educators to consider when providing reading instruction. Correspondingly, educators' considerations for pedagogical practices during ELA instruction for diverse learners are important.

Pedagogy of ELA

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) and ESSA (2015b) aimed to improve academic achievement and student proficiency on state standards and assessments. Further, ESSA (2015b) required revisions be made to reading and writing content standards for students in grades K through 12. ESSA (2015a) also included funding for early childhood education programs. In comparison to other education policies, the curricular emphasis was placed on the development of language acquisition, early literacy skills, and reading comprehension for at-risk populations (ESSA, 2015b). These points of focus in education policies provided further considerations for the development of foundational literacy skills of school-aged children from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Waldfogel (2012) ascertained English Language Learners (ELL), specifically Hispanic students, stabilized in their literacy performance. However, Waldfogel also noted literacy gaps among black and white students from different socioeconomic backgrounds widened throughout their education and did not improve with remedial instruction during high school. The researcher detected solutions to literacy deficits were not templated answers but required solutions represented in education policies, which are

reflective of the needs of specific groups (Waldfogel, 2012). Therefore, education policies are needed for improved literacy instruction among students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Waldfogel (2012) proposed three core areas for improved literacy learning: (1) support the development of language-rich programs for vocabulary acquisition, (2) provide access to universal early childhood education programs, and (3) generate summer reading programs for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Waldfogel, 2012). The proposed changes in education policies for improved literacy instruction of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds provided some measures to address literacy concerns among minority students. A closer look into students' literacy development involved educators' pedagogical practices during literacy instruction.

Similarly, students' development of literacy skills and educators' pedagogies were influenced by factors beyond education policies. Warikoo, Sinclair, Fei, and Jacoby-Senghor (2016) observed "…negative implicit associations toward low-status racial minority groups are a potentially significant contributor to educational inequality not only because they are automatic and difficult to control but also because they are pervasive" (p. 509). Thereupon, educators' pedagogical and curricular practices among diverse students from low socioeconomic backgrounds required further inquiry.

Kolomitro (2017) depicted curriculum was derived from one of four different frameworks: (1) humanistic, (2) social reconstruction (3) systemic, or (4) academic. Kolomitro also described the curriculum design and purpose varied in each framework. For example, the humanistic framework was designed to support students with self-directed learning, and the role of the educator was to facilitate learning. Moreover, the

role of the humanistic curriculum was to provide students with opportunities to become autonomous learners through intrinsically rewarding experiences. The social constructivist curriculum included a framework, which supported educators and students as partners in curriculum development. Accordingly, the social constructivist framework supported opportunities for collaboration with the community to precipitate social reform (Kolomitro, 2017). In contrast to the humanistic and social constructivist frameworks, schools supported the systemic or academic model.

The systemic curriculum design included the implementation of goals and standards for effectiveness monitoring, which were measured by outcome-based programs (Kolomitro, 2017). The purpose of this curricular framework was to align goals, standards, and instructional materials with assessments. Both outcome-based programs and assessments were used to measure curricular effectiveness. Further, the academic curriculum design provided an emphasized focus on pedagogy. Kolomitro (2017) reported this curricular framework included opportunities for cross-curricular pedagogical practices. Educators provided students with opportunities to learn the meaning of knowledge through research and inquiry-based learning activities. The researcher discovered educators shifted between the four curricular frameworks depending on their epistemology and content area of focus (Kolomitro, 2017).

As shown in Table 1, a study related to science education revealed educators' pedagogical practices did not easily change for renewed classroom behaviors on content knowledge and pedagogical practices. The sections epistemology in ELA and PCK from Figure 1 in Chapter I connects to this finding and links to this research study by examining educators' pedagogies during ELA instruction. Bahcivan and Cobern (2016)

perceived educators' pedagogical practices in science were not affected by educators' PCK and epistemological beliefs about science education despite a strong sense of self-construal. Behrmann and Souvignier (2013) recognized that educators' pedagogical content beliefs about reading instruction affected students' reading performances. With students' success connected to educators' beliefs about pedagogical practices, a deeper understanding of educators' beliefs and pedagogical practices about how students learn and develop reading and writing skills required additional research.

Literacy Instruction

Kelcey and Carlisle (2013) attributed insufficient school readiness skills to differences in students' socioeconomic backgrounds and literacy instruction. Kelcey and Carlisle also examined educators' reading instruction and the most effective literacy practices connected to student achievement. They described educators' discourse during literacy instruction and how they showed or represented ideas to assist students contributed to better reading and writing skills. In the study, three instructional actions were prevalent for effective literacy instruction and achievement: (1) organization of instruction, (2) delivery of literacy content, and (3) support of student engagement (Kelcey & Carlisle, 2013).

Kelcey and Carlisle (2013) detailed the organization of instruction included educators' pedagogical practices associated with the communication of instructional tasks and a defined purpose of learning presented to students in organized processes. For example, educators explained the intent and value of the lesson to students and implemented a wrap-up summary as a culminating activity of learning. Kelcey and Carlisle noted during the delivery of literacy content, educators identified the best

instructional practices for student learning and the retention of literacy content. This instructional action included modeling and coaching. The researcher added educators used questions to monitor or facilitate students' learning. Altogether, educators' support of student learning included discourse with students grounded in feedback, assessments of students' work, and students' opportunities to ask questions. These three instructional actions supported students' CLS attainment during literacy instruction (Kelcey & Carlisle, 2013). The connectivity of learning to support reading and writing instruction was necessary to assist in the development of CLS. Nevertheless, educators' abilities to provide comprehensive instructional support should be contemplated during instructional planning.

The considered need for educators to present quality instruction required the revamping of instructional planning for general and special educators (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp 2012). Fisher et al. (2012) represented adequate planning provided opportunities for educators to develop effective questioning for improved literacy learning. They determined effective questioning techniques supported opportunities for students to participate in collaborative conversations and supported writing activities (Fisher et al., 2012). Students' collaborations promoted student engagement. In connection, Kelcey and Carlisle (2013) referenced the importance of utilizing student engagement for effective literacy instruction. Furthermore, the use of collaborative pedagogical practices provided opportunities for student literacy development and student engagement.

Cooper (2014) observed connective instruction, academic rigor, and lively teaching facilitated student engagement. Cooper also identified connective instruction linked students' experiences to classroom instruction. The study showed academic rigor

included the demonstration of students' high levels of cognition and focus facilitated by educators' presentation of content. Lively teaching represented the active participation of educators in the delivery of instruction. Consequently, different factors were found to influence student engagement within classrooms. For example, students who were emotionally engaged did not demonstrate learning without rigorous instruction. Educators' demonstration of academic rigor and lively teaching were aligned with their decision-making about classroom management. The researcher concluded educators' use of pedagogical practices, which included opportunities for student identity and culturally relevant practices, was needed to support the learning of diverse students (Cooper, 2014). As a result, educators should consider how students learn when planning quality instruction.

The use of brain-based instructional strategies was identified to improve literacy instruction (Wilson, 2012). Students who were taught how to visualize texts used the strategy to reinforce meaning and recall (Wilson, 2012). Wilson (2012) presented students' imaginations were not automatically activated during reading. Hence, they required support with this strategy. Wilson also explained educators modeled and facilitated students' production of mental imagery through explicit instruction, classroom discussions, and opportunities for the assimilation of information. As a result, students were able to demonstrate the use of imagery during reading and reported improved comprehension and recall of texts (Wilson, 2012).

Kieffer, Vukovic, and Berry (2013) established attention shifting and inhibitory control on reading comprehension among fourth-grade students supported their reading performance. Kieffer et al. also identified students' working memory assisted them with

retaining initial phonemes as they sounded out words and assimilated word meanings within sentences for understanding. Specifically, attention shifting, directly and indirectly, affected reading and language comprehension. Educators' abilities to support students with inhibitory control required them to learn and implement new instructional strategies while yielding former reading practices (Kieffer et al., 2013).

Kieffer et al. (2013) and Stipek and Valentino (2014) unveiled working memory and attention shifting were foundational concepts of learning and projected future literacy development. The willingness of educators to acquire new pedagogical practices presented opportunities for them to provide an explicit focus on improving students' reading performances (Kieffer et al., 2013). The demonstrated achievement of students' reading performances contributed to educators' enactive attainment and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Hastings, 2012).

Differentiated Instruction

Dixon, Yssel, McConnell, and Hardin (2014) ascertained differentiated instruction provided students with different ways to acquire content. The researcher indicated the implementation of differentiated instructional practices allowed students to interpret content, processes, and products associated with learning differently (Dixon et al., 2014). Lehman (2017) indicated differentiated pedagogical practices were necessary to provide students with varied approaches to learning.

Stavrou and Koutselini (2016) determined educators' abilities to differentiate instruction required them to review their pedagogical practices through self-reflection and collaboration with colleagues. Stavrou and Koutselini (2016) learned differentiation required educators to deconstruct the curriculum according to students' needs. Tomlinson

and Moon (2013) provided differentiated instruction provided all students with an optimal learning experience. Andrus, Jacobs, and Kuriloff (2018) recommended educators provide opportunities for all students to participate in learning.

Tobin and Tippett (2014) ascertained students who were provided opportunities for differentiated learning in science classes were more engaged and motivated to learn. Tobin and Tippett also disclosed science educators identified the inclusion of differentiated instruction into science lessons supported a more practical framework for presenting science content. The researcher found the inclusion of differentiated instructional practices benefited all students in the science class (Tobin & Tippett, 2014).

The PCK of educators was demonstrated through their use of differentiated learning opportunities for students. Students' accessibilities to rigorous content, multicultural education, and educational multimedia all provided a medium for educators to demonstrate variation in their pedagogical practices to support the development of reading and writing skills among students from diverse backgrounds. Dixon et al. (2014) and Lehman (2017) revealed differentiation required educators to think creatively about curricular standards while considering the backgrounds of their students.

Educational strategies for improved learning opportunities included reformed pedagogical practices. Andrus et al. (2018) indicated all students benefited from responsive educators as well as opportunities for active and collaborative learning. Jensen (2011) found students' buy-in and multiple opportunities for varied study impacted student learning. Conversely, Apfelbaum et al. (2012) described multiculturalism and the biases of educators impacted the interconnected relationships between educators and

students associated with learning. Dixon et al. (2014) considered students required variations in instruction for the development of learning.

Aronson and Laughter (2016) revealed educators' use of pedagogical practices, which included the implementation of culturally relevant education, was connected to the academic development of students across different content areas. Paris (2012) informed the pedagogical practices of educators, who provided culturally relevant content, exceeded general assumptions about epistemologies in education and included language, literacy, and cultural activities.

Lozenski (2012) stated culturally relevant teaching was essential to the social integration of minority students. Lozenski also conferred educators should use social consciousness for the inclusion of all students. The researcher proposed social conscious curricular practices included instruction with social, political, and economic content (Lozenski, 2012). The requirement for students to demonstrate competencies related to curricular, cultural, and social matters was aligned with educators' use of culturally relevant pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Lozenski (2012) presented multicultural education included the recognition of students' experiences and differences. Lozenski referenced changes in the curriculum included an awareness of students' cultures and the inclusion of authentic instruction based on their personal experiences. However, the researcher observed preparations for the implementation of culturally relevant pedagogies encompassed educator training, curriculum revisions, and the identification of sustainable pedagogical practices (Lozenski, 2012). The examination of diversity within multicultural education includes the observations of differences represented among students. Some differences may be

related to students' backgrounds, gender, ethnicities, or language preferences (Lozenski, 2012; Andrus et al., 2018; Kimathi & Bertman, 2019).

Gee (2013) found educational multimedia improved educators' instructional practices and supported students' learning through innovative and interactive opportunities for learning. Gee also originated technology did not denote the only medium for educational multimedia. Education multimedia for literacy education included the incorporation of any medium for teaching and learning. The researcher showed how the use of different mediums and media was critical to students' independent and collaborative learning experiences. Primarily, students' modes of learning were not developed independently. Students developed through their personal experiences and experiences shared with others (Gee, 2013).

Gee (2013) observed students who were unable to associate experiences with new texts lacked comprehension. Gee noticed students needed opportunities to understand texts, learn new things, and improve present learning experiences. The researcher revealed students demonstrated difficulties with learning facts when the information was not backed with previous experiences or supported through an opportunity to acquire a new learning experience (Gee, 2013). Snow and Matthews (2016) indicated the same difficulties associated with students who lacked unconstrained skills when learning how to read. Gee (2013) detected students' interest in technology, specifically gaming, served a copious need. Gaming provided students with continuous feedback and developed their metacognition and inquiry for improved math and literacy skills through collaborative technological uses (Gee, 2013).

Northrop and Killeen (2013) discovered technology use increased student motivation and instructional practices during a phonics lesson. Northrop and Killeen also identified educators used technology as an extension to explicit and direct instruction. They explained educators utilized iPads during literacy instruction and neglected usage during direct or exact instruction. Educators executed four practices when using iPads: (1) they presented literacy content without the use of iPads; (2) technology was used as a part of a think-aloud presentation with the educator modeling a predetermined app; (3) educators applied guided practice with students as they enacted the app, and (4) students used the app for independent practice and application of learning. Educators endorsed literacy learning with the use of iPads beyond the classroom. For extended learning, educators communicated with parents for continued phonics instruction at home. The totality of technology use inside and outside of school supported literacy instruction (Northrop & Killeen, 2013).

Lindeman and Anderson (2015) revealed early childhood educators used structural play to incorporate literacy standards and science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) education into early childhood classrooms. Lindeman and Anderson observed students used design technology as they built block towers, which supported inquiry. For example, when a student was unable to construct a secure structure, they used problem-solving and critical thinking skills to redesign their creation. Educators photographed students' designs with cameras and smartphones to facilitate learning. Furthermore, educators incorporated texts into students' learning to support their contextual knowledge. The study revealed students improved their language and literacy skills as they participated in collaboration, project designs, and writing

opportunities with their peers. These collaborative and communicative interactions among students enabled openings for language development in settings established by students and encompassed with experiences of their interests (Lindeman & Anderson, 2015).

Lenters and Winters (2013) showed ELL improved communication and literacy skills through the study of fairy tales. Students used printed and digital texts as they analyzed fairy tales for storytelling (Lenters & Winters, 2013). Educators observed the use of art and digital media increased students' creativity in literacy (Lenters & Winters, 2013). Lenters and Winters (2013) ascertained educators facilitated students' learning though literacy instruction and collaboration. Students' participation in collaboration and writing instruction improved their literacy skills as they studied fairy tales (Lenters & Winters, 2013).

During literacy instruction, students were immersed in an environment with multiple resources, collaboration, peer, and professional modeling (Lenters & Winters, 2013). Lenters and Winters (2013) noted students were exposed to nonlinear texts, which increased their abilities to communicate through gestures, images, and sound. The study indicated students combined these nuances and created fractured fairy tales in ELA classes for the betterment of their communication and literacy skills (Lenters & Winters, 2013). Seemingly, educators used an early childhood folklore genre for literacy acquisition among fifth-grade students.

Lenters and Winters (2013) reported educators collaborated with professionals from an acting company. In turn, actors supported students as they developed fractured fairy tales. Lenters and Winters also acknowledged students participated in detailed

processes as they generated their plays. Educators implemented eight requirements when requiring students to develop their fractured fairy tales: (1) students studied traditional fairy tales; (2) students collected versions of the fairy tales from families or cultural groups; (3) students compared fairy tales and identified similarities; (4) students were assigned a fairy tale; (5) students identified fractured fairy tales through text and video on their assigned topic; (6) students identified similarities between the traditional and fractured fairy tale; (7) students generated their fractured fairy, and (8) students recorded their fairy tale and received feedback from members of the acting company, peers, and educator for suggested improvements. Accordingly, students implemented changes and continued to edit their production, which provided authentic opportunities for the application of language and literacy skills. Students implemented language and literacy skills as they used writing webs to compare their fractured fairy tales to a traditional fairy tale. Upon completion of the revisions, the educator recorded and shared students' performances with participants from the acting company. The actors reviewed students' performances via VoiceThread videos and provided feedback to students as they refined their production for the final performance. The study concluded that students demonstrated improvements in their communication and literacy skills after the completion of the assignment (Lenters & Winters, 2013).

Title I Schools and ELA

Members of local education agencies and schools with high numbers of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds receive financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Education to support the academic achievement of disadvantaged students (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Policymakers have attempted to generate

education policies to reduce the achievement gaps between students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and their peers. ESEA (1958) initially provided Title I funds. Funds were designed to provide local education agencies with additional monies for the increased support of low-performing students (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Additional funding provided an increase in educational resources associated with core content areas to assist low-performing students with meeting state academic standards (U. S. Department of Education, 2018). However, as shown in Table 1, inequity in funding for Title I schools has contributed to concerns on the qualities of educators and educational resources (Rodas & Elizabeth, 2019).

Darling-Hammond (2013) indicated the effect on student learning was contributed by inadequacies in funding for education. Likewise, Darling-Hammond also presented more funds were provided for students from affluent communities compared to low-income communities. In comparison to other countries (Finland, South Korea, and Singapore), the United States neglected factors used by these countries for the success of their educational systems. These countries incorporated six factors for success: (1) all schools received equitable funding; (2) educators received equitable and competitive salaries in comparison to other careers; (3) educators used a rigorous academic curriculum to educate students; (4) assessments were no longer used to track students for assignment to middle schools and restricted access to high schools; (5) educator preparation programs were improved for the recruitment of the most competent pre-service educators, and (6) educators were encouraged to participate in ongoing professional learning through educator mentorship and collaborative planning after

employment. These factors contributed to the development of quality education programs for improved teaching and learning of all students (Darling-Hammond, 2013).

A report provided by the U.S. Department of Education (2011) found more than 40% of Title I schools were not equitably funded through state and local education agencies. A study by Rodas and Elizabeth (2019), as shown in Table 1, discovered Title I schools in New York were provided with less equipped educators than non-Title I schools. The inadequacies in educators' preparedness potentially affected the quality of education provided to students in Title I schools (Rodas & Elizabeth, 2019). Therefore, educators selected for this research study possessed an undergraduate degree in education and secured at least three years of experience.

Mayer, Wiley, Wiley, Dees, and Raiford (2016) discovered students who attended Title I schools in Georgia were identified as meeting state content standards on Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) in the areas of reading and math. Mayer et al. also specified students who attended Title I schools performed higher than students who did not attend Title I schools in the areas of reading and math for the CRCT. In contrast, the study showed students in Title I schools demonstrated a lower percentage of students exceeded the math and reading state standards on the CRCT. Subsequently, the study determined Title I was not the only indicator of student achievement (Mayer et al., 2016).

Mayer et al. (2016) considered educational stakeholders' decisions about Title I funds related to the purchase of curriculum was connected to the most positive difference in student achievement. Educational stakeholders' decisions about the allocation of resources for Title I funds differed. Some school districts distributed funds on extra instruction for reading and math while other districts attempted to improve educators'

pedagogical practices with professional learning (NCLB, 2001; U. S. Department of Education, 2018). There was one commonality among schools that did not differ. Schools that received Title I funds were identified as high-poverty schools (U. S. Department of Education, 2011).

Socioeconomic Status and Literacy

According to the Center for Public Education (2015), students of color who were at risk and from low socioeconomic backgrounds, experienced more reading difficulties in school compared to students from higher income families. The Center for Public Education also reported students who did not master reading by the end of third grade experienced a lack of success throughout their education and beyond. The differences among students' learning performances contributed to a deficit between socioeconomic groups through their adult years (Center for Public Education, 2015). Hence, the achievement gap widened between students from lower income compared to higher income families. Education policies, educators' content knowledge, and low socioeconomic status foreshadowed the potential successes of students relevant to CLS development.

Reardon, Valentino, and Sores (2012) introduced the difference in literacy skills among students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and their peers began in elementary school. Reardon et al. also presented third grade students demonstrated basic word-reading skills with the inclusion of decoding and letter-sound awareness. Conversely, they noted students lacked knowledge-based competencies, which comprised vocabulary and background knowledge for reading comprehension and advanced literacy skills. Students' lack of knowledge-based competencies impacted reading development

during early years and contributed to literacy gaps through high school. Black and Hispanic students, with average literacy skills, entered high school three years behind White and Asian students. On the contrary, low-income students, with average literacy skills, entered high school five years behind their peers (Reardon et al., 2012). Despite the literacy deficiencies within minority groups, the inadequacies were not maintained within all subgroups.

The basic proficiencies assessed on standardized assessments comprised CLS, which include reading and writing. The lack of assessments on advanced skills prior to testing in accountability grades contributed to a lack of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds being identified for gifted programs (Burney & Beilke, 2008). Poverty was identified as a factor that contributed to inequities in students' educational resources and academic performances (Burney & Beilke, 2008). However, poverty was not the only factor affecting students' abilities to be recognized for academic success. Dover (2013) determined educators lack of culturally relevant pedagogies also affected students' abilities to receive an equitable education.

The Casey Foundation (2013) reported students from low socioeconomic backgrounds entered school with inadequate school readiness skills and performed lower than their peers. Heckman (2011) perceived education policies in support of early childhood education programs provided opportunities for educational equity and economic efficiency in the future. Heckman (2011) also proposed students who were afforded the opportunity to receive an early education projected improved productivity in the future. Educational stakeholders rendered opportunities for investments in human

capital were important for students from disadvantaged communities to reduce negative social and economic outcomes (Casey Foundation, 2013).

As shown in Table 1, Doyle et al., (2012) examined the relationships between school readiness skills and low socioeconomic status. Doyle et al. resolved parental education and students' communities impacted students' school readiness. The study also showed children of parents with minimum education exhibited lower social competencies and numeracy skills, a component of language and cognitive development, compared to peers whose parents were more educated. Students whose parents had minimum education and dwelled in disadvantaged communities lacked school readiness skills and required interventions upon the entrance of school (Doyle et al., 2012). Correspondingly, this study gathers data on educators' beliefs about how students learn CLS.

A lack of school readiness skills contributed to students' literacy deficiencies during the early years. Moreover, skill deficits in the performances of students during early education were recognized in latter grades. Students' lack of school readiness and literacy development were associated with parental education and living communities. Comparatively, Magnuson and Schindler (2016) and Cherng (2017) contributed to educators' beliefs about students' academic success from disadvantaged backgrounds and early elementary programs influenced students' literacy development and learning.

Early Childhood Education of ELA

The Harvard Family Research Project (2014) reported students learned beyond home and school during early childhood and elementary grades. The Harvard Research Project also discovered students' academic achievement was connected to early learning experiences encountered at home and in the community. The organization noted students'

learning was further influenced by community-based organizations Additionally, families' involvement in community organizations and schools contributed to students' academic achievement. The associations between home, school, and community organizations optimized students' learning through residual opportunities for cyclical learning and resources for sustained learning inside and outside of school (Harvard Family Research Project, 2014).

Yoshikawa et al. (2016) outlined there were three reasons to invest in early childhood programs: (1) education gaps among socioeconomic classes, (2) increased maternal employment, and (3) young children's brain development during the early years. Yoshikawa et al. described students who attended preschool exhibited increased language, literacy, and math skills as well as reduced aggressive behaviors compared to peers who did not attend preschool. The study also revealed students' cognitive and social benefits equalized to peers who did not attend early childhood programs. Students' educational benefits were affected by a lack of continuity in instruction following students' transitions into elementary programs. The lack of an aligned curriculum between early childhood and elementary grades impacted students' social and educational benefits (Yoshikawa et al., 2016).

McAlister (2013) detected schools that served communities comprised of minority families, particularly of color and low socioeconomic backgrounds, received less parental involvement within the community. McAlister also asserted a lack of community involvement impacted students' achievement. Consequently, students' literacy development was facilitated through their environment and community interactions. The researcher informed students' learning was reinforced through parental

support of learning, community and environmental factors, and students' access to early childhood education programs (McAlister, 2013).

Skibbe et al. (2013) determined parental support benefited students' language and literacy skills. Skibbe et al. evaluated parent's implementation of three types of writing support: (1) graphophonemic, (2) print, and (3) precision. The evaluation of parental support and students' development of writing were connected to decoding skills and phonological awareness (Skibbe et al, 2013).

Parents provided graphophonemic support by analyzing segmented words, matching corresponding letters with sounds, and formulating words (Skibbe et al., 2013). In contrast, some parents provided print support through handwriting. Parents reinforced word spelling and directed students during print support as they transcribed letters on a page (Skibbe et al., 2013). The instructions provided through graphophonemic and print support enabled students' literacy development. Puranik and Lonigan (2012) discovered young students' emergent literacy skills are predictors of future writing skills.

In most cases, educators connect writing activities to students' interests and instructional purposes (Dennis & Votteler 2013). Skibbe et al. (2013) determined that parents who encouraged precision writing encompassed graphophonemic and print supports. Students' writing support was structured with immediate feedback for writing mistakes (Skibbe et al., 2013). Feedback and explicit instruction supported students' writing development. Researchers revealed students benefited from explicit instruction and visual media during writing development (Neumann, Hood, & Ford, 2013; Hall, Simpson, Guo, & Wang, 2015).

Pianta, Downer, and Hamre (2016) examined quality early childhood education programs. Pianta et al. indicated quality early childhood programs possessed four components: (1) structural elements, (2) classroom environments, (3) teacher and student interactions, and (4) quality ratings assigned to programs. For connectivity to this research study, I summarized the article related to classroom environments and teacher and student interactions.

The classroom environment included a traditional analysis of classrooms and playground equipment and related activities among educators, students, and parents (Pianta et al., 2016). The evaluation of the classroom environment preluded observed interactions between educators and students. The examination of classroom environments are critical as research suggests that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds possess strained relationships with their teachers (Varga, 2017). The relationship between educators and students is valuable. The study showed students, prekindergarten through third grade, benefited from educators attentive to their individual needs, provided positive feedback, and supported language and cognitive development (Pianta et al., 2016). Reis da Luz (2015) disclosed personal connections between students and their teacher increases students' intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation may support students' attainment of academic goals.

Reutzel (2015) resolved an immersion approach to teaching concepts about print (CAP) in early childhood education classrooms improved students' early literacy skills. Reutzel also discovered students' reading readiness and word reading test scores improved through immersion practices. The researcher identified educators' incorporated CAP during shared reading and assisted students' understanding of new vocabulary.

Educators utilized modeling and active learning during their instructional processes. Active learning opportunities encompassed educators and students reading texts aloud and identifying punctuation marks for text through sound and specified hand motions. Educators used variations in instructional practices to sustain students' learning. The use of active learning through varied instructional practices and opportunities for remediation improved students' literacy skills (Reutzel, 2015).

Researchers Hamre et al. (2012) and Pianta et al. (2016) found authentic interactions between educators and students impacted students' literacy development. The interactions between educator and students, coupled with effective literacy instruction, improved students' language and literacy skills. Waldfogel (2012) and Yoshikawa et al. (2016) determined students' access to quality early childhood education programs impacted their acquisition and attainment of language and literacy skills. Furthermore, students' participation in quality early education programs improved their school readiness skills (Pianta et al., 2016). These benefits were reported in programs with high-quality language and literacy instruction. As shown in Table 1, researchers' study of effective reading instruction has led the focus of research and policy in the United States for the past two decades (Begeny et al., 2012). The precept to investigate reading instruction hastened my research of educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices related to CLS development.

CLS in Elementary Schools

The revised reading and writing content standards provided an all-inclusive or comprehensive plan for providing literacy instruction and included grades preschool through 12 (ESSA, 2015b). ESSA (2015b) indicated literacy instruction should include a

comprehensive approach for teaching reading and writing. Policymakers recognized skills students should develop during comprehensive literacy instruction, which included "phonological awareness, phonic decoding, vocabulary, language structure, reading fluency, and reading comprehension [that] includes age-appropriate, explicit instruction in writing…" (ESSA, 2015b, p. 1936).

Murnane et al. (2012) discovered literacy development was an important subject for educational stakeholders. Murnane et al. also considered the importance of literacy development precipitated the need for the inclusion of reading instruction and students' reading proficiencies in the development of education policies. They reasoned students' literacy challenges generated concerns regarding educators' abilities to prepare students for competition in a global world. Educational stakeholders understood the importance of advanced literacy skills. The possession of advanced literacy skills required to demonstrate their abilities to read and synthesize information from multiple sources for new learning. Educational stakeholders sought to improve the attainment of these skills and literacy rates through enhanced school programs and education policies (Murnane et al., 2012).

According to Begeny et al. (2012), educators' research of literacy education facilitated change in curriculum standards and propelled the adoption of new education policies. New ELA standards promoted critical thinking across content areas and enhanced students' content knowledge as they used multiple texts for content and inquiry (Wixson & Lipson, 2012). Educators' instructional practices changed to include questioning for students to draw conclusions and construct their own knowledge

(McMillan & O'Neil, 2012). Students' abilities to draw conclusions and construct their own knowledge was connected to comprehension.

Snow and Matthews (2016) recognized reading comprehension beyond third grade was critical for students' understanding of new words and the assimilation of new information during learning. Snow and Matthews submitted students' literacy skills for reading and reading comprehension were comprised into two categories: (1) constrained and (2) unconstrained skills. The researcher established that constrained skills were restricted to predetermined measures associated with early literacy skills. In contrast, unconstrained skills were acquired through multiple contexts and supported by students' vocabulary and background knowledge. For instance, constrained skills included students' ability to recognize letters, write their names, read environmental print, and successfully handle a book. Students' attainment of constrained skills enabled them to read most words with accuracy and automaticity.

On the other hand, students demonstrated unconstrained skills through vocabulary, grammar, and discourse skills. The use of vocabulary and background knowledge was essential to students' abilities to exhibit critical analysis during reading and comprehending texts. Subsequently, constrained and unconstrained skills were acquired through students' personal and contextual experiences (Snow & Matthews, 2016).

Many culturally relevant pedagogies can be used to support CLS in elementary classrooms. Seven culturally relevant pedagogies were identified to examine educators' pedagogical practices of CLS development. The seven concepts include instructional practices for all learners: (1) recognize students by name as they enter the class, (2)

arrange the classroom for collaborative discussions, (3) utilize visual aids and props to support literacy instruction, (4) implement the usage of graphic organizers during literacy instruction, (5) regularly monitor students' understanding of processes, content, and products through differentiated instruction, (6) assess students' prior knowledge by incorporating a student-centered approach to instruction, and (7) connect learning to students' real-life experiences (Krasnoff, 2016). An educator's use of these pedagogical practices in different content areas supports culturally relevant pedagogies. Furthermore, an educator's use of inclusive pedagogies through a student-centered approach to instruction facilitates authentic learning experiences.

The literacy development of students was affected by their socioeconomic status and literacy instruction. A reformed curriculum encompassed differentiated learning opportunities connected to students' cultures and personal experiences, which supported culturally relevant pedagogies (Krasnoff, 2016). Educational stakeholders' continued considerations for implementing culturally relevant pedagogical practices may be connected to reformations in education preparation programs, professional learning activities, educators' epistemologies, and pedagogical practices.

Summary

Students' literacy achievement at the end of third grade was connected to their future school success (Center for Public Education, 2015). Education policies were developed to provide funding for early childhood programs and an increased focus on the literacy development of students from disadvantages backgrounds. Education policies also required changes to curricular standards and an increased examination of educators' pedagogical practices during ELA instruction. Researchers found students' literacy skills

increased with access to quality early childhood education programs, effective teacher and student discourse, and accessibility to educational resources.

Much of the empirical literature on literacy skills in early childhood and elementary grades included reading but not writing instruction. In addition, most of the literature indicated educators used a constructivist approach during reading instruction, while minimum research is provided on the use of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory to investigate literacy instruction. The lack of research on literacy instruction to include reading and writing supported the purpose of this research study. An examination included educators' implementation of comprehensive skills for literacy instruction, which includes reading and writing. The focus of this study was to examine educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices about CLS development within two Title I schools. The findings from this study added research related to epistemology and pedagogy. The inclusion of third grade ELA educators at Title I schools provides information related to pedagogical practices for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Furthermore, I examined the environmental setting of third grade ELA educators' classrooms through Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory. The study results conclude whether educators used a comprehensive approach to meet their students' epistemological needs during ELA instruction with the inclusion of culturally relevant pedagogies or if educators' pedagogical practices presented reading and writing instruction in isolation.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Reardon et al. (2012) identified literacy gaps across race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background. Moreover, insufficient school readiness skills and differences in literacy instruction were identifiable among races and ethnicities (Carlisle & Kelcey, 2013; Waldfogel, 2012). Cooper (2014) found students from disadvantaged backgrounds learned through social integration and benefited from learning activities that were connected to real-world experiences. These authentic learning experiences were supported through educators' usage of culturally relevant pedagogical practices, which included student-centered learning opportunities inclusive of students' cultural backgrounds and personal experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Samuels, 2018).

Researchers identified a cultural mismatch between educators and students in grades K-12 and higher education (McGrady & Reynolds, 2013; Harper, 2018). Furthermore, McGrady and Reynolds (2013) discovered a racial mismatch that affected educators' beliefs about students' achievement abilities and was potentially connected to an educator's racial bias. Wetzel et al. (2019) described the need for educators to reduce inequities in America's educational system, specifically literacy.

Veraksa, Shiyan, Shiyan, Pramling, and Pramling-Samuelsson (2016) found the communicative practices between students with their parents, educators, and peers were a contributing factor in the development of learning. Seemingly, literature related to the potential educational disadvantages and future inadequacies of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds was prevalent in examining educators' epistemologies and

pedagogies on CLS development. Knight (2013) highlighted disparities between students with minimum literacy skills and their peers who had average literacy skills.

Rochman (2017) noted students who could not perform foundational skills fluently exhibited difficulties when they were required to merge those skills for continued learning. Policymakers identified the need for systemic instruction in the areas of reading and writing. ESSA (2015b) documented comprehensive literacy instruction supported students' development of foundational literacy skills. ESSA also detailed an educators' use of developmentally appropriate practices facilitated students' development of literacy skills. Targeted instruction in both areas supported students' phonological awareness, decoding, vocabulary, language development, reading fluency, and comprehension. Further, the education policy specified educators were required to monitor students' progress to develop literacy skills and the potential need for adaptations in pedagogical practices (ESSA, 2015b).

Various factors affect students' literacy outcomes. Hastings (2012) discovered educators' positive self-efficacy impacted literacy instruction. Brown (2014) found quality literacy instruction was connected to students' language and literacy development. In comparison to ESSA (2015b), Andrus et al. (2018) recognized educational monitoring was necessary to analyze the relationships between educators and students beyond the curriculum. Andrus et al. (2018) perceived all students benefit from responsive educators and active and collaborative learning opportunities. Unfortunately, little is known about educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices on the development of literacy outcomes, specifically reading and writing.

The purpose of this qualitative intrinsic case study was to examine educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices during ELA instruction in six third grade classrooms. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological and ecological theories of human development were used to analyze educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices on CLS development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Data were collected in three phases. Figure 3 provides a display of the data collection process. In Phase I, data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded to identify themes and subthemes. In Phase II, data were collected through photographs with descriptive narratives. Participants provided a descriptive narrative by answering three prompts to accompany their photograph. In Phase III, data were collected through an open-ended questionnaire.

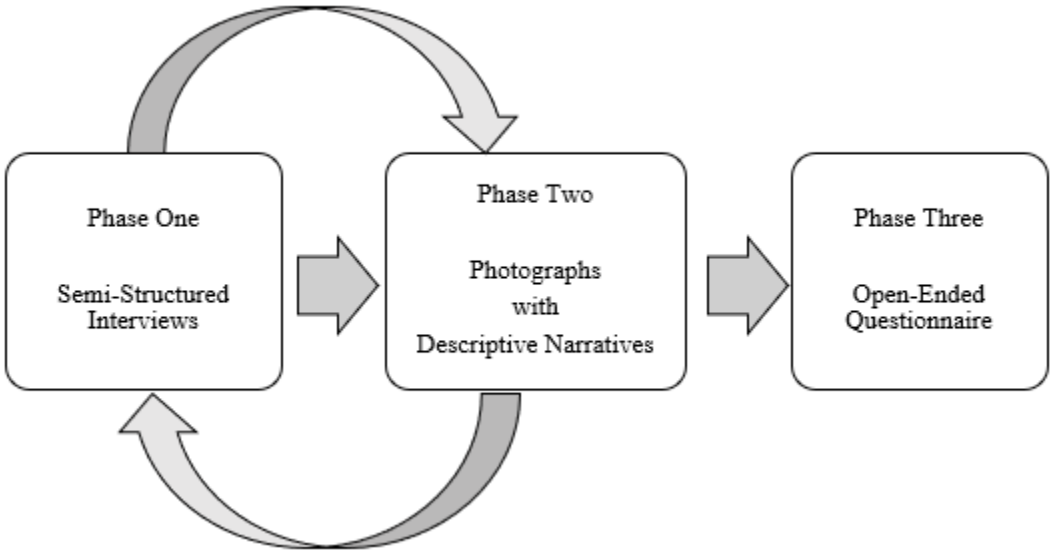

Figure 3. Display of data collection processes.

Participants' responses through semi-structured interviews were uploaded into NVivo and analyzed with inductive coding (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Blair (2015) acknowledged the use of inductive thinking during coding reflected a holistic

epistemology. I used axial coding to connect codes from the descriptive narratives submitted with each photograph to participants' semi-structured interviews. I proceeded with inductive coding for the analysis of the open-ended questionnaire. Conversely, deductive coding was applied to categorize codes from each phase of data collection to predetermined topics from Figure 1 in Chapter 1, which includes epistemology in ELA, PCK, and CLS (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). I grouped codes for the identification of new topics based on findings from this study.

The utilization of semi-structured interviews, photographs with descriptive narratives, and an open-ended questionnaire were employed to gather data about educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices related to CLS development. Educators' epistemologies and pedagogies were examined during ELA instruction. I allocated the identified data collection instruments to answer three research questions.

Research Questions

1. What are the epistemological beliefs of third grade educators in two Title I schools about how students learn CLS?
2. What are the pedagogical practices of third grade educators in two Title I schools as they develop students' CLS?
3. How do third grade educators believe they address the epistemological needs of students through their CLS pedagogical practices?

Research Design

The research design I employed was a qualitative intrinsic case study. Qualitative research allows researchers to explore and understand participants' perspectives in their natural setting (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research is used to gather specific

information through systemic processes (Aspers & Corte, 2019). I employed systemic processes through data collection to examine educators' epistemologies and pedagogies.

An intrinsic case study provides researchers with opportunities to better understand a research topic of interest (Stake, 1995). The topic identified by the researcher should be a topic that resonates with the researcher through generalizations about the topic and specificities associated with the study. Moreover, the purpose of an intrinsic case study is not to understand a construct, phenomenon, or problem but to know more about a topic of research (Stake, 1995). I chose an intrinsic case study to gather descriptive and detailed information from third grade ELA educators related to their epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices on CLS development in two Title I schools. Data were collected from participants by using three data collection tools: (1) semi-structured interviews, (2) photographs with descriptive narratives, and (3) an open-ended questionnaire.

An intrinsic case study provided me with descriptive and detailed information related to educators' epistemologies and pedagogical practices on CLS development. Moreover, a qualitative intrinsic case study supported further examination of educators' processes during ELA instruction (AERA, 2019). The potential outcomes of this study could improve educators' pedagogical practices for CLS development.

A case study supports a qualitative approach to developing and implementing a research study (Ellinger & McWhorter, 2016). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) identified qualitative studies allowed researchers to examine and draw meaning from participants' beliefs and practices. In this research study, I examined the beliefs and practices of third grade ELA educators on CLS development. A qualitative research design also contributes

to an increased understanding of literacy development and the inclusion or lack of culturally relevant pedagogical practices in ELA classrooms. According to Baškarada (2014), qualitative research supports evaluation and contributes to organizational learning. This research study examined educators' beliefs about how students learn to read and write through an inquiry into epistemology and pedagogy.

Hallberg (2013) discovered qualitative research was classified as descriptive or theory-generating. Hallberg also found qualitative research provided increased opportunities for the use of descriptions during the analysis of research. Moreover, qualitative research supported the obtainment of an in-depth understanding of participants and examined the processes of their daily lives (Hallberg, 2013). Bronfenbrenner's bioecological and ecologies theories of human development guided my research study. The inclusion of theory to guide this qualitative research study further supported utilizing an intrinsic case study.

Case studies support empirical inquiry in education research (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014). A case study allows a researcher to examine a topic of interest and obtain participants' perspectives (Yin, 2014). Mills, Durepos, and Wiebe (2010) presented that case studies were often used for educational design and supported knowledge transfer from generation to generation. Through this research, I obtained third grade ELA educators' perspectives on CLS development.

I chose an intrinsic case study, because it includes the primary exploration of my interests (Mills et al., 2010). My primary interest in exploration for this study is third grade ELA educators. This case connects to an interest to study ELA educators' pedagogical practices in Title I schools. The disparity in literacy performances between

minority students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and their peers corresponds with my underlining interests in epistemology, literacy instruction, and socioeconomic status (Doyle et al., 2012).

Trustworthiness

I established trustworthiness for this research study through assertions to ensure the credibility, confirmability, dependability, and reliability of the findings (Shenton, 2004). The utilization of three data collection tools (semi-structured interviews, photographs with descriptive narratives, and an open-ended questionnaire) supported the credibility through data triangulation. Moreover, established credibility also included the participation of educators from two sites. A college and I coded semi-structured interviews to determine inter-rater reliability. Establishing inter-rater reliability and the triangulation of data both contributed to confirmability.

Additionally, I provided specificities related to data collection and analysis to support dependability. I designed this study to examine third grade ELA educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices about how students learn and develop CLS. Shenton (2004) recommended six parameters for transferability. Within this chapter, I convey the six requirements (1) the location and number of participating school sites, (2) the requirements for participation in this research study, (3) the number of participants included in this research study, (4) the three data collection tools used for this research study, (5) the parameters and prompts used for each phase of data collection, and (6) the duration of time for phase of data collection.

Binding the Study

The case study was bound by definition and context (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Prior to data collection, the term CLS was defined based on descriptions provided in the education policy ESSA (ESSA, 2015b). I generated considerations for the context of the study with four components from the core of the theoretical framework: (1) third grade ELA educators, (2) literacy instruction, (3) classroom learning experiences, and (4) opportunities to apply learning. Defining the term CLS and framing the study around four core items contributed to the scope of the study (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Role of the Researcher

Qualitative research extends to constructivist learning and contains an understanding of knowledge supported through participatory interactions and social construction (Topolovčan, 2016). A researcher's role in a qualitative study is to support research participants in expressing their personal experiences and perspectives (Sutton & Austin, 2015). I gathered data through semi-structured interviews, photographs with descriptive narratives, and an open-ended questionnaire. My role in this qualitative study was to examine third grade educators' beliefs and practices in six ELA classrooms. I do not have a personal or professional relationship with any participants. However, I do have experience as an ELA educator. Potential biases were limited through the instrumentation of multiple data sources. Triangulation of data were used to support the corroboration of results (Almalki, 2016).

I related personal experiences as a former student of poverty and educator to decisions and practices implemented during classroom instruction. As a Title I school student, I experienced benefits from learning opportunities connected to my background

and personal experiences. I found the retention of content more difficult when I lacked background knowledge connected to the topic. As a result of the disconnect, I lacked enthusiasm for learning and often felt less prepared than my peers familiar with the topic.

As an educator in a Title I school, I demonstrated a commitment to provide support and authentic learning experiences to the students I served as much as possible. The development of connective learning began in the planning phase for classroom instruction. Additionally, I was interested in educational research. Therefore, I used content from research articles and professional learning to support the decisions I made in my classroom related to my beliefs and practices connected to student learning.

Five components were present in all lessons I planned and developed for students: (1) activating strategies, (2) warm-up activities, (3) academic vocabulary, (4) instructional procedures, and (5) culmination of learning. The benefits of these five components appended improved pedagogy and learning opportunities for all students. Activating strategies supported the assessment of students' background knowledge and sustained learning throughout the lesson (Jensen, 2011). Warm-up activities encouraged students' buy-in for learning (Jensen, 2011). Vocabulary aided students' comprehension (Snow & Matthews, 2016). Interchangeable instructional procedures required students' use of metacognitive strategies for improved thinking and learning autonomy (Rieser et al., 2016). Lesson closures supported the relevance of content and facilitated students' assimilation of knowledge (Ganske, 2017). In contrast, I observed my pedagogical practices differed from other educators within the same school. This observed difference ignited my interest in ELA educators' beliefs and pedagogical practices for students from disadvantaged backgrounds on CLS development.

Participants

Setting

The selected district has one primary school, three elementary schools, one intermediate school, one middle school, and one high school. Recruitment included third grade educators from elementary and intermediate schools. Educators from an intermediate school were appropriate as the U. S. Department of Education (2008) recognized intermediate schools as elementary schools, because they include upper elementary grades.

The distance between the two participating sites is approximately 16 miles. The sites are in two different cities, but they are a part of the same school district. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2021) lists Site I as located in the suburbs and Site II as rural. The student enrollment varies at both sites. For example, Site I has a student population of 369, and Site II is 409 (NCES, 2021). Moreover, both schools have a diverse student body. Table 2 shows the demographics of both sites.

Table 2

Demographics for Participating Sites

School Sites	American Indian	Asian	Native Hawaiian	Hispanic	African American	Caucasian	Two or More Races
Site I 369 students	0%	2%	1%	11%	44%	35%	7%
Site II 409 students	0%	1%	0%	6%	44%	45%	3%

The number of students in third grade varies at both sites. Site I has 131 third grade students, and Site II has 69 students (NCES, 2021). At Site I, approximately 55% of the students are males, and 45% are females. Males make up 56% of the enrollment at Site II, and females are 44%. In contrast to the student demographics, the educators at each site were not as diverse.

Site I employed six third grade educators. Five were females, and one educator was a male. Four, or 67%, were Caucasian. Two, or 13%, were African American. Site II employed three third grade educators. All three educators were females. Two, or 67%, were African American. One, or 13%, was Caucasian.

For this research study, third grade ELA educators in Title schools were preidentified to examine epistemology and pedagogy. Hence, I applied quota sampling for this research study (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). Sarstedt, Bengart, Shaltoni, and Lehman (2017) identified the need for quota sampling when the characteristics were preidentified for the sample representing the population. This sample's characteristics included third grade ELA educators with three or more years of experience who possess an undergraduate degree in education and teach in a self-contained classroom.

Population

This research study included participants from two Title I schools located in east Alabama. This sample population was adapted from a study conducted on preservice educators (Blatt & Patrick, 2014). In the study implemented by Blatt and Patrick (2014), two sites were selected for the research study to explore preservice educators' experiences in outdoor settings and their willingness to incorporate nature in learning.

Participants represented a quota sample. Three educators were recruited from each Title I school site to participate in the research study. There was a total of six participants. Six participants were selected to reduce the possibility of saturation (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Crouch and McKenzie (2006) proposed small sample sizes in a qualitative study provided opportunities for the researcher to build a rapport with

participants, which improves the details participants are willing to provide during data collection.

All participants had three or more years of teaching experience. Educators with three or more years of experience were included to support the consideration for teacher quality. Goe (2007) established a framework for teacher quality, including educators' qualifications, professional characteristics, and abilities to generate student outcomes. Participants were educators who meet the following criteria: (1) they taught third grade literacy instruction in a self-contained classroom at a Title I school; (2) they possessed three or more years of teaching experience, and (3) they retained an undergraduate certification in education. Educators with less than three years of teaching experience and who possessed an undergraduate degree in a field other than education were excluded from this research study. There were no other exclusion criteria.

The quota sample included six third grade educators. All participants were female educators, and they taught at a Title I school within a district located in east Alabama. Three educators were at Site I, and the three remaining educators were at Site II. Due to the Coronavirus, two of the six participants taught ELA instruction in a virtual environment. Therefore, one out of three educators at each site taught virtually.

Participants possessed an undergraduate degree in education and taught third grade ELA instruction in a self-contained classroom at a Title I school. Participants were tenured faculty members and included two Caucasian and four African American educators. As shown in Table 3, participants were assigned an identifier for this research study. The identifiers are based on Site numbers, and I used a code of A-C for each participant at each site. For example, Site 1A is the first participant at Site I. I also

collected participants' years of experience. Table 3 provides the participant identifier, race, and years of experience for each participant. Recruitment included a male educator, but he opted not to participate. Hence, all participants were female.

Table 3

Participant Identifier, Race, and Years of Experience

Participant Identifier	Race	Years of Experience
1A	African American	7 or more years of experience
1B	African American	7 or more years of experience
1C	Caucasian	3-6 years of experience
2A	African American	7 or more years of experience
2B	African American	7 or more years of experience
2C	Caucasian	7 or more years of experience

All final considerations for diversity were determined upon the identification of the voluntary participants for this research study. Out of the nine potential participants, six were selected to represent the quota sample. Participants represented included Caucasian and African American participants. Data were collected to examine six third grade ELA educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices on CLS development.

Procedures

I obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Following this, I contacted the school district in east-central Alabama to secure participation in this research study. Correspondence was emailed to the Superintendent in a qualitative study research proposal letter (Appendix A). The qualitative study research proposal letter (Appendix A) was needed to obtain permission from the school district to conduct research. The Superintendent requested a meeting to discuss the sample and processes for the research study. I met with the Superintendent a week after the letter was emailed. I

reviewed documents for recruitment and data collection. During the meeting, I shared the names of sites I aspired to use as Site I and Site II. The Superintendent provided an approval letter (Appendix P) permitting me to conduct research within the district. However, the Superintendent requested I host a meeting with principals at the identified sites to review recruitment and data collection documents.

A qualitative study introduction email (Appendix B) was sent to principals at the Title I elementary and intermediate schools within the school district to communicate awareness about this research study. I conducted a virtual meeting with each administrator. The meeting agenda was the same as the meeting I conducted with the Superintendent. Both principals agreed to participate in the research study. The principals granted permission to recruit participants at each school.

The recruitment of participants spanned five weeks. In week one, the qualitative study initial recruitment email (Appendix C) and qualitative study participation survey (Appendix D) were emailed to all prospective third grade ELA educators' school email addresses at the elementary and intermediate schools. The qualitative study participation survey (Appendix D) was used to ensure interested participants met this research study's participation criteria. A week passed without any responses. I followed up with the Superintendent and principal for each site. The Superintendent and principals encouraged me to resend the documents. The initial recruitment email (Appendix C) and participation survey (Appendix D) were resent during week two. Six educators volunteered to participate. All participants were qualified and met the criteria for participation in this study. Participants were selected based on the content provided on the qualitative study participation survey (Appendix D). If three applicants were not identified at the identified

sites, I would have implemented purposive sampling (Mack et al., 2005). Mack et al. (2005) described purposive sampling could be used in place of quota sampling when the number of participants is more of a target than a requirement for a research study. Purposive sampling was not needed.

In the third week, the six participants received three documents via email: (1) qualitative study participant email (Appendix E), (2) the semi-structured interview notification (Appendix F), and (3) CSU's web-based informed consent (Appendix O). Participants completed the documents before the start of the research study.

The introduction to qualitative study participant email (Appendix E) was sent to participants welcoming them to the research study. The semi-structured interview notification (Appendix F) allowed participants to document their preferences for the semi-structured interview. CSU's informed consent form (Appendix O) provided details related to seven areas: (1) purpose, (2) procedures, (3) possible risks, (4) potential benefits, (5) costs and compensation, (6) confidentiality, and (7) withdrawal from the research study. An email was sent to the participant confirming receipt of the document and acknowledging preferences selected for the scheduled semi-structured interview.

I sent the qualitative study follow-up email (Appendix G) in week four to confirm details related to Phase I of data collection. Participants received the final email correspondence in week five, the day before their scheduled semi-structured interview. The email included three attachments: (1) a duplicate copy of the qualitative study follow-up email (Appendix G), (2) semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix I), and (3) semi-structured interview prompts (Appendix J).

Instrumentation

The instruments used in this research study were semi-structured interviews, photographs with descriptive narratives, and an open-ended questionnaire. A review of the literature did not reveal an empirical study that included all three of the instruments in a research study examining epistemology and pedagogy. Some empirical studies included two of the three instruments (López, 2017; Miller & Lin, 2019). As a result, I created the instruments used during the different phases of data collection. As shown in Table 4, I included adaptations from various empirical studies to support the usage of semi-structured interviews, photographs with descriptive narratives, and an open-ended questionnaire to examine educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices on CLS development.

Table 4 represents data collection tools, empirical studies, and research questions identified for this research study. Table 4 details how each question prompt from semi-structured interviews, photographs with descriptive narratives, and the open-ended questionnaire are connected to empirical studies and linked to a research question. Researchers listed in the literature review column were selected, because they provided literary content related to one of these categories: (1) epistemology, (2) pedagogy, (3) or multiculturalism. The item of classification and review of literature columns in Table 4 connect to this research study, because they illustrate how I utilized the prompts and empirical studies to gather data for each research question.

Table 4

Items Analysis Chart for Data Collection Instruments

Semi-Structured Interviews		
Item Classification	**Empirical Studies Related to the Research Question/Data Collection Tool**	**Research Question**
How were you prepared to become a reading teacher?	Broman, 2018; Valtierra & Siegel, 2019	1
What are your beliefs about how students learn to read and write?	Maravilla & Gomez, 2015	1
How do you help students develop comprehensive literacy skills?	Maravilla & Gomez, 2015; McKenney & Bradley, 2016; Vaughn, 2018	1
What instructional strategies are used most often in your classroom to help all students learn comprehensive literacy skills?	Wilson, 2012; Kelcey & Carlisle, 2013; Maravilla & Gomez, 2015	1
How does professional learning support you with teaching comprehensive literacy skills?	Hamre et al., 2012; Hastings, 2012; Santos & Miguel, 2019	1
Photographs with Descriptive Narratives		
Item Classification	**Empirical Studies Related to the Research Question/Data Collection Tool**	**Research Question**
What happens during literacy instruction?	Guo et al., 2012; Kelcey & Carlisle, 2013	2
What is the educators' role during reading instruction?	Brownlee et al., 2012; Kelcey & Carlisle, 2013	2
How do you support differentiation during literacy instruction?	Dixon et l., 2014; Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Andrus et al., 2018	2
Open-Ended Questionnaire		
Item Classification	**Empirical Studies Related to the Research Question/Data Collection Tool**	**Research Question**
Tell me what you were not able to capture in the photograph related to instructional practices during ELA instruction.	Kelcey & Carlisle, 2013; Lenters & Winters, 2013	3
How do you ensure all students are successful with developing comprehensive literacy skills in your classroom?	Reardon et al., 2012; Krasnoff, 2016; Rodas & Elizabeth, 2019	3
How do you demonstrate your multicultural knowledge during ELA instruction?	Dover, 2013; Gay, 2013; Lehman, 2017	3
How do you support students' participation in multiculturalism during ELA instruction?	Neubert & Reich, 2006; Gay, 2013; Omer, 2016	3

As illustrated in Figure 3, there were three phases in the data collection process: (1) Phase I included semi-structured interviews; (2) Phase II included photographs with descriptive narratives, and (3) Phase III included an open-ended questionnaire. Data collection lasted four weeks. Factors arose that impacted the number of participants and necessitated modifications to a data collection tool. Details related to the modifications are included in the limitations of the study. Permission to modify the number of participants and the data collection tool were provided by CSU's IRB (Appendices Q & R). These changes did not impact the timeline, because they occurred before the beginning of data collection. Moser and Korstjens (2018) recommended data collection be implemented broadly during a research study and adapted throughout the data collection process. The four-week timeline included all three phases: (1) semi-structured interviews lasted two weeks; (2) photographs with descriptive narratives were collected for one week, and (3) the open-ended questionnaire lasted one week. Table 5 provides a review of the timeline with each data collection tool, location, number of participants, and data collection setting. All data collection phases were implemented consecutively and after the completion of the previous phase.

Table 5

Timeline for Qualitative Intrinsic Case Study

Data Collection Tool	**Location**	**Number of Participants**	**Timeline**	**Setting for Data Collection**
Semi-Structured Interviews	Sites I and II	Six third grade ELA educators	2 weeks	Virtual Connection
Photographs with Descriptive Narratives	Sites I and II	Six third grade ELA educators	1 week	Email
Open-Ended Questionnaire	Sites I and II	Six third grade ELA educators	1 week	Email

Participants at each site were assigned a site number and letter from the alphabet to maintain confidentiality and data organization during the data collection process. For example, participants at Site I were identified as Site I A, Site I B, or Site I C. Each participant was informed of their site number and letter in the introduction to qualitative study participant email (Appendix E).

Participants were provided with explicit details about the data collection process identified for each phase of this research study. Before each data collection phase, participants were provided with detailed information about the purpose of the data collection tool and procedural steps for completion of the specified data collection phase. Participants were informed of the measures to ensure confidentiality and anonymity during data collection. I present a more detailed description of instrumentation in the sections below for each data collection tool.

Phase I: Semi-Structured Interviews

Phase I was used to conduct semi-structured interviews. López (2017) discovered students acquired literacy and writing skills through embedded opportunities for learning. In the study conducted by López (2017), semi-structured interviews were used to explore children's beliefs about learning to read and write. Accordingly, I used five prompts during semi-structured interviews to explore third grade ELA educators' beliefs about reading and writing. Boudah (2011) supported the use of prompts by revealing educational research could develop from a practitioner's questions. I also used a review of the literature in Chapter II to generate prompts for the semi-structured interviews. Table 2 provides an inclusive list of empirical articles used to develop the prompts on

epistemology for research question one. Future references are made to Table 4 in the sections on photographs with descriptive narratives and the open-ended questionnaire.

Participants were interviewed separately at Site I. I interviewed participants at Site II after completing interviews at Site I. Semi-structured interviews at each site spanned for one week. The semi-structured interviews were recorded. I generated notes and used a cellular application, Otter, to transcribe the semi-structured interviews in real-time to assist with recalling information. A virtual connection (e. g. Zoom) was utilized for these semi-structured interviews, and the recorded interviews were transcribed in Otter.

Participants were provided the Zoom link the day before their scheduled meeting. I used four open-ended prompts (Appendix J) during semi-structured interviews to obtain in-depth information about third grade ELA educators' epistemological beliefs on CLS development. This form of data collection was selected, because semi-structured interviews presented participants' opportunities to provide impartial responses to open-ended questions (Creswell, 2012).

Phase II: Photographs with Descriptive Narratives

In Phase II, I used photo elicitation to examine third grade ELA educators' pedagogical practices on CLS development. Harper (1988) stated photographs are used in four ways for data collection: (1) empirical, (2) phenomenological, (3) reflexive, and (4) narrative. I employed photographs to gather reflexive data by allowing participants to provide a photograph of literacy instruction from their perspective (Pilcher, Martin, & Williams, 2015; Boucher, 2017). Moreover, the use of photographs supported a constructivist approach to research. Poveda, Matsumoto, Morgade, and Esperanza (2018)

recognized participants could share their point of view, biases, knowledge, and personal interpretations through photographs. The use of photographs supported my examination of educators' beliefs and provided participants with autonomy.

Poveda et al. (2018) determined photographs were easy to use in research, because they were flexible and adaptable. Photographs and photo elicitation have been used in many ways in research. Wilson (2017) conducted a research study to investigate the differences between wearable cameras and traditional cameras during research. In contrast, Miller and Lin (2019) used photo elicitation in research to document parents' perceptions of at-home learning for literacy development among children who attended early childhood care settings. Photo elicitation was also used by López (2017) to support semi-structured observations conducted in students' homes to compare participants' beliefs about reading and writing to their actual practices. Accordingly, the use of photo elicitation in this research study was adapted from the study on reading and writing conducted by López (2017) to compare educators' beliefs about CLS to their pedagogical practices.

Participants used one week to capture a photograph of whole or small groups of ELA instruction and to answer three prompts (Appendix K). As shown in Table 4, the three prompts for the photographs were generated from the review of the literature in Chapter II. Participants used Flickr to capture photographs and supported geotagging (Welsh, France, Whalley, & Park, 2012). In an adaptation of research conducted by Welsh et al. (2012) and Miller and Lin (2019), geotagging was used to increase the evaluation of systemic instructional practices. Geotagging supported the observation of ELA instruction for classroom settings inside and outside (Costello, 2012). Likewise,

participants included a photograph with a narrative for each question prompt to describe how the image answered each prompt. The use of a photograph with descriptive narratives was adapted from two research studies on photo elicitation (López 2017; Miller & Lin, 2016). Allowing participants to generate a photograph to represent pedagogy ensured meaningful and significant literacy instruction images (Wilson, 2017).

Phase III: Open-Ended Questionnaire

In Phase III, I utilized an open-ended questionnaire to gather data. The open-ended questionnaire included four prompts (Appendix M). This data collection tool was beneficial, because participants were not provided with predetermined responses (Allen, 2017). Participants were allowed to provide more personal responses compared to the use of closed questions (Allen, 2017).

Participants were allotted one week to complete the open-ended questionnaire (Appendix M). They provided a comprehensive response to their perceived abilities to meet students' epistemological needs for the acquisition of reading and writing skills (Allen, 2017). As referenced in the sections on semi-structured interviews and photographs with descriptive narratives, a review of the literature from Chapter II was used to generate prompts for the open-ended questionnaire. Above in Table 4, there is an inclusive list of empirical articles I used to develop the open-ended prompts on epistemology, pedagogy, and multiculturalism to answer research question three.

Data Collection

Data collection was used to link the research questions to the research conclusions (Baškarada, 2014). The data collection process extended to considerations on the reliability of a research study (Baškarada, 2014). The U.S. General Accounting Office

(1990) discovered the evaluation of case study data in compilation with data collection activities allows the researcher to modify the study design if needed. In connection, “failing to explore rival explanations, inconsistently applying analytic techniques, only using a subset of data, and inadequately relating findings across cases can lead to unjustified conclusions” (Baškarada, 2014, p. 14). Therefore, the connection between data collection and data analysis is inevitable. The misinterpretations of data collection can impact data analysis, including analyzing and categorizing data for empirical conclusions (Yin, 2009). The data collection process included semi-structured interviews, photographs with descriptive narratives, and an open-ended questionnaire.

I obtained permission from CSU's IRB to conduct the research study. An IRB informed consent document (Appendix O) provided information to participants related to the research study. Contents included in the informed consent document was synonymous with the information provided to participants in the qualitative study recognition email (Appendix F).

Research study participants were selected through recruitment within a school district located in east Alabama. Principals from the elementary and intermediate schools were identified through the school district's webpage. Principals received an introduction to the qualitative study email (Appendix B). The school district's webpage was also used to identify third grade ELA educators. All third grade ELA educators received the recruitment email (Appendix C) and participation survey (Appendix D). Prospective participants had one week to return the qualitative study participation survey via email. All correspondence sent via email was returned via email with an electronic receipt. If potential participants did not respond to the qualitative study participant survey, the

survey was resent to ensure six applicants were identified for participation in this research study.

Six participants were identified from the interested and qualified applicants to represent two groups of three applicants, with three or more years of teaching experience from Sites I and II. The names and locations of identified participants were recorded upon selection. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the data collection process, because participants at each site were assigned a participant identifier. An introduction to the qualitative study participant email (Appendix E) was sent to the selected applicants one week after the final submission of the qualitative study participation survey (Appendix D). This correspondence included a separate attachment with the semi-structured interview notification (Appendix F) and CSU's IRB informed consent form (Appendix O). Both documents included detailed guidelines for the research study and a projected timeline for data collection. All preliminary correspondence was disseminated and collected weekly.

The semi-structured interview notification email (Appendix F) confirmed recognition for selected participants in the research study. In addition, participants were able to document their preferred day of the week and time for their virtual meeting. The virtual connection was conducted through a Zoom meeting. At this time, participants were provided with the document to obtain informed consent (Appendix O). A week after the semi-structured interview notification was sent to educators and returned, participants were sent the qualitative study follow-up email (Appendix G) with a notice of receipt attached, which provided the setting, meeting date, and time for their semi-structured interview. If participants did not respond to the meeting date email within a week, I

would have resent the initial email. All participants responded and no follow-up or replacement emails (Appendix H) were disseminated.

During this research study, all instructions for the data collection process were secured off-site from the meeting locations and inaccessible to anyone not connected to the research study. Notes, audio recordings, and transcriptions of semi-structured interviews were saved and stored on a removable disk and computer hard drive. Each photograph with descriptions was sent to my email and stored in an album created for each participant. These contents were also stored on a hard drive. The open-ended questionnaires were submitted anonymously via email. Data collected from the open-ended questionnaires were saved and stored on a removable disk and hard drive. All data stored on a computer hard drive were password protected. I stored the removable disk in a locked file cabinet where only I had access. Participants were informed data from the research study will be eradicated one year after completing the case study. After data were collected, participants were emailed the qualitative study thank you email (Appendix N).

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews lasted 30 to 45 minutes, with the average being 30 minutes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in Phase I. I completed all interviews over the course of two weeks. The first three participants were interviewed at Site I. The last three participants were interviewed at Site II. Information provided on the semi-structured interview notification (Appendix F) was used to schedule the participants' preferred method for the meeting, location, and time.

A week before the scheduled semi-structured interview began, participants were emailed the qualitative study follow-up email (Appendix G) confirming the meeting date and time for the individual semi-structured interview. Upon receipt of the qualitative study follow-up email, participants were asked to send an email confirming the scheduled meeting. Participants received a reminder email the day before the scheduled semi-structured interview. The email contained three attachments: (1) a duplicate copy of the qualitative study follow-up email (Appendix G), (2) semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix I), and (3) semi-structured interview prompts (Appendix J).

DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) acknowledged semi-structured interviews are often used in qualitative research. Semi-structured interviews provide opportunities for researchers to explore participants' thoughts and feelings about an identified topic (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). In this research study, each semi-structured interview lasted at least 30 minutes. No interviews lasted longer than an hour. This time limit was maintained to prevent saturation (Guest et al., 2006). Before the interviews, I provided another copy of the qualitative study interview protocol (Appendix I) and the semi-structured interview prompts (Appendix J).

The qualitative study semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix I) provided participants with expectations for the interview. McNamara (1999) and Creswell (2012) generated expectations for interviews during research. The expectations for this research study were adapted from their literature. At the beginning of the meeting, each participant was allowed to review the protocol independently. I reviewed the protocol aloud and answered any pending questions posed by the participants if needed.

Five open-ended prompts (Appendix J) were used to gather in-depth information related to third grade ELA educators' epistemological beliefs on CLS development. I began with a personal introduction, and I allowed each participant to provide an introduction. Introductions were used to provide a level of comfort for participants before the interview. Participants' responses were recorded using an audio recorder and a cellular application, Otter, to transcribe the semi-structured interview. I took notes throughout the interview process to support the recall of information and the analysis of the transcription following the completion of interviews. Participants were provided an opening to pose questions about the qualitative study semi-structured interview protocol and data collection at the beginning of each interview.

Photographs with Descriptive Narratives

Photographs with descriptive narratives were used for data collection in Phase II and week three of the research study. The photographs were used to analyze third grade ELA educators' pedagogical practices for CLS development. Participants were provided the photograph prompts (Appendix K) via email, which included three prompts for participants to answer using a photograph and descriptive narratives. These documents were disseminated on the first day of the week for data collection. One week was allotted for participants to capture a photograph of whole or small groups during ELA instruction. The use of photographs was an adaptation from a previous study where parents used photo elicitation to document home-based activities used for literacy development (Miller & Lin, 2019).

The photograph prompts included directives for gathering and submitting data. A qualitative study photography checklist (Appendix L) was also provided to participants.

The checklist supplied participants with detailed directions for downloading and accessing the cellular application, Flickr, on their mobile device. Participants were allowed to use their mobile devices to save time during data collection (Bedhall-Hill, 2011).

Flickr was used to capture an image and record descriptive narratives in response to three prompts. Welsh et al. (2012) conducted a research study that allowed students to use Flickr to geotag landscape photographs in the research field. The qualitative study photography checklist was adapted from the research study on geotagging. In contrast to the study by Welsh et al. (2012), each participant in this research study used Flickr to geotag a photograph of ELA instruction. Descriptions related to the benefits of geotagging photographs are provided in Chapter III data analysis.

I emailed participants in the middle of the week to identify if they were making progress towards the submission of a photograph with descriptive narratives. If a participant was experiencing difficulties with the usage of Flickr, I provided support via email. Accordingly, the photograph was used to compare each participant's beliefs to their pedagogical practices. Further, information related to epistemological and pedagogical analysis through semi-structured interviews and photographs with descriptive narratives are reviewed in Chapter III data analysis.

Open-Ended Questionnaire

An open-ended questionnaire was utilized in Phase III and implemented during the fourth week of data collection. Questionnaires were selected, because they are objective (Govender, Mabuza, Ogunbanjo, & Mash, 2014). Participants were able to share their knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs through responses provided on the

questionnaire (Govender et al., 2014). For this research study, participants used an open-ended questionnaire to provide feedback on their perceived abilities to meet the epistemological needs of third grade students through their pedagogical practices. The data provided through the open-ended questionnaire supported the culmination of practices presented through semi-structured interviews and photographs with descriptive narratives.

The week following the data collection of photographs with descriptive narratives, participants were emailed the open-ended questionnaire on a Google Form. Data collection for the open-ended questionnaires lasted one week. The open-ended questionnaire prompts (Appendix M) included four questions. Participants used the open-ended questionnaire to provide feedback on their beliefs and practices connected to CLS and the implementation of culturally relevant pedagogies to meet the epistemological needs of students.

The Google Form was selected as the method for disseminating the open-ended questionnaire, because this method allows participants to provide anonymous responses. Moreover, the Google form provided easy access to data for the analysis and categorizing of participants' responses. In contrast to responses provided in Phases I and II, responses in Phase III were anonymous. Anonymous responses are required to support data analysis. More information related to the analysis and interpretation of data is included in Chapter III data analysis.

I provided follow-up with participants in the middle of the week to ensure they were able to access the Google Form. All participants were able to access the document. I viewed participants' responses at the end of the week. Five responses were collected at

the check point. All participants received a reminder email to submit their open-ended questionnaire to conclude data collection. The email was resent to all participants, because the submission of the open-ended questionnaire was anonymous. The remaining participant submitted their questionnaire on the corresponding day.

Data Analysis

Bazeley (2012) identified data analysis contributes to researchers' ontology and epistemology. For example, data analysis defines the way we view and understand the world (Bazeley, 2012). The data analysis of a research study can impact the research findings. As a result, researchers should maintain objectivity during data interpretation and analysis (Daniel, 2016). The analysis of qualitative data can be completed through various techniques. Dudovskiy (2016) discovered qualitative data analysis could be divided into five categories: (1) content analysis, (2) narrative analysis, (3) discourse analysis, (4) framework analysis, and (5) grounded theory. The data analysis identified for examining third grade ELA educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices on CLS development was content analysis.

Content analysis includes the process of categorizing verbal and behavioral data (Dudovskiy, 2016). Data were interpreted and analyzed through coding. Saldaña (2012) introduced a four-step process for coding: (1) begin with an open coding system to code text; (2) identify themes with similar codes; (3) group themes and subthemes into categories, and (4) identify connections between themes and subthemes to describe phenomena. Each one of these steps was used during data analysis for Phases I and III.

Semi-structured interviews, photographs with descriptive narratives, and the open-ended questionnaire supported the triangulation of data. The use of multiple data

sources is known as method triangulation (Polit & Beck, 2012). Figure 4 illustrates the data analysis process for analyzing semi-structured interviews, photographs with descriptive narratives, and the open-ended questionnaire. In an adaptation from the research study conducted by López (2017), data collected from semi-structured interviews were compared to descriptive narratives. I compared the data to examine third grade ELA educators' beliefs to their documented instructional practices. The interconnecting of codes from participants' responses in Phases I and II required axial coding (Dudovskiy, 2016). Data collected from the open-ended questionnaires were examined for similarities and differences among data collected through semi-structured interviews and descriptive narratives. The method of examining codes from all three data collection methods utilizes triangulation coding (Campbell, Goodman-Williams, Feeney, Fehler-Cabral, 2020).

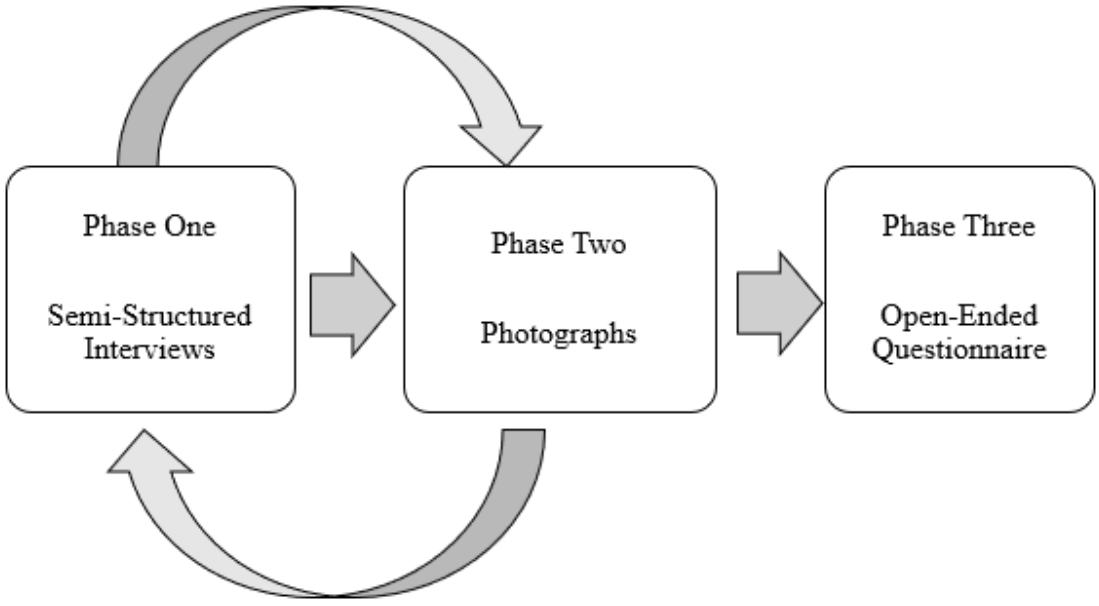

Figure 4. Illustration of data analysis and a comparison of participants' beliefs related to their pedagogical practices.

The triangulation of data in a qualitative study supports the validity of the research study through the convergence of multiple sources of data (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). Data collected through the data collection phases were transcribed and analyzed during data analysis. NVivo was used to analyze data from semi-structured interviews. NVivo is a computer-based data analysis package that supports the organization, management, and representation of qualitative data (Ozkan, 2004). Descriptive narratives and open-ended questionnaires were coded manually. After coding was complete, I created a codebook to organize the codes from the transcribed data.

Tables were developed to document the organization of codes, themes, and subthemes. The development of tables supported the grouping and linking codes (Dudovskiy, 2016; Campbell et al., 2020). Inter-rater reliability was supported by a colleague who has experience with qualitative coding data to ensure consistency across coding (Graham, Milanowski, & Miller, 2012). I redacted participant names and other identifying information before the colleague viewed study data to protect confidentiality. The colleague has over fifteen years of educational experience as a classroom teacher, assistant principal, principal, and Assistant Superintendent. Additionally, the colleague has experience with analyzing data and conducting a concept analysis. His coding experiences include the reviewing of data from the Georgia Schools Assessment Performance Standards, which includes the analysis of qualitative data for the development of school-wide processes and programs.

In this chapter, I provide explanations for data analysis. I include descriptions for each phase of data collection. The data analysis reporting is connected to each research question and data collection tool, as indicated in Table 6.

Table 6

Data Analysis Alignment Chart

Research Questions	Data Collection Tool	Item on the Tool to Answer the Research Questions	Analysis
What are the epistemological beliefs of third grade educators in two Title I schools about how students learn comprehensive literacy skills?	Semi-structured interviews And audio recordings	How were you prepared to become a reading teacher? What are your beliefs about how students learn to read and write? How do you help students develop comprehensive literacy skills? What instructional strategies are used most often in your classroom to help all students learn comprehensive literacy? How does professional learning support you with teaching comprehensive literacy skills?	Inductive coding for participants' responses to the prompts
What are the pedagogical practices of third grade educators in two Title I schools as they develop students' comprehensive literacy skills?	Photograph with descriptive narratives	What happens during literacy instruction? What is the teacher's role during reading instruction? How do you support differentiation during literacy instruction?	Iterative categorization for photographs and axial coding for descriptive narratives
How do third grade educators believe they are addressing the epistemological needs of students through their pedagogical practices related to comprehensive literacy skills?	Open-Ended Questionnaire	Tell me what you were not able to capture in the photograph related to instructional practices during ELA instruction. How do you ensure all students are successful with developing comprehensive literacy skills in your classroom? How do you demonstrate your multicultural knowledge during ELA instruction? How do you support student's participation in multiculturalism during ELA instruction?	Inducting coding for participants' responses to identify similarities and differences

Below, I present a data analysis description for semi-structured interviews, photographs with descriptive narratives, and the open-ended questionnaire. Each section is organized by data collection tool. I provide explanations about the codes, themes, and subthemes. A table is included for each subheading displaying the grouping of codes for themes.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Data analysis for semi-structured interviews was connected to research question one and analyzed through inductive coding of participants' responses. The analysis of data began after I completed each interview. The transcribed audio from Otter was reviewed for clarity and accuracy. I used the notes generated during the semi-structured interviews to correct any language that may have been transcribed incorrectly. The transcription was uploaded into NVivo. Following, I reread the transcription and used inductive coding to create a codebook (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011).

Coding was completed by two methods: (1) computer-based and (2) manually. DeCuir-Gunby et al. (2011) described the process for developing and using a codebook. A colleague and I used a similar method for inductive coding to analyze 15%, or one, semi-structured interview. The longest semi-structured interview, at 45 minutes, was selected. One semi-structured interview was appropriate due to the small sample size. Belur, Tompson, Thornton, and Simon (2018) discovered that "coding behaviors changed between and within individuals over time, emphasizing the importance of conducting regular and [systematic]…" inter-reliability tests (p. 1). As recommended, an inter-rater reliability test was conducted, and the results are detailed below. Accordingly, the

colleague and I coded data from the semi-structured interviews by manually highlighting phrases line by line (Miles & Huberman, 1994). We determined inter-rater reliability by independently coding semi-structured interviews and sharing the codes (Graham et al., 2012). I found 46 codes, and the colleague identified 51 codes.

Inter-rater reliability was used to establish consistency in coding. Miles and Huberman (1994) found coders could determine inter-rater reliability during an analysis of content. I used their process by dividing the number of code agreements between the colleague and me (46) by the total number of agreements (46) plus disagreements (5). Miles and Huberman (1994) detailed coders needed reliability of 90% or higher for consistency in coding. The established reliability for this research study was 90%.

The colleague and I combined similar codes to identify themes and subthemes (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011). Also, we discussed the similarities and differences among codes. Codes were grouped to identify themes and subthemes. In the same manner, our discourse included explanations of the identified themes and subthemes. The identification of themes included codes or words from participants. For reference throughout this dissertation, themes are italicized.

One theme was *literacy instruction:* the codes were i-Ready, Sonday System, and Reading Street. An analysis of the data revealed, participants mentioned curricular programs during their discussions about ELA instruction. Hence, curriculum was identified as a subtheme to literacy instruction. This process of analysis was used to identify other themes. Codes related to *reading preparation*, such as reading classes, student teacher, and trial and error defined participants' experiences in educator preparation programs and student internship. Codes connected to *student performance*,

such as high students, low students, balance tests, and placement tests were grouped, because participants connected students' assessment scores to their rationale for ability grouping and the determination of students' reading levels. When asked about the instructional strategies used to help develop students' CLS, participants related the practice and application of reading and writing to students' literacy *experiences*. Suggestions for *cultural referencing* included student demographics, parental support, parental education, and socioeconomic background concerning how students learn to read and write. Code or words associated with *barriers* were a lack of preparation, scheduling, and the Coronavirus concerning the pedagogical practices employed during ELA instruction. References to *professional development* were i-Ready training, Sonday System training, Reading Street training, and plentiful as participants connected the role of professional learning to their ELA instruction. Table 7 displays the themes and codes or words identified from semi-structured interviews.

Table 7

Themes and Codes for Semi-Structured Interviews

Themes	Codes		
Reading Preparation	• College • Practicum	• Reading Classes • Student Teaching	• Method Courses • Trial and Error
Literacy Instruction	• Small Group • Feedback • Writing • Reading Street • Centers • Hybrid	• Whole Group • Reading • i-Ready • Phonics • Writing	• Questioning • Reading Comprehension Strategies • Sonday System • High Frequency Words • Individualized
Student Performance	• High Students • Assessments • Placement Test	• Low Students • Progress Monitoring • Balance Test	• Next to Lowest Students • Diagnostic Test
Experiences	• Background Knowledge • Practice	• Application	• Hands-on Learning
Professional Development	• I-Ready Training • Classworks • Relevancy	• Sonday System Training • Google Classroom • Plentiful or a lot	• Reading Street Training • Whiteboard
Cultural Referencing	• Parental Education • Demographics or Disadvantaged	• Parental Support • Low-socioeconomic Background	• Community Support
Barriers	• Lack of Preparation • Coronavirus	• Time	• Scheduling

The matching codes were added to the codebook. As a result of inter-rater reliability, we agreed on seven themes. The number of subthemes varied for each theme. I reanalyzed the six semi- interviews by using the seven themes: (1) *reading preparation*, (2) l*iteracy instruction*, (3) *student performance*, (4) *experiences*, (5) *professional development*, (6) *cultural referencing*, and (7) *barriers*. The identified theme, *cultural referencing*, was used in a qualitative study to describe educators' comments about a student's culture or background (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011). The description of cultural referencing was applicable for participants' responses in this research study as they discussed beliefs about students' CLS development outside of the ELA classroom.

Photographs with Descriptive Narratives

Participants submitted one photograph with descriptive narratives to provide data concerning educators' pedagogical practices during ELA instruction on CLS development. The utilization of IC was appropriate for this research study to code photographs. Neale (2016) specified IC supported the analysis of "data by topic, event, story, verbal interaction, signifier, feeling, idea, category, theme, concept or theory…" (p. 1096). I used IC to categorize photographs by an event. This categorization included whole and small group instruction. For example, participants submitted a photograph with descriptive narratives. I observed the photograph and read the descriptive narrative to determine the event or setting for the photograph. Figure 5 illustrates a submitted photograph and sample quote of a descriptive narrative from Participant 1B. Participant 1B stated, "Students are working on i-Ready." The photograph displayed a large group of students. Hence, the identification of whole group instruction. Similarly, I used this

process to analyze all photographs and descriptive narratives submitted for this research study. Below, I describe more about IC and the connectivity of photographs for this research study.

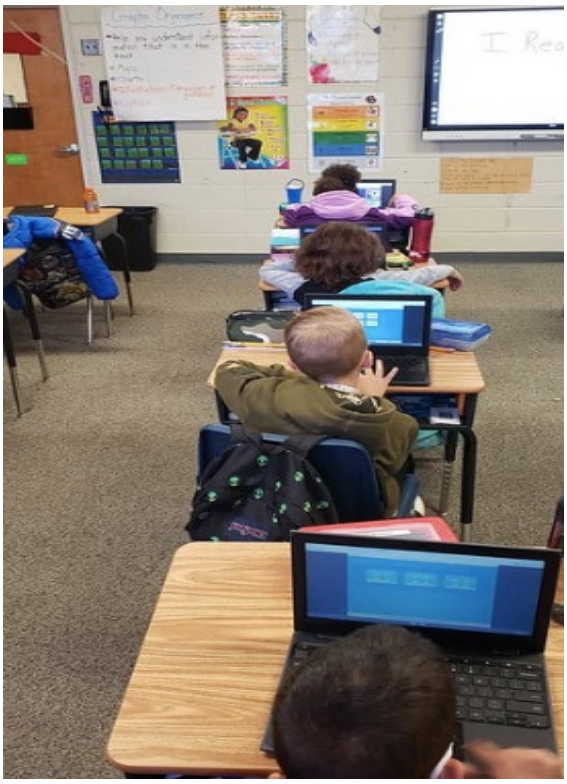

Figure 5. Photograph submission from Participant 1B.

I implemented axial coding to link codes from semi-structured interviews to descriptive narratives. Dudovskiy (2016) described axial coding as the linking of codes for data analysis. I used themes established in Phase I through inter-rater reliability to code the descriptive narratives in Phase II. Below, I further explain how IC and axial coding were used to answer research question two through a closer look at IC and axial coding.

Neale (2016) recommended IC is not used as the only method to analyze qualitative data. Neale found IC was beneficial when used with other forms of data

analysis. IC can be used to support thematic analysis, constant comparison, and narrative analysis (Neale, 2016).

In this study, IC was used for thematic analysis and constant comparisons. In an adaptation of research studies conducted by López (2017) and Miller and Lin (2019), photographs were used to capture ELA educators' visual instruction and compare participants' beliefs about their pedagogical practices to their documented instructional practices. For instance, participants used Flick to submit one photograph representative of their pedagogical practices during ELA instruction. Each participant's photograph represented three question prompts. In connection, participants used the three prompts to provide details relevant to how their photograph represented each prompt. The analysis of data began after each photograph with descriptive narratives was submitted through Flickr.

The submitted photographs included the geotagged location. I adapted geotagging from a previous study on landscapes (Welsh et al., 2012). The spatial metadata of photographs was analyzed for georeferencing to identify ELA instructional locations (Welsh et al., 2012). Mainly, I analyzed the group setting and location of each photograph with IC. The classification and analysis of photographs abetted ELA instruction inside and outside classroom settings (Costello, 2012).

Descriptive narratives were analyzed with deductive coding. I conducted deductive data-driven coding in Phase II, because I used themes identified by inter-rater reliability from Phase I to code descriptive narratives (DeCuir-Gunby, 2011). The use of axial coding linked codes from semi-structured interviews to descriptive narratives (Dudovskiy, 2016). Moreover, the themes identified from photographs were connected to

themes from the participants' descriptive narratives. Semi-structured interviews and descriptive narratives were identified for linkage, because they supported the contextualization of meaning related to the topics presented in Figure 1 from Chapter I such as epistemology in ELA, PCK, and CLS (Given, Opryshko, Julien, & Smith, 2011).

The connection of themes between photographs and descriptive narratives supported thematic analysis. In a similar manner, themes for photographs were adjusted as they were analyzed and compared to descriptive narratives and semi-structured interviews. The adjustments of themes in comparison to semi-structured interviews and photographs demonstrated constant comparison. In contrast to the analysis of semi-structured interviews, three themes emerged: (1) *literacy instruction*, (2) *student performance*, and (3) *experiences*. Four themes were not coded for the photographs: (1) *reading preparation*, (2) *professional development*, (3) *cultural referencing*, and (4) *barriers*. In the limitations of the study for Chapter V, I discuss possible reasons for the omission of four themes.

In this case, the seven themes identified during inter-rater reliability for semi-structured interviews were used to analyze the descriptive narratives submitted with photographs. Similar to Table 7, codes were grouped for the generation of themes. Many of the codes identified in descriptive narratives were the same as semi-structured interviews. In brief, three of the seven themes arose: (1) *literacy instruction*, (2) *student performance*, and (3) *experiences*. Codes or words that pertained to *literacy instruction* found in descriptive narratives included small group, i-Ready, Sonday System, Reading Street, phonics skills, and reading. These codes were similar to words from semi-structured interviews. Codes or words for *student performance* entailed above

level group, level group, below level group, diagnostic tests, and assessments. Correspondingly, *experiences* comprised practice reading, practice writing, and participation. Table 8 shows the themes and grouped codes from descriptive narratives.

Table 8

Themes and Codes for Descriptive Narratives

Themes	Codes		
Literacy Instruction	• Teach • Individual or Differentiate • Sonday System • Phonics Skills	• Model • Small Group • Reading Street • Comprehension	• Assist • I-Ready • Lesson of the Day • Reading
	• Reading Level • Below Level Group • Accommodations • Diagnostic Test	• Above Level Group • Improve Skills • Modifications	• Level Group • Difficulty Reading • Assessments
Experiences	• Practice Writing • Participation • Practice	• Practice Reading • Discussions	• Practice Skills or Strategies • Hands-on Learning

Although there were similarities in codes between semi-structured interviews and descriptive narratives, there were also differences. Similarities included curriculum programs for *literacy instruction*, ability grouping and assessments for *student performance*, and the practice of reading and writing skills for *experiences* during literacy instruction. Differences in codes or words for *literacy instruction* were teach, model, and assist. Comparatively, new codes or words for *student performance* were difficulty reading, accommodations, and modifications when discussing students who read below grade level or received Special Education services. Participants abetted strategies and discussions for experiences during ELA instruction. The differences in codes did not impede the meaning or grouping of codes. As much, the different codes were matched to the themes identified in Phase I.

Open-Ended Questionnaire

Data analysis for the open-ended questionnaires was connected to answer research question three. The questionnaire was provided through a Google Form. Participants submitted their anonymous responses on their perceived abilities to meet their students' epistemological needs for CLS development. The Google Form also included a question for participants to document their years of teaching experience. Open coding was used to analyze participants' responses.

Open coding is a type of inductive coding. This type of coding includes raw data organization during the analysis process (Dudovskiy, 2016). I analyzed and coded participants responses as they were submitted through the Google Form. The open-ended questionnaire was analyzed in two ways: (1) inductive coding and (2) comparing participants' responses based on their years of experience.

Codes or words were grouped for the generation of themes. The analysis of participants' responses on the open-ended questionnaire revealed seven themes: (1) *literacy instruction*, (2) *student performance*, (3) *experiences*, (4) *cultural referencing*, (5) *student engagement*, (6) *planning*, and (7) *multiculturalism*. I identified similarities in codes to other data collection tools. Due to the similarity of codes, some of the codes discovered were the same as codes identified in the data analysis of semi-structured interviews and descriptive narratives. Hence, four of the themes were the same: (1) *literacy instruction*, (2) *student performance*, (3) *experiences*, and (4) *cultural referencing*. For that reason, referenced codes for *literacy instruction* encompassed comprehension strategies, feedback, model, i-Ready, reading, and small group. References for *student performance* contained assessments, below grade level, above

grade level, and on reading level. Codes or words relevant to *experiences* were grouped as practice reading, practice writing, background knowledge, and real-world examples. Phrases that included *cultural referencing* were demographics and limited access. However, educators explained *student engagement* and *multiculturalism* were facilitated through *planning*. Codes or words used to explain *planning* were research, analyze, create, and knowledge. Participants also used phrases to describe *multiculturalism*. Codes or words for multiculturalism consisted of pull-up videos, embrace others' diversity, and different cultures or backgrounds. Table 9 exhibits the themes and grouped codes from the open-ended questionnaire.

Table 9

Themes and Codes for Open-Ended Questionnaire

Themes	Codes		
Literacy Instruction	• Small Group • Feedback • Writing • Reading Street • Centers • Hybrid	• Whole Group • Reading • I-Ready • Phonics • Writing	• Questioning • Reading Comprehension • Sonday System • High Frequency Words • Individualized
Student Performance	• Reading level • Below Grade Level • Above Grade Level • Scores	• Difficulty with Skills or Missing Skills • On Grade Level • Assessments	
Experiences	• Background knowledge or information • Personal connections or experiences • Practice Writing	• Real-world Examples • Practice Reading	
Cultural Referencing	• Demographics • Lack of Background Knowledge	• Limited Access or Exposure	
Student Engagement	• Encourage the Students • Show Excitement or Enthusiasm • Inclusive Curriculum	• Present an Open-Mind or Explore • Participate or Share	
Planning	• Identify Strength or Weakness • Research	• Analyze or Create Knowledge	
Multiculturism	• Pull-up Videos or Pictures • Difference Cultures, Backgrounds, or Countries	• Embrace Others' Diversity	

Participants' responses were examined to identify similarities and differences based on their years of teaching experience. Participants' years of experience were categorized in one of three areas: (1) zero through two years of teaching experience, (2) three through six years of teaching experience, or (3) seven or more years of teaching experience. As a reminder, I provided demographical data for participants in Table 3.

The groups were identified because of research associated with educators' effectiveness after the first three years of teaching experience. Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain (2005) discovered educators demonstrated little improvement after the first three years of teaching. Furthermore, educators' years of experience were not found to be connected to student achievement beyond their beginning years in education (Rivkin et al., 2005). Correspondingly, an analysis of educators' beliefs on their abilities to meet students' epistemological needs allowed me to examine educators with three or more years of experience. However, participants did not vary much related to their years of teaching experience for this comparison. Of the sample, 83%, or five participants, had seven or more years of experience, and 17%, or one participant, had three to six years of experience. Due to the limited diversity among participants based on their years of experience, I will not report data from this finding.

Summary

Data were collected from two Title I schools located in east Alabama. Quota sampling was used to identify the sample. Participants included six third grade ELA educators. I examined third grade ELA educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices on CLS development. Data collection was conducted through three

phases and lasted four weeks. I obtained approval from Columbus State University's IRB to conduct this research study.

Data analysis included the triangulation of data through different methods of data collection. Semi-structured interviews, photographs with descriptive narratives, and an open-ended questionnaire provided data related to epistemology and pedagogy. Data from each phase of the data collection was coded. Inductive coding was used for the semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires. Through inter-rater reliability, seven themes emerged for semi-structured interviews. Seven themes were also identified for the open-ended questionnaire. IC was utilized for the photographs. Axial coding was used for the descriptive narratives submitted with each photograph. The analysis of descriptive narratives revealed three themes.

The responses of participants from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed to provide content related to epistemology. Photographs with descriptive narratives were used to contrast insightful information related to participants' epistemological beliefs and their pedagogical practices. Axial coding was utilized to link codes between Phases I and II of data collection. The open-ended questionnaire provided data on educators' beliefs about their abilities to meet their students' epistemological needs for CLS development.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

There is limited research on third grade ELA educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices on developing students' CLS. The disparity in research includes a lack of focus on epistemology in elementary compared to secondary settings (Huling, 2014; Lee et al., 2013, & Ismail et al., 2019). As a result, I used Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of human development to examine the connection between the process-person-context-time model and educators' development of CLS (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Further, I implemented Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development to investigate educators' pedagogical practices within ELA classrooms involving students' CLS development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

I employed a qualitative intrinsic case study research design to examine third grade ELA educators' epistemologies and pedagogies. I chose an intrinsic case study, because it facilitates a better understanding of educators' beliefs about how students learn and develop CLS and their instructional practices during ELA instruction. I completed three phases of data collection for this study: (1) semi-structured interviews, (2) photographs with descriptive narratives, and (3) an open-ended questionnaire. No participant attrition occurred. The participants completed all phases of the data collection.

In Phase I, I conducted semi-structured interviews for two weeks. Data were gathered related to educators' epistemological beliefs. Participants partook in Zoom interviews, where they responded to five prompts (Appendix J). I used the five prompts to collect data on educators' personal beliefs about how students develop CLS.

In Phase II, I collected a photograph with descriptive narratives. Data were collected for one week, simultaneously, at each cooperating site. Participants captured one photograph of whole or small instruction groups to document their pedagogical practices during ELA class. I asked participants to take photographs representing three prompts: (1) their instructional practices during ELA instruction, (2) an image reflecting their role during ELA instruction, and (3) their use of differentiated instructional practices during ELA instruction. Participants also provided a descriptive narrative for each prompt (Appendix K) to describe how the photograph represented each prompt.

In Phase III, I collected an open-ended questionnaire from participants through Google Forms. Data collection lasted from one week. The questionnaire was comprised of four prompts (Appendix M). Participants provided data on their abilities to meet students' epistemological needs through their pedagogical practices. I examined pedagogies to identify the inclusion of multiculturalism within classroom environments during ELA instruction. All phases of data collection were conducted remotely.

Below, I describe the analysis of qualitative data. The analysis includes reviewing the problem statement, the research study's purpose, and research questions. I also explain how data analysis was used to answer each research question.

Findings

In this chapter, I discuss the findings from the three phases of data collection. Data revealed the beliefs and practices described by the third grade ELA educators in this research study were consistent across the three phases of data collection. The identified themes were connected to participants' epistemologies and pedagogies about how students learn and develop CLS. In like manner, I further align the findings with

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological and ecological theories of human development in Chapter V. Data were collected to answer the three research questions identified for this study.

1. What are the epistemological beliefs of third grade educators in two Title I schools about how students learn CLS?
2. What are the pedagogical practices of third grade educators in two Title I schools as they develop students' CLS?
3. How do third grade educators believe they address the epistemological needs of students through their CLS pedagogical practices?

I applied three data collection tools to triangulate data. Figure 6 presents a graphical representation depicting the connectivity among research questions, data collection tools, and data analysis. Later in this chapter, I provide findings from the data analysis and explain how the data were used to answer the three research questions. Figure 6 demonstrates the alignment of data collection and analysis to answer research questions.

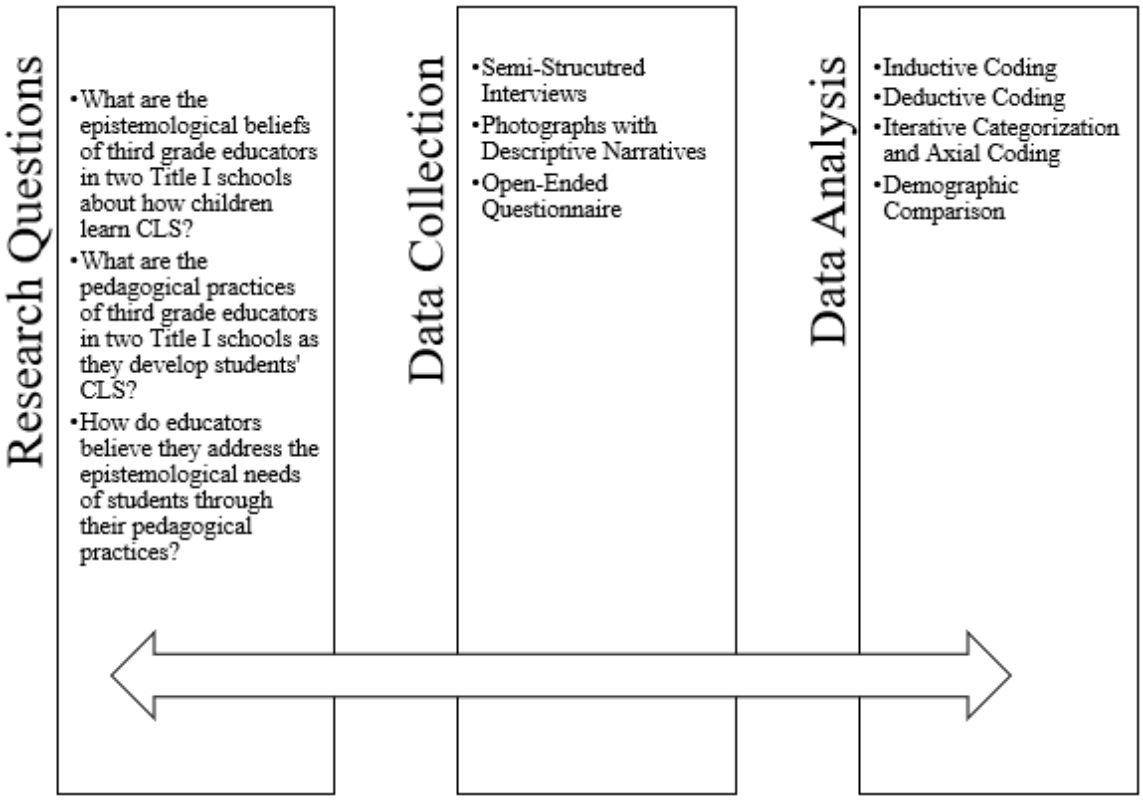

Figure 6. Flow chart used to display the alignment of research questions, data collection, and data analysis.

The interpretation applied in each phase of data analysis was needed to answer the identified research question. In each phase of data collection, the number of participants who mentioned each theme was analyzed. Phases I and II include the number of themes most coded or discussed among each phase of data collection. This additional information was included, because all participants mentioned the themes identified in Phases I and II. Like Blatt and Patrick (2014), the themes or codes from Phase I was tracked in NVivo and supported by a sample quotation for each code. Quotations from participants were also used in Phase II. For example, quotations were used to support the photographs of ELA instruction. In Phase III, data were presented to show how many

participants mentioned each theme. The usage of tables followed by descriptions is included for each data collection tool to support the findings.

Semi-Structured Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews with all participants via Zoom to answer research question one. Participants answered five prompts related to their epistemological beliefs about how students learn CLS. Participants provided details about how they were trained to teach reading, their beliefs about how students learn to read and write, their role in students' development of CLS, the instructional strategies used during ELA instruction, and professional learning in their preparedness to teach CLS. Participants' responses were recorded during the Zoom meeting and transcribed by Otter.

Inductive coding was used to code the transcribed data from participants' responses during semi-structured interviews. A colleague and I used manual coding to establish inter-rater reliability and identify codes, themes, and subthemes (Graham et al., 2012). Figure 7 provides a representation of the processes used to determine inter-rater reliability. I uploaded transcripts into NVivo for inductive coding based on the findings from inter-rater reliability. The coding for this research study was adapted from a study on developing and using a codebook (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011).

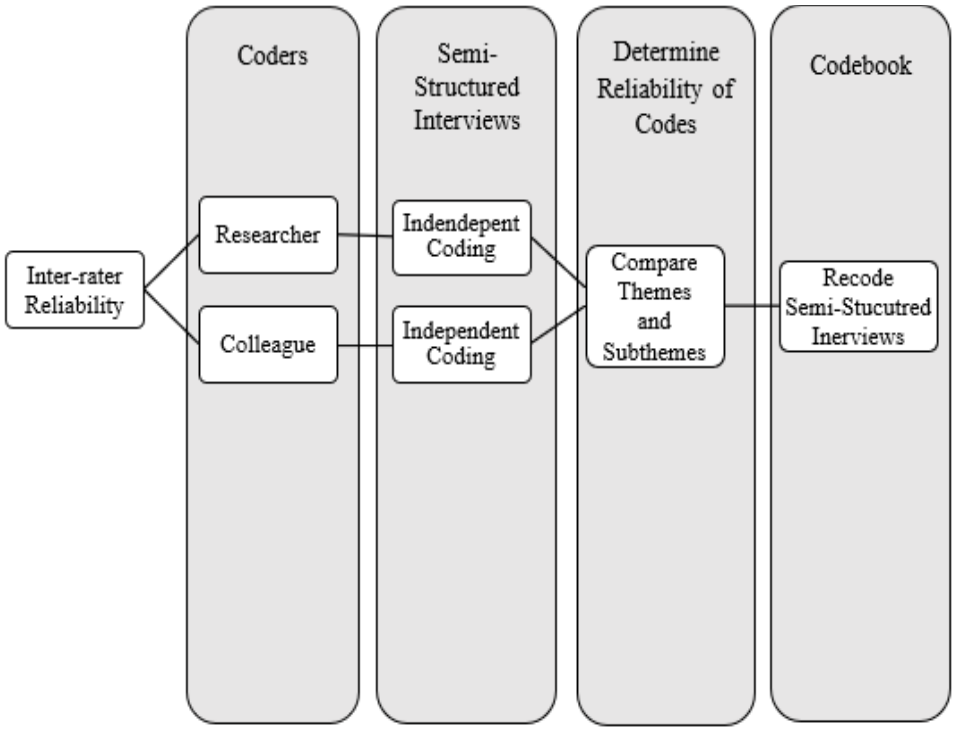

Figure 7. Creating a codebook to support inter-rater reliability. Adapted from "Developing and using a Codebook for the Analysis of Interview Data: An Example from a Professional Development," by J. T. DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011, *Field Methods, 23*(2), 136-155.

All participants partook in a semi-structured interview. The themes and subthemes identified during inter-rater reliability were used to code all semi-structured interviews. Seven themes and 34 subthemes were discovered after coding. The identified themes and subthemes were recorded. Table 10 lists the themes, subthemes, and codes recorded during the process of inter-rater reliability, and there are three example quotes provided by participants for each theme. The documented comments represent a variety of participants to provide an unbiased representation of the sample.

Table 10

Inductive Data-Driven Coding for Semi-Structured Interviews with Themes and Subthemes

Themes	Subthemes	Codes	Example Quotes from Semi-Structured Interviews	Participant Identifier
Reading Preparation	Undergraduate studies, reading courses, internship trial and error	Instructional, college, some reading classes, mentor teacher, what does and does not work	I guess, somewhat prepared, in a way.	1A
			And, of course, you take all the reading classes that they offer.	2C
			You have to be in the classroom. I mean, really, it's just trial and error.	1C
Literacy Instruction	Curriculum, student grouping, differentiation, instructional strategies, virtual learning, reading instruction, writing instruction	Small group, whole group, questioning, feedback, reading, reading comprehension or strategies, writing, i-Ready, Sonday System, Reading Street phonics, high frequency words, centers, writing, individualized, hybrid	This year we're doing i-Ready, which is really big.	1B
			[…] this person over here might need phonics skills, but this one over here might need comprehension in depth […]	2B
			So, when they first [or] when we first will start our reading lesson, I will always introduce like an idiom of the day.	2A
Student Performance	Early preparation, ability grouping, reading level, data, assessments, and Special Education	high students, low students, next to lowest students, assessments, progress monitoring, diagnostic test, placement test, balance test	I think it started very early. Like, as far back as two [*sic*] they start learning how to talk.	1B
			You can tell […] first of all, they're not fluent readers; they're not on the grade level they should be on.	2C
			[…] they sure aren't going to go to fourth grade if they don't pass certain tests with all this literacy act going.	1C
Experiences	Educators' personal	background knowledge, application,	My teacher brought a cassette recorder to school, and she had everybody read something and record themselves.	2C

	experiences, real-world connections, learning activities, reading practice, writing practice	hands-on learning	[…] trying to build on what they know like this week is graphic resources [….] How many of you read comic books, you know, trying to make that connection with the things they already know. […] because they were learning new words, descriptive words of characters but also vocabulary [*sic*] understand.	1C 2A
Professional Development	Programs, resources, mentorship, authenticity (positive or negative)	i-Ready training, Sonday System training, Reading Street training, Classworks, Google Classroom, Whiteboard, Relevancy, plentiful or a lot	I love i-Ready…I believe like, it helps the kids understand reading. […] actually helps me to become a better teacher, but it helps me to learn things that I don't already know […] Because if you don't want to be there, you ain't [*sic*] getting nothing [*sic*] from it anyways, because you're like condescend.	1A 1B 1C
Cultural Referencing	Socioeconomic status, parental education, parental engagement, community involvement	Parental education, parental support, community support, demographics or disadvantaged, low-socioeconomic background	[…] there's somebody that's been exposed, and somebody that's not to me [..] it depends on background and things like that […] If the environment is conducive to you know, wanting to be educated, wanting to learn more, if the parents or the guardians are enthusiastic about learning and reading, I think that's where the love of reading starts [*sic*] their environment. And I've started sending home some fresh reads, for fluency for their parents to time them Monday through Thursday for one minute…	2B 2A 2C
Barriers	Lack of preparation, scheduling, participants' attitudes, COVID-19	lack of preparation, time scheduling, social distancing	[…]I have been doing this almost like 15 years. To me, I don't think nobody prepares you… So, we are literally told, if you can't get to something, that's what you don't get to. I try to give more one on one time, right now with COVID going on it's quite difficult.	2B 1C 1B

Seven major themes emerged from the semi-structured interviews. All themes were mentioned by 100%, or six participants. Three of the seven themes were the most recognized among participants. These three themes answered research question one: (1) *literacy instruction*, (2) *experiences*, and (3) *student performance*. Consequently, further analysis into patterns among participants' responses and their perceptions about the most discussed or coded themes was conducted.

Previous research studies reported the number of participants who mentioned themes (Idema & Patrick, 2019; Troung, 2019). Therefore, I utilized data displays from NVivo for "illuminating rather than obscuring the message" (Eisner, 1997, p. 8) presented within the data, because all participants mentioned the seven themes. The visual displays presented in hierarchy charts organized, simplified, and summarized the data mentioned by participants (Verdinelli & Scagnoli, 2013). In this chapter, I further explain how the findings are aligned with each research question.

As a result of all seven themes being identified among the six participants, I used a hierarchy chart to identify coding patterns among participants' semi-structured interviews (Verdinelli & Scagnoli, 2013). Patterns were created based on the number of times participants mentioned a theme. Figure 8 displays patterns among participants' responses on how students learn CLS. I reviewed each theme in NVivo to determine the themes that were mentioned the most by participants during semi-structured interviews.

Figure 8 portrays the hierarchy chart produced by NVivo. Verdinelli and Scagnoli (2013) discovered visual displays, as presented in Figure 8, provides more insight and a deeper understanding of the data. Correspondingly, seven themes are included in Figure 8

as all participants identified each theme. However, the three themes, *literacy instruction, experiences,* and *student performance*, represent the hierarchy chart's largest areas. This finding revealed participants discussed these themes the most among the seven themes.

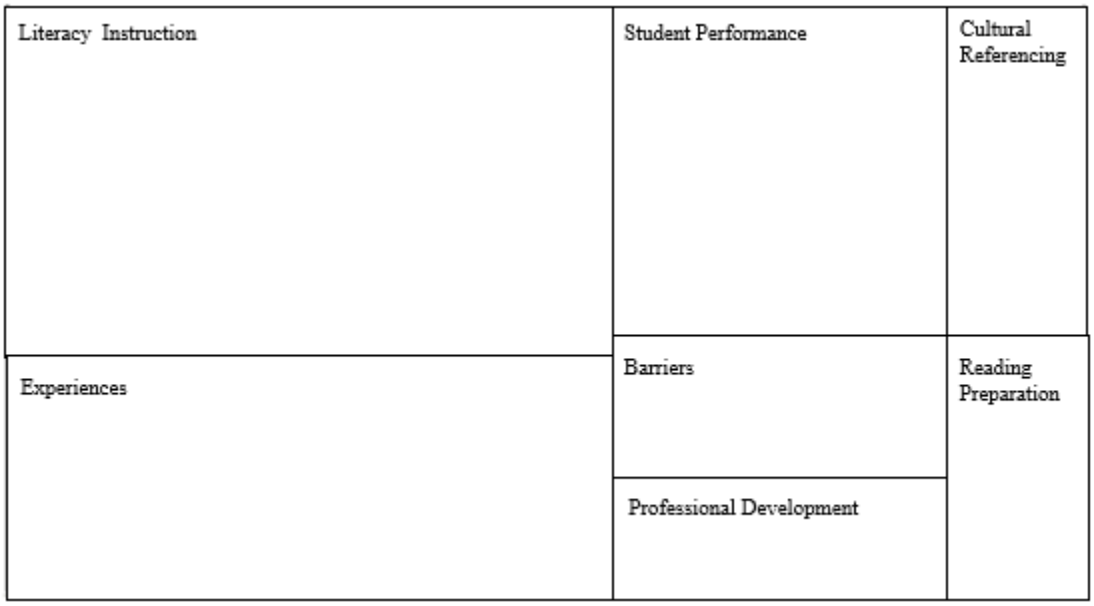

Figure 8. Hierarchy representation of all semi-structured interviews.

A more in-depth examination into *literacy instruction*, *experiences*, and *student performance* perpetuated findings on educators' beliefs about how students learn CLS. The frequency of discussions or codes for each theme varied among participants. Hence, the emergence of *literacy instruction*, *experiences*, and *student performance*. Each participant discussed some themes more than others. As a result, I created a hierarchy of themes for participants' coded transcripts. Table 11 provides a hierarchical representation of the seven themes for each participant's semi-structured interview. Table 11 demonstrates participants' responses for each theme in descending order. This detailed analysis of participants' responses for each theme is critical as I compared their CLS beliefs to their pedagogical practices in Phase II (López, 2017). NVivo counted the number of times a participant mentioned each theme. Therefore, Table 11 includes the

participant identifier and the total codes identified for each participant's semi-structured interview.

Table 11

Hierarchy Charts of Participants' Responses for Semi-Structured Interviews

Total Number of Codes Per Theme	Participant Identifier	Hierarchy of Themes	Number of Coded References for Each Theme
135	2C	Literacy instruction	47
		Experiences	20
		Cultural referencing	19
		Reading preparation	18
		Student performance	14
		Barriers	10
		Professional development	7
173	1A	Literacy instruction	95
		Student performance	30
		Experiences	23
		Reading preparation	11
		Professional development	9
		Barriers	4
		Cultural referencing	1
188	1B	Experiences	55
		Literacy instruction	50
		Student performance	32
		Reading preparation	17
		Professional development	13
		Barriers	10
		Cultural referencing	11
237	2A	Experiences	92
		Literacy instruction	67
		Professional development	20
		Reading preparation	20
		Barriers	15
		Student performance	14
		Cultural referencing	9
245	2B	Literacy instruction	83
		Cultural referencing	47
		Student performance	45
		Experiences	42
		Barriers	15

		Reading preparation	7
		Professional development	6
395	1C	Literacy instruction	120
		Student performance	114
		Experiences	76
		Barriers	43
		Professional development	28
		Cultural referencing	11
		Reading preparation	3

Table 11 shows a difference in the frequency of themes discussed by each participant. However, the data revealed three themes were discussed the most among participants as they answered five prompts. The identification of themes were the same among participants at each site.

At Site I, 100%, or three participants, described *literacy instruction*, *experiences*, and *student performance* as the top three themes influencing CLS learning. In contrast, the responses among participants at Site II varied. Participant 2A provided details that represented *experiences*, *literacy instruction*, and *professional development* as the most recognized themes. Participant 2B included *literacy instruction*, *cultural referencing*, and *student performance* were the top three themes. Seemingly, Participant 2C differed from Participants 2A and 2B. In connection, *literacy instruction*, *experiences*, and *cultural referencing* were the top three themes. The hierarchy of themes among participants differed, but *literacy instruction*, *experiences*, and *student performance* were the most prominent themes among all participants, as indicated in Figure 8.

Literacy Instruction. When participants were asked how they help students develop comprehensive literacy skills and specifics about their instructional practices, 100%, or six participants, referenced the programs used to support reading development. Participant 1A mentioned, "…But for third grade, we are just sticking with the Reading

Street curriculum, making sure we teach those skills, those target skills. Sonday System, it's just really to enhance those phonics skills." Comments from Participant 1B were "…we spent a majority of our day doing i-Ready." These descriptions were similar to two participants from Site II. Participant 2A stated, "But this year, I have a good chunk who are missing that phonics piece. So, we hit that hard, the program that they have for us this year, the Sonday System." Another comment from Participant 2C confirmed, "I've noticed them finding the roller coaster in their voice, you know, and I'm making sure that they stop at their periods and don't keep running over. And you know, read that again, so I'm pushing the Sonday System." If participants did not discuss Sonday System, they described other programs that were used for literacy instruction. Participants also included details of how the programs were used in whole and small group settings during ELA instruction. Participant 1A described, "Sonday System is geared toward small group instruction. So, it's like you can use it for intervention in a way, and then Reading Street is whole group instruction." Participant 1C provided explicit details about the processes used to support students during small group instruction. In so, the descriptions included details about the opportunities needed for students to learn literacy skills.

> So like, if we're doing I mean, I guess it's a reading skill. It's a grammar skill like compound words. Okay, so, here's a bunch of words, stick them together. Um, main idea, we have main idea and details. There's an ice cream cone activity I use. They put the ice cream cones together. The cone is the main idea. The ice cream on top is the details that go with it. So, it's okay to find activities that go with things. So, they can actually get their hands on it. See it. For author's

> purpose, there's a pie they put together, and it talks about, you know, each piece of author's purpose.

Experiences. Participants provided details related to learning opportunities provided during literacy instruction to help students learn CLS. Participant 1B discussed difficulties experienced with conducting small group instruction due to the Coronavirus in the following quote.

> Now, if I can pull about two or three, I'm doing it. Last year, I could pull maybe like five at a time. But now, I'm down two or three because of COVID. But lately when I pull them for some small group, I'm working on, like, Sonday System.

Participant 1B continued by discussing similar difficulties with providing students' hands-on experiences during ELA instruction.

> Now, it's kind of hard to get to what creates a barrier for the students not being able to go and read. It takes more time than what they have done before in previous years of teaching. Oh, when I said they can't go get a book, it's just COVID. They can't stick their hands in the book bins, you know, just to get the books out.

Participant 2B discussed the need for increased learning experiences as details were provided about learning opportunities students received to develop their background knowledge and practice CLS.

> They have a writing prompt when they come in here. I start them off writing a paragraph. By the end of the year, they need to be writing at least five. In here, I build on, once again, what they know. You have to break that down. Basically, they'll give you something, like for you to write. Make me up a story about what

> you did this weekend or something like that. I had to explain to them. They didn't know what a journal entry was. So, I explained the format, you know, letter writing. The format started with what is a journal. It can be like a diary. They didn't know any of it. So, I had to start all the way from the bottom, you know, to tell them how this should be done. I had to get a starter sentence to show them how they're supposed to write a journal. Because they didn't know.

In some cases, participants discussed providing students with opportunities to practice skills and evaluate their learning. One participant discussed how learning opportunities were used to monitor student's academic performances. "I've started sending home some fresh reads for fluency for their parents to time them Monday through Thursday for one minute and see, let them see, how they can grow" (Participant 1C).

Student Performance. Participants mentioned phrases differentiated instructional practices, reading level, assessments, and grade level placement as they discussed monitoring students' academic performances. In the following quote, Participant 2A discussed the usage of assessment data for ELA instruction.

> I just didn't know how to go about addressing those needs for my kids in the time that I have, and there's a lot of planning that goes into getting everything prepared for virtual. I started reviewing over the comprehension tests that we would normally take. If they were in person, they would be called the balance test. It has a little bit of where they have to actually go into the text and find evidence. A lot of them just really don't understand how to break down, you know, a paragraph.

They don't know how to think it out and ask themselves questions and really think complex.

Photographs with Descriptive Narratives

Photographs with descriptive narratives were collected to determine participants' beliefs about how students develop CLS. All participants used photographs of whole or small groups of instruction to answer three prompts related to their pedagogical practices during ELA instruction. Participants generated a narrative to answer three prompts associated with their photograph. The narratives described three areas: (1) educators' instructional practices during literacy instruction, (2) educators' roles during literacy instruction, and (3) educators' approaches to supporting differentiation during literacy instruction. I retrieved photographs with descriptive narratives from all participants. Each participant submitted one image via the Flickr app to answer research question two.

I analyzed photographs with IC for thematic analysis. Photographs were categorized by whole or small groups of instruction and photographs representing instruction inside or outside the classroom. Table 12 reveals the categorization for submitted photographs. Later in this section, I discuss comparing participants' photographs to their responses from semi-structured interviews.

Table 12

Iterative Categorization of Photographs with Group Setting

Group Setting	Inside the Classroom	Outside the Classroom	Total and Percentage of Responses (N=6)
Whole Group	XXXX	X	83%
Small Group		X	17%

Participants presented images of whole and small groups of instruction. The findings showed 83%, or five participants, submitted photographs of whole group

instruction. In contrast, 17%, or one participant, submitted a photograph of small group instruction.

Furthermore, 67%, or 4 participants, submitted photographs of ELA instruction inside of the classroom. However, 33%, or two participants, submitted photographs of ELA instruction outside of the classroom. The submission of ELA instruction outside of the classroom was submitted by educators selected by the district to provide virtual learning for students who did not attend school in a traditional environment due to the Coronavirus. The geotagged location was not included in Table 12 to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

Descriptive narratives reflected participants' pedagogical practices during ELA instruction. I performed axial coding to link the seven themes between semi-structured interviews to descriptive narratives. Participants did not mention the same themes in Phase II of data collection as detected in Phase I. They did not describe all seven themes in their descriptive narratives. However, in Phase II of data collection, 100 %, or six participants, mentioned each theme identified in data analysis. Table 13 reflects the themes mentioned by participants. Three major themes emerged: (1) *literacy instruction*, (2) *student performance*, and (3) *experiences*. These themes answered research question two.

Table 13

Deductive Coding for Descriptive Narratives with the Number of Coded References

Linked Themes from Phase I	Total and Percentage of Responses (N=6)
Literacy instruction	(6) 100%
Experiences	(6) 100%
Student performance	(6) 100%
Cultural referencing	(0) 0%
Barriers	(0) 0%
Professional development	(0) 0%
Reading preparation	(0) 0%

Seemingly, 100%, or six participants, mentioned *literacy instruction*, *experiences*, and *student performance*. The frequency of themes documented in descriptive narratives differed among participants. Participants described some themes more than others. Thus, these differences impacted the hierarchy of themes among participants' responses. Table 14 provides a hierarchical representation of themes for each participant in descending order. An examination of the hierarchical data supported the comparison of participants' beliefs to their pedagogical practices. Table 14 includes the participant identifier and the total number of codes for each theme. Some participants' responses differed between semi-structured interviews and descriptive narratives. Nonetheless, 33%, or two participants, recognized the same top three themes in semi-structured interviews and descriptive narratives. Conversely, Participants 1B, 2A, 2B, and 2C differed by describing a different order than indicated with semi-structured interviews.

Table 14

Hierarchy Chart of Participants' Responses for Descriptive Narratives

Total Number of Codes Per Theme	Participant Identifier	Hierarchy of Themes	Number of Coded References for Each Theme
11	1B	Literacy instruction	5
		Student performance	2
		Experiences	4
11	1C	Literacy instruction	5
		Student performance	2
		Experiences	4
21	2B	Literacy instruction	10
		Experiences	8
		Student performance	3
31	2A	Literacy instruction	14
		Experiences	9
		Student performance	8
42	2C	Literacy instruction	19
		Student Performance	12
		Experiences	11
43	1A	Literacy instruction	27
		Student performance	10
		Experiences	6

Although some individual responses varied between semi-structured interviews and descriptive narratives, the three themes, *literacy instruction*, *student performance*, and *experiences*, were the most prevalent. Participants provided varying details about *literacy instruction*, *student performance*, and *experiences*. Nevertheless, participants connected all responses to their pedagogical practices during ELA instruction to meet students' needs. This was representative of participants at both sites. For example, Participant 1A described, "I teach phonics using the systemic, multi-sensory reading intervention program called Sonday System. The purpose of this program is to enhance students' knowledge on phonics skills that they may have missed in the primary grades." This quote includes references to *literacy instruction* and *student performance*.

Participant 2A encompassed *literacy instruction* and *experiences* in "Each group is grouped based on reading abilities. Each group has different passages with different levels of difficulty but on the same skill." Participants' responses often included multiple codes for different themes in one sentence or question response. As a result, this section does not include separate sections for findings on *literacy instruction*, *student performance*, and *experiences*. DeCuir-Gunby et al. (2011) presented the ability to make new connections between concepts supported data expansion. Therefore, the reporting of participants' responses in connection to another theme strengthens the concept of data expansion. I italicized the themes for easy recognition within the findings.

Participant 2C submitted a photograph of whole group instruction. The image displayed an instructional program used during ELA instruction. References to *experiences* and *literacy instruction* are included in the quote.

> The photograph I took was during my morning session of our new program called the Sonday System. I love this program because it focuses on students' automaticity while reading. They are able to see the words, hear the word spoken, repeat the word, and touch spell the word. I have found that my students use touch spell during their spelling tests. This program teaches students not only how to read with greater accuracy and fluency but also to listen and take dictation.

Figure 9 shows the submitted photograph of whole group instruction from Participant 2C during ELA instruction. Additionally, Figure 9 represents *experiences* during *literacy instruction* within one class from Site II. The photograph reflects students during whole group instruction.

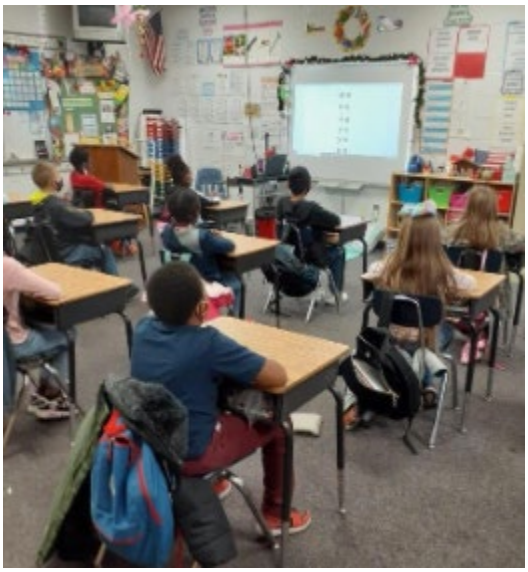

Figure 9. Submission of pedagogical practices during ELA instruction from Participant 2C.

Participant 1A provided a descriptive narrative related to an explanation of ELA instruction in a virtual environment, which included a reference to the instructional program Sonday System. The descriptive narrative included details related to *literacy instruction*, *experiences*, and *student performance*.

> First, I teach phonics using the systematic multi-sensory reading intervention program called Sonday System. The purpose of this program is to enhance students' knowledge on phonics skills that they may have missed in the primary grades. Students are to read sounds and spell sounds. Then, students will read words and sentences that includes [*sic*] review skills. Lastly, I introduce the new skill [*sic*] the day. The new skill for today were [*sic*] prefixes de- and re-. Students have an opportunity to practice the new skills. Next, I break into small groups. I have three small groups. In those small groups [*sic*] I tailor my instruction based on the students' [*sic*] need. For example, the picture with the passage is what I was working on with my on level group. The skills that we were working on is

> author's purpose. Author's purpose is a skill most students have a difficult time understanding. Therefore, I used a fresh read passage from Reading Street. I also ask comprehension questions that includes [*sic*] review skills such as character and setting.

Figure 10 shows the submitted photograph of whole group instruction from Participant 1A during ELA instruction in a virtual environment. In contrast to Figure 9, this photograph represents what happens outside of a traditional classroom setting. The photograph captures whole group ELA instruction in a virtual environment. Participant 1A submitted the photograph from Site I.

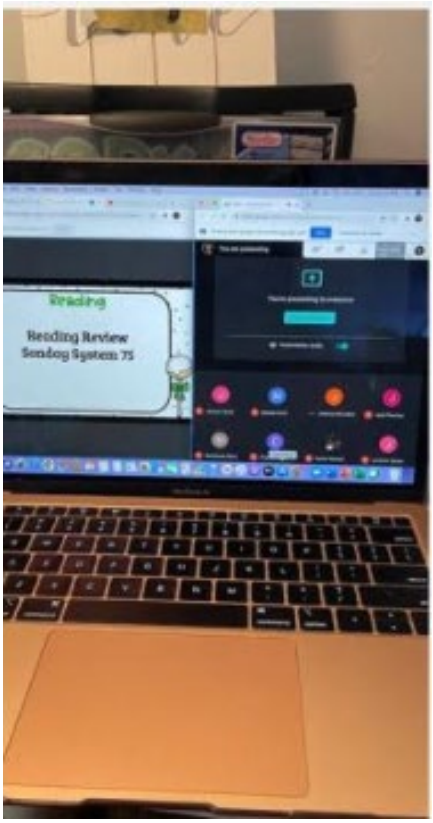

Figure 10. Submission of pedagogical practices during ELA instruction from Participant 1A.

Figures 9 and 10 represent whole groups of instruction inside and outside the classroom, specifically related to literacy instruction. Comparatively, Figure 11 presents the one photograph of small group instruction presented outside of the classroom in a virtual environment. Participant 2A submitted the photograph from Site II.

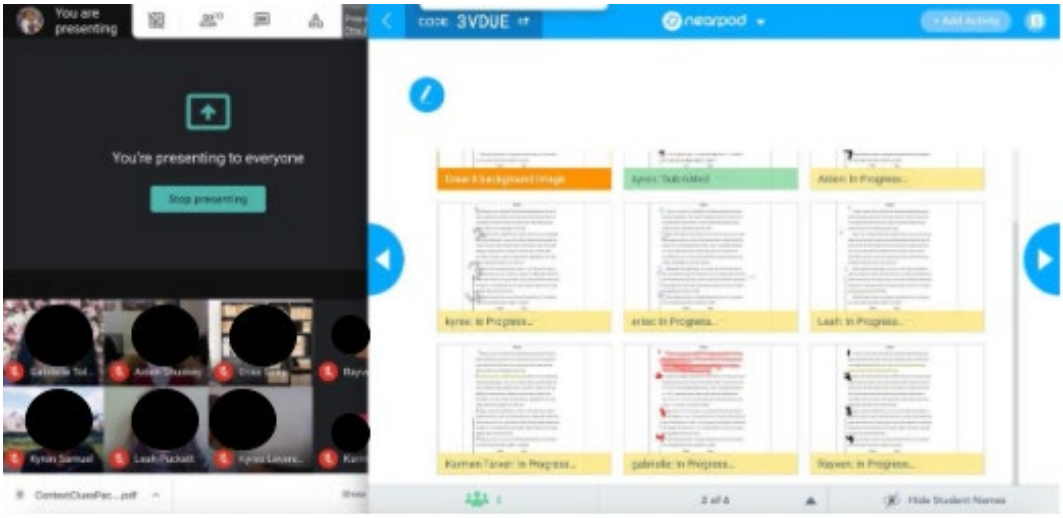

Figure 11. Submission of a small group during ELA instruction from Participant 2A.

In the descriptive narrative provided with the photograph, Participant 2A describes her role during ELA instruction. The participant stated, "The role of the teacher is to monitor and provide redirection and assistance. If a student seems to be having difficulty." Participant 2A continued the descriptive narrative with methods for supporting differentiation during ELA instruction. In assimilation to the descriptive narrative related to her role during ELA instruction, references to described *literacy instruction* and *student performance*.

> This is just one of the three groups I had today. Each group is based on [*sic*] reading abilities. Each group has a different passage with different levels of

difficulty but on the same skill. This photo is of my advanced group. I am less hands on and provide less guidance with this group than I do with my more severe group. With my severe group, I am at a slower pace and do more think-alouds to provide more modeling than the other group.

Participants 1A, 2A, and 2C provided photographs from an educator's perspective. Participant 2B provided a photograph from a student's perspective. Participant 2B provided an image of an assessment in Figure 12 to represent whole group instruction. The participant described instructional strategies presented during ELA instruction. Participant 2B stated, "The students and I read the passage first by using close read [*sic*] strategies to break down the passage and questions."

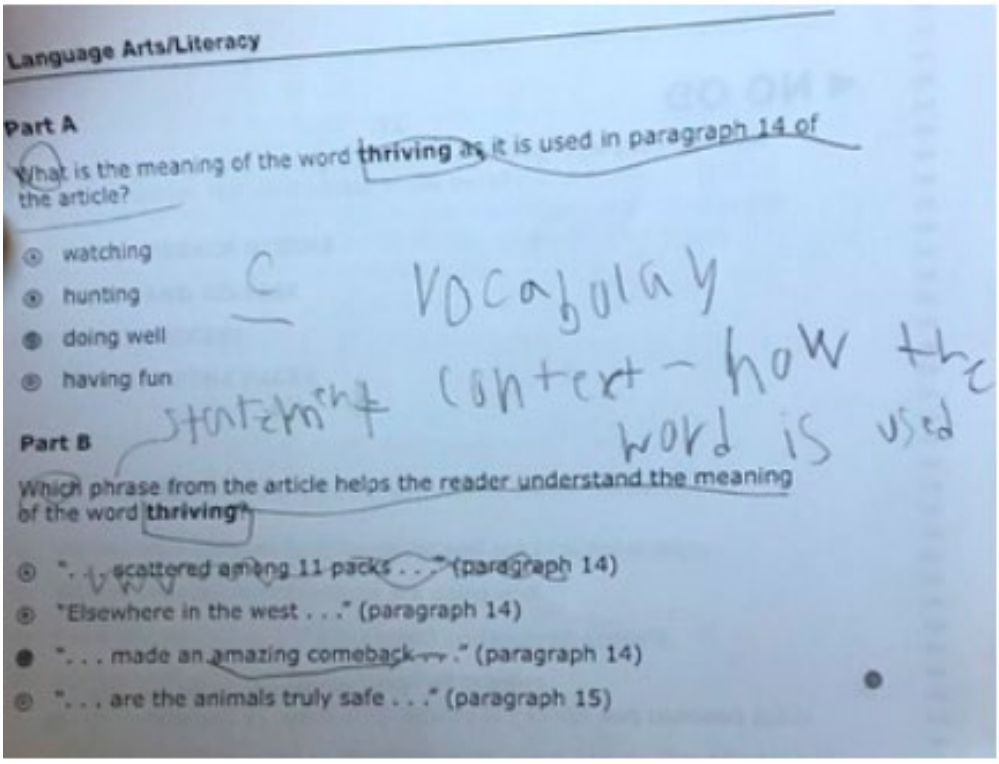

Figure 12. Submission of an assessment from Participant 2B.

Participant 2B continued with a descriptive narrative about her role during ELA instruction. The description included information about pedagogy and methods for presenting differentiated instructional practices, which included details about *literacy instruction* and *student performance*.

> My role as the teacher is to make sure the students understand the purpose of reading passages, [*sic*] and responding to questions that may be difficult. I try my best to make the common core requirement [*sic*] easier [*sic*] so [*sic*] students can understand. I try to implement engaging websites while having fun learning such as [*sic*] Nearpod [*sic*] which offers so many different features [*sic*] Kahoot, Quizizz, Socrative, Edpuzzle, and a few more.

Similar to Participant 2B, Participant 1C provided a photograph from a student's perspective. Figure 13 presents an image of a student text used by Participant 1C during whole group instruction. In connection to Participant 2B, Participant 1C provided details related to *literacy instruction*, *experiences*, and *student performance*. Participant 1C ascertained, "The picture I sent is on the board on a power point [*sic*]. The students also have the page open in their books. They read it in their head, then I read it [sic] differentiate for students who can't read it."

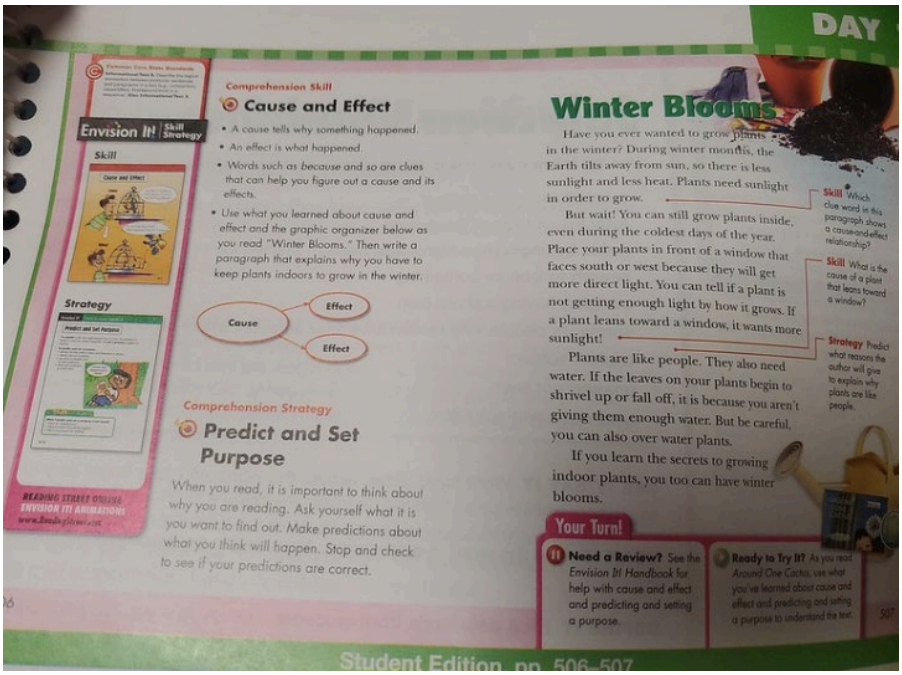

Figure 13. Submission of a student book from Participant 1C.

Participants used a photograph and descriptive narratives to describe and demonstrate their pedagogical practices during ELA instruction. Images reflected whole and small groups of instruction inside and outside the classroom. For instance, participants used descriptive narratives to explain what happens during ELA instruction, their role in teaching CLS, and the differentiated instructional practices used to support CLS development. There were no photo submissions of writing instruction. All data were coded related to *literacy instruction*, *experiences*, and *student performance* for reading instruction.

Open-Ended Questionnaire

I distributed an open-ended questionnaire to participants. The questionnaire was on a Google Form and included four prompts. Data were collected on participants' abilities to meet their students' epistemological needs for CLS development. Participants responded to prompts about four areas: (1) the instructional practices that were not

captured in their photograph submission, (2) their methods for ensuring all students develop CLS, (3) their demonstration of multicultural knowledge during ELA instruction, and (4) the instructional practices applied to promote students' participation in multicultural activities. Questionnaire submissions were anonymous.

I identified seven themes through inductive coding: (1) *literacy instruction*, (2) *student performance*, (3) *experiences*, (4) *cultural referencing*, (5) *student engagement*, (6) *planning*, and (7) *multiculturalism*. The number of times participants mentioned a theme was also included to identify the most discussed themes. As shown in Table 15, I present themes in descending order for the open-ended questionnaire.

Table 15

Inductive Coding for Open-Ended Questionnaire with the Number of Coded References

Themes from Phase III	Number of Coded Themes
Literacy instruction	45
Student performance	33
Multiculturalism	28
Experiences	26
Student engagement	9
Planning	5
Cultural referencing	3

Three of the seven themes were presented in Phases I and II of data collection: (1) *literacy instruction*, (2) *student performance*, and (3) *experiences.* Participants recognized one of the seven themes in Phases I and III of data collection: *cultural referencing*. I also discovered three new themes in Phase III: (1) *student engagemen*t, (2) *planning*, and (3) *multiculturalism*. These three themes emerged to answer research question three: (1) *experiences*, (2) *student performance*, and (3) *multiculturalism*. These three themes were mentioned by 100%, or six participants, on the open-ended questionnaire.

Within the open-ended questionnaire, three themes were coded the most among participants: *literacy instruction* (45), *student performance* (33), and *multiculturalism* (28). Eisner (1997) recognized the need to evaluate what is learned from data. Hence, I reviewed codes included in sentences with *literacy instruction.* Discussions about *literacy instruction* encompassed details about *experiences* and *student performance* for students' CLS development. Hence, *experiences* and *student performance* were selected to answer research question three. The data revealed that *student performance* was discussed more than *experiences*, but both themes answered research question three.

One participant incorporated *literacy instruction* and *student performance* in a response by recording, "We do whole group, then small group. Small group is differentiated on the students' [*sic*] reading level or the skills they are lacking. We also use i-Ready [*sic*] which is tailored to their needs." There was only a difference of two between *multiculturalism* (28) and *experiences* (26) for the most discussed themes. There were minimum references among participants related to *student engagement*, *planning*, and *cultural referencing*.

I identified the relatedness of themes across the three phases of data collection. The connection of themes among the three phases of data collection supported triangulation (Patton, 1999). In contrast to Phases I and II of data collection, all participants did not mention 100% of the themes coded in Phase III. Therefore, I reported the number of participants who mentioned each theme as referenced in previous studies (Blatt & Patrick, 2014; Idema & Patrick, 2019; Truong, 2019). The number of participants who discussed each theme differed. Table 16 presents the percentages for

participants who discussed each theme for the open-ended questionnaire. I adapted Table 16 from a research study on the experiential learning theory, which examined the impact of attendance at science festivals on participants (Idema & Patrick, 2019). Table 16 indicates example quotes from participants on the open-ended questionnaire. Below Table 16 is an interpretative section of the data.

Table 16

Inductive Coding for Open-Ended Questionnaires

Theme	**Total and Percentage of Responses (N=6)**	**Example Quotes from Open-Ended Questionnaire**
Literacy instruction	(5) 83%	I was unable to show the read aloud or writing [plus] typing students do during instruction.
Experiences	(6) 100%	You can't assume all students are aware of certain cultural [backgrounds]…
Student performance	(6) 100%	I was providing verbal feedback about details they missed that were important to comprehending the text.
Cultural referencing	(2) 33%	I understand students in my demographics have limited access to a lot of experiences outside of […]
Student engagement	(5) 83%	They share [the] things they like about different cultures.
Planning	(3) 50%	I like to research my reading lessons before teaching […]
Multiculturalism	(6) 100%	We often discuss different backgrounds and cultures from various countries […]

Accordingly, 100% percent, or six participants, referred to *experiences*, *student performance*, and *multiculturalism* on their open-ended questionnaire. This interpretation included 83%, or five participants, who mentioned *literacy instruction* and *student*

engagement. Respectively, 50%, or 3 participants, mentioned *planning*. This countered 33%, or two participants, who discussed *cultural referencing*. The following three themes: (1) *experiences, (2) student performance*, and (3) *multiculturalism* answered research question three.

Experiences. Participants described *experiences* as they discussed their demonstration of multicultural knowledge and implementation of culturally relevant pedagogies during ELA instruction. One anonymous participant suggested, "When the opportunity presents itself as a teachable moment. I like to tap into real world [*sic*] examples and situations that impact our students." The participant's explanation detailed a connection to *cultural referencing*. "I may pull up videos and pictures of topics that the students may have no background knowledge on." The findings showed other participants detailed using visuals to support the development of their multicultural knowledge and students' knowledge during ELA instruction (Krasnoff, 2016).

Student Performance. The theme *student performance* comprised details aligned with descriptions from Phases I and II of data collection. The recognition of *student performance* incorporated opportunities for participants to discuss their role during literacy instruction and students' academic progress. One anonymous participant outlined the educators' roles during ELA instruction. The participant described an educator's responsibilities and *student performance* when dictating what was not captured in the photograph submission. A synopsis of this quote is included in Table 13 for *literacy instruction.*

> You cannot see my guided instruction. I was providing verbal feedback about details they missed that were important to comprehend the text. I was also

> assisting students who otherwise seemed completely lost on how to approach a text using comprehension strategies.

Furthermore, participants detailed opportunities students received for differentiation. One anonymous participant encompassed details about the *literacy instruction* and *student performance* on the open-ended questionnaire. The anonymous participant provided details about using assessment data for ELA instruction for students' CLS development.

> Based [sic] the data that I received at the beginning of the year from STAR reading, i-Ready reading, weekly reading test [sic], fluency passages, and my observation [*sic*] I analyze and create a realistic goal for my students. I would like the students who are below grade level to gain one year of growth or higher when the tests are administer [*sic*] during the winter, spring, and at the end of the year. The students that are at or above grade level scores [*sic*] shall increase as well. Basically, we put in a lot of work!

Multiculturalism. Anonymous participants' responses pertinent to *multiculturalism* included descriptions associated with *literacy instruction* and *experiences*. Similarly, I identified *literacy instruction* and *experiences* in Phases I and II of data collection. However, multiculturalism was a newly identified theme, which evolved from open-ended questionnaires. One anonymous participant depicted content related to *literacy* instruction and *experiences* in details about *multiculturalism*.

> I try to encourage students to explore, be open minded, and embrace others [*sic*] diversity. Several of our stories that we read are based on different cultural and etc. [*sic*] Students need to be aware of the background [*sic*] and information should be shared prior to and after reading the different stories.

As referenced in Table 16, I found two new themes from an analysis of each participant's open-ended questionnaire: (1) *student engagement* and (2) *planning*. The theme *student engagement* was recorded by 83%, or five participants, for responses related to *multiculturalism*. For example, participants connected their explanations to their demonstration of multicultural knowledge or students' participation in multicultural activities. One anonymous participant described, "I allow them to share their backgrounds and experiences from various places. They often teach us things we don't know." Additionally, two anonymous participants stated, "I try to encourage students to explore…," and "I also invite students to tell about their history or culture."

On the contrary, *planning* was explained by 50%, or three participants, when discussing *multiculturalism*. Participants' inclusion of *planning* was connected explicitly to multicultural knowledge and their abilities to ensure all students develop CLS. According to Table 15, the total codes for *planning* was five. Fisher et al. (2012) and Lozenski (2012) determined planning and the inclusion of cultural teaching practices were necessary for all students' inclusion. One anonymous participant discussed how planning helped to develop multicultural knowledge. "I like to research my reading lessons before teaching because all students aren't aware of certain topics [*sic*] and etc. You can't assume all students are aware of certain cultural [*sic*] because several are not expose [*sic*]" (Anonymous).

The participant's response contained a statement relevant to the theme of *cultural referencing* from Phase I of data collection. Table 16 lists 33%, or two participants, documented statements related to *cultural referencing*. I connected both statements from

participants to their demonstration of *multiculturalism* during ELA instruction. These two statements referenced students as lacking knowledge or "not expos [sic]" (Anonymous).

Participants provided anonymous responses on the open-ended questionnaire to provide data about the pedagogical practices implemented during ELA instruction to meet students' epistemological needs. I compared themes in Phase III to themes from Phases I and II. This supported the triangulation of data (Carter et al., 2014). Respectively, participants described practices related to seven themes. The data revealed three themes of the seven themes that answered research question three: (1) *experiences*, (2) *student performance*, and (3) *multiculturalism*.

Triangulation of Data

I further analyzed findings by reviewing themes from semi-structured interviews, descriptive narratives, and open-ended questionnaires for similarities. For example, Figure 1 of Chapter II includes three topics from a review of the literature: (1) epistemology in ELA, (2) PCK, and (3) CLS. A review of the literature revealed subtopics associated with each topic. The subtopics for epistemology in ELA are educator beliefs, educator preparation programs, and professional learning. Additionally, the subtopics for PCK are literacy instruction and differentiated instruction. Reading are writing are subtopics identified for CLS. Accordingly, I aligned findings from semi-structured interviews, descriptive narratives, and open-ended questionnaires to topics and subtopics from Figure 1. The connection of data to the literature supported an analysis of the findings for the reconceptualization of Figure 1. I present and discuss the redesigned figure in Chapter V.

Summary

I analyzed semi-structured interviews and the open-ended questionnaire with inductive coding. Deductive coding was used to analyze the photographs with descriptive narratives. Codes from semi-structured interviews were linked to descriptive narratives with axial coding. I organized six photographs with IC. Some themes were consistent across the three phases of data collection.

For research question one, participants provided data related to their epistemological beliefs about how students learn CLS. Initially, seven themes were coded. I delineated three of the seven themes to answer research question one: (1) *literacy instruction*, (2) *experiences*, and (3) *student performance*. Similarly, the data revealed *literacy instruction*, *experiences*, and *student performance* in Phase II of data collection.

Participants used descriptive narratives to describe their pedagogical practices during ELA instruction to help student develop CLS. Axial coding was used to link codes from Phase I of data collection to Phase II. Three coded themes answered research question two: (1) *literacy instruction*, (2) *student performance*, and (3) *experiences*. Four themes from Phase I were not coded in Phase II for descriptive narratives. These findings were coupled with an analysis of photographs. Most photographs submitted by participants reflected whole group instruction inside the classroom. One photograph represented small group instruction outside the classroom.

An open-ended questionnaire provided data on educators' beliefs about meeting students' epistemological needs through their pedagogical practices during ELA instruction. Seven themes were coded for open-ended questionnaires. Three of the seven

themes answered research question three: (1) *experiences*, (2) *student performance*, and (3) *multiculturalism*. Two of the three themes, *student performance* and *experiences*, were unanimous from Phases I and II of data collection. I provide an analysis of the findings in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Summary of the Study

The problem for this research study was there is limited research examining the epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices of third grade ELA educators on CLS development. The analysis of epistemology included educators' beliefs about how students learn CLS. The evaluation of pedagogy involved reviewing educators' instructional practices for developing students' CLS. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological and ecological theories of human development provided a theoretical framework to examine third grade educators' epistemologies and pedagogies during ELA instruction.

The findings from this study improve our understanding of the importance of examining educators' beliefs and pedagogical practices about how students learn and develop CLS. Below, I discuss how the findings answered the three research questions identified for this research study.

1. What are the epistemological beliefs of third grade educators in two Title I schools about how students learn CLS?
2. What are the pedagogical practices of third grade educators in two Title I schools as they develop students' CLS?
3. How do third grade educators believe they address the epistemological needs of students through their CLS pedagogical practices.

Analysis of the Findings

This chapter presents the findings discussed in Chapter IV to examine third grade educators' epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices on CLS development. There were three phases of data collection: (1) semi-structured interviews, (2) photographs with descriptive narratives, and (3) an open-ended questionnaire. Interviews were conducted separately at each site for a total of two weeks. The data collection of photographs with descriptive narratives occurred for one week and began after Phase I. The open-ended questionnaire was collected through Google Forms after Phase II. Data collection for the open-ended questionnaire lasted for one week.

Data were coded differently for each phase. Participants' responses from the semi-structured interviews were uploaded into NVivo and analyzed using inductive coding. Codes were determined by inter-rater reliability and added to a codebook. I used axial coding to code participants' descriptive narratives. Appropriately, I used inductive coding to analyze the open-ended questionnaire. Data were consistent across all three phases of data collection. The data collection tools measured what they were intended to measure. This finding is essential to the reliability and validity of the data collection tools selected for this study (Hohamad, Sulaiman, Sern, & Salleh, 2015).

Interviews provided detailed information on educators' beliefs and thoughts connected to how students learn CLS (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The use of photographs represented visual literacy as educators provided data on their pedagogical practices during ELA instruction (Ravas & Stark, 2012). The practices between participants in traditional and virtual settings did not vary. Furthermore, the use of photographs provided a holistic review of educators' teaching and learning (Ravas &

Stark, 2012). On the open-ended questionnaire, educators provided a wide array of responses related to their understanding of multiculturalism and the inclusion of culturally relevant pedagogical practices during ELA instruction (Hyman & Sierra, 2016). The identified methodology and incorporation of three data collection tools contributed to the answers for each research question and supported triangulation of data.

Discussion

Below, I provide a discussion of the results. The discussion is situated within the research questions. I confirmed the findings for each research question with the empirical literature. "To facilitate the identification of common and shared knowledge," (Hughes & DuMont, 1993, p. 785) consistent themes from the three phases of data collection were aligned to the three topics from Figures 1 of Chapter I (1) epistemology in ELA, (2) PCK, and (3) CLS to support the findings. Figure 1 changed based on the findings, and I present an updated interpretation below the discussion for research questions.

Research Question 1: Epistemological beliefs about how students learn CLS

Educators depicted responses related to their epistemological beliefs about how students learn CLS. Their CLS epistemologies included details about the curricular practices used for reading and writing instruction, which included specifics about the organization of instruction and content delivery for ELA instruction (Kelcey & Carlisle, 2013). Educators addressed instructional strategies used to support differentiation for student groupings (Wilson, 2012). The identification of grouping was included to meet students' individual needs (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). Further, educators discussed how differentiation provided all students with diverse opportunities to learn and met each student's individual needs (Lehman, 2017; Stavrou & Koutselini, 2016). Participants

demonstrated an intrinsic ability to understand the importance of evaluating students' performances to identify holistic and individualized instructional aids for CLS development. This examination included a reoccurring responsibility to provide opportunities for learning framed by experiences supportive of CLS.

Participants' representations of learning experiences included personal connections and extended to students. This finding was similar to a research study about preservice educators. Broman (2018) discovered preservice educators' personal and instructional training experiences influenced their epistemologies. Correspondingly, this study included descriptions of participants' personal experiences as students. Details provided described specificities related to how the third grade educators learned to read and activities completed for CLS development.

The learning experiences and activities obtained by participants during ELA instruction differed from their students. In contrast, students acquired real-world connections for enhanced learning activities to support CLS development (Krasnoff, 2016). Learning through different contexts was contributory to CLS development. The recognition of students' differences, learning abilities, and backgrounds supported reading and writing skills. The diversity among students presented participants opportunities to organically incorporate inclusive literacy activities for CLS development (Valtierra & Siegel, 2019). The relatedness of participants' personal experiences to students' learning experiences aligned with my beliefs about teaching and learning. The experiences I encountered as a student and educator in Title I schools influenced my curricular decisions and instructional practices.

Students differed because of their backgrounds and academic performances. Considerations for early education were identified to potentially support students' CLS development. Participants ascribed early preparation was essential to students' CLS learning before their arrival to third grade (Doyle et al., 2012). Early learning included students' access to early education programs and text exposure (Waldfogel, 2012; Reutzel 2015; Yoshikawa et al., 2016). The appropriation for access to early education is noteworthy for policymakers. The connotations of the findings support considerations for funding and an evaluation of content standards in early grades. For instance, sustained funding for early education programs and the connectivity of content standards from early childhood to elementary grades may improve students' school readiness and CLS development.

Additionally, participants determined students' reading levels and performances on weekly and standardized assessments contributed to their literacy development. Begeny et al. (2012), ESSA (2015b), and Murnane et al. (2012) precipitated these factors in their suggestions to identify education policies supportive of changes in ELA standards, accountability testing, and students' development of advanced literacy skills. These focus points were also prevalent for general and special education students, which included an increased emphasis on students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Doyle et al., 2012).

Research Question 2: Pedagogical practices for how students develop CLS

Pedagogical practices used to foster CLS development encompassed whole and small groups of instruction. Photographs submitted by participants represented ELA instruction inside and outside of the classroom. Despite instruction presented inside and

outside classrooms, participants discussed using technology to support ELA instruction in both settings (Costello, 2012). Students in traditional and virtual settings were provided ELA instruction in whole and small groups for CLS development. The content provided by participants in both settings reflected ELA content standards. Participants derived instructional practices based on varying evidence of learning. For example, participants in the virtual environment discussed using observations and student work samples to identify students' academic needs. This practice contrasted participants in a traditional setting who implemented weekly assessments. The instructional settings and evaluation processes differed, but the pedagogical practices used for CLS development were the same. This analysis raises a thought about the relevance of regular assessments to determine students' academic performance. More importantly, the applicability of educational stakeholders' determination of students' promotion or retention by their performance on a state assessment.

Technology was used to enhance student engagement and support guided practice (Hicks & Turner, 2013). The use of technology was a shared practice by participants in traditional and virtual settings. Participants provided details about how they used technology to support instructional practices associated with students' development of phonics skills (Northrop and Killeen, 2013).

Curricular resources were used for CLS development with whole and small groups of students during ELA instruction in traditional and virtual settings (Mayer et al., 2016). Subsequently, the instructional practices between participants in traditional and virtual settings aligned. The consistency of pedagogical practices is critical for post-secondary institutions' educational stakeholders to contemplate when training preservice

educators. Preservice educators should be provided opportunities to teach in traditional and virtual environments. The applicability of teaching in traditional and virtual settings during practicum can support the installation of best practices.

Descriptive narratives provided explicit details about the pedagogical practices used to support students in whole and small groups within the ELA classroom for traditional and virtual teaching (Costello, 2012). Descriptions included details about curriculum programs such as i-Ready, Sonday System, and Reading Street. Curriculum programs supported students' development of phonetics skills for reading. Additionally, participants discussed their use of data to monitor students' progress and identify their individual needs for additional CLS support (Stavrou and Koutselini, 2016).

Students' lack of phonetic skills was interpreted to affect their academic performance. Descriptive narratives provided by participants included details about instructional methods to improve students' reading and writing performances (Kelsey & Carlisle, 2013). They shared varying pedagogical practices for high, low, or grade-level reading groups (Andrus et al., 2018). These descriptions overlapped with descriptions of their role during whole and small groups of instruction. Many of their roles included providing students with individualized instruction to support CLS development (Andrus et al., 2018; Pianta et al., 2016). This finding was essentials as students' differences affect their learning (Moos & Ringdal, 2012).

Participants used learning experiences to describe students' learning activities for reading and writing practices (Gee, 2013). These descriptions often overlapped with differentiated instructional practices based on their academic performance (Tobin & Tippett, 2014). Unlike the descriptions provided during semi-structured interviews,

participants did not provide information about generating learning experiences to support students' lack of background knowledge. Learning experiences were restricted to instructional practices for CLS development.

The descriptions detailed reading and writing practices and the use of curricular resources. Moreover, the inclusion of student groupings for ELA instruction facilitated aspects of their pedagogical practices. Participants referenced differentiated instructional practices to support CLS development in whole and small groups among students in traditional and virtual settings.

Research Question 3: Meetings students' epistemological needs through CLS practices

Participants responded to their perceived abilities to meet students' epistemological needs for CLS development. Explanations of ELA instruction entailed descriptions of their instructional responsibilities to monitor students' academic progress. The organization of instructional materials and the feedback provided to students throughout the learning process were necessary for student success (Kelcey & Carlisle, 2013). Correspondingly, educator preparation programs include instructional planning and collective feedback related to planning processes and reviewing content standards. However, educator preparation programs omit data monitoring and training practices related to the inclusion of culturally relevant pedagogies. The practicality of including opportunities for preservice educators to experience these practices is needed to support their development as effective educators during formal training.

The use of culturally relevant pedagogical practices supported participants' endeavors to meet students' epistemological needs. Participants included details

about ELA instruction and students' opportunities for learning. As an educator in Title I schools, I used diverse practices to support student learning. However, instructional decisions to include different contexts for learning were propagated by personal experiences as a student. The incorporation of various learning opportunities to support and extend learning may not be a rudimentary process for all educators. Constructively, educators in this study used culturally relevant pedagogies. They understood the individual needs of their students based on observations and regular monitoring of students' performances. Seemingly, educators' representation of experiences evolved.

Multicultural activities provided students opportunities to explore different cultures. The implementation of multicultural activities required preparation on behalf of the participants. For instance, they prepared for student's individual instructional needs and the inclusion of multicultural activities. Effective planning was identified as a necessary process to support student's background knowledge (Fisher et al., 2012). Planning included ideas about students' socioeconomic backgrounds. Participants proclaimed demographical factors contributed to students' limited access to other cultures (Darling-Hammond, 2013). The consideration of students' limited access to diverse cultures contributed to participants' planning for engaging learning opportunities and developing multicultural learning experiences (Anderson & Leventhal, 2014; Vaughn, 2018).

Participants acknowledged ELA instruction was a part of their efforts to meet students' epistemological needs. They described providing students with opportunities to become engaged during ELA instruction. Students explored different cultures through the curriculum. Furthermore, students were provided opportunities to teach peers about their

culture (Apfelbaum et al., 2012). The connectedness of curriculum and culture facilitated active participation and an inclusive ELA classroom (Cooper, 2014; Andrus et al., 2018).

The research was critical to participants' ELA instruction as they presented content on different cultures to students. Instruction for multicultural knowledge was supported through photographs, videos, and students' opportunities to share information about their culture. Similarly, educators discussed using photographs and videos to increase their multicultural acknowledge (Gay, 2013). Students were encouraged to participate in multicultural learning by presenting information to their peers and through the exposure of texts during ELA instruction (Lozenski, 2012).

Participants represented primary and secondary views about reading and writing. Explanations about reading included instructional practices during ELA instruction. Reading was esteemed as the predictor of students' academic performances. In contrast, the writing was not described directly or evaluated as closely as reading. Participants broached the topic of writing as they discussed reading. For example, students needed to write in order to practice and demonstrate what they learned. The concept of CLS was separate for instruction compared to an inclusive practice as noted in education policy (ESSA, 2015b).

Reconceptualizing Figure 1

I used data expansion and reconceptualization to align topics from Figure 1 to themes from Phases I, II, and III (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011). This examination process provided in-depth information about the data. Eisner (1997) discussed the importance of extending data analysis beyond representation to a form of understanding. A representation of data for understanding extends "the nature of knowledge and the

relationship between what one knows and how it is represented" (Eisner, 1997, p. 4). Based on what I learned from this research study, I revised Figure 1 to represent the findings from the study in compilation to the empirical literature.

Previously, Figure 1 included three topics: (1) epistemology in ELA, (2) PCK, and (3) CLS. The literature revealed subtopics associated with each topic. For reference, the subtopics for epistemology in ELA were educator beliefs, educator preparation programs, and professional learning. The subtopics for PCK were literacy instruction and differentiated instruction. Additionally, the subtopics for CLS were reading and writing. Figure 14 portrays the topics epistemology in ELA, PCK, and CLS with the subtopics from Figure 1. I inserted the newly identified subtopics from this research study. The subtopics included in the revised figure were consistent across all three phases of data collection: *student performance* and *experiences*. The new subtopics are filled with gray. In contrast to Figure 1, where the topics are presented as three nested systems with some overlapping subtopics as indicated by the arrows, Figure 14 illustrates the subtopics as cross-cutting qualities for CLS development. Additionally, educators' beliefs were identified to overlap into PCK with educator preparation programs and professional learning. This was determined as educators' beliefs were aligned with their pedagogical practices.

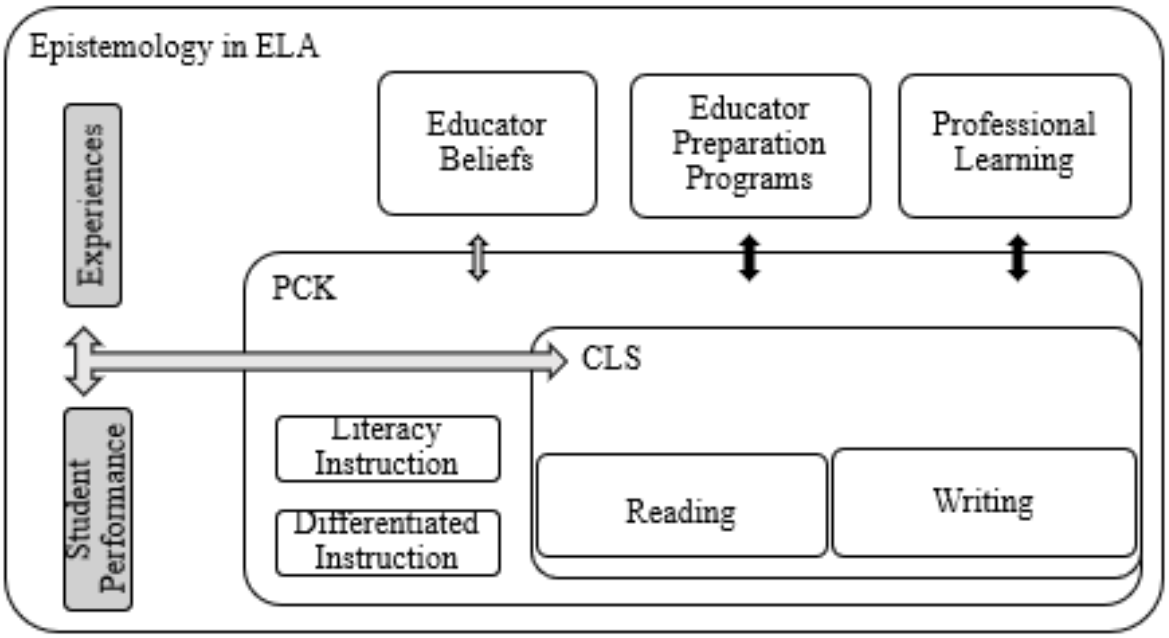

Figure 14. Revised qualities related to students' development of comprehensive literacy skills inclusive of an educators' epistemologies and pedagogical content knowledge.

The findings from this research study extends the literature. Student performance and experiences are cross-cutting qualities to epistemology in ELA, PCK, and CLS. This finding is an opening to new understandings about novice educators and preservice educators. Seemingly, novice and preservice educators enter teaching with a myriad of experiences. Their experiences contribute to their epistemologies about curriculum and instruction. The recognition of the potential connectivity between novice and preservice educators' epistemologies has implications for educator preparations programs and policymakers.

Implications for Teaching Practice and Policy

The preparation of novice and preservice educators at the beginning of their teaching practice may require support throughout their first teaching year. Based on the findings from this study, there are implications for informal examinations of novice and

preservice educators' pedagogical practices and the connectivity of personal experiences for improved PCK.

Participants expressed the need for autonomy related to professional development. Implications from this study suggest incorporating a needs assessment to identify professional development sessions connected to educators' epistemologies and pedagogies. Participants wanted to participate in professional development sessions linked to their classroom experiences and practices. The use of academic coaches or educator mentors would support the examination of novice and preservice educators' pedagogical practices. The feedback provided by academic coaches and educator mentors may contribute to individualized and group professional development.

Observations should extend to the inclusion of co-planning sessions between academic coaches, educator mentors, and participating educators for improved pedagogical practices. Moreover, some participants possessed limited recollection about their experiences in educator preparation programs. They connected most discussions about reading preparation to the experiences obtained during their first year of teaching. This implication perpetuates the need to provide sustained support to novice educators during their first year of teaching and sustained support to preservice educators throughout their practicum experience. The need for increased personnel for instructional supports is of importance to policymakers for adequate educational funding.

Relationship to the Theoretical Framework

This research study combined the bioecological and ecological components of Bronfenbrenner's human development theories. The bioecological theory presents human development occurs through the process-person-context-time model (Bronfenbrenner &

Morris, 2006). This is an extension of the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). I examined educators' beliefs and pedagogical practices on CLS development with components of the bioecological model through an extended examination of the ecological system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 1988). I included the process-person-context-time model to represent the recurring process that occurs within the five areas of the ecological system: (1) microsystem, (2) mesosystem, (3) exosystem, (4) macrosystem, and (5) chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The relatedness of data from the study to the theoretical framework frames the findings within Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development. Below, I detail how the findings connect to the theoretical framework in Figure 2.

The microsystem included two topics: (1) instructional delivery and (2) differentiated instruction. Participants discussed in semi-structured interviews and descriptive narratives their pedagogical practices during ELA instruction to support CLS through differentiation. Participants included specificities about ELA instruction in the open-ended questionnaire as they discussed their pedagogical practices. They provided extended details about literacy instruction and their use of multicultural activities to support differentiation during ELA instruction. All references were directly related to educators' beliefs and pedagogical practices involving students' CLS development.

Personal experiences and learning activities were topics for the mesosystem. Participants provided details about their learning experiences as students and the learning experiences of students during ELA instruction. They connected experiences to their beliefs about how students learn and develop CLS. For instance, participants discussed how they used learning activities to promote student engagement and opportunities to

incorporate multiculturalism inside of the classroom. The use of classroom experiences to support students' learning and development of CLS was in addition to experiences students encountered outside of the classroom in traditional environments.

Participants discussed their decision-making process and provided cultural references to explain their instructional choices for ELA instruction. This concept is connected to the exosystem. For example, participants recognized students from low socioeconomic backgrounds lacked exposure to other cultures. As a result, they spent time researching topics before presenting the information during ELA instruction. Thoughtful consideration was given to what was taught and relevant experiences needed to support students' CLS development. Participants' decision-making and classroom behaviors were connected to three concepts: (1) district expectations, (2) students' academic performances, and (3) students' socioeconomic backgrounds. These concepts were not a student's sole responsibility as understood within the exosystem.

Two topics were identified for macrosystem: (1) reading and (2) writing. In further explanation of ELA instruction, participants explained they could not capture students' engagement as they completed tasks connected with CLS learning. Additionally, participants explained students' performances in reading was a primary focus and writing was secondary. Consequently, both are necessary for students to progress to the next grade level. A lack of shared importance was indicative of barriers beyond their control. Nevertheless, reading and writing are skills students will need throughout their life.

A generalized interpretation of the findings indicated Bronfenbrenner's bioecological and ecological human development theories supported this study. However,

there is another theory to consider for comparison. The transformative theory can be plausible for a future research study. Recommendations for using the transformative theory are detailed in the section on recommendations for future research.

Limitations of the Study

The school district identified for this research study has three elementary schools and one intermediate school. The two sites selected were elementary and intermediate schools. All participants for this study were female. The lack of diversity may have resulted from the identification of the selected schools.

One of the two unselected elementary schools did not have enough participants to fulfill the sample. There were less than three third grade ELA educators located at the school. The second elementary school did not have enough educators with three or more years of experience. Thus, both schools did not meet the qualifications for participation in this study. The selected intermediate school did have a male teacher, but he opted not to participate.

Due to the Coronavirus, the instructional expectations changed for educators. Some educators were required to provide instruction in traditional and virtual settings. However, some educators were selected to teach only in a traditional or virtual setting. These instructional changes may have limited the recruitment of the male participant, because there are increased job responsibilities.

During the axial coding of descriptive narratives, I noted four themes were not referenced: (1) *reading preparation*, (2) *professional development*, (3) *cultural referencing*, and (4) *barriers*. The omission of the four themes may have occurred because I modified the Phase II data collection tool. The initial data collection tool

required participants to capture six photographs of whole and small groups during ELA instruction. Participants were arranged to answer six prompts and provide one photograph representative of each prompt. Due to the instructional changes for educators because of the Coronavirus, participants were instructed to capture one photograph of whole or small groups during ELA instruction and answer three prompts. Participants used one photograph to represent the three prompts. I obtained approval from CSU's IRB for changes to the data collection tool (Appendix R). Changes were made before the beginning of the study. Nevertheless, these changes may have limited the data I was able to collect from participants, which may have contributed to the omission of the four themes.

Recommendations for Future Research

Data collected from educators represented CLS development as a process experienced by educators and students in an ELA classroom. Educators were models, and students were observers (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). The interactions between educators and students portrayed Bronfenbrenner's bioecological and ecological human development theories. Contrarily, the data from this research study did not examine ecology beyond a classroom setting.

A lack of contemplation about the ecological theory beyond a classroom setting may reduce educators' considerations for students to experience "…integral education that will contest the vision of education for the global marketplace" (O'Sullivan, 2002, p. 2). The findings from this study support a need to examine educators' epistemologies and pedagogies on students' development of sustainable living patterns.

A future research study could examine the ecological theory in the context of sustainable living patterns compared to human development (O'Sullivan, 2002). For instance, researchers could examine educators' epistemologies and pedagogies on students' development of sustainable living patterns in elementary grades. A varied view of ecology through a curricular focus on social, political, and economic changes may increase the likelihood of social integration for all students, including developing sustainable living patterns through curricular studies (Gay, 2013; Lozenski, 2012; O'Sullivan, 2002).

Limitations of this research study were a lack of diverse participants and the new expectations for educators to teach inside and outside ELA classrooms. Thus, all participants were female, and there was a change in data collection for Phase II. Future studies may benefit from the inclusion of another content area. The connection of social studies may support the inclusion of diverse participants and social, political, and economic content. Thereupon, students' participation in an inclusive curriculum may transcend their identification of personal benefits associated with sustainable living patterns.

Implications of the Study

The significance of the study was to improve educators' instructional preparations and practices for teaching CLS. Educators were selected from Title I schools, because research suggested students from low socioeconomic backgrounds faced an increased likelihood of reading difficulties (Doyle et al., 2012; Heckman, 2011; Reardon et al., 2012). The findings were consistent across the three types of data collection. I analyzed the data and discovered educators' epistemological beliefs aligned with their pedagogical

practices. The study suggests educators' beliefs about knowledge connect to their pedagogical practices. Brownlee et al. (2012) and Irby et al. (2013) determined educators' epistemological beliefs framed students' learning through an analysis of the curriculum, instructional practices, and students' performances.

District administration responsible for professional learning could benefit from planning development sessions aligned with educators' preferences. This assertion could benefit educators and students. Santos and Miguel (2019) established educators benefited from professional learning aligned to their beliefs and pedagogical practices. Hence, improved professional learning may change educators' pedagogical practices. Kimathi and Bertman (2019) determined educators' pedagogical practices changed after they participated in professional learning where they were engaged. To ensure sustainability, the continued support of educators could extend beyond a professional learning session.

Dagen and Morewood (2016) found the support of educators was an on-going process. Similar to the study conducted with early childhood educators, district administration could develop sustained opportunities for educators to connect between professional learning sessions (Dagen & Morewood, 2016). The connectivity of educators could include educators within and across disciplines. Additionally, policymakers could use these findings to continue identifying the need for educational policies supportive of professional development funding (ESSA, 2015a; U. S. Department of Education, 2018). Policymakers could connect educational policies to improving educators' pedagogical practices through increased funding for professional learning (NCLB, 2001; U. S. Department of Education, 2018).

Similarly, the findings from this study may benefit institutions of higher education. Broman (2018) determined pre-service educators' epistemologies evolved. The data revealed participants' epistemologies and pedagogies were consistent. Universities could consider developing transitional programs to provide sustained support to pre-service educators' as they transition to their first year of teaching.

Dissemination of the Findings

I will share the findings with the district administration and school personnel of the cooperating school district. Dissemination of the findings will include the Superintendent and principals at Sites I and II. Due to the Coronavirus, I will conduct a review of the findings remotely via Zoom. The study results on educators' epistemologies and pedagogies will help district administration and school personnel generate more personalized professional learning opportunities for educators.

Conclusion

Creswell (2014) wrote individuals' understanding increased through interactions among their environment, community, and world. The implementation of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological and ecological theories of human development encapsulated this idea. Educators described how their epistemological beliefs and pedagogical practices contributed to students' learning and development of CLS.

Educators participated in three phases of data collection: (1) semi-structured interviews, (2) photographs with descriptive narratives, and (3) an open-ended questionnaire. I strategically selected the research design and data collection tools. I selected an intrinsic case study, because I wanted to know more about the similarities and differences between educators' beliefs and classroom practices. Additionally, I wanted to

gather data from educators' perspectives about how they believed students learned CLS. The examination included an analysis of students' development of CLS beyond standardized assessments. Specifically, I wanted to gather data from participants responsible for students' learning. The quota sample was critical, because educators devote time to monitoring students' learning and performances.

The use of semi-structured interviews allowed educators to share their roles and daily instruction occurrences in an ELA classroom. Participants' interviews unveiled findings not documented in standardized assessments. However, the analysis is relevant to students' academic performances. Educators' supported evidence of their pedagogical practices with photographs and descriptive narratives. The photographs displayed whole and small groups of instruction mentioned by educators.

Nonetheless, the descriptive narratives echoed information provided by participants in their semi-structured interviews. Seemingly, patterns emerged in the data. The continued alignment of educators' beliefs and practices remained as they completed the open-ended questionnaire. Themes identified in Phase I emerged in Phases II and III. For the majority, data were consistent across the three phases of data collection. Perhaps, teachers are making a difference and following best practices.

Educators expressed their beliefs for an inclusive curriculum based on their students' socioeconomic backgrounds. Their pedagogical practices supported those beliefs. Educators worked to develop their multicultural knowledge and incorporate opportunities for multiculturalism. Participants used culturally relevant pedagogies for students' CLS development. They described using one or more of these three practices: (1) the utilization of visual aids and props to support literacy instruction, (2) regularly

monitoring students' understanding of content through differentiated instructional practices, and (3) connecting students' learning to real-life experiences (Krasnoff, 2016). Educators recognized the experiences provided during literacy instruction were related to students' CLS development. Evaluating students' performances provided educators with opportunities to monitor students' progress and evaluate their needs for individualized instructional support. Overall, educators connected their personal beliefs to their practices in the ELA classroom.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
Qualitative Study Research Proposal Letter

Date

Dear (Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent)

(School District) is being asked to participate in a qualitative research study to examine third grade English Language Arts (ELA) educators' beliefs and practices related to students' development of reading and writing skills. There are no benefits to individual participants. The benefit to society is that if the data collection tools are valid, they can be used in future studies to evaluate educators' beliefs and instructional practices on students' development of skills. Here is a brief overview of the proposed research study.

What: This will be a qualitative intrinsic case study.

Who: The sample will include third grade ELA educators from two Title I schools within your district. Three educators will be selected from each school to participate in this qualitative study.

Why: The purpose of this study is to examine third grade ELA educators' beliefs and practices on how students learn to read and write.

How: Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews, photographs of literacy instruction (excluding students' faces), and an open-ended questionnaire. All submissions are confidential. None of the procedures are experimental. The data collected from this study will not be used in future research projects.

When: The research study will last four weeks.

Where: All data collection will occur remotely. Semi-structured interviews will take place through Zoom. Photographs and the open-ended questionnaire will be completed electronically via email.

Please contact me for questions via telephone (334-695-7920) or email (williams_nina1@columbusstate.edu). Thank you for assisting me with this research study.

Sincerely,

Nina Williams
Doctoral Candidate Columbus State University

Appendix B
Introduction to Qualitative Study Email

Date

Dear (Principal Name)

(School Name) is being asked to participate in a qualitative research study to examine third grade English Language Arts educators' beliefs and instructional practices on students' development of reading and writing skills. The Alabama Literacy Act has placed a great emphasis on the literacy development of students in grades kindergarten through third. Although, participants will not benefit directly from participating in this study, they can contribute to society.

Three third grade ELA educators will be asked to participate over a four-week period. Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews, photographs (excluding students' faces), and an open-ended questionnaire. Participation in this research is completely voluntary. Participants may stop participation at any time. There will be no penalty for withdrawal from the study.

I am certified through the Collaborative Institute Training Initiative. None of the procedures are experimental. All data collection methods will be conducted by me. There will be no identifiable participant information available. Responses will remain confidential. The data from this study will not be used or distributed for any other study. All data from the research study will be physically destroyed after a year.

As a follow-up, I will contact you via telephone to discuss any questions. If you desire to speak before my follow-up correspondence, please contact me via telephone (334-695-7920) or email (williams_nina1@columbusstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Nina Williams
Doctoral Candidate Columbus State University

Appendix C
Qualitative Study Initial Recruitment Email

Date

Dear (Name of Potential Participant)

I am asking for your participation in a qualitative study to support my research as a doctoral candidate at Columbus State University. The purpose of the research study is to examine third grade English Language Arts (ELA) educators' beliefs and instructional practices on students' development of reading and writing skills.

The Alabama Literacy Act has placed a great emphasis on the literacy development of students in grades kindergarten through third. Additionally, third grade has been identified as a pivotal time in students' academic success. You will not acquire personal benefits from participating in this study. However, you have the capacity to contribute to society. Your feedback will support a closely examined view in educational research into educators' epistemologies and pedagogies related to literacy instruction.

You were selected from your school's website because you are a third grade ELA educator. The research study will last four weeks. There are specific criteria for participating in the study. Hence, I am requesting you complete the Qualitative Study Participation Study Survey attached to this email. The survey will be used to ensure potential participants meet the criteria for participation in this research study. After completing the survey, please return the document to me within a week of receipt by using the email address provided below. Your responses are confidential. The data collected from this study will not be used in future research projects.

If selected to participate in this research study, an Introduction to Qualitative Study Participant Email, Columbus State University's Informed Consent Form, and the Semi-Structured Interview Notification will be provided to you within a week. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. Furthermore, you may stop your participation at any time. If you do not want to participate or withdraw from the study early, there will be no penalty.

For questions, please contact me via telephone (334-695-7920) or email (williams_nina1@columbusstate.edu). I thank you for considering participation in this research study.

Sincerely,

Nina Williams
Doctoral Candidate Columbus State University

Appendix D
Qualitative Study Participation Survey

Date

Dear (Name of Potential Participant)

I appreciate your consideration to voluntarily participate in this qualitative study. To ensure you meet the participant qualifications for this research study, please answer the questions below. Thank you for taking your time to complete this brief survey.

1. Do you teach third grade English Language Arts in a self-contained classroom?

   ____ YES ___ NO

2. Do you have three or more years of teaching experience?

   ____ YES ___ NO

3. Do you have an undergraduate degree in education?

   ____ YES ___ NO

4. How long have you been an educator?

   ____ 0-2 Years ____ 3-6 Years ____ 7 + Years

If you meet the qualifications for this research study, you will be contacted via email within a week to receive the following: An Introduction to Qualitative Study Participant Email, Columbus State University's Informed Consent Form, and the Semi-Structured Interview Notification. Please contact me via telephone (334-695-7920) or email (williams_nina1@columbusstate.edu) for queries.

Sincerely,

Nina Williams
Doctoral Candidate Columbus State University

Appendix E
Introduction to Qualitative Study Participant Email

Date

Dear (Participant Name)

(Participant Name), thank you for volunteering to participate in this research study.

Six third grade English Language Arts educators will be selected to participate over a four-week period. Data will be collected through a semi-structured interview, photographs (excluding students' faces), and an open-ended questionnaire.

Please find two documents attached to this email: (1) Columbus State University's Informed Consent Form and (2) the Semi-Structured Interview Notification. Please read, complete, and submit the informed consent form to me via email. Consent is required for participation in this research study.

The Semi-Structured Interview Notification will be used to schedule your semi-structured interview. I ask that you read the notification and identify your preferred methods for participating in the semi-structured interview. The notification should be returned to me along with the informed consent form.

To ensure your confidentiality during the research process, you have been assigned an identifier: Site:____ Letter: ____. Please use the identifier in lieu of other identifiable information such as your name and school during data collection for this research study.

If you have any questions, please contact me via telephone (334-695-7920) or email (williams_nina1@columbusstate.edu). Again, thank you for volunteering to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Nina Williams
Doctoral Candidate Columbus State University

Appendix F
Semi-Structured Interview Notification

Date

Dear (Participant Identifier)

You have been selected to participate in a qualitative research study to examine third grade English Language Arts educators' beliefs and instructional practices on students' development of reading and writing skills.

Data collection will begin with semi-structured interviews. The purpose of this notification is to allow you to document your preferences for the interview. Please complete the contents in the box below and return this document to me via email within the week of receipt. A week before the scheduled semi-structured interview begins, you will be emailed the Qualitative Study Follow-Up Email confirming your preferred methods for meeting.

If you have any questions, please contact me via telephone (334-695-7920) or email (williams_nina1@columbusstate.edu).

Please select one of the following.

I would like to conduct my semi-structured interview by Virtual Connection (Zoom):

_____ Preferred Day of the Week _____ Preferred Time

Sincerely,

Nina Williams
Doctoral Candidate Columbus State University

Appendix G
Qualitative Study Follow-Up Email

Date

Dear (Participant Name)

This email is generated to confirm your preferences for participating in the semi-structured interview.

Setting: Zoom

Date:

Time:

This follow-up email will be resent to you via email the day before your scheduled interview. The email will include credentials for connecting to the Zoom meeting and the semi-structured interview protocol and question prompts.

If you have any questions or need to change this scheduled interview, I will be glad to make accommodations. Please contact me via telephone (334-695-7920) or email (williams_nina1@columbusstate.edu).

Again, thank you for volunteering to participate in this research study.

Sincerely,

Nina Williams
Doctoral Candidate Columbus State University

Appendix H
Qualitative Study Replacement Email

Date

Dear (Participant Name)

This correspondence is generated in continuation to the Qualitative Study Follow-Up email related to participation in this research study.

I received your response on the Semi-Structured Interview Notification on (Include Date Signed on Recognition Email) the interview. However, I have been unable to reach you via email to continue with data collection. As a reminder, your participation in this research study is voluntary. Moreover, I hope that you decide to continue participation in this research study.

In the event I do not receive a response from you confirming your willingness to continue participation in this research study within one week of this disseminated email, I will accept the lack of correspondence as confirmation of your decision to discontinue participation in this study.

I appreciate your willingness to participate in this research study and provide your professional expertise. If you have any questions, please contact me via telephone (334-695-7920) or email (williams_nina1@columbusstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Nina Williams
Doctoral Candidate Columbus State University

Appendix I
Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Date

Dear (Participant Identifier)

Here are the expectations and procedures for the semi-structured interview. As the interviewer, I will provide the following:

1. Consent from the interviewer to participate in the study through Columbus State University's Institutional Review Board
2. A suitable place for the interview at the interviewee's discretion
3. An opportunity for the interviewer and interviewee to provide an introduction
4. An overview of the research and purpose of the identified data collection tool
5. Generate questions for the semi-structured interview but remain flexible
6. Recognition that the semi-structured interview will be recorded through notes and audio as well as transcribed
7. Provide probes to obtain additional information, when needed
8. Provide a courteous and professional environment throughout the semi-structured interview process

Nina Williams
Doctoral Candidate Columbus State University

Appendix J
Semi-Structured Interview Prompts

These question prompts will be used by the interviewer for the interviewees. The interviewer's use of these questions will provide in-depth data on third grade English Language Arts educators' epistemological beliefs related to the development of comprehensive literacy skills.

1. How were you prepared to become a reading teacher?
2. What are your beliefs about how students learn to read and write?
3. How do you help students develop comprehensive literacy skills?
4. What instructional strategies are used most often in your classroom to help all students learn comprehensive literacy skills?
5. How does professional learning support you with teaching comprehensive literacy skills?

Appendix K
Photograph Prompts

Capture one photograph of whole group or small group instruction to answer the question prompts on instructional practices used during English Language Arts (ELA) instruction. One photograph will be submitted for the three question prompts. Additionally, provide a descriptive narrative to describe how the selected photograph is being used to answer each question prompt. The photograph and narratives will provide in-depth data on third grades ELA educators' pedagogical practices related to the development of comprehensive literacy skills.

Refrain from capturing images of students' faces. The photograph should be taken while located behind or beside students. If students' faces are included in the image, they must be blackened out with digital photo editing before submission.

1. What happens during literacy instruction?
2. What is the teacher's role during reading instruction?
3. How do you support differentiation during literacy instruction?

Appendix L
Qualitative Study Photography Checklist

Please follow the directives below for downloading the photography application as well as capturing and submitting the photograph of English Language Arts instruction, which will include whole group or small group.

1. Download the Flickr application to your mobile device from Google Play Store (Android) or App Store (iPhone).
2. Click ‘allow’ to ensure your location is accessible for geotagging the photograph.
3. Click the + symbol at the bottom of the screen to access the camera (see A below).
4. Click the camera icon to take a photograph.
5. If you select to use the photograph, click ‘next’.
6. Type each question number and provide a descriptive narrative detailing how the selected photograph answers each question prompt one through three.
7. Click the lock and select ‘private’.
8. Click the location tab to the right of the lock.
9. Select the appropriate location from the generated list.
10. Click ‘upload’.
11. When the photograph is captured, click ‘select’ and identify the photograph for submission by selecting the circle beside the photograph.
12. Click the arrow to share and input my email address: williams_nina1@columbusstate.edu.

If you have any questions about the usage of Flickr, please contact me for questions via telephone (334-695-7920) or email (williams_nina1@columbusstate.edu).

Appendix M
Open-Ended Questionnaire

Answer each open-ended questionnaire prompt. These questions will provide in-depth data on third grades English Language Arts (ELA) educators' perceptions of their abilities to meet the epistemological needs of students through culturally relevant practices for reading and writing development. Click 'submit' after completing all responses to the open-ended questionnaire.

1. Tell me what you were not able to capture in the photograph related to instructional practices during ELA instruction.
2. How do you ensure all students are successful with developing comprehensive literacy skills in your classroom?
3. How do you demonstrate your multicultural knowledge during ELA instruction?
4. How do you support students' participation in multiculturalism during ELA instruction?

Appendix N
Qualitative Study Thank You Email

Date

Dear (Participant Name)

I appreciate you participating in this qualitative research study. I commend you for contributing your time and expertise. Without you, this research study would not have been possible. You have contributed a wealth of knowledge to me and society. Truly, I appreciate your dedication to me and to all who will benefit from the findings in this research study.

You are greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Nina Williams
Doctoral Candidate Columbus State University

Appendix O
Institutional Review Board Informed Consent

COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Informed Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted by Nina Williams, a doctoral candidate, in the Counseling, Foundations, and Leadership department at Columbus State University. This project is student-led and supervised by Dr. P. Patrick.

I. Purpose:

The purpose of this project is to examine third grade English Language Arts educators' beliefs and describe their instructional practices on the development of students' reading and writing skills.

II. Procedures:

Data collection will include semi-structured interviews, photographs, and an open-ended questionnaire of third grade educators. Semi-structured interviews will be virtual. Photographs and the open-ended questionnaire will be electronic. Semi-structured interviews will last for two weeks. Photographs and the open-ended questionnaire will both last for one week each. Semi-structured interviews should take 30 minutes to complete but will not exceed an hour. Photographs with descriptive narratives should not last more than a week with 15 minutes per the designated day to complete. The open-ended questionnaire should not take more than 20 minutes to complete. The data collected from this study will not be used in future research projects.

III. Possible Risks or Discomforts:

The potential risk could be discomfort from participants answering questions, which may challenge them to provide responses contradictory to district or administrative guidelines related to literacy instruction. The researcher is allowing participants to participate in a virtual setting with the time of the semi-structured interview selected by the participant, and submissions to the open-ended questionnaire are anonymous to minimize discomfort. Another potential risk could be discomfort from unfamiliarity with a new device while taking pictures. The researcher is allowing participants to take photographs on their own device to minimize discomfort.

IV. Potential Benefits:

There are no benefits to individual participants. The benefit to society is that if the data collection tools are valid, they can be used in future studies to evaluate educators' beliefs and instructional practices on students' development of skills.

V. Costs and Compensation:

There is no individual compensation for participation in this research study. There is no cost to the individual for participation in this research study.

VI. Confidentiality:

Data collected from participants will be submitted with the site number and letter assigned to each participant at the beginning of the research study. All data collected will be stored as electronic files on the researcher's computer hard drive and a removable disk. The computer hard drive will be password protected and stored off-campus from the site of the participants' schools. The removable disk will be stored in a locked file cabinet that is only accessible by the researcher. The data will be stored for one year on the researcher's password protected computer and on the removable disk. All data related to the research study will be deleted from the hard drive of the researcher's computer, and the removable disk will be physically destroyed after a year.

VII. Withdrawal:

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time, and your withdrawal will not involve penalty or loss of benefits.

For additional information about this research project, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Nina Williams at [redacted] williams_nina1@columbusstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Columbus State University Institutional Review Board at irb@columbusstate.edu.

I have read this informed consent form. If I had any questions, they have been answered. By selecting the *I agree* radial and *Submit*, I agree to participate in this research project. I confirm that I am 18 years of age or older.

○ I agree. ○ I do not agree.

Submit

Revised 10/01/2017

Appendix P
Letter of Cooperation

[redacted] BOARD OF EDUCATION

[redacted]

[redacted]
Superintendent

October 13, 2020

Dear IRB Members,

After reviewing the proposed study, to examine third grade English Language Arts(ELA) educators' beliefs and practices related to students' development of reading and writing skills, I have granted authorization for Nina Williams to conduct research in [redacted] and [redacted].

I understand that Nina William is planning to conduct the following research activities by collecting data during a four weeks' period through semi-structured interviews, photographs of literacy instruction (excluding students' faces), and an open-ended questionnaire. All submissions will be confidential and data collected will not be used in future research projects.

Thus, I have indicated to Nina Williams that third grade teachers will be allowed to volunteer in the study. Participants may stop participation at any time. Also, there will be no penalty for withdrawal from the study. Ms. Williams has assured me her commitment to the confidentiality and professionalism involving participants in her study.

I hope that the research project goes well and data collected will be beneficial to our community and education system. If the IRB has any concerns about the permission granted by this letter, please contact me at [redacted] or [redacted]

Sincerely,

[redacted]

Appendix Q
Columbus State University IRB Conditional Approval

irb <irb@columbusstate.edu> Oct 7, 2020, 12:43 PM

to me, Patricia, CSU, Institutional

Institutional Review Board
Columbus State University

Date: 10/07/2020
Protocol Number: 21-012
Protocol Title: Examining the Epistemological Beliefs and Pedagogical Practices of Third Grade English Language Arts Educators on the Development of Comprehensive Literacy Skills in Tw
Title I Schools

Principal Investigator: Nina Williams
Co-Principal Investigator: Patricia Patrick

Dear Nina Williams,
The Columbus State University Institutional Review Board or representative(s) has reviewed your research proposal identified above. It has been determined that the project is classified as exempt under 45 CFR 46.101(b) of the federal regulations. Conditional approval is granted pending the approval from the listed outside performance site(s).
Please note any changes to the protocol must be submitted in writing to the IRB before implementing the change(s). Any adverse events, unexpected problems, and/or incidents that involve risks to participants and/or others must be reported to the Institutional Review Board at irb@columbusstate.edu or (706) 507-8634.
If you have further questions, please feel free to contact the IRB.
Sincerely,

Andrew Dorbu, Graduate Assistant

Institutional Review Board
Columbus State University

Appendix R
Columbus State University IRB Modification Approval for Data Collection Tool

From: **irb** <irb@columbusstate.edu>
Date: Wed, Nov 18, 2020 at 8:27 AM
Subject: Re: IRB Application Protocol 21-012 Conditional Approval
To: Nina Williams [Student] <williams_nina1@columbusstate.edu>

The submitted modification requests for Protocol 21-012 have been approved by the IRB.
Please note any further changes to the protocol must be submitted in writing to the IRB before implementing the change(s). Any adverse events, unexpected problems, and/or incidents that involve risks to participants and/or others must be reported to the Institutional Review Board at irb@columbusstate.edu or (706) 507-8634.
If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the IRB.
Sincerely,

Andrew Dorbu, Graduate Assistant