ESOL AND MAINSTREAM TEACHER COLLABORATION: OVERCOMING CHALLENGES THROUGH DEVELOPING ROUTINES

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This study examines how ESOL (English to speakers of other languages) and third-grade co-teaching pairs made sense of collaborative models of teaching across one school year. Findings from this qualitative case study of one elementary school highlight challenges faced by co-teaching pairs, as well as routines that developed to support both successful and strained collaborative relationships. As more schools adopt co-teaching to meet the instructional needs of English learner (EL) students in mainstream classrooms, this analysis provides a critical picture of the challenges and opportunities related to co-teaching. Implications for supporting and developing teacher capacity for linguistically responsive instruction in collaborative teaching contexts are discussed.

Keywords: case study, collaboration, co-teaching, elementary school, English learners

The number of English learners (ELs)[1] continues to grow at a rapid pace in K–12 schools across the United States (Park, O'Toole, & Katsiaficas, 2017). While the number of ELs increases, however, the academic achievement of these students consistently lags (Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010). It is clear that this demographic shift necessitates particular skills and knowledge related to teaching culturally and linguistically diverse learners (Lucas & Villegas, 2010). In addition, Common Core State Standards (CCSS) requires increased academic rigor and emphasis on content knowledge and English language development for ELs (Hakuta, 2011). Yet, many practicing content teachers are not sufficiently afforded the professional knowledge to meet the needs of ELs. As a result, schools are beginning to implement co-teaching models in which English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) and mainstream teachers teach alongside one another using collaborative models to support ELs. In this model of instruction, ESOL teachers work in the mainstream classroom to provide required language instruction for ELs. They teach content to all students in tandem with the mainstream teachers, usually focusing specifically on the linguistic demands embedded in the content lesson, which helps both ELs and non-ELs alike. This development, however, while growing in popularity as a means of providing equitable access to mainstream classrooms and content for ELs, it is a problem for districts and schools that often lack resources to support teachers using new, collaborative teaching models. As a result, these teachers have likely not been trained to be successful with this innovation in collaborative planning, teaching, and assessment (Peercy & Martin-Beltran, 2011). Such a situation poses challenges, but also opportunities, for incorporating effective classroom practices that benefit all students.

Drawing on collective sensemaking, most notably the ways in which teachers use their formal and informal relationships and networks to interpret and adapt to institutional messages (Coburn, 2001; Horn, 2018; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2006), this qualitative case study examines how teachers made sense of their collaborative work in one elementary school in the midst of implementing new collaborative models of teaching. A university-based teacher educator was embedded within the partner school for the school

year as a facilitator of professional learning, as these collaborative, co-teaching models were implemented.

This paper unpacks the challenges and opportunities, as well as eventual development of routines, that developed as co-teaching pairs engaged in implementing new, collaborative models of EL instruction within the context of a third-grade mainstream classroom. The examination is framed by research on how collaborating teachers of ELs draw on a shared vision and tools (Daniel & Peercy, 2014), as well as routines as a source of professional learning (Horn & Little, 2010). Specifically, this study analyzed how teachers developed their capacity and understanding of culturally and linguistically responsive instruction as they navigated new roles, power dynamics as co-teachers (Creese, 2002), and resultant collaborative relationships through two main research questions:

- How do teachers learn to meet the needs of ELs using collaborative, co-teaching models of instructional practice?
- What are the challenges to this collaborative work and how do teachers mitigate these challenges?

Literature Review

School-university partnerships are promising pathways in supporting inservice teacher and student learning (Bier et al., 2012; Zeichner, 2010), yet little of this research focuses specifically on pedagogy for effectively teaching ELs. Furthermore, research suggests that sustained, classroom-embedded instructional coaching and professional development can encourage teacher learning (Gallucci, 2008; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Teemant, 2010). Findings from a study on the coaching and implementation levels of research-based EL strategies into teachers' practice reveal that through the teachers' involvement in a lengthy coaching phase, implementation progressed substantially after each semester (Penner-Williams & Worthen, 2010). Furthermore, Batt (2010) found that when the coaching phase of the workshop on the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)[2] was eliminated, teachers demonstrated weak implementation of the SIOP strategies into their practice. While there is potential to enhance instruction and professional learning through teacher involvement in a school-university partnership (Leslie, 2011), outcomes can vary depending on individual teacher factors that mediate teacher learning and pedagogical change, such as teacher attitudes and collegial relationships (Fisler & Firestone, 2006).

Consequently, there is an increased need for innovative models of professional development that consider the variety of factors shaping teacher professional learning as it relates to meeting the needs of ELs in classrooms. In particular, the field needs to better understand the challenges related to collaboration and co-teaching between ESOL and mainstream teachers, as well as how teachers are navigating this unfamiliar space (Peercy, Martin-Beltran, Yazan, & DeStefano, 2017). This study considers what the literature has not considered, and addresses this gap by providing a case study of one elementary school to serve as a model for illuminating the inherent challenges and emerging opportunities in these developing professional relationships.

Recent research suggests that occasions to engage in professional learning related to the development of linguistically responsive instruction and to demonstrate such responsive teaching practices can be challenging to find (Tandon, Viesca, Hueston, & Milbourn, 2017). Meanwhile, others have found that opportunities to collaborate on relevant and timely topics, such as academic language within the context of shifting national learning standards (i.e., Common Core State Standards), can play a significant role in how teachers learn to instruct ELs (Lahey, 2017) more effectively. These new standards require an increase in rigor of content demands and use of academic language for all students, including ELs, across grade levels and content areas, thereby increasing the need for ongoing, work-embedded professional learning. Opportunities for teacher learning can be discerned by an examination of the routines in which collaborating teachers engage (Horn & Little, 2010). By looking closely at their routines, we can better understand the collective capacity (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2009), or lack thereof, of this group of ESOL and third-grade co-teaching pairs.

Recently, scholars have delved into aspects of the related challenges and opportunities found in the acts of collaborating and co-teaching between ESOL and mainstream teachers. For instance, there is evidence of the use of tools (e.g., checklists, shared assessment instruments, calendars, email) as a means of mediating collaboration and making teacher learning and thinking about instruction for ELs visible (Martin-Beltran & Peercy, 2014). Moreover, a culture of collaboration established through an entire school vision, along with a schoolwide focus on meeting the needs of ELs, can further play a role in how positively collaborative practices are taken up (Russell, 2012). Indeed, many ESOL and mainstream teachers engaged in collaborative relationships cite the need for consistency and routine in order to successfully do their work (Peercy, Ditter, & Destefano, 2016). Thus, how co-teachers develop consistent practices and routines, and engage in their collaborative work, can be understood through the lens of collective sensemaking.

Collective Sensemaking: A Lens for Understanding Teacher Collaboration

This analysis draws on the concept of sensemaking to understand how collaborating teachers made sense of their new relationships within the context of implementing new models of instruction for ELs. Collective sensemaking (Coburn, 2001) refers to the formal relationships (e.g., assigned co-teacher, grade-level teams), informal relationships (e.g., teachers on other grade-level teams, out-of-school relationships with bilingual teaching assistants), and networks (e.g., online professional communities, access to district-level instructional leaders) among teachers, and the ways in which these relationships shape the teachers' understanding and enactment of the new collaborate models of instruction for ELs. Sensemaking, a social theory derived from the context of teachers' work, schools, districts, and communities, helps to unpack how teachers interpret the same messages differently. In this paper, I draw on sensemaking theory to understand the phenomenon of teachers' collaborative work and relationships to highlight their understandings of their collective work, the challenges faced, and ultimately the routines put into place in order to navigate the school year in meeting their students' needs.

Research Methods

This qualitative case study examined ESOL and third-grade co-teaching pairs engaged in a school-university partnership over the course of one school year, drawing on observation, survey, interview, and document analysis as data sources. Following an intrinsic case study (Stake, 1995), the study design necessitated that careful attention be paid to the particular context. It was conducted within the setting of a school-university partnership, which was developed with the goal of improving teacher capacity for linguistically responsive instruction in an elementary school engaged in implementing collaborative models of ESOL instruction (Russell, 2017). A university-based teacher educator collaborated with the partner school for the school year as a facilitator of professional learning.

Setting

Sycamore Elementary is located in a large, metropolitan area in the southeastern United States. At the time of data collection, 91% of the students were eligible for free or reduced lunch and 63% of the students were classified as ELs. The school was in the first year of implementing new models for serving ELs, including these two:

- **30+ Technology model.** In this model, ESOL teachers provided 30 minutes of direct instruction inside the mainstream classroom. In addition, students received 15 minutes or more of ESOL support using an interactive technology program.
- **Balanced Plus model.** In this model, ESOL teachers provided a minimum of 45–50 minutes of support in the mainstream setting alongside the mainstream teacher. The ESOL teacher could present English Language Arts (ELA) content as whole-group, small-group, or individual instruction.

Participants

Eight focal teachers participated in this study: four ESOL teachers and four third-grade classroom teachers, with each assigned a pseudonym, forming four co-teaching pairs. One co-teaching pair used the 30+ Technology model and the other three co-teaching pairs were engaged with the Balanced Plus model. For purposes of triangulation, interviews were conducted with the district ESOL coordinator, principal, ESOL department chair, and third-grade department chair.

Data Sources

Data sources included observations, surveys, interviews, and documents. Observations were conducted formally and informally in co-taught classes; instructional coaching cycles ($N = 2$ per teacher, including planning, observation, and debrief meetings); and in meetings, hallway conversations, and during partnership mentoring activities, such as lunchtime brown bags ($N = 2$) and academic language book study meetings ($N = 7$).

Surveys entailed an initial needs assessment survey and an exit survey (see Appendix A). These surveys were administered to all eight focal teachers. In addition, audio-recorded interviews ($N = 10$) were conducted with all participants (for sample teacher interview protocol, see Appendix A); a researcher's log of activities and a field journal were maintained as well.

Data Analysis

The constant comparative method was used to analyze field notes, observation and survey data, interviews, and collected documents (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As such, data collection and analysis were iterative processes (Glesne, 2006). Ongoing data reduction was used (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to refine hunches and findings, as well as to make connections between the research questions, study context, and data analysis. Data analysis involved the development of analytic codes from both the conceptual framework of the study and through codes that emerged from data collection and the autoethnographic process; Dedoos,[3] an analytic process, deduced the main themes that developed. Data were triangulated within and across the sources and data analysis processes to confirm and validate findings. Triangulation was also used to select research participants to identify disconfirming evidence (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Findings

There's the ideal, then there's the reality [. . . in terms of time, ability, and desire to collaborate effectively].
—Veteran ESOL Teacher

The data revealed that co-teaching pairs initially struggled to make sense of their new professional roles and relationships as the models for EL student instruction were implemented. In terms of collaboration, there was a clear chasm between what would ideally be happening and what actually was taking place within the school and classrooms. The following overarching themes emerged from the findings: (a) internal and external factors impacted the ability to collaborate and implement the new instructional models; (b) teachers developed routines and other strategies to facilitate the work of collaboration; (c) in some instances, the status quo was reinforced, maintaining the more traditional boundaries between ESOL and mainstream teacher instruction; and (d) there was potential in the school-university partnership to support professional development and teacher collaboration.

Figure 1 Challenges to Collaboration

Experiencing Internal and External Challenges to Collaboration

Figure 1 shows how internal and external factors affect the ability to collaborate and implement the instructional models, pushing and pulling co-teaching pairs as they set to work within their new professional capacities. Four of these factors—limited time, lack of control and support, unwillingness to adapt, and unrealistic expectations from administrators—are discussed below.

Limited time. Teachers reported feeling rushed and hurried. Several pairs indicated that they did not have opportunities to meet built into their school day. As a result, they had little time to plan, assess, or discuss individual student needs. As one ESOL teacher noted, "There is not time during the day because we don't share planning times; I don't have the same planning time with either one of them [her mainstream co-teachers]." The principal noted this obstacle and stated that administration would need to consider how to make more planning time available to co-teachers during the school day. Furthermore, ESOL teachers felt rushed in terms of how much time they had to work with ELs. One ESOL teacher using the 30+ Technology model stated, "If you only see them [ELs] for . . . 30 minutes . . . you don't know the students until a long time has passed." Teachers felt pressured to utilize every moment of class time due to restrictions; as one third-grade teacher stated, "It wasn't easy at first trying to figure out the groups and how we were going to try to maximize the time."

Lack of control and support. As teachers had to coordinate lesson topics and sequencing to adhere to a structured model of co-teaching, they felt constrained in their autonomy and professionalism. This was compounded by feelings that they did not have the support they needed to successfully co-plan and co-deliver a content-based lesson with significant linguistic demands. A new third-grade teacher stated:

"It was hard to find [the] support . . . of somebody that really had time to sit down . . . answer the questions and find the support for you." This sense of a lack of support was likely a symptom compounded by a lack of time.

Change is never a seamless process, and there were myriad challenges and a steep learning curve involved in implementing the new instructional models. A third-grade teacher noted, "It was kind of challenging at the beginning to kind of figure out what it [the new model] was going to look like." Another added, "It wasn't easy at first to figure out the groups and how we were going to try to maximize the time [that the ESOL teacher was in class]." Meanwhile, ESOL teachers were negotiating new teaching assignments at the last minute. A veteran ESOL teacher stated:

> So, last year I was kindergarten, one, and two, and this year, I'm just first and third. So, you never know. And we usually don't find out [what grades we will be supporting] until right—first week— well, right when school starts.

In this case study year, co-teaching pairs didn't find out about the new instructional models until right at the start of the school year, causing mainstream and ESOL teachers alike to scramble to figure out what needed to be done and how the models would be implemented. Given that there was limited professional development, the small amount that was offered was for ESOL teachers only, provided at the onset of implementing the new models. This placed a significant burden on the shoulders of ESOL teachers tasked with entering mainstream classrooms to collaborate with mainstream teachers.

Unwillingness to adapt. Some teachers seemed not to want to share their classrooms, or were inflexible with their space, time, and students. This stemmed from several factors. Certain co-teaching pairs just did not know *how* to collaborate, develop their roles, or divide their work. Some third-grade mainstream teachers held the belief that they were in charge of the planning and that the ESOL teacher was not willing or able to contribute. Furthermore, there were feelings that ESOL teachers were being intrusive in their attempts to "push in" to the classroom as co-teachers. A veteran ESOL teacher described this as ". . . you're coming into another person's classroom and you're not there just by invitation, you were sent there." This dynamic proved problematic as teachers sought to develop their co-teaching relationships. In some instances, third-grade teachers perceived the ESOL teachers as assistants, a possible holdover from the "push-in" model in which ESOL teachers played a supportive, rather than a co-teacher, role. An ESOL teacher described this phenomenon: "Some teachers experience the challenge of letting go—even first-year teachers that assume the ESOL teacher is some kind of assistant." Thus, although ESOL and mainstream teachers are colleagues and equally expert in their respective fields, some teachers struggled with a perception of unequal power relations, one in which the ESOL teacher occupies a lower professional position.

Unrealistic expectations from administrators. Challenges were compounded with the sense that expectations for co-teaching were unrealistic. Teachers described themselves as overwhelmed and overloaded. One ESOL teacher using the 30+ Technology model expressed her frustration with how much time she was allotted for serving ELs in the third-grade classroom: "So twelve students for children who need additional time and need additional instruction, thirty minutes is just, it's almost just ridiculous." She went on to say, "It would have been really better to be able to have just a few kids at a time." Such expectations for substantive individual differentiation during a short class period puts an undue burden on ESOL and mainstream teachers.

Teachers talked about being uncomfortable, frustrated, and nervous. These feelings contributed to an overall waning of morale for some. Mainstream teachers started the year off without the ESOL teachers, and the ESOL teachers, who had been busy testing, placing students, and mapping EL students' schedules, were placed in third-grade classrooms after school had been in session for about a month. Third-grade teachers were then overwhelmed when a co-teacher was integrated into their classroom. This constant push-pull affected morale and teacher buy-in for the new co-teaching models.

Making Collaboration Work

Despite the challenges, teachers were resilient and developed routines and strategies to do the work of collaboration. This did not happen immediately; over the course of the school year, however, co-teaching pairs were able to figure out how to collaborate in ways that worked for each co-teaching situation. To achieve this, some pairs capitalized on each individual teacher's strengths and expertise; in addition, as the year moved along, co-teachers developed a rhythm for sharing the work of planning and delivery of instruction. Developing strategies and routines was key in teachers feeling as though they had agency over their success in meeting the needs of all their students. As Peercy and her colleagues point out, disruptions to routines can make it difficult for ESOL and mainstream co-teachers to work productively with one another (Peercy et al., 2016).

Drawing on individual teachers' strengths and expertise. Some co-teaching pairs recognized that they each came to co-teaching with particular gifts and experience that went beyond the paradigm of third-grade teachers considering themselves content experts and ESOL teachers as language experts. In the most effective partnerships, both co-teachers saw themselves as content and language teachers equally, and as partners in pedagogy with a common goal. Effective co-teachers knew what their teaching partner was good at and capitalized on this, as a veteran ESOL teacher noted:

> I guess because I tend to come up with the best ideas I think for me, when there's talk and exchange of ideas. And one person will say something, and you go, "Oh, I know . . . what we can do. I have this great idea. I'll pull this, you pull that. You're good at this. You're good at that. Megan is better at . . . the computer . . . you know, she'll do the Bright Links sort of things. I can find books, because I know the library well, so I'll say I know which book we need. I've got this, I can make this game. You do that." And so that is wonderful because you divide and conquer.

When teachers got to the point where they were in a routine that both were doing the instructional planning and delivery, they were the most content with the model. A teacher summarized this as "I mean sometimes I would say, 'Okay, I'll pull that for language arts.' Then she'd say, 'Well, I'll pull the stuff for reading.' But sometimes we divide it up, you know?"

Getting into a rhythm. As the year progressed, some co-teaching pairs developed predictable routines that enabled them to share the work of lesson planning and delivery of instruction. This sharing of work looked different across co-teaching pairs. In some instances, ESOL teachers deferred to the third-grade teacher and figured out how to work around what the third-grade teacher had planned. One ESOL teacher explained it as:

> So, we don't necessarily plan together. I mean we touch base and, you know, tell each other what we're doing, but as [for] actually planning together . . . we don't because she does her activity and I do the writing activity.

Clearly, the rhythm that this co-teaching pair had gotten into was one of doing separate activities and touching base to be sure they were aligned for their individually planned instruction. While this had the potential of being instructionally problematic and was not the intent of the instructional model, it was the routine that this co-teaching pair developed, despite a less than ideal collaborative relationship. As this ESOL teacher noted, "With Ms. Simmons . . . I stay a week behind . . . I take the skill that she's taught . . . I differentiate and teach it a different way."

In other cases, the work was more fully integrated and shared between the ESOL and third-grade teacher. One third-grade teacher in a more successful collaborative co-teaching relationship described the give-and-take of her work with the ESOL teacher:

> But we would flip it every few weeks depending on just what we wanted to teach. Like if we were planning and one of us got really excited about something, we would just flip it for whichever one we prefer and just ask, "What do you want to do?"

This particular co-teaching pair met once a week after school on the same day. This consistent routine supported their productive co-teaching relationship. The ESOL co-teacher explained how this routine benefitted both the co-teachers and the students:

> It's just more beneficial because we can actually sit down and hammer out what we're going to do, what the standard actually means, what activities we're going to use . . . we talk about materials, who's going to pull the materials, who's going to develop something.

Confirmed through classroom observations, this co-teaching pair was very effective in sharing the planning, delivery of instruction, and assessment of student learning. They also used the assessment data they had collected to inform their next instructional steps. By taking time out of their busy days to meet weekly, they were able to develop a helpful and productive routine.

Developing relationships and looking ahead. Each pair approached co-teaching and collaboration differently and in ways that made sense to them and their particular situation. Navigating these relationships, however, was often rocky in the beginning. Teachers were new to this type of work and were unsure of what to do and how to do it.

As the end of this school year approached, some co-teaching pairs were excited to continue their collaboration, while others looked forward to being paired differently in the future. One experienced ESOL teacher who had worked with many mainstream teachers over the course of her career explained it like this: "It really depends on that person [mainstream classroom teacher]—the classroom teacher's personality and what they're willing to do." She continued, ". . . some ESOL teachers are not in a situation where the general ed teacher is willing to do much collaboration." To the majority of ESOL teachers, it seemed that the third-grade teachers set the tone for what collaboration and co-teaching would look like in their classroom. It was often the case that both the ESOL and the third-grade teachers perceived the mainstream teacher as having the power to decide how much room and time they would give the ESOL teacher to be an equal in the classroom.

Developing a Cooperative Capacity Versus Reinforcing the Status Quo

Findings revealed that the new models supported the capacity development of certain co-teaching pairs, in which an equitable relationship and shared personal goals were fostered, while these same models reinforced the status quo in in others, in which the content teacher's pedagogical goals took precedence over those of the ESOL teacher. It seemed that co-teaching pairs moved in the direction of either a true teacher partnership, or their relationships became tense and reinforced traditional boundaries between mainstream and ESOL teachers, one in which the ESOL teacher is marginalized.

Forming mainstream and ESOL teacher partnerships. In these teacher partnerships, teachers came together to meet the needs of ELs. They co-planned, shared instructional responsibilities and materials, and took the time to reflect on formative and summative assessment data. In one such relationship, when asked where she found the most literacy support, a third-grade teacher indicated that she received the most support from her ESOL teacher. Another described how she gathered instructional materials: "Sometimes I had things, she had things, so we just sort of pooled the materials. And that was nice to not have to do it all." The idea that the co-teachers could share resources was important. As another teacher noted, "We shared a lot. I mean, if Lauren did a graphic organizer, we both used it." In these effective co-teaching relationships, teachers worked within a teaching partnership, doing the work of teaching together.

Reinforcing traditional boundaries of mainstream and ESOL teaching. In these co-teaching relationships, the status quo remained intact (Creese, 2002). The mainstream teacher took on the more dominant role in the relationship and classroom, doing the majority of the planning and leading the instruction, with little collaborative work happening outside of class. Teachers did their own individual planning and instruction with little collaborative engagement, and as a result, the traditional boundaries

between ESOL and mainstream teachers were reinforced, permitting the third-grade teachers to often assume the more powerful role in the relationship when planning and implementing instruction, viewing ESOL teachers as professionally inferior. As the ESOL chair explained:

> The grade-level teachers often think their level of importance is higher than that of the ESOL teacher, so when they decide to change the plans last minute, it's not a big deal [for them], but leaves the ESOL teacher scrambling to figure out their lessons for the day.

The observation that ESOL teachers did not need to be consulted when changes to the lesson plans were made at the last minute highlights any disparate sense of control and power between mainstream and ESOL teachers.

Supporting the Potential of a School-University Partnership

When there was no professional development provided for co-teaching pairs on implementing the new instructional models over the course of the year, the school-university partnership provided opportunities for learning. Teachers noted the value of occasions to come together during lunchtime brown bags and book study to share insights regarding implementing the co-teaching models and ideas about their teaching practices.

The teachers appreciated hearing what their colleagues had to say about what they were doing in class and were able to glean ideas for their own instruction. A novice third-grade teacher described the book study: "[It] was awesome. Just hearing people's perspectives and how they do this in their class and how, you know, it related to the book." Another third-grade teacher, with more experience but also new to the building, enjoyed the lunchtime brown bags, stating:

> Just finding out the way the different teams went about creating their balanced literacy schedule. I just love sitting back listening to the way the different teams tackle the teaching and the sharing of things and how they went about everything.

For many of the new teachers, in fact, either to the building or to the profession, this sharing of instructional ideas and support for ELs in their classrooms was incredibly helpful as they navigated their new roles. In addition, the use of tools (e.g., the text used in the book study), was beneficial as they acted as buffers from which to engage in difficult conversations related to language, culture, and instruction (Martin-Beltran & Peercy, 2014). It seemed that teachers did not necessarily like to bring up the specific instructional challenges related to co-teaching among their peers because of the personal nature of any tensions or issues. It was easier to rely on the case studies from the book to discuss issues related to teaching ELs in the mainstream.

Discussion and Implications

Overall, the findings suggest that teachers made sense of their work in different ways based on (a) the relationships they had with their co-teacher; (b) their official or unofficial roles within the school (e.g., new teacher, veteran teacher, ESOL teacher) and the ways those identities played out socially; and (c) the contextual constraints of the school, district leadership, and educational policy. Depending on the status and perceived roles within the school, the mainstream and ESOL teachers had to negotiate—explicitly or implicitly—how to collaborate. Teacher sensemaking was activated as teachers navigated the implementation of new collaborative models of teaching in their particular instructional context, which provided both opportunities and constraints (Horn, 2018; Spillane et al., 2006). Since there appeared to be no overarching model of collaboration, pairs took an individual approach in ways that made sense to them. Despite challenges to implementing the new co-teaching models for ELs, teachers were able to develop routines to support co-teaching, though their effectiveness varied.

The majority of partnerships took time to develop into comfortable routines. At the beginning of the school year, many teachers were unsure of how to proceed. It took several months for co-teaching pairs to arrive at a functional, sustainable system. For example, some teachers met on a specific day of the week, while others relied on email to send lesson plans and ideas back and forth; still others defaulted to the mainstream teacher sending over plans to the ESOL teacher, who then needed to plan instruction around this information.

Specific lessons can be learned from this study that can facilitate how routines might be systematized by co-teaching pairs that have established strong collaborative relationships. These can then be shared with other teachers, both within the school and potentially across the district. Making explicit the challenges in co-teaching and possible routine solutions to them can help subsequent co-teachers more quickly develop successful routines of their own in support of ELs. Professional development, school-university partnerships, and teacher leadership are probable avenues for making this learning possible.

Professional Development and the Potential of School-University Partnerships

It is important to note that there was no professional development or support at the beginning of the school year to help set the tone and encourage new teaching pairs to plan and work together in intentional ways. Furthermore, ESOL teachers were busy with paperwork and EL student placement for the first weeks of school, and thus not in the third-grade teachers' classrooms. When the ESOL teachers were ready to engage, the third-grade teachers had already established classroom routines with their students. Once ESOL teachers were ready to enter third-grade classrooms, teaching pairs were left to their own devices to devise new routines, which proved to be difficult for some pairs. As Peercy and her colleagues point out (Peercy et al., 2016), routines are important as co-teaching pairs work to create a shared division of labor. Disruptions to these efforts made collaborative work more challenging and reinforced any existing traditional boundaries between ESOL and mainstream teachers, which resulted in inequitable roles. In this particular case, when ESOL teachers were not taking on equitable roles as teachers in the classrooms at the outset, the dynamic was problematic from the start; ESOL teachers ended up having to close this distance. In some cases, co-teaching pairs were successful and were able to develop teaching partnerships in which they devised and relied on effective routines (Horn & Little, 2010), sharing instructional decision-making and power. In other cases, this reality exacerbated and contributed to reinforcing the inequitable status quo, contributed to resistance to collaborate, and made apparent problematic issues of power between ESOL and mainstream teachers.

Teacher Leadership: Recognizing One's Expertise

In breaking down traditional roles and boundaries, the findings suggest that teacher leadership can play a key role. As teachers recognize their own expertise, they can influence how co-teaching is viewed across a school. A third-grade teacher in a successful co-teaching pair who did not recognize her own value as a part of the group involved in the partnership work stated: "I think it [the partnership work] would be extremely helpful for new teachers . . . especially if they're coming from somewhere that doesn't have the amount of ESOL that we have here." This finding reveals the need to build the leadership capacity of teachers as they become skilled co-teachers.

The need to share expertise with others, both inside and outside their buildings, is critical for teachers in moving toward wide-scale acceptance and implementation of co-teaching to support ELs within the mainstream classroom. Several of the mainstream and ESOL teachers that had been teaching at the school for many years were skilled in working with ELs. In addition, some of the co-teaching pairs had developed specific and effective systems of co-planning and co-teaching. Sharing this knowledge and expertise across the school could be highly beneficial as teachers new to the building and/or profession are asked to collaborate in such a way. There was, however, a sense of reluctance or hesitation on the part of the teachers to be involved in this type of teacher leadership. A few of the teachers who were comfortable

with co-teaching perceived any professional learning activities in this area to be redundant and didn't recognize their own value in participating in such activities when they had a system down.

Ultimately, there is a need to develop the leadership capacity of teachers as they become skilled in co-teaching so that they are empowered and positioned to share this expertise with others, both inside and outside their buildings. This is critical in moving toward wide-scale acceptance and implementation of co-teaching to support ELs within mainstream classrooms. Both ESOL and mainstream teachers need to be encouraged to recognize their own expertise, including the need for ESOL teachers to be valued as knowledgeable, certified teachers within the mainstream classroom context, and to be encouraged to leverage their skills and knowledge as they contribute to capacity development across the school in support of teaching ELs.

Implications and Recommendations

This case study of one elementary school has resulted in the following implications and recommendations in support of co-teachers in implementing new instructional models:

- Provide models of collaboration for co-teaching pairs before the beginning of the school year so that teachers do not need to navigate this process entirely on their own.
- Provide opportunities and guidance to co-teaching pairs around communication, co-planning, and co-teaching so that all co-teaching pairs have a workable agenda going into the school year.
- Draw on the expertise and leadership of effective co-teaching pairs.
- Provide resources, support, and accountability for collaboration and co-teaching to *both* ESOL and mainstream teachers.
- Consider the use of a common text to be used as a resource for conversations related to co-teaching and instruction for ELs in the mainstream classroom.
- Honor the expertise of individuals engaged in co-teaching—both mainstream and ESOL teachers—so that each brings status and agency to the relationship.

Conclusion

A key objective of this research was to develop a deeper understanding of how teachers engaged in collective sensemaking (Coburn, 2001) related to co-teaching and the subsequent learning as a result of developing their capacity as co-teachers of ELs. Implementation of the Common Core State Standards requires increased academic rigor for ELs and necessitates an emphasis on content knowledge as well as English language development. To help meet the new standards, this study sheds light on the potential of co-teaching in elementary classrooms, with both ESOL and mainstream teachers involved in planning, instruction, and assessment.

As schools and districts find themselves with growing EL populations (Pandya, McHugh, & Batalova, 2011), innovative solutions to meeting the needs of this diverse group of learners are needed. New models that integrate collaboration, co-teaching, and school-university partnerships can feasibly contribute to this equity work. Such models can do so by: (a) understanding the constraints that hinder collaborating teachers' ability to take up new ways of thinking and doing this work (e.g., informal and formal networks, teacher leadership); (b) considering the variety of supports and resources collaborating teachers need to make this developmental shift; (c) including focused development of routines and shared sessions; and (d) engaging university and K–12 partners at the school leadership level—partnering with schools on their strategic plans and getting involved in instructional improvement work. In doing so, we can come one step closer to the optimum in co-teaching and collaborative models that support instruction for ELs.

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Notes

[1]I refer to English learner (EL) students in this paper as students that are receiving English language services. I recognize that these students are emergent bilingual or multilingual learners and bring linguistic and cultural resources along with their need for specialized instruction.

[2]SIOP is a sheltered instruction model for K–12 classrooms, which many public-school teachers of ELs are required to use.

[3]Dedoose is a cross-platform application for analyzing qualitative and mixed methods research developed by social science researchers.

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Appendix A
Teacher Needs Assessment, Exit Survey, and Interview Protocol

Teacher Needs Assessment
1. What day/time do you usually collaborate with your third-grade/ESOL co-teacher?
2. What strengths do you and your co-teacher bring to the partnership? What helps the collaboration work?
3. What challenges, if any, are you having (besides time!) in navigating the new ESOL models at Sycamore?
4. Would you be interested in earning PLUs for participating in ongoing professional development through this collaboration?
5. If you could earn PLUs, what type of product would be most useful for you to develop (e.g., lesson plans, teaching reflections, assessments)?
6. If we were to focus on a particular topic this fall would you be most interested in (a) ESOL/general education teacher collaboration or (b) academic language?
7. Anything else you would like to share?

Teacher Exit Survey
1. What ESOL model are you working with this year?
2. At this point, how have you come to organize your time, planning, curriculum, and other teaching tasks with your current ESOL model to meet the needs of students?
3. What were some of the successes and challenges with the model this year?
4. What are some of the lessons you have learned?
5. What advice would you share with teachers new to using your model?
6. What might you change about how you are doing things now?

Share how the book study, using common instructional strategies, focusing on the needs of academic language learners, and/or collaborative planning has helped you to support your collaborative work in the classroom.
Take a few minutes and jot down your responses, giving some thought to the following, recognizing that you each approach this process in your own way:
- Using focal ESOL students
- Drawing on common instructional strategies
- Use of collaborative planning
- Holding informal conversations about instruction and/or students
- What else has been supportive? Anything in particular?

Teacher Interview Protocol

1. Can you tell me about your teaching position? What are your teaching responsibilities? Who do you collaborate with (ESOL, SPED, etc.) regularly in your classroom/teaching?
2. What does a typical day look like for you? What do you do? What do the students do? Who do you work with?
3. What support, if any, do you receive from your colleagues (other teachers, staff, administrators—school or district level)?
4. Tell me a bit about the kinds of professional development that you have found most valuable as a teacher? Have you ever received any form of classroom embedded PD or coaching (outside of this project)?
5. What have you found most eye-opening about this partnership?
6. What are 2–3 things that you have learned or tried as a result of our work together?
7. What supports were missing for you to be able to take full advantage of the support being provided by the partnership work?
8. Can you tell me your perspective on the new ESOL models that you have engaged with this year? What's been a success? What have been some challenges? How has collaboration improved, or not, as a result of the new model(s)?
9. What would suggestions do you have for beginning or improving a collaborative university and school partnership?
10. What would be most helpful for you in terms of your professional development and improving your instructional practice for ELs?
11. What do you wish we had known before beginning this partnership (about your school, your teaching schedule/demands, about technology, about other PD you were receiving, etc.)?
12. Anything else you want to share?