Pre-service Teachers’ Self-efficacy through ESL Microteaching Experiences in a US Teacher Education Program

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Although the practice of microteaching is widely considered a critical component in teacher education programs, the research regarding microteaching with mainstream teachers’ preparation for teaching English Language Learners is not fully developed. Recognizing a lack of previous studies of mainstream teachers’ preparation for teaching ELLs, this study examines four pre-service teachers’ self-efficacy while working with ELLs through ESL microteaching experiences. The data consisted of two individual interviews with four pre-service teachers and researchers’ two classroom observations. Study findings indicated that the four pre-service teachers’ self-efficacy was generally improved after having participated in ESL microteaching experiences because it enhanced pedagogical knowledge and provided more opportunities to evaluate their knowledge through microteaching practices. However, pre-service teachers’ self-efficacy varied depending on ELLs’ diverse English proficiency, home languages, and previous teaching and working experiences with ELLs. This study provides several suggestions about how teacher educators can create a purposeful ESL microteaching experience for teacher candidates in the teacher education program.

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Ⅰ. INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, schools in the United States have become more culturally and linguistically diverse. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, about 4.6 million English Language Learners (ELLs) are currently enrolled in public K–12 schools (Ballantyne, Sanderman, & Levy, 2008). Unfortunately, many culturally and linguistically diverse students—ELLs in particular—perform at a lower level than that their non-ELL peers (Ballantyne, Sanderman, & Levy, 2008).

Although a large population of teachers already have students of diverse backgrounds in their own mainstream classrooms, only a few teachers have received proper ESL teacher education and training in terms of how to best guide ELLs towards academic achievement (Gandara & Santibaez, 2016; Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008). According to the NCES (National Center for Education Statistics) survey, only 27% of teachers responded that they were “very well prepared” to meet the needs of ELLs, while 12% reported that they were “not at all prepared” (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

Since many teachers in the U.S. are inadequately prepared to work with culturally and linguistically diverse students, there is a need for better preparation of mainstream teachers. As such, teacher education programs need to find ways to better address ELL-specific knowledge and skills so that teacher candidates have appropriate tools and knowledge to effectively teach ELLs in their future mainstream classrooms.

To better understand how effectively prepare pre-service teachers in the teacher education program, two research questions were explored:

1) What are the self-efficacy beliefs of pre-service teachers about teaching ELLs before and after microteaching experiences?
2) How do four pre-service teachers construct their self-efficacy beliefs regarding teaching ELLs through microteaching experiences?

Ⅱ. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Microteaching has been defined as a systemic technique of controlled