

A Study of Teacher Efficacy of Special Education Teachers of English Language Learners With Disabilities

Oneyda M. Paneque
Barry University

Patricia M. Barbetta
Florida International University

Abstract

This study examined the teacher efficacy of special education teachers of English language learners (ELLs) with disabilities by surveying 202 elementary special education teachers. Overall participant teacher efficacy scores were high. No statistically significant differences in efficacy scores were found for levels of teacher preparation, number of years of teaching experience, or socioeconomic status of the students. A statistically significant difference in perceived efficacy was found with self-reported proficiency in the language of the students. In addition, a multiple regression analysis indicated that proficiency in the language of the students accounted for significant variance in predicting the level of teachers' perceived efficacy. Responses to the open-ended questions about what was most helpful when working with ELLs with disabilities yielded two major themes: organizational issues and teacher issues. The results demonstrate the positive correlation between proficiency in the language of the students and teacher efficacy.

Introduction

Teacher efficacy is a teacher's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action to successfully accomplish specific instructional tasks, or, more simply, his or her capacity to affect student performances (Bandura, 1977, 1995). Self-efficacy theory posits that the perception of one's ability affects one's thoughts, feelings, motivation, and actions. Bandura (1997)

explains that once efficacy beliefs are formed, they are difficult to change, suggesting that it is easier to affect change when teachers are in a formative process in teacher preparation programs rather than when they are in the classroom.

Teacher efficacy beliefs can influence a teacher's behavior regarding choices made, effort expended, and perseverance under adverse conditions. Numerous positive outcomes have been associated with teachers' high sense of self-efficacy. Among these are student achievement (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Moore & Esselman, 1992), student motivation (Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1989), the ability to implement classroom management strategies successfully (Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990; Woolfolk, Rosoff, & Hoy, 1990), and the ability to work longer with students who are struggling (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Gibson & Dembo, 1984). Also, teachers with a high sense of efficacy have a strong conviction that they can influence student learning, even the learning of those students who may be more challenging (Guskey & Passaro, 1994). These teachers are open to new ideas and are more willing to experiment with and try new teaching strategies to better meet their students' needs (Ghaith & Yaghi, 1997; Guskey, 1988; Stein & Wang, 1988).

In contrast, teachers with low efficacy feel that they only have minimal influence on student achievement. These teachers give up more easily when confronted with difficult situations, are less resourceful, and oftentimes feel that students cannot learn because of the extenuating circumstances (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Bandura, 1997). Overall, efficacious teachers tend to engage in more productive, quality teacher behaviors.

This study investigated the self-efficacy of teachers of students with disabilities who are also English language learners (ELLs). A small number of self-efficacy studies related to teachers of students with disabilities have emerged in recent years with fewer studies investigating teachers of ELLs, particularly those who teach ELLs with disabilities. Of the existing studies, several examined teacher referrals to special education as it relates to self-efficacy (Coladarci & Breton, 1991; Podell & Soodak, 1993; Soodak & Podell, 1993). These studies found that teachers with higher efficacy made fewer referrals to special education than those with lower efficacy. Coladarci and Breton (1991) found that special education resource room teachers with high efficacy scores were satisfied with their position and felt their instructional supervision was useful. Those who had low efficacy scores, however, felt the opposite.

Brownell and Pajares (1996, 1999) studied the association between general education teachers' efficacy and teaching mainstreamed students with learning and behavior problems. The researchers concluded that the teachers with higher efficacy had more productive perceptions of their preservice teacher preparation and these teachers reported that they had more success with

students with learning and behavior problems. This study suggests that teacher preparation and professional development affect teacher efficacy beliefs.

More recently, Tasan (2001) examined the effect of differences in student language backgrounds on the perception of efficacy of public school elementary teachers. Variables examined included student language background, participants' own ethnic identities, participation in diversity training, and the interaction between their own ethnic identities and participation in diversity training. The results of this survey study indicated that the participants reported the highest efficacy with the standard English speaking students, then the non-English speaking students, and lastly the nonstandard English speaking students. The variable that accounted for the differences in efficacy scores regarding student language background was participation in diversity training. These findings suggest that teacher efficacy can be enhanced through situation-specific teacher preparation and professional development.

Carlson, Brauen, Klein, Schroll, and Willig (2002) conducted a nationwide study of personnel who serve students with special needs. In regards to the section on self-efficacy, they found that overall special education teachers reported high efficacy. However, the special education teachers reported feeling least skillful in working with ELL students with disabilities. Carlson et al. suggested the need for further research into the efficacy of special education teachers of ELLs since the participants in their study reported that they felt less efficacious working with these students.

The purpose of this study was to extend the work of Carlson et al. (2002) by examining the efficacy of special education teachers working with ELLs with disabilities. Even though there is an increasing number of ELLs with disabilities in our schools, due, in part, to high-stake testing and poverty (Heubert, 2002), research on the self-efficacy of these teachers is scarce. Specifically, this study posed research questions about (a) the correlation between teacher variables and teacher efficacy for special education teachers of ELLs with disabilities, (b) which independent variables were the best predictors of perception of teacher efficacy for special education teachers working with ELLs with disabilities, and (c) what special education teachers thought was most helpful for themselves, as well as preservice and inservice teachers, when working with ELLs with disabilities

In this study, teacher variables examined included highest degree earned, degree in an area of special education, certification in special education, status of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsement, number of years teaching, proficiency in the language of the students, and Title I status of school as an indicator of the socioeconomic level of the school population. Data on participants' views added to the understanding of teacher efficacy when working with ELLs with disabilities.

Method

Participants and Setting

The survey study was conducted in the southeast region of the United States in a large, urban school district offering a wide range of educational programs including programs for students with disabilities and for those who speak English as a second language. Participants in the study were 202 of the 345 special education teachers in 31 elementary schools that housed classrooms for ELLs with disabilities, making the return rate 58.5%. According to information obtained from the survey, the majority of the participants taught at Title I schools, held degrees in special education, held graduate degrees, were certified in an area of special education, were ESOL endorsed, and reported proficiency in the language of the target students. Table 1 provides a summary of participants' demographics. Fifty percent of the participants had less than 7.5 years teaching experience.

Elementary schools were selected since they have the highest concentration of ELLs. In order to be included in the sample, the school had to have an enrollment approximating the district's average number for elementary schools of students with disabilities and ELLs. Of the 31 elementary schools, 20 were Title I schools.

Table 1
Participant Characteristics

Characteristics	Responses	
	Yes (%)	No (%)
Taught at Title I school	72.8	27.2
Held special education degree	84.7	15.3
Held graduate degree	60.2	39.8
Were certified in special education	92.5	7.5
Were ESOL endorsed	70.6	29.3
Were proficient in language of target students	66.3	33.7

Note. $N = 202$ special education teachers.

Instrumentation

Since teacher efficacy is specific to the domain of instructional functioning (Bandura, 1997), it was necessary to develop a teacher efficacy inventory for purposes of this study. The Exceptional Children who are English Learners (EXCEL) Teacher Inventory was designed in accordance with Bandura's (2001) *Guide for Constructing Self-Efficacy Scales*. Existing teacher efficacy instruments (e.g., Teacher Efficacy Scale by Gibson and Dembo, 1984; Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2001) were not used because they did not address the teacher competencies relevant to teachers working with ELL students with disabilities.

The EXCEL Teacher Inventory was comprised of three sections. Section I contained 20 items related to teacher perceptions of ability to work with students with disabilities from non-English-language backgrounds. Two items were adapted from the Teacher Efficacy Scale (Gibson & Dembo, 1984) on teachers' perceptions of their ability to (a) motivate students independent of their home environments and (b) get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students.

Teacher competencies for Section I were identified following the guidelines established by the Florida Department of Education (Florida Department of Education, n.d.) in the Performance Standards for Teachers of English for Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) that outline the competencies necessary for ESOL endorsement. These guidelines are aligned with the national professional organizations in the area of TESOL or bilingual education (TESOL, 2001; National Association for Bilingual Education, 1992). In addition, the items are aligned with the competencies outlined by the Council for Exceptional Children (2003) for beginning teacher preparation programs. The relationship of teacher efficacy items on the EXCEL Teacher Inventory to teacher competencies for special education teachers of ELLs with disabilities is presented in Table 2.

In Section I, participants rated themselves using a 9-point Likert scale for the 20 teacher efficacy items when asked their perception of their abilities in areas of specific teacher competencies that affect student performance. A score of 1 indicated that the teacher felt he or she could do "nothing," while a score of 9 indicated that the teacher felt he or she could do "a great deal."

Section II of the EXCEL Teacher Inventory consisted of three open-ended questions in which participants were asked (a) to identify what they thought helped them most in working with ELLs with disabilities, (b) to make recommendations regarding the preparation of future teachers for this population, and (c) to provide information as to what they believed would help teachers in the field most when working with target students.

Section III had items to gather background information on the participants. Data obtained from the demographic section of the inventory were correlated

Table 2

Teacher Competencies and Teacher Efficacy Items

Competencies	Item number	How much can you do to . . .
Motivation	1	motivate students. . . ?
	6	get through to even the most difficult . . . students?
Knowledge and understanding of learners' characteristics	18	be sensitive to and aware of the needs of students. . . ?
Instructional strategies and practices	4	teach students who speak English as a second language?
	7	incorporate appropriate content and materials. . . ?
	8	determine appropriate instruction. . . ?
	11	adapt and modify lessons for students. . . ?
	15	improve the academic achievement of students. . . ?
Language	5	distinguish between language difference . . . disability?
	10	support the native language(s) of children. . . ?
	14	communicate with students. . . ?
Assessment and evaluation	12	use traditional and alternative assessment. . . ?
	16	determine the needs of students. . . ?
	17	evaluate the academic performance of students. . . ?
	20	assess the academic progress of students. . . ?

Note. Items in this table are presented according to competency areas.

Table 2, cont.,

Teacher Competencies and Teacher Efficacy Items

Competencies	Item number	How much can you do to...
Classroom management and social interactions	3	redirect students who are misbehaving and disruptive?
	13	help students . . . develop social skills?
Communication and collaboration	2	communicate with parents and families. . . ?
	9	identify and utilize school/community resources. . . ?
	19	develop appropriate Individual Educational Plans for students. . . ?

Note. Items in this table are presented according to competency areas.

to the items in Sections I and II. The background information obtained included highest degree earned, teacher certification, type of preparation for teacher certification, years of teaching experience, status of ESOL endorsement, type of ESOL endorsement preparation, and proficiency in languages other than English. Participants were asked to rate themselves on their proficiency in the language of their students with disabilities from non-English-language background.

Reliability and validity

Since the EXCEL Teacher Inventory was developed specifically for the study, reliability and validity needed to be established. Cronbach’s alpha was used to measure the internal consistency reliability of the instrument or how individual items related to each other and the instrument as a whole. The coefficient alpha was .9419, indicating highly satisfactory reliability. For this reason, the sum of the teacher efficacy scores was used for data analysis.

Both content and face validity were established. The content validity of the instrument was established by first reviewing the literature to identify areas of competency for teachers working with ELLs with disabilities and then creating a table of specifications for the development of the inventory items. The initial instrument was designed based on the teacher efficacy related to competency areas that included knowledge of language and language development; culture and implications for teaching and learning; instruction, planning, and classroom management; assessment, diagnosis, and evaluation; and communication and collaboration. The face validity of the EXCEL Teacher Inventory was determined by a review panel of three experts in the area of

ESOL/bilingual special education and a small group of special education teachers. First, a panel reviewed the instrument and made recommendations to improve reliability and validity. Revisions and corrections were made according to their recommendations. Next, the EXCEL Teacher Inventory was given to a group of 20 special education teachers to evaluate for clarity and appropriateness of the items. Teachers attending a graduate course in special education at a local university were asked to review the inventory. The inventory was distributed at the end of class and teachers voluntarily completed the survey and returned it to the instructor. Suggestions and recommendations from this group were also incorporated to improve the inventory.

Procedure

The survey instruments, consent forms, and letter-size return envelopes were delivered to the 31 targeted elementary schools. These materials were distributed to all of the teachers of students with disabilities at that site by each school's assistant principal supervising special education or that person's designee. Those teachers who voluntarily consented to participate in the study were asked to complete the EXCEL Teacher Inventory which took approximately 20 minutes. The completed surveys were then collected by the researcher at the school sites.

Data Analysis

Correlations and *t*-tests were calculated between total teacher efficacy scores and each of the teacher demographic variables. Descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions and measures of central tendency, provided a description of the participants and the pattern of their responses to the total teacher efficacy score. In addition, a multiple regression was used to analyze which of the teacher variables were the best predictors of teacher efficacy. The predictor variables were Title I status of school, degree in special education, highest degree earned, teaching certification, status of ESOL endorsement, years of teaching experience, and proficiency in languages other than English.

Following qualitative data analysis procedures (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Glesne, 1999), responses to the three open-ended questions were coded and analyzed for patterns of responses. Initially, a list of the responses for each question was compiled. These responses were then coded and categorized according to common words, phrases, and ideas. Commonalities among the responses were identified as themes emerged from the responses. Then, the responses were analyzed to each question within each set, as well as across each set of responses to the questions. Response patterns were reported accordingly.

Results

A major focus of this study was to examine the teacher efficacy in relation to competencies identified for teachers of ELLs with disabilities assessed in Section I of the EXCEL Teacher Inventory. The results revealed that overall, the special education teacher efficacy scores in this study were high.

The mean scores for each of the 20 individual teacher efficacy items are shown in Table 3. Most of the individual scores ranged from 3 to 9 on the 9-point Likert scale. The widest range of scores, 1 to 9, was on supporting the native language of the target students. The narrowest range of scores, 4 to 9, was on helping students develop social skills, improving their academic achievement, and developing appropriate Individual Educational Plans (IEPs). The mean scores ranged from 6.44 to 8.16 on the Likert scale. Participants rated themselves highest on how much they can do to be sensitive to and aware of the needs of students who are culturally and linguistically diverse ($M = 8.16, SD = 1.09$). The next highest mean score was for how much they can do to develop appropriate IEPs for students with special needs from non-English-language backgrounds ($M = 8.06, SD = 1.13$). The two lowest mean scores for the teacher efficacy items related to (a) identifying and utilizing school/community resources for culturally and linguistically diverse students with special needs ($M = 6.44, SD = 1.69$) and (b) supporting the native language(s) of the students who did not speak English fluently ($M = 6.72, SD = 1.95$).

Next, teacher variables were correlated with teacher efficacy (see Table 4). Proficiency in the language of the target students was the statistically significant variable, $p = .002$. Furthermore, teacher variables as predictors of teacher efficacy were examined. The multiple regression equation found that proficiency in the language of the target students was the predictor of teacher efficacy, $p = .001$.

The results of the quantitative analysis are augmented by a qualitative analysis of the responses to the three open-ended questions. The responses were grouped according to participants' proficiency in the language of their ELLs with disabilities since this was the variable found to be statistically significant when correlated to teacher efficacy and it was the predictor of teacher efficacy. Teachers who were proficient in the language of the target students were identified as language proficient (LP) and those who were not proficient as language non-proficient (LNP).

Participants were asked three open-ended questions about what helps most when working with the target students for themselves and for preservice and inservice teachers. Themes emerged from the responses to the three questions and were classified in two major categories, organizational issues and teacher issues. Themes classified under organizational issues were associated with the structure of the school and educational system such as

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Teacher Efficacy Items

Item number	How much can you do to . . .	Range	M	SD
9	identify and utilize school/community resources. . . ?	2-9	6.44	1.69
10	support the native language(s) of children. . . ?	1-9	6.72	1.95
6	get through to even the most difficult . . . students?	3-9	6.82	1.43
5	distinguish between language difference . . . disability?	3-9	7.06	1.47
12	use traditional and alternative assessment. . . ?	2-9	7.10	1.61
7	incorporate appropriate content and materials. . . ?	3-9	7.14	1.40
1	motivate students. . . ?	3-9	7.26	1.52
2	communicate with parents and families. . . ?	2-9	7.30	1.75
17	evaluate the academic performance of students. . . ?	3-9	7.32	1.35
15	improve the academic achievement of students. . . ?	4-9	7.34	1.26
16	determine the needs of students. . . ?	3-9	7.40	1.32
8	determine appropriate instruction. . . ?	3-9	7.45	1.30
14	communicative with students. . . ?	2-9	7.60	1.48

Note. Items arranged by mean efficacy scores from lowest to highest.

support from others, resources, class size, time, and funding. Teacher issues were closely related to what the individual teacher brought to the classroom such as teacher dispositions, teacher preparation, teaching experience, teaching skills, and language skills. Participants in the present study wrote more

Table 3, cont.,

Descriptive Statistics for Teacher Efficacy Items

Item number	How much can you do to . . .	Range	M	SD
3	redirect students who are misbehaving or disruptive?	3–9	7.61	1.23
11	adapt and modify lessons for students. . . ?	2–9	7.66	1.29
20	assess the academic progress of students. . . ?	3–9	7.70	1.28
4	teach students who speak English as a second language?	3–9	7.78	1.28
13	help students . . . develop social skills?	4–9	7.81	1.19
19	develop appropriate Individual Educational Plans for students. . . ?	4–9	8.06	1.13
18	be sensitive to and aware of the needs of students. . . ?	3–9	8.16	1.09

Note. Items arranged by mean efficacy scores from lowest to highest.

Table 4

Correlation Between Each Predictor and Teacher Efficacy

Predictors	Correlation
Title I status of school	.02
Degree in special education	-.05
Graduate degree	.04
Certification in special education	.03
ESOL endorsement	.09
Number of years teaching	.05
Proficiency in language of target students	.23*

Note. One-tailed test.

* $p < .01$.

responses regarding teacher issues than organizational issues. Since language proficiency was found to be statistically significant when correlated to teacher efficacy as well as the teacher variable that predicted teacher efficacy, the themes were further analyzed by comparing themes from LP and LNP participants (see Table 5).

Overall, responses from both LP and LNP participants were similar regarding organizational issues. Both groups valued receiving support from other educators and parents. A difference in responses was noted in the type of support deemed useful. LNP participants had more comments about receiving support from persons fluent in the language of the students and the parents than LP participants did. A few comments about lack of support on the part of the parents were documented in both groups. Responses related to support from others, including educational personnel proficient in the language of the target students, and resources were most frequently reported by participants as most important for themselves and inservice teachers.

There were many comments from participants about teacher issues for all three open-ended questions. Participants wrote that teacher dispositions, such as having a positive attitude towards the target students and caring about them, were important for themselves and inservice teachers, although most important for preservice teachers. Participants also frequently recommended field-based experiences with the target students for preservice teachers and for themselves. Participants identified teaching skills as most helpful for themselves whereas this theme did not appear as frequently for the preservice teachers and teachers in the field.

Most of the comments by LNP and LP participants identified similar issues except in the area of language skills. Fifty-one LP participants who wrote about the importance of language skills for themselves reported that proficiency in the language of their students and parents allowed them to communicate with both groups more effectively. Additionally, two LNP participants also wrote that knowing “a little Spanish” had helped them. Both LP and LNP wrote more responses regarding the importance of knowing the language of the ELLs with disabilities for inservice teachers than preservice teachers. Regarding preservice teachers, both LP and LNP participants made many suggestions in the area of teacher preparation and field experiences which would allow them to work effectively with the target students. Recommendations for inservice teachers primarily focused on teacher preparation and professional development activities. Furthermore, LP participants more frequently identified the importance of teaching skills (i.e., “using a variety of strategies and materials” or “using ESOL and ESE [Exceptional Student Education] strategies”) than LNP participants.

In sum, the overall self-efficacy scores of the special education teachers in this study were high. Proficiency in the language of the target students was the teacher variable that was the best predictor of teacher efficacy and the one variable that was statistically significantly correlated to teacher efficacy. With

Table 5

Ratings of Most Important Issues for Participants

Organizational Issues	Level of language proficiency		
	Total (N = 202)	LNP (n = 68)	LP (n = 134)
Support	14% (n = 29)	29% (n = 20)	7% (n = 9)
Resources	10% (n = 20)	18% (n = 12)	6% (n = 8)
Class size	1% (n = 2)	1% (n = 1)	.7% (n = 1)
Time	1% (n = 2)	1% (n = 1)	.7% (n = 1)
Funding ^a	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)	0% (n = 0)
Teacher Issues	Level of language proficiency		
	Total (N = 202)	LNP (n = 68)	LP (n = 134)
Dispositions	14% (n = 29)	13% (n = 9)	15% (n = 20)
Preparation	35% (n = 70)	28% (n = 19)	38% (n = 51)
Experience	13% (n = 27)	19% (n = 13)	10% (n = 14)
Teaching skills	31% (n = 62)	44% (n = 30)	24% (n = 32)
Language skills	26% (n = 53)	3% (n = 2)	38% (n = 51)

Note. This table reports frequency of responses on most important issues for participants themselves when teaching ELLs with disabilities. Percentages were calculated based on the number of responses for each theme divided by the number of participants who were language proficient (LP) or language non-proficient (LNP).

^aParticipants did not identify issues related to funding for themselves, only for inservice teachers.

respect to the three open-ended questions, the majority of the responses were related to teacher issues. Most of the responses from LNP and LP participants were similar for themselves, preservice teachers, and inservice teachers except for those related to language skills. LP participants wrote that their language proficiency was most helpful when working with the target students.

Discussion

This study contributes to the field of teacher self-efficacy that has limited research on the efficacy of teachers of ELLs with disabilities. Overall, the participants' total efficacy scores were high as were the scores on most individual teacher efficacy items. These results support some of the findings of the Carlson et al. (2002) study, while contradicting other findings. The special education teachers in the Carlson et al. study also reported overall high self-efficacy. However, these teachers reported feeling less efficacious in accommodating the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students with disabilities. Differences in participants between the Carlson et al. study and the present study may have contributed to this difference in the results. In the Carlson et al. study, the nationwide sample of special education teachers had a student population with 24% of students from a cultural or linguistic group different from their own and 7% of students were ELLs. Whereas in the present study situated in the southeast region of the United States, over 60% of the students enrolled came from a non-English-language background and 25% of the students at the elementary level were ELLs; in addition, 45% of the full-time instructional staff was from a non-English-language background. In the present study, no questions were asked about the participants' ethnicity; however 66.3% reported that they were proficient in the language of their students. Differences in teacher and student backgrounds may account for differences in findings on teacher efficacy between the present study and the Carlson et al. study.

In the present study, proficiency in the language of their students was the teacher variable found to be associated with teacher efficacy at a statistically significant level, $p = .002$. In addition, a multiple regression equation determined that proficiency in the language of their students was the variable found to be a predictor of teacher efficacy when working with ELLs with disabilities, $p = .001$.

These results support the contention of the experts in the field that it is advantageous to be proficient in the language of the ELLs with disabilities (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002; Baca & Cervantes, 2004; Delgado & Rogers-Adkinson, 1999; Winzer & Mazurek, 1998). These experts assert that the use of native language instruction and the development of the native language allow ELLs to build on their prior knowledge and support learning new content material.

Also, native language proficiency assists in learning English as a second language because common language proficiencies can be transferred from one language to the other. Further, the teacher's language ability allows him or her to accommodate and adapt instruction more effectively and efficiently by understanding the students in their native language, translating, modeling responses, and helping students transfer skills from their language to English (Salend, Dorney, & Mazo, 1997). Teachers fluent in the language of the students are also better able to communicate with the families of the students and encourage their support. Similarly, Carlson et al. (2002) found that special education teachers proficient in the language of their students were able to use different instructional strategies to teach English language and academic content.

In the present study, participants identified more themes related to teacher issues than organizational issues. This finding is contrary to the results of the Soodak and Podell (1994) study in which general education teachers were asked to identify ways to address the needs of difficult-to-teach students, identify which ways are most effective, and identify the cause of the problem. Soodak and Podell found that general education teachers gave more non-teacher-based suggestions (i.e., parental participation) than teacher-based suggestions (i.e., instructional strategies). Difference in the results may be due to differences in teacher preparation and experiences in dealing with challenging students of special education teachers.

Under organizational issues, participants wrote frequently about support from others and resources. Several of the responses by the LNP participants were in reference to having support from someone who could translate and assist in teaching the target students. There were a limited number of comments made about smaller class size, time constraints, and funding issues.

Many participants wrote that support from others was helpful for themselves and for inservice teachers. Several LNP participants wrote specifically about benefiting from support from others who spoke the language of the ELLs and their parents. Similarly, participants in the Soodak and Podell (1994) study recommended that support from others (i.e., parents or multidisciplinary special education assessment teams) be made available when working with students who were difficult to teach. Coladarci and Breton (1991) also found that teachers with higher efficacy perceived the instructional supervision they received more useful than those with lower efficacy. The participants in this study had high efficacy scores and also viewed supervision and support from others as useful.

Kruger (1997) found that general education teachers who received social support, particularly reassurance of worth, from teacher assistance teams had high self-efficacy in problem solving skills and planning and evaluating interventions for students with behavior problems. However, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2002) found that perceived support from others was related to efficacy for novice teachers only. This is consistent with previous work by

Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, and Hoy (1998) and Bandura's (1997) theory that efficacy is most malleable during early stages of learning. The present study revealed similar findings regarding support from others.

Special education teachers in the present study wrote about the importance of receiving support from parents of ELLs with disabilities. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2002) found that teacher efficacy was related to support from parents. Teachers with higher efficacy perceived parent support more positively. Fostering family involvement in the case of non-English speaking families is challenging in part because of cultural and linguistic differences between the family and school personnel (Harry, 1992; Torres-Burgo, Reyes-Wasson, & Brusca-Vega, 1999). Communicating with families is critical for the academic success of the target students (Ortiz, 2002).

Participants gave many responses categorized under teacher issues. These are issues related to teacher dispositions, preparation, experience, teaching skills, and language skills. Participants wrote that teaching dispositions, such as "to be culturally aware and sensitive" to the students' needs and "understanding the[their students'] different cultures," were important for working with target students. These teacher dispositions were identified as important for participants themselves as well as for the preservice and inservice teachers.

Participants also wrote many responses about the usefulness of teacher preparation and professional development activities for themselves and for preservice and inservice teachers. General recommendations were made about TESOL courses at the university level, training in the area for continuing professional development, and also specific courses. These recommendations support the work of Roache, Shore, Gouleta, and Butkevich (2003). They found that there was need for professional training in issues related to the education of culturally and linguistically diverse students with disabilities for individuals working with those students.

Several participants suggested that there should be specific courses required for special educators that focus specifically on strategies and techniques for ELLs with disabilities. The recommended courses were similar to those suggested by Utley, Delquadri, Obiakor, and Mims (2000). Utley et al. recommended courses related to multicultural issues, family involvement, effective teaching strategies, cultural knowledge, and knowledge of the language of the students. Competencies outlined by TESOL (2001), National Association for Bilingual Education (1992), and Council for Exceptional Children (2003) require that teachers of students with disabilities from non-English-language backgrounds be able to communicate with the students and be able to distinguish between language difference and language disability.

Participants wrote numerous responses regarding the need for professional development for themselves and inservice teachers. Comments

included training on topics such as instructional strategies, language development and acquisition, and cultural sensitivity. Several comments were made about training specifically for special education teachers of ELLs with disabilities. In addition, comments were made about having ongoing trainings, not video tapes or one day trainings. These responses support the work of Imants and Tellema (1995) who proposed a dynamic view of teacher training and professional development, targeting teachers with low efficacy. Imants and Tellema noted that highly efficacious teachers benefited more from professional development because of their willingness to learn and try new instructional practices, thereby increasing their level of efficacy.

Many participants wrote that field-based experiences should be included as part of teacher education programs for preservice teachers, and that early and varied experiences with the target students would help better prepare them. This supports the literature that found that special education teachers who had field experiences with the target students while in their teacher preparation program reported being more skilled to meet the students' needs after graduation (Carlson et al., 2002). Further, it lends support to the self-efficacy literature that identified mastery experiences as the most influential in developing teacher efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

The results of this study have implications for the practice of special education teachers working with ELLs with disabilities who are at risk for academic failure. Perhaps most notably, the results suggest that teachers of target students should have skills in the language of the ELLs in their classroom. Special education teacher preparation programs should consider expanding their programs to include bilingual special education since there are fewer than 15 such programs in the United States (National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education, 2000). Additional implications with respect to teacher preparation and practice follow.

The results further suggest that preservice teacher education programs support teachers in the development of second-language skills. This could be accomplished by including in the special education program curriculum courses with content in second-language acquisition, courses that provide students with additional opportunities for teachers who speak a language other than English to further develop their language skills, and/or by providing courses for teachers to learn the language of their ELLs.

When working specifically with culturally and linguistically diverse students, teachers must have a firm understanding of the students' language and culture to evaluate and teach them. In addition, teachers must have the competencies necessary to establish communication between parents and others in the learning community so the student may develop to his or her maximum potential. Special education teacher preparation programs should include instruction on strategies for working effectively with parents who primarily speak a language other than English.

Also, preservice teacher preparation programs should include in their curriculum instructional strategies needed to effectively teach ELLs with disabilities (e.g., using visuals and manipulatives, teaching key vocabulary, and building lessons on the students' cultural background). Further, this study's results suggest that preservice teachers should have frequent opportunities for field-based experiences with guided practice in classrooms with the target students. Special education university professors knowledgeable in instructional practices for ELLs with disabilities are needed to effectively teach these courses and assist preservice teachers in maximizing field-based learning experiences. Supervising teachers (those who have student teachers in their classrooms) need to be skilled in the education of ELLs with disabilities to provide preservice teachers with appropriate guided practice. Subsequently, student teachers should be placed only with supervising teachers with these skills or those willing to develop these skills.

With respect to inservice-level special education teachers, the results suggest that special education teachers would benefit from an infrastructure that promotes support from others and collaboration with other professionals. Schools should provide time for teachers to collaborate, and preservice training programs should provide future teachers with training in effective collaboration. In addition, school districts should consider providing professional development activities in the areas of cultural diversity, testing and evaluation, language development and second-language acquisition, and family involvement among others.

Several recommendations can be made for future research. Confirmation of the results through replication of the study with other populations would allow for generalizations. In this study, most of the participants who were proficient in the language of the target students were Spanish speakers as are the majority of ELLs. One recommended replication of this study could be conducted with special education teachers of ELLs with disabilities working in a demographically different school system.

In this study, most teachers were trained in traditional special education teacher preparation programs. Those who were ESOL endorsed did so through training offered by the university or district-based courses. A replication of the study with special education teachers who were educated via nontraditional means may yield different results. In addition, research should be conducted with special education teachers who have received training in bilingual special education.

Another modification of the study could include participants who are fluent in more than one language, but not the language of the ELLs. This proposed study could shed light on situations where teachers and students have similar prior experiences (i.e., learning a second language) that enhance the learning process. Results may be different if a study were conducted with special education teachers at middle school and high school levels.

Greenwood, Olejnik, and Parkay (1990) and Parkay, Olejnik, and Proller (1988) found that teachers of younger students had higher teacher efficacy than those of older students.

In addition, future research could include classroom observations of the participating special education teachers. Observations could be used to corroborate whether efficacious teachers engage in behaviors of highly effective teachers. These data and the results could be compared to the results of the study by Ashton and Webb (1986) where classroom observations were used to confirm the teacher efficacy survey results. A study similar to this one could be conducted over a period of a few years as a longitudinal study with the goal of identifying any changes that may occur in factors that affect teacher efficacy.

Additional research could include general education classroom teachers who work with the target students. These teachers are the ones who most often refer students to special education. Studies (Brownell & Pajares, 1996, 1999; Freytag, 2001) have shown that teachers with high teacher efficacy make fewer referrals to special education. This is particularly important since a disproportionate number of ELLs are referred for special education services (Donovan & Cross, 2002).

In conclusion, there are limited studies of teacher efficacy that focus on special populations (e.g., students with disabilities as well as those who speak English as a second language). Further research in this area is recommended since research in the area of teacher efficacy has consistently yielded a strong relationship to student outcomes (Armor et al., 1976; Ashton & Webb, 1986; Berman, McLaughlin, Bass, Pauly, & Zellman, 1977; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Teacher efficacy affects teachers' thoughts, their actions in the teaching process, the effort they put forth, and their perseverance in improving student achievement (Bandura, 1997). For this reason, it is important to study the efficacy of teacher, particularly those who work with challenging students who are most in need of the best teachers. This study has contributed to the body of literature on teacher efficacy, which is scarce with regard to teachers of students with disabilities as well as students from non-English-language backgrounds.

References

- Armor, D., Conry-Oseguera, P., Cox, M., King, N., McDonnell, L., Pascal, A., Pauly, E., & Zellman, G. (1976). *Analysis of the school preferred reading program in selected Los Angeles minority schools* (Report NO. R-2007-LAUDS). Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED130243)

- Artiles, A. J., & Ortiz, A. A. (2002). English language learners with special education needs: Contexts and possibilities. In A. J. Artiles & A. A. Ortiz (Eds.), *English language learners with special education needs: Identification, assessment, and instruction* (pp. 3–27). McHenry, IL: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Ashton, P. T., & Webb, R. B. (1986). *Making a difference: Teachers' sense of efficacy and student achievement*. White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Baca, L. M., & Cervantes, H. T. (2004). *The bilingual special education inter-face* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84, 191–215.
- Bandura, A. (1995). Exercise of personal and collective efficacy in changing societies. In A. Bandura (Ed.), *Self-efficacy in changing societies* (pp. 1–45). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: W. H. Freeman.
- Bandura, A. (2001). *Guide for constructing self-efficacy scales* (Rev. ed.). Available upon request from Frank Pajares, Emory University.
- Berman, P., McLaughlin, M., Bass, G., Pauly, E., & Zellman, G. (1977). *Federal programs supporting educational change. Volume 7: Factors affecting implementation and continuation*. Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED140432)
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1998). *Qualitative research in education: An introduction to theory and method*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Brownell, M. T., & Pajares, F. M. (1996). The influence of teachers' efficacy beliefs on perceived success in mainstreaming students with learning and behavior problems: A path analysis. *Florida Educational Research Council Research Bulletin*, 27(3–4), 11–24. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED409661)
- Brownell, M. T., & Pajares, F. M. (1999). Teacher efficacy and perceived success in mainstreaming students with learning and behavior problems. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 22(3), 154–164.
- Carlson, E., Brauen, M., Klein, S., Schroll, K., & Willig, S. (2002). *Study of personnel need in special education*. Rockville, MD: Westat Research Corporation. Retrieved December 8, 2005, from <http://www.ecs.org/html/offsite.asp?document=http%3A%2F%2Fwww%2Espense%2Eorg%2F+>
- Coladarci, T., & Breton, W. A. (1991, April). *Teacher efficacy, supervision, and the special education resource-room teacher*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED330684)

- Council for Exceptional Children. (2003). *What every special educator must know: Ethics, standards, and guidelines for special educators* (5th ed.). Reston, VA: Author.
- Delgado, B., & Rogers-Adkinson, D. (1999). Educating the Hispanic-American exceptional learner. *Advances in Special Education, 12*, 53–71.
- Donovan, S., & Cross, C. T. (Eds.). (2002). *Minority students in special and gifted education*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- Florida Department of Education. (n.d.). *Performance standards for teachers of English for speakers of other languages*. Tallahassee, FL: Florida Department of Education, Office of Multicultural Student Language Education. Retrieved December 8, 2005, from <http://www.firn.edu/doe/omsle/perstand.htm>
- Freytag, C. E. (2001, February). *Teacher efficacy and inclusion: The impact of preservice experiences on beliefs*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southwest Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED451180)
- Ghaith, G., & Yaghi, H. (1997). Relationships among experience, teacher efficacy, and attitudes toward the implementation of instructional innovation. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 13*(4), 451–458.
- Gibson, S., & Dembo, M. (1984). Teacher efficacy: A construct validation. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 76*, 569–582.
- Glesne, C. (1999). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. New York: Longman.
- Greenwood, G. E., Olejnik, S. F., & Parkay, F. W. (1990). Relationships between four teacher efficacy belief patterns and selected teachers characteristics. *Journal of Research and Development in Education, 23*(2), 102–106.
- Guskey, T. R. (1988). Teacher efficacy, self-concept, and attitudes toward the implementation of instructional innovation. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 4*, 63–69.
- Guskey, T. R., & Passaro, P. D. (1994). Teacher efficacy: A study of construct dimensions. *American Educational Research Journal, 31*, 627–643.
- Harry, B. (1992). *Culturally diverse families and the special education system: Communication and empowerment*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Heubert, J. P. (2002). Disability, race, and high-stakes testing of students. In D. J. Losen & G. Orfield (Eds.), *Racial inequity in special education* (pp. 137–165). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

- Imants, J. G. M., & Tellema, H. H. (1995, April). *A dynamic view of training for the professional development of teachers*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED390839)
- Kruger, L. J. (1997). Social support and self-efficacy in problem solving among teacher assistance teams and school staff. *Journal of Educational Research, 90*(3), 164–169.
- Midgley, C., Feldlaufer, H., & Eccles, J. S. (1989). Change in teacher efficacy and student self- and task-related beliefs in mathematics during the transition to junior high school. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 81*, 247–258.
- Moore, W. P., & Esselman, M. E. (1992, March). *Teacher efficacy, empowerment, and a focused instructional climate: Does student achievement benefit?* Paper present at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED350252)
- National Association for Bilingual Education. (1992). *Professional standards for the preparation of bilingual/multicultural teachers*. Washington, DC: Author. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED355825)
- National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education. (2000). *Personnel training programs to teacher bilingual special education*. Reston, VA: Author.
- Ortiz, A. A. (2002). Prevention of school failure and early intervention for English language learners. In A. J. Artiles & A. A. Ortiz (Eds.), *English language learners with special education needs: Identification, assessment, and instruction* (pp. 31–48). McHenry, IL: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Parkay, F., Olejnik, S., & Proller, N. (1988). A study of relationships among teacher efficacy, locus of control, and stress. *Journal of Research and Development of Education, 2*(4), 13–22.
- Podell, D. M., & Soodak, L. C. (1993). Teacher efficacy and bias in special education referrals. *Journal of Educational Research, 86*, 247–253.
- Roache, M., Shore, J., Gouleta, E., & Butkevich, E. (2003). An investigation of collaboration among school professionals in serving culturally and linguistically diverse students with exceptionalities. *Bilingual Research Journal, 27*(1), 117–136.
- Salend, S. J., Dorney, J. A., & Mazo, M. (1997). The roles of bilingual special educators in creating inclusive classrooms. *Remedial and Special Education, 18*, 54–64.

- Soodak, L. C., & Podell, D. M. (1993). Teacher efficacy and student problem as factors in special education referral. *The Journal of Special Education, 27*, 66–81.
- Soodak, L. C., & Podell, D. M. (1994). Teachers' thinking about difficult-to-teach students. *Journal of Educational Research, 88*(1), 44–51.
- Stein, M. K., & Wang, M. C. (1988). Teacher development and school improvement: The process of teacher change. *Teaching & Teacher Education, 4*(2), 171–187.
- Tasan, A. P. (2001, April). *Teacher efficacy and diversity: Implications for teacher training*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Seattle, WA. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED453201)
- Teachers of English for Speakers of Other Languages. (2001). *TESOL P–12 ESL teacher standards*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Torres-Burgo, N., Reyes-Wasson, P., & Brusca-Vega, R. (1999). Perceptions and needs of Hispanic and non-Hispanic parents of children receiving learning disabilities services. *Bilingual Research Journal, 23*, 373–387.
- Tschannen-Moran, M., & Hoy, A. W. (2001). Teacher efficacy: Capturing an elusive construct [Electronic version]. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 17*, 783–805.
- Tschannen-Moran, M., & Hoy, A. W. (2002, April). *The influence of resources and support on teachers' efficacy beliefs*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA. Retrieved December 8, 2005, from <http://www.coe.ohio-state.edu/ahoy/AERA%202002%20megan.pdf>
- Tschannen-Moran, M., Hoy, A. W., & Hoy, W. K. (1998). Teacher efficacy: Its meaning and measure. *Review of the Educational Research, 68*, 202–248.
- Utley, C. A., Delquadri, J. C., Obiakor, F. E., & Mims, V. A. (2000). General and special educators' perceptions of teaching strategies for multicultural students. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 23*, 34–50.
- Winzer, M. A., & Mazurek, K. (1998). *Special education in multicultural contexts*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Woolfolk, A. E., & Hoy, W. K. (1990). Prospective teachers' sense of efficacy and belief about control. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 82*, 81–91.
- Woolfolk, A. E., Rosoff, B., & Hoy, W. K. (1990). Teachers' sense of efficacy and their beliefs about managing students. *Teaching & Teacher Education, 6*, 137–148.