

**English as a Second Language (ESL) Pre-Service Teachers' Thoughts about  
Recruitment and Retention of Quality Teachers of Culturally and Linguistically  
Diverse Learners**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study identified important factors that need to be considered concerning the recruitment, retention, and job satisfaction of ESL teachers from the pre-service teacher perspective. The ESL Pre-Service Teacher Questionnaire (EPTQ) was developed and administered to eighty eight undergraduate students pursuing Elementary (Early Childhood-6th grade) Texas Teacher Certification with an English as a second language (ESL) endorsement at a large university in central Texas. Students rated the importance of the following areas on the EPTQ: (1) appropriate resources and materials for the classroom; (2) teacher compensation/salary; (3) effective professional development provided by the district; (4) support from administration, parents, and co-workers. The aforementioned factors are commonly cited in the literature for recruitment and retention of teachers. Results indicated that support from administration, parents, and co-workers was rated as most important for the recruitment, retention and job satisfaction of educators teaching English as a second language. Compensation/salary was identified as least important.

**Key Words:** English as a second language (ESL), pre-service teachers, job satisfaction, English language learners (ELL), teacher recruitment, teacher retention

## **Introduction**

Changing demographics in the United States have yielded an increase in the English Language Learner (ELL) population (NCES, 2010; TEA, 2010). Nationally, about 21% or about 11 million students in grades K-12 speak a language other than English at home (NCES, 2010). The majority of these students are Hispanic. Currently, there is a national shortage of English as a second language (ESL) teachers to meet the needs of these students (AAEE, 2008). Research also shows that schools with higher proportions of minority, low-income and low-performing students have higher teacher attrition rates (Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006; Watlington, Shockley, Guglielmino, & Felsher, 2010). In addition, English language learners are more likely than their peers to drop out of high school (Kohler & Lazarin, 2007).

### **Changing Demographics**

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2010), the ELL population is on the rise nationally, "presenting a growing challenge to schools." The largest minority populations in schools that speak a language other than English at home are Hispanics. Approximately, 7.2 million Hispanics speak a language other than English. The second largest population of students who speak a language other than English are Asian students which total about 1.3 million students.

Texas is one state that has the highest ELL populations in the United States. At present, the state of Texas serves 800,554 ELLs in different ESL/Bilingual programs. This accounts for an astounding 16.9% of the student population in Texas which has grown by 50% since the 1998-1999 school year (TEA, 2010). Hispanics comprise 92.2

% of the ELL population that participated in a Bilingual/ESL program with Asian/Pacific Islanders coming in a distant second at five percent (TEA, 2010).

## **Drop Out Rates**

Hispanics make up the largest portion of the ELL population (TEA, 2010; NCES 2010). Research has established a link between the dropout rate of Hispanics and the academic achievement of ELLs (Kohler & Lazarin, 2007). Hispanics have the highest percentage of students who drop out of high school in the United States at 25% (NCES, 2010). In Texas, Hispanics represent 44% of the total student population in grades 7-12 and 58% of the total students who dropped out in 2008-2009 (TEA, 2010). Because Hispanics represent the fastest growing population in the United States this should be the top priority for educators. **Recruitment and Retention Practices**

Districts and universities are faced with the challenge of recruiting and retaining highly qualified ESL teachers for the growing ELL population. Studies have been conducted on the practices of recruiting and retaining both highly qualified teachers and teacher candidates. One such study surveyed Texas superintendents and found ESL to be the most commonly used program for teaching ELL students (Lara-Alecio, Galloway, Irby, & Brown, 2004). For universities and school districts alike, recruiting ESL teachers and teacher candidates was considered a “top priority” or “very important” (Lara-Alecio, Galloway, Irby, & Brown, 2004; Diaz & Mahadevan, 2011). Moreover, universities and school districts find it less difficult to train and certify ESL teachers because unlike bilingual teachers, they do not need to know a second language (Lara-Alecio, Galloway, Irby, & Brown, 2004; Diaz & Mahadevan, 2011).

What are districts and universities doing to recruit and retain ESL teachers and teacher candidates? Research shows the majority of recruitment is done through direct contact at college fairs for prospective teacher candidates and job fairs at universities for prospective teachers (Lara-Alecio, Galloway, Irby, & Brown, 2004; Diaz & Mahadevan, 2011). School districts and universities also reported that they are recruiting, more often than not, within the state of Texas. Incentives, like stipends and health care, are offered to ESL teachers just as scholarships are being offered to university students (Lara-Alecio, Galloway, Irby, & Brown, 2004). It is important to note that school districts with low numbers of ESL teacher shortages and attrition rates are those that offer greater stipends and more incentives (Lara-Alecio, Galloway, Irby, & Brown, 2004). Retention of teachers and teacher candidates can also be attributed to support being offered by districts and universities such as teacher and professor mentoring (Lara-Alecio, Galloway, Irby, & Brown, 2004; Diaz & Mahadevan, 2011). Both studies also concluded that there is a greater need for collaboration between districts and institutions of higher education to better serve the needs of the growing ELL population.

## **Pre-Service Teachers Perspectives**

Castro (2010) conducted a study in which he examined the literature reviewing preservice teachers' perspectives on cultural and linguistic diversity of students in

schools. His findings indicate a lack of understanding of multiculturalism among pre-service teachers (Pappamihiel, 2007; Castro, 2010; Walker, Shafer, & liams, 2004). Specifically, people still hold true to the idea of meritocracy and ignore institutional factors, such as racism, that can negatively affect ELLs (Pappamihiel, 2007; Castro, 2010; Walker, Shafer, & liams, 2004). These ideas are depicted in a study of teachers' attitudes by Walker, Shafer, and liams (2004) in which they found that teachers felt ELLs in mainstream classrooms were considered to be problematic. The fact that teachers come from a predominantly white, middle-class background exacerbates the lack of understanding of the diverse needs of the students in our classrooms (Berry, 2008). Castro notes that institutional practices in the education of pre-service teachers' notions about diversity, social justice, and multicultural education, can aide them in understanding their students' diversity in the classroom (Pappamihiel, 2007).

### **Teacher Preparation**

Teacher preparation along with policy making can have the largest impact in the success rate of making education more equitable for ELL students (Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008). Teacher preparation programs have to be the ones to initiate high standards in preparation. Research conducted by O'Neal, Ringler, and Rodriquez (2008) illustrate one specific situation in which ESL teachers were unprepared to work with ELLs. They concluded that this group of teachers had a lack of knowledge of second language acquisition and information regarding ELLs. In addition, a majority of the teachers were not required to take a course in multicultural education or diversity. Consequently, only 25% of the participants felt prepared to teach ELLs. When asked if they would have taken a course had it been offered, 100% of the teachers said "yes". Similarly, pre-service teachers who have been provided with opportunities to experience being a second language learner themselves (such as studying abroad in a country where they do not know the culture or language), have had some success in developing understanding and empathy for ELL students (Berry, 2008; Pappamihiel, 2007; Suarez, 2002). The participants also showed an interest in continuing professional development for teaching ELLs. Tellez (2004) suggests that acquisition of cultural knowledge, knowledge of second language teaching, and recruitment of Latino teachers can better prepare teachers of ELLs.

### **Texas State ESL Initiative**

The College of Education at Texas State University-San Marcos (TXSTATE), responded to the school districts' need of preparing our teacher candidates for successful experiences in a diverse professional teaching career by changing the certification programs for students graduating from this institution. In the Fall of 2009, TXSTATE started to offer only two options for elementary teacher certification: Early Childhood - 6<sup>th</sup> Grade (EC-6) Bilingual/English as a Second Language (ESL) or EC-6/ESL. The first step towards this challenge was to change and redesign the program by integrating stand-alone ESL courses.

## **Possible Solutions**

Ingersoll (2001) suggests that in order to solve the problem of shortages in high needs areas, like ESL, we must first look at the institutional factors that affect teacher turnover. Several studies offer possible solutions to preparing and retaining teachers in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. Greenlee and Brown (2009) affirm that teachers would be willing to stay in schools if they had more autonomy and resources for creating curriculum, opportunities for professional development, and authority for school-based decisions (Achinstein, Ogawa, & Sexton, 2010; Berry, 2008; Cuellar Allsup, De la Colina, & Battle, 2007; Cuellar, De la Colina, & Battle, 2007; De la Colina, Cuellar, & Battle, 2008; Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006; Ng & Peter, 2009). For first year teachers, it was important that they receive mentoring and collegial support (Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006; Watlington, Shockley, Guglielmino, & Felsher, 2010). In addition, several studies found that monetary incentives such as yearly bonuses and/or tuition reimbursement programs could encourage teachers to stay at their school (Beesely, Atwill, Blair, & Barley, 2010; Carr, 2009; Garrison, 2006; Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006).

## **Purpose of the Study**

It is apparent that there is a strong need to produce more highly qualified teachers across the nation that are prepared to teach ELLs. This is especially true in Texas where the number of students learning ESL is increasing at a very fast rate. There is also a need to find ways to keep skilled teachers trained to work with ELLs in public school classrooms (Cuellar Allsup, De la Colina, & Battle, 2007; Cuellar, De la Colina, & Battle, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 1997; De la Colina, Cuellar, & Battle, 2008; Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006; Watlington, Shockley, Guglielmino, & Felsher, 2010).

The purpose of this study was to investigate, from the pre-service teacher perspective, important factors in recruiting and retaining teachers who are qualified to teach students learning ESL. Therefore, an answer to the following question was sought:

Which of the following factors will lead to recruitment, retention, and job satisfaction for an ESL teacher from the viewpoint of pre-service teachers that are working toward teacher certification and the attainment of an ESL endorsement: (a) appropriate resources and materials for the classroom, (b) teacher compensation/salary, (c) effective profession development provided by the district, and (d) support from administration, parents, and co-workers?

## **Methodology**

The following section will discuss the methods and procedures used to collect and analyze data on the factors, from the pre-service teacher perspective, that will lead to recruitment, retention, and job satisfaction of teachers qualified to teach ESL. Specifically, this section includes a description of the respondents, instrument, data gathering procedures, data analysis and results.

## Respondents

Eighty eight undergraduate students who were enrolled in two specific courses (Foundations of Bilingual and ESL Education and Methods and Materials for Teaching English as a Second Language), which would lead to obtaining the appropriate credential for teaching ESL in Texas public schools, completed a questionnaire addressing ESL teacher recruitment, retention and job satisfaction. Students met for class with course instructors twice a week for approximately 3 hours over the course of a full academic semester (approximately 15 weeks). Four of the course days (approximately 10 hours) were set aside for students to go into the field in order to observe ESL teachers working with ELLs. Eighty-three of the respondents were female while only 8 were male. The majority of the respondents were Caucasian.

Table 1. Respondents by Gender

Gender	Number	Percent
Female	83	94
Male	8	6

Table 2. Respondents by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Number	Percent
White/Caucasian	66	75
Hispanic	17	19
African American	4	5
Asian	1	1

All of the respondents were enrolled at Texas State University-San Marcos, a doctoral granting university that is located on the edge of the Texas Hill Country along the Austin-San Antonio corridor. Presently, there are over 32,500 students enrolled in the university (Texas State University, 2011). Recently, Texas State was recognized as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) by the US Department of Education. In order to achieve HSI status, a university has to have an enrollment of full time Hispanic undergraduate students that numbers at least 25%. Texas State surpassed this number in September 2010. Currently, Texas State is the largest HSI in Texas (Texas State University, 2011, US Department of Education, 2011).

Today, Texas State still remains close to its roots as a normal school in that it is one of the top three university producers of teachers in the state of Texas on a yearly basis. During the 2010 school year, approximately 5,500 students made up the College of Education. Roughly 2,800 of those students were enrolled in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. Of those students, approximately 67% were White, 23% were Hispanic, and five percent were Black (Texas State University, 2011; Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2011).

## **Procedure and Instrumentation**

Initially, the authors conducted research in regards to recruitment, retention, and job satisfaction of bilingual (Spanish & English) teachers from the pre-service perspective (Cuellar Allsup, De la Colina, & Battle, 2007; Cuellar, De la Colina, Battle, 2007; De la Colina, Cuellar, & Battle, 2008). The Bilingual Pre-Service Teacher Questionnaire (BPTQ) was developed for the research conducted with bilingual pre-service teachers.

As more research concerning recruitment, retention, job satisfaction of individuals teaching children learning ESL is needed; minor wording alterations were made to the BPTQ to make it appropriate for ESL pre-service teachers (See Appendix). Unlike bilingual teachers, ESL teachers do not have to know a second language. ESL teachers are trained in methodology to teach ELLs using only the second language (English).

The questionnaire (EPTQ) consists of 4 questions in which students were to rate the importance of the following areas on their importance pertaining to recruitment, retention, and job satisfaction: resources and materials for the classroom, compensation/salary, professional development provided by the district, and support from administration, parents, and co-workers. These factors had previously been identified as critical to include on the BPTQ (which was modified into the EPTQ) as they are commonly cited in the literature concerning teacher recruitment and retention (Cuellar Allsup, De la Colina, & Battle, 2007; Cuellar, De la Colina, Battle, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 1997; De la Colina, Cuellar, & Battle, 2008; Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006; Watlington, Shockley, Guglielmino, & Felsher, 2010).

Eighty eight undergraduate students who were enrolled in courses (Foundations of Bilingual and ESL Education and Methods and Materials for Teaching English as a Second Language), which would lead to obtaining the appropriate credential for ESL in Texas public schools, filled out a questionnaire addressing ESL teacher recruitment, retention and job satisfaction. Because the questionnaires were a required assignment for the students, all respondents completed the questionnaire in class. Respondents were given the opportunity to turn in their questionnaire anonymously and still receive credit for the activity based on class attendance. Respondents rated the four areas using a five point Likert scale (1-5) with 1 indicating the lowest level of importance and 5 indicating the highest level of importance.

## **Analysis and Results**

For the purpose of this study, and answer to the following question was sought: Which of the following factors will lead to recruitment, retention, and job satisfaction for an ESL teacher from the viewpoint of pre-service teachers that are working toward teacher certification and the attainment of an ESL endorsement: (a) appropriate resources and materials for the classroom, (b) teacher compensation/salary, (c) effective profession development provided by the district, and (d) support from administration, parents, and co-workers?

Mean scores and standard deviations (Table 1) were calculated for each area using Excel. Frequency counts by question and score (Table 2) and percent responses by question and score (Table 3) were also calculated.

Table 3. Mean Scores by Question

Question	Mean	SD
A. Resources and Materials	4.61	0.70
B. Compensation/Salary	3.49	0.96
C. Professional Development	4.40	0.84
D. Support	4.84	0.45

Table 4. Frequency Counts of Responses by Question

Question	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 3.5	Score 4	Score 5	No Score
A. Resources and Materials	0	0	11	0	12	65	0
B. Compensation/Salary	2	10	31	2	30	13	0
C. Professional Development	1	2	8	0	26	50	1
D. Support	0	0	3	0	8	76	1

Table 5. Percent of Responses by Question

Question	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 3.5	Score 4	Score 5	No Score
A. Resources and Materials	0	0	12.5	0	13.5	74	0
B. Compensation/Salary	2.3	11.4	35.2	2.3	34.1	14.8	0
C. Professional Development	1.1	2.3	9.1	0	29.6	56.8	1.1
D. Support	0	0	3.4	0	9.1	86.3	1.1

Respondents rated support from administrators, parents, and co-workers as the most important factor leading to recruitment, retention, and job satisfaction with a mean of 4.84. The majority of respondents (76) assigned a score of 5 to support (86.3%). None of the respondents assigned a score below 3 to support.

Respondents rated resources and materials for the classroom as the second most important factor leading to recruitment, retention and job satisfaction with a mean score of 4.61. Again, the majority of respondents (65) assigned a score of 5 to resources and materials (74%). None of the respondents assigned a score lower than 3 to resources and materials.

Respondents rated professional development provided by the school district as the third most important factor leading to recruitment, retention, and job satisfaction as an ESL teacher with a mean score of 4.40. Most respondents assigned a score of 4 (26) or 5 (50) to this factor (29.6 % and 56.8%). It is important to note that even though respondents rated professional development as third most important out of the four

factors, it is still significant as the mean score was still over 4. This indicates that the respondents still rated this factor as important to very important.

Lastly, the respondents rated compensation and salary as least important in regards to recruitment, retention, and job satisfaction of teachers trained to teach ELLs with a mean of 3.49. Most respondents assigned a score of 3/3.5 (33) to this factor (37.5%) followed by a score of 4 (30 and 34.1%) and a score of 5 (13 and 14.8%). Compensation/salary was the only factor that did not receive a mean score over 4; however, respondents still indicated that it was still somewhat important as the mean score was still over 3.

### **Discussion of Results**

Eighty-eight ESL pre-service teachers completed the EPTQ and rated support from administration, parents, and co-workers as the most important element for recruitment, retention, and job satisfaction. This is consistent with what the literature says about teacher recruitment, retention and job satisfaction (Cuellar Allsup, De la Colina, & Battle, 2007; Cuellar, De la Colina, Battle, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 1997; De la Colina, Cuellar, & Battle, 2008 Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006; Watlington, Shockley, Guglielmino, & Felsher, 2010). It appears that the pre-service teachers show insight in their recognition that teachers, school administrators, parents, and members of the community need to work together as well as support and consistently depend on each other.

It is fascinating that salary was rated lowest in importance. This is also consistent with the literature. It is conceivable that the ESL pre-service teachers did not choose to become teachers for the salary and are aware that teachers' salaries can be considered to be low in comparison to other professions. However, even though salary was rated as lowest in rank, it still obtained a mean score of more than 3, signifying that it is still of some importance.

The ESL pre-service teachers rated resources and materials second. This indicates that the respondents are aware of the importance of having materials that are age and language appropriate when working with English language learners.

Lastly, the ESL pre-service teachers rated professional development provided by the school district as third. The respondents seem to be aware that there is always new research in the field of education/best strategies and practices to teach ELLs and that it is necessary to keep up to date with new ideas and best approaches to best serve the culturally and linguistically diverse learner.

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings of this type of study are particularly significant because of the need for highly qualified teachers who are adequately prepared to teach the ELLs in our public schools. It is of great importance for school administrators to know what factors need to be addressed in order to keep these highly qualified ESL teachers in the classroom for the benefit of the students and for accountability purposes according to No Child Left Behind legislation (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). It is also

important for university faculty involved in teacher preparation programs to be aware of this information as they recruit students into their programs and as they build relationships with school districts.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The main limitation of this study concerns the fact that all of the pre-service teachers/respondents for the study were attending and working toward a teaching degree with an ESL endorsement at one university. This particular university has recently become a HSI. The Department of Curriculum and Instruction only offers two options for elementary teacher certification: Early Childhood - 6<sup>th</sup> Grade (EC-6) Bilingual/English as a Second Language (ESL) or EC-6/ESL. So, the respondents in effect could not pursue a generalist option that did not necessarily prepare them to effectively teach ELLs. Therefore, the classroom and field experiences for these respondents is similar and is possibly unlike the experiences of pre-service teachers in other education programs at other universities.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

At this stage, the researchers have concluded that it is important to distribute the questionnaire (EPTQ) to respondents who are enrolled in similar elementary education programs with the inclusion of an ESL endorsement and/or specialization at other universities. There is also additional qualitative data that was collected on the questionnaires that is currently being analyzed. The researchers recognize the importance of evaluating this data which focuses on why the pre-service teachers chose to enter a program which includes an ESL endorsement and what challenges they anticipate in their future classrooms. This will give more insight into how to recruit individuals who want to be ESL teachers as well as how to provide support in order to keep them in the classroom for an extended period of time.

The researchers also previously completed a similar study with bilingual pre-service teachers (Cuellar Allsup, De la Colina, & Battle, 2007; Cuellar, De la Colina, Battle, 2007; De la Colina, Cuellar, & Battle, 2008). The researchers recognize the importance of comparing the results obtained in that study with the current results found with the ESL pre-service teachers to look for trends, similarities, and differences between the two groups.

Results of this study will help administrators and university faculty gain important knowledge which will facilitate the recruitment of individuals into the teaching profession as well as provide support and appropriate materials and professional development that will lead to the retention and job satisfaction of ESL teachers.

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**Appendix – EPT**

**CONSENT FORM**

In order to protect your integrity, safety, reputation, and identity as a participant, we are employing the following procedures:

- a. Names of participants in this research study will not be associated with or revealed in the data analysis, reports, presentations, journal articles, or other publications associated with the investigation.
- b. Participants' questionnaire information in this research study will not impact your grade performance.

Signing this document indicates that you are willing to participate in this research investigation by answering the attached questionnaire.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in the research investigation on pre-service teacher thoughts about the recruitment and retention of quality ESL teachers and give my permission for use of the collected data.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

**A. Personal Information**

Gender:      Male              Female

Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the neighborhood where you grew up.

**Educational Background**

Anticipated Date of Graduation	Degree	Major	Minor

Describe when/how you decided to go to college.

Describe when/how you decided to become a teacher/ESL teacher.

What challenges do you anticipate facing in your future classroom?

Where do you see yourself in terms of your career in 5 years? In 10 years?

Areas of Certification which you are working toward: \_\_\_\_\_

Which of the following grade-levels would you like to teach?

Pre-K K 1 2 3 4

**Language Proficiency**

Is English your first language? YES NO

If no, how did you learn to speak English?

Are you proficient in more than one language? YES NO

If yes, what languages do you speak? \_\_\_\_\_

Level of Proficiency?

Language\_\_\_\_\_ :Beginner Intermediate Advanced Fluent

Language\_\_\_\_\_ :Beginner Intermediate Advanced Fluent

Language\_\_\_\_\_ : Beginner Intermediate Advanced Fluent

**B. School/Environment Conditions**

Please rate the following (1=not very important and 5=extremely important) areas on how important you feel they are pertaining to your future job satisfaction. Please provide additional comments, descriptions, and explanations.

**A. Resources and Materials** for your classroom:

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_

not very important

extremely important

Explain why:

**B. Compensation/Salary:**

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_

not very important  
important

extremely

Explain why:

C. **Professional Development** provided by your district:

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
not very important \_\_\_\_\_ extremely  
important

Explain why:

D. **Support** from administration, parents, & co-workers:

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
not very important \_\_\_\_\_  
extremely important

Explain why:

E. **Other:** Please include any other areas which you feel are pertinent to your future job satisfaction and describe why you feel they are important.

Describe what you hope your future classroom environment will look like. Include a description of the student population in your school and classroom.