

Envisioning collaboration: including ESOL students *and* teachers in the mainstream classroom

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(Received 11 January 2010; final version received 20 May 2010)

The inclusion of language learners and the imperative to meet the needs of English language learners in the mainstream classroom call upon teachers of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL teachers) and mainstream teachers to work together; however, little research has been done in US contexts to understand collaborative efforts between ESOL and mainstream teachers. Research thus far has focused on the inclusion of English language learners (ELLs), but this paper argues that we need to look more closely at the inclusion of *teachers* of ELLs, by examining how three ESOL teachers and three of their mainstream counterparts envision their work as collaborative. We found that when pairs envisioned their work as collaborative, they created a synergy that constructed a broader network of resources for ELLs by bringing together more people, materials, ideas and abilities than either teacher was able to generate alone. This network allowed both teachers in the pair to become part of a larger conversation, and connected both teachers to others who were working to foster the academic success of ELLs.

Keywords: teacher collaboration; English language learners; inclusion; mainstream

In the USA, the number of English language learners (ELLs)¹ is growing dramatically and educators face new challenges as they aim to help these students achieve academic success on par with their English-speaking peers. Increasingly, mainstream teachers teach ELLs in their classrooms, although they may not have special training in working with ELLs. In elementary school settings, ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) teachers have traditionally met with students outside of their mainstream classrooms (called ‘pull-out instruction’). Historically, mainstream and ESOL teachers have done their work largely independently of one another. However, there is growing recognition that ELLs would benefit from collaboration between their ESOL and mainstream classroom teachers to provide education that coordinates curricular and instructional goals while supporting students’ academic language needs (Arkoudis 2006; Creese 2002, 2006; Davison 2006; Dove and Honigsfeld 2010; Gardner 2006; Martin-Beltrán and Percy 2010; Martin-Beltrán, Percy, and Selvi, forthcoming; Rushton 2008). In some elementary schools there has been a move to have the ESOL specialist ‘plug-in’ to the mainstream classroom (rather than pulling ELLs out of the mainstream classroom for a short period), so that ELLs in the class may continue to learn mainstream content and interact with English-dominant peers,

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but have scaffolded support available from a language specialist while they are learning.

This interest in ‘plug-in’, or collaborative, teaching models is part of a larger shift to the inclusion of learners with special needs in mainstream classrooms. Scholars have argued that ‘pull out’ models, or separate ESOL tracks, deny ELLs’ equitable access to the curriculum and constrain opportunities for peer interaction with English dominant students (Nieto 2002; Olsen 1997; Valdés 2001). The inclusion of language learners has become more prominent with the alignment of language and content area curricular standards, increased emphasis on all students meeting national standards and accountability as measured by standardised test performance (Platt, Harper, and Mendoza 2003; Reeves 2006). The inclusion of language learners and the imperative to meet the needs of English language learners in the mainstream classroom call upon ESOL teachers and mainstream teachers to work together; however, little research has been done in U.S. contexts to understand collaborative efforts between ESOL and mainstream teachers. Research thus far has focused on the inclusion of ELL *students*, but this paper argues that we need to look more closely at the inclusion of *teachers* of ELLs, by examining how ESOL teachers and their mainstream counterparts envision their work as collaborative (for work in international contexts about teacher collaboration, see Arkoudis 2006; Creese 2002, 2006; Davison 2006; Gardner 2006; Rushton 2008).

Background literature

Research has shown that classroom teachers and specialists in the USA rarely collaborate and are unlikely to understand the roles, responsibilities and practices of other school professionals who work with linguistically and culturally diverse students (Roache et al. 2003). Many articles focus on techniques and recommend strategies for teacher collaboration (Haynes 2007; Hoffman and Dahlman 2007; Honigsfeld and Dove 2008), and document recent trends towards inclusive education for ELLs (Platt, Harper, and Mendoza 2003; Reeves 2006), which has necessitated ESOL–mainstream teacher collaboration; however, as Davison has argued, collaborative teaching between ESOL and mainstream teachers has been largely ‘undertheorised and under-researched’ (2006, 457). Recent work (Arkoudis 2006; Creese 2002, 2006; Davison 2006; Gardner 2006) has made important contributions to the field by shedding light on the complexity of ESOL–mainstream collaborative teaching relationships through their examination of teacher discourse and the evolution of partnerships in settings outside the USA. The present study draws upon concepts from this body of research and examines three different collaborative teaching relationships situated in three elementary schools in a linguistically diverse community in the Mid-Atlantic USA.

As we sought to analyse successful collaboration and to describe the collaborative relationships in three co-teaching case studies, we drew upon work that has encouraged teacher collaboration across content areas and grade levels, such as the research on critical friends groups (e.g. Bambino 2002; Curry 2008; Norman, Golian, and Hooker 2005), professional learning communities (e.g. DuFour 2007; Seglem 2009; Servage 2008) and lesson study (e.g. Fernandez 2002; Honigsfeld and Cohan 2008; Lewis et al. 2006). All of these models encourage critical reflection and collaborative dialogue about teaching issues (such as planning lessons, analysing student learning and refining instructional approaches based on student outcomes), but most of the work in these bodies of research has not focused on teacher collaboration to benefit ELLs (for exceptions see Honigsfeld and Cohan 2008; Mitchell 2007; Waddell and

Lee 2008). Previous work has also focused primarily on the inclusion of ESL *students* in the mainstream classroom, whereas we were interested in whether and how ESL *teachers* experienced inclusion in mainstream classrooms through their collaboration with mainstream colleagues.

This paper adds to the work on teacher collaboration by examining how three pairs of ESOL and mainstream teachers who worked together to meet the needs of ELLs did or did not *envision* their work as collaborative. The concept of envisioning emerged from the data post hoc, and was a way for us to examine teachers' *joint* construction and understanding of their teaching efforts, rather than conceptualising their teaching as individual (such as the work on teacher beliefs, e.g. Kagan 1992). We draw upon literature about teacher vision (see Turner 2007; Turner and Mercado 2009), which defines vision as shaping teachers' personal definitions of teaching (Hammerness 2001). We bring a sociocultural lens to this literature by examining how teachers can construct this vision together through collaboration. We offer the term *envisioning* as our way to understand the teachers' social construction of the teaching relationship through their shared vision of teaching and learning.

Because we understand the teachers' *envisioning* from a sociocultural perspective (Johnson 2009; Vygotsky 1978; Wertsch 1991), their interaction in social activities (in this case, their teaching and their collaboration about their teaching) shapes both their collective and their individual constructions of how they understand, or envision, their teaching and their teaching relationship. We draw on sociocultural theory to argue that the teachers' practices were inevitably shaped by the 'specific social activities in which [they] engage[d]' (Johnson 2009, 9). Our findings highlight the social negotiations between the teachers as they enacted their visions of teaching and learning (which could merge or diverge, creating greater collaboration or dissonance). Furthermore, the teachers' ways of envisioning their work together affected the inclusion of ESOL teachers in mainstream classrooms. When pairs envisioned their work as collaborative, they created a synergy that constructed a broader network of resources for ELLs by bringing together more people, materials, ideas and abilities than either teacher was able to generate alone. This network allowed both teachers in the pair to become part of a larger conversation, and connected both teachers to others who were working to foster the academic success of ELLs.

To guide our understanding of the pairs' collaboration, we utilised Davison's (2006) framework describing distinct stages of ESOL–mainstream teacher collaboration in terms of increasing effectiveness. We drew upon and extended Davison's framework to closely examine how the teachers did or did not envision their work as collaborative as they developed collaborative relationships. Davison articulated five levels of teacher collaboration: (1) pseudocompliance or passive resistance (to collaborating); (2) compliance; (3) accommodation; (4) convergence (and some co-optation); and (5) creative co-construction. At each of these levels, ESOL and mainstream teachers are increasingly positive about, involved in, and intrinsically motivated by collaborating with their counterpart.

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- (1) What conditions and contexts create obstacles or opportunities for successful ESOL–mainstream teacher collaboration?
- (2) What factors allow (or do not allow) teachers to envision their work as collaborative?

Setting and context

This research project grew out of a university–school district partnership that aimed to improve the teaching of ESOL students by providing a five-month professional development series for 26 teachers across 11 elementary schools. The researchers and a district ESOL instructional specialist organised and co-taught the workshops for teachers. The focus of the professional development was on the benefits and challenges of ESOL–mainstream teacher collaborative planning and collaborative teaching, as well as building relationships and an understanding of each other’s professional expertise between ESOL and mainstream teachers.

Methods

Data collection

With help from the district ESOL specialist, we identified three focal pairs (six teachers) who were participating in the professional development, and willing to participate in interviews and observations of their co-planning, teaching and debriefing on their lesson. These focal pairs also represented a spectrum of approaches to collaborative planning and teaching: the first pair (Kathleen² and Gina) was voluntarily working collaboratively at their own initiative, the second pair (Dorothy and Hannah) was collaborating together because their school was participating in a plug-in pilot project and the third pair (Samantha and Tanya) represented a pull-out ESOL model that generally did not engage in co-planning or co-teaching. We interviewed the focal teachers about the atmosphere and logistics of collaborating in their school, observed them planning a lesson together, observed them teaching the planned lesson together and interviewed them after they taught the lesson to garner their impressions about their collaboration.

Participants

Pair one, Kathleen and Gina, were both teaching for their fourth year at Haven Elementary School. Kathleen, an ESOL teacher, was in her second year teaching ESOL, after two years as a first-grade teacher at Haven. Gina was a second grade teacher. Kathleen and Gina were in their first year of co-teaching together during the year we collected data. They had asked for permission from their principal to co-teach, and they taught together every day when Kathleen plugged into Gina’s classroom for the writing block. They taught together in a writing workshop format. The nature of their collaboration was remarkable: they were good friends and spent many hours together after school planning their instruction together. For four other periods per day, Kathleen pulled ESOL students out of their mainstream classrooms and worked with them for 45 minutes.

Pair two, Dorothy and Hannah, worked together at Cedar Elementary School. Dorothy was an ESOL teacher who had been at the school for four years (after teaching English abroad and receiving her M.Ed. in TESOL) and Hannah was a second-grade teacher who had been teaching for five years (after changing careers and going through an alternative certification programme). The teachers reported that they were participating in a district ‘pilot programme’ for co-teaching (which seemed to suggest an experiment rather than a systematic change). Dorothy seemed excited to have this opportunity to co-teach and she had been proactive about asking her principal for

permission to co-teach, whereas Hannah explained that she was asked to participate. Hannah explained that their school had chosen her class in second grade to pilot a co-teaching model because they had a large group of ESOL students in this grade level. During their language arts block (90 minutes), all of the ESOL students from across two classrooms in second grade went to Hannah's room where Dorothy plugged in every day. During the other periods of the day Dorothy taught third graders and kindergartners (in a pull-out model) and she had recently begun plugging into one fifth grade teacher's classroom.

Pair three, Samantha and Tanya, taught at Valley View Elementary School. Samantha had been teaching ESOL there for five years, after she changed careers. Tanya was a kindergarten teacher in her second year at Valley View, and had previously taught kindergarten for a few years in another school district about 35 miles away. Unlike the other two pairs, Samantha and Tanya did not plan or teach collaboratively. According to Samantha, their principal discouraged collaborative teaching because she felt that when two teachers were in the classroom, one ended up assisting and not being fully engaged in teaching. Samantha was one of four ESOL teachers in her school and pulled students out for six 30–45-minute periods per day, working with three groups of kindergartners, two groups of fourth graders, and one second-grade newcomer.

Data analysis

We used the constant comparative method (Strauss and Corbin 1998) to analyse interviews transcripts and field notes from our professional development sessions, looking for major themes. We began this process by working separately to examine the data we had collected (we had each been the primary interviewer and point of contact for a particular pair of teachers, and both researchers had taken notes during and after our professional development sessions), to generate initial impressions and generate preliminary themes. Our next step was to read the transcripts of the interviews that we had not conducted, and to again generate initial impressions and themes. We then met to discuss our themes and to examine points of convergence and divergence in our emergent themes. After agreeing on themes that we felt related to obstacles and opportunities for collaboration (such as communication about instruction, teaching styles, student outcomes, teacher expertise, logistics and time, accountability, ownership of curriculum, space, students, legitimacy and administrative affordances and constraints), we coded the data for these themes using NVivo software. As we compared our coding from the collaborative planning sessions and interviews, we found that in some cases we needed to code the same examples as both obstacles and opportunities for collaboration, which led us to re-think the complexities of dynamic collaborative relationships. This also led us to understand the term 'envisioning' as something that is dynamic. In order to help us conceptualise relationships considered 'successful collaboration', we referred to Davison's (2006) evaluative framework, described above, and we compared this with the teachers' own conceptualisations of the effectiveness of their collaborative relationships.

Findings: how the teachers envisioned their relationships

We found that the way that teachers envisioned their relationship and their approach to teaching was an important part of the context that created obstacles or opportunities

for successful collaboration. In contrast to Davison, who argued that collaborative teaching requires ‘strong incentives and support from the administration, careful planning and coordination of teaching loads, and above all, sufficient resources and structured allocated time’ (2006, 458), this study found that whether teachers envision their relationship as collaborative can outweigh administrative support or other external affordances, such as paid planning time.

In next section, we will discuss four factors that both helped and hindered teachers in this study from envisioning their relationships as collaborative and working to include one another in their collaborative teaching of ELLs: (1) common goals for teaching and learning; (2) willingness to discuss disagreements; (3) recognition of their counterpart’s expertise; and (4) the status accorded to them in their relationships at school as well as issues related to ownership of space and students.

Common goals for teaching and learning

We observed that the teachers with the most collaborative teaching relationship (as defined by Davison’s (2006) framework), Kathleen and Gina, were also the teachers who envisioned their work as the most collaborative in that they explicitly shared common goals for teaching and learning. Kathleen expressed this shared vision succinctly in the following quote when she talked about the compatibility of her teaching style with Gina’s.

We are very, very much on the same page when it comes to teaching.

Both Kathleen and Gina viewed teaching and learning as processes that emerge through social interaction, and they worked to generate meaning together in their planning, instruction and assessment. Kathleen illustrated their common concern for student learning when she stated that if she noticed that students were struggling with particular concepts, she would talk to Gina about it and they would address the concepts during their co-teaching time. They both thought it was important to make their expectations and thinking transparent to students, and devised shared rubrics for evaluating students, and created a system of sticky notes for conferencing with students about their writing which allowed either teacher to consult with students as they moved through the writing process. They also encouraged students to construct meaning together, by spending time working in pairs on oral and written language as well as academic content. Furthermore, their use of a writing workshop format with students, and the many hours they spent together and with the parent liaison at their school (who helped them translate materials and instructions into Spanish) to provide scaffolding in students’ first language also made evident that they viewed students as coming to the classroom with important resources and ideas to share (which is an important feature in the successful inclusion of students with disabilities (e.g. Calabrese, Patterson, and Liu 2008; Savich 2008) and ELLs (e.g. Flores et al. 2009; Valdés 2001).

The second pair (Dorothy and Hannah), who struggled the most to work together collaboratively, also articulated the most dissonance around their goals for teaching. Dorothy explained that there are difficulties leading a classroom together when each teacher has a different vision for the classroom, however, she never discussed this explicitly with Hannah. In the following quote, she described the tensions teachers experience when they are teaching together.

You want to run the show and when there are two of you, you have to give and take, and that takes a lot of getting used to. I think the degree to which you can do that is going to depend on your vision for the classroom and what you put the priority on.

Hannah described the tensions between her and Dorothy as differing teaching styles.

I think the styles of myself and my co-teacher are not exactly compatible ... I like [Dorothy], but working professionally together has been challenging.

Hannah's main conflict with Dorothy was due to a dissonance in their teaching philosophies. While Hannah's vision of teaching and learning was based on more discrete literacy skills, Dorothy did not use this same skill-based language to describe her teaching. Hannah felt that this obstacle to collaboration might be overcome if she and Dorothy were able to communicate more about the purposes or reasons behind their teaching.

Hannah: I am not sure that I see a connection here with her lesson and what really needs to be done, and that is a communication disconnect for us, you know, and I see that. I mean I am not sure this [co-teaching] model is the best for us in particular ... [When she taught something recently, I thought] 'What? Why are you reading this? ... That is entertaining and they enjoy it, but it's not really part of the curriculum, and I do not see what skills you are teaching them.

Hannah's view of teaching and learning was impacted by the pressures of testing and accountability she felt from the county and state, yet she perceived ESOL teachers as not being under the same pressure to demonstrate student learning through test scores and, therefore, as being less likely to understand and respond to these pressures.

We are under very tight time constraints of the curriculum. And we are not always sure that the ESOL department is always appreciative of that fact ... This is what is mandated, these skills are supposed to be taught. It is making ESOL [teachers] aware that we have them for a reason ... there are things that we should be following and I am not sure they [ESOL teachers] realize that, I am not sure they get that connection there.

Above, Hannah described how she did not perceive Dorothy's goals as aligned with her own goals for teaching. What is important here is not so much the increased standardised testing constraints themselves, but rather the way that teachers envisioned their own teaching and their teaching partners' teaching in light of these constraints. For example, another teacher described the same situation from a different perspective below, and in her view, ESOL teachers share similar goals and pressures with mainstream teachers. This is an example of how the way the teachers envisioned their practices – as complementary or separate – had a lot of power to positively or negatively shape their interactions and collaboration. In contrast to Hannah's quote above, Samantha asserted that ESOL teachers are also part of this system of increased accountability and pressure to perform on tests. Samantha viewed her role as collaborating with and supporting the mainstream teacher in this atmosphere.

Samantha: When I first came [to teach at this school,] some of the things that the ESOL teachers did were a lot of fun and I participated happily ... I think there is maybe a little place for that but ... Now we just cannot do that anymore. The stakes are too high.

Not only did Hannah and Dorothy have different goals for teaching and learning, but they also did not communicate about their different visions or how these linked with their practices. This lack of communication negatively affected their relationship, which will be discussed in next section.

Willingness to discuss disagreements

The effectiveness of the teachers' collaborations was also related to each pair's willingness to work through conflicts about teaching. Our focal pair with the strongest co-teaching model, Kathleen and Gina, pointed out that even classroom management and organisation issues (such as when students were allowed to sharpen pencils, consistently keeping materials in the same place, managing the placement of small groups in the classroom and taking care not to talk too loudly) could create underlying tension between teachers if they were not comfortable discussing these issues with each other. They noted that their friendship enabled them to confront these kinds of difficulties, which could have created friction and misunderstanding had they not shared mutual trust. Indeed, Kathleen and Gina shared an exceptionally close collegial relationship, which stemmed from a friendship that they had outside of school as well. The teachers lived in the same apartment complex and spent many hours after school together, both planning instruction and socialising. The teachers sought out opportunities to work together and approached their principal on their own, requesting to co-teach together. Both teachers were able to overcome logistical challenges and scheduling in order to allow Kathleen to plug into Gina's classroom every day during the second graders' writing block. While Davison's (2006) framework to describe levels of collaboration is helpful, it does not account for the relationships that develop outside of school and inevitably impact how teachers envision their collaboration.

In the following quote, Kathleen explained how their trusting relationship allowed for each teacher to take risks in front of each other and admit when they were wrong; whereas teachers who do not feel as comfortable with each other might be uneasy communicating openly about their teaching, and therefore might not enjoy a co-teaching model.

Kathleen: I think it is because we are so comfortable with each other ... Our model is not going to work for everyone ... I feel like because we had the experience with being friends, it is like 'Okay, that was not the right thing to do that [teaching approach I just tried]. I can admit that [to my co-teacher]'. [Laughs.]

In contrast to the relationship described above in which the teachers were comfortable examining and challenging their teaching together, Dorothy admitted that she and Hannah were still 'learning to work with each other', indicating a strain in their relationship. Dorothy also contrasted her relationship with Hannah and her close friendship with the kindergarten teachers in her school, which she indicated made it easy to collaborate with them about instruction, although they did not co-teach together.

In the following quote Dorothy described the challenge of working together with Hannah in light of what she viewed as conflicting personalities, which she said was also manifested in power struggles over decision-making in the classroom.

We both have very outer personalities. We both like to be in charge and we are quite sure that we are right.

The fact that they did not feel comfortable addressing any underlying disagreements greatly hindered Dorothy and Hannah's cooperation. They both acknowledged underlying differences in their teaching, yet they both told the researchers that they had never discussed this explicitly with one another. In contrast to Kathleen and Gina's relationship that allowed them to take risks and tackle disagreements, Dorothy and Hannah did not show evidence of this mutual trust and, therefore, allowed many underlying disagreements to bubble under the surface of their everyday teaching.

Recognition of counterparts' expertise

The way teachers envisioned their relationship was significantly related to whether they recognised their counterpart as bringing important expertise to the collaboration (and therefore perceived mutual benefit in working together), and how they understood the ways to draw upon this expertise. It was common that ESOL teachers were viewed by their mainstream counterparts as a resource person. Rather than initiating regular contact with ESOL teachers, the mainstream teachers often consulted ESOL teachers if they had a specific question about how to reach an ESOL student. For example, in the following quote Tanya, a kindergarten teacher who worked with Samantha (ESOL teacher), stated that she had Samantha as 'a go-to person' when she had problems teaching ESOL students.

Students that I have had problems with in the past and I am like 'I cannot really figure this out', because [Samantha] works with this population she is able to always kind of help with what is going on. So, sometimes I'll go and ask you know, ask their [Samantha and the other ESOL teachers in the school] opinion, ask her to observe this and what would they do about it?

Her ESOL counterpart, Samantha, agreed in the following quote from her interview.

We just had a few newcomers (ELLs new to the USA who usually do not have English proficiency yet) and whenever they come in, usually the teacher comes and says 'What can I do?' or 'Do you have anything that I can work on?' and so forth.

Although the ESOL teachers at their school did not co-teach with mainstream teachers, Tanya viewed Samantha and the other ESOL teachers in her school as contributing their expertise in an integral way that was part of their broader understanding of teaching and learning. In the following quote Tanya explained the resources and support that ESOL teachers brought to her teaching.

I am always able to go to Samantha or the other ESOL teachers and say 'This is the skill that we are working on and they are not getting it', and they can do some more instruction in that area as well. So I would definitely say that I see they are a huge support to us in our classroom, just with the pre-teaching, and vocabulary development, and things like that.

In the following quote Kathleen expressed that co-teaching allowed her to be more aware of and in tune with students' experiences and needs in her counterparts' classrooms, and her colleagues who were familiar with her instructional expertise more readily viewed her as a resource for instructional ideas even when she was not physically in the classroom.

The two people I co-teach with, they utilize me more than the other teachers I work with. Like I feel like a resource and I feel like I am helping my children even if I am not in the room.

Another significant factor that impacted the ways that teachers envisioned their collaboration was their perception of their counterpart's expertise due to experience in a similar setting. It was common for mainstream teachers to refer to ESOL teachers' prior teaching experiences in relation to their own. For example, Hannah explained that Dorothy was not accustomed to the demands of a regular mainstream classroom, because she had never taught in a regular elementary setting. She explained that Dorothy's previous experience of teaching in Japan did not seem to relate to their present setting. Mainstream teachers seemed to give more legitimacy to ESOL teachers who had previous experience as mainstream teachers. In the following quote, Gina explained how she viewed Kathleen as having a deeper understanding of the mainstream curriculum and managing a regular classroom because Kathleen had been a first grade teacher for two years before she began teaching ESOL.

She was a classroom teacher so she had this huge benefit that I think some ESOL teachers do not understand in the sense that they just have not had that experience. So the classroom management piece, the way the class needs to move because if you walk in and the kids are transitioning, you do not really understand what is going on, you might try to pull the kids here and the classroom teacher is like 'That is not how my rules are, that is not the flow', that kind of thing ... You know, I think it helps that because she has had that.

Tanya also confirmed this perception of legitimacy in the following quote when she mentioned a positive experience working with an ESOL teacher the previous year who had been a kindergarten teacher before she became an ESOL teacher.

So, she knew our curriculum and when we were going through the things, she would know exactly what it is that we were doing.

In contrast, Tanya identified Samantha as going through a 'year of acclimation', since it was her first time working with kindergarten.

Teachers were not able to envision their work as collaborative when they did not view their counterpart as offering expertise. This worked both ways: not only did mainstream teachers view ESOL teachers as important collaborators when they had expertise to offer, but ESOL teachers also viewed mainstream teachers as useful collaborators when they had expertise to offer, and difficult to work with when they did not know their own curriculum well and did not plan ahead. In the following quote Kathleen explains how a collaborative relationship was not built with teachers who did not perceive her as a legitimate teacher who was actually teaching the students something valuable.

The teachers that I am pulling the students out of the classroom, they do not talk to me about what their children need. And if I ask them specifically 'This week, this is the theme that is coming up, what do you think I need,] some of the things that thond] 'Oh I think, they are gonna be fine', [they are indicating to me that] they have it under control and they do not need anything from me ... They do not think I can do it ... It is always like 'They are gonna be fine' and the relationship is not there because they do not see me as a teacher. They see me as someone who comes to the door and gets the children and brings them into my room. They do not know what I do ... I feel like I am

giving [the students] everything I have when they are here for 45 minutes, but I do not know what they walk back into once they are gone.

In the next quote, Kathleen explains that she had difficulty collaborating with teachers who she perceived as lacking expertise about how to teach or reach students in need.

They [the mainstream teachers that say ‘They’re gonna be fine’] basically do not know probably what they are teaching tomorrow. So, to ask for help, they would probably have no idea what they need help with ... The people that I am talking to do not have either knowledge or dedication that I have for the kids. So, if I ask ‘Okay, what is gonna happen next week?’, for example they are talking about the fractions, and they did not even know they had fractions next week. They are just like ‘Well, I can blame the fact that they are ESOL, and they just do not get it’ ... They like me coming to their room, grabbing their kids, bringing them here and doing whatever it is I do with them and when I bring them back, they do not really want to connect.

Hannah illustrates a similar disconnect in the following quote. Describing a situation from the year prior to this study, Hannah explained that the ESOL teachers brought new writing tools to the mainstream teachers, which might have been framed as an extra resource if only she gave credibility to the expertise of the ESOL teachers and had understood the value of the resource.

The ESOL teachers gave it to us and told us, ‘We used this in our classes all the time, and the kids love it, and they do know how to use it’ and blah blah. And it is like, the [mainstream] teachers were kind of looking at each other like, ‘Okay, what is the purpose of this other than it is fun, and I do not see any real academic value here, That is going to be super time-consuming’.

In this example, we can see that even if ESOL teachers bring in concrete resources and expertise to the situation, this does little to increase collaboration if both teachers do not envision each other’s contributions as valuable.

Status and ownership as constraints on collaborative relationships

The way the teachers conceptualised their relationship was also impacted by factors such as the status accorded to them in their relationships at school, and misunderstandings and disagreements over ownership of space and students. Several ESOL teachers mentioned situations in which they felt as if they were in a position of service to the mainstream teachers rather than in an egalitarian collaborative relationship. In the following quotation, Samantha explained how the ESOL teachers might be treated as if they were of lower status.

Issues like a teacher asking, ‘Why didn’t someone pick up the kids today?’ almost like we do have a lesser status in that we are almost like at the beck and call for the mainstream teachers sometimes. It depends on the teacher too.

Dorothy explained how some mainstream teachers expected ESOL teachers to run errands, rather than teach together.

In other classes, I can see that I would be used as a chauffeur. And I am okay with that once in a while if it happens. If you forgot to make copies during your planning time and

if that is the lesson that you are supposed to be teaching, and you need me to run to the teacher's lounge once in a blue moon, that is fine. Even better, would be to say 'Can you do the read aloud, so that I can go and make copies?' I am okay with that. I do not want to be used as a substitute teacher.

Gina also explained how some mainstream teachers did not understand what ESOL teachers did, and therefore assumed they were not held accountable for their teaching in the same way.

I think classroom teachers are like 'Ohhhh, these [ESOL] teachers are walking around the hallway, they pick up kids whenever they want, sit around whenever they want, do whatever they want'.

The teachers' quotes above illustrate a perception that ESOL teachers were often viewed as having lesser status, or that their roles were misunderstood by others in the school.

Discussion

This study corroborates work by Davison (2006) and others which asserts that including ELLs in mainstream classrooms requires close coordination between teachers to guide language development along with growth in content knowledge. We argue that it is important to look more closely at the ways teachers envision their teaching to understand what fundamentally supports or hinders such collaboration.

We found teachers' level of collaboration (based on Davison 2006) shifted with the ways that the teachers envisioned their relationship. The first pair, Kathleen and Gina, showed a high degree of collaboration, which could be considered at the highest level that Davison described ('creative co-construction' – Level 5). This was evident in the high degree of trust between them, their acceptance of conflict as inevitable and their negotiating and deciding what they should teach by analysing students' needs together.

The second pair, Dorothy and Hannah, seemed to shift roles and move back and forth between Davison's Levels 1, 2 and 3 (pseudocompliance or passive resistance, compliance and accommodation) depending on the instructional context, the daily demands on their time and the way they envisioned their relationship. While Hannah often referred to a lack of positive outcomes (Level 1), she also acknowledged tensions and showed a willingness to experiment (Level 3) and even explained that conflicts in teaching roles may be inevitable (Level 5). Dorothy showed a positive attitude with 'good intent' (Levels 2, 3 and 4) and looked for opportunities to learn from her co-teacher (Level 4); however, she also seemed to avoid certain conflicts in order to accommodate perceived needs of her co-teacher (Level 3). She articulated that their shifting roles and power dynamics depended on the degree of communication and planning time that she had with her co-teacher.

In examining the work of the third pair, Samantha and Tanya, we discovered something that both surprised and encouraged us: teachers do not have to be working together in the same classroom to be teaching collaboratively. We found that the 'degree of external support' (Davison 2006, 467) that teachers received from their school and district contexts did not affect the degree of collaboration between the teachers as much as whether the teachers envisioned their relationship as collaborative. For example, although Samantha did not teach in the same room with Tanya, and

the teachers did not have a school administrator that supported co-teaching, they envisioned their work as engaging in a common purpose and were able to collaborate on their teaching in ways that seemed to be at the level of convergence (Level 4). They welcomed opportunities to learn from one another and demonstrated a high degree of respect for each other. Tanya viewed Samantha and the other ESOL teachers in her school as providing important knowledge and ideas when she needed more support for how to teach ELLs in her kindergarten class. By the same token, Samantha mentioned that although there were not formal mechanisms for collaboration in place in her school, she often checked in quickly with the mainstream teachers in the hallways about how she could support what they were doing in their classrooms.

Although we have separated our analyses of the way the teachers *envisioned* their teaching relationship from the ways they engaged in *practices* into two papers (this paper and Martin-Beltran and Percy 2010), we clearly saw how the way the teacher pairs viewed their relationship impacted the way they were able to enact collaboration in their daily practices. In other words, there was a symbiotic relationship between ‘the viewing’ and ‘the doing’ of collaborative work. No matter how many tools, resources or affordances were available to teachers, this would not necessarily create more collaboration if the teachers were not open to viewing each other as resources. Pair two, Dorothy and Hannah, seemed to struggle most when it came to a common vision for teaching and learning, which made for a weak foundation on which to build a collaborative teaching relationship.

The first pair, Kathleen and Gina, was most successful because they shared common goals for teaching students and they were able to negotiate conflicts which led to greater understanding between them. The teachers in the third pair, Samantha and Tanya, were able to successfully collaborate because they recognised each other’s expertise and contribution to the teaching and learning of the students that they shared.

Finally, as Davison argued, we found that these teachers were not merely providing ‘another pair of hands’ (2006, 456) but rather were creating a kind of synergy. The teachers were multiplying, expanding and providing access to a larger network of resources across the school. In other words, this collaborative relationship was more than a two-way relationship between the ESOL and the mainstream teacher. Instead, this relationship often fostered communication with others at the school (i.e. emailing other teachers their plans, coordinating with other specialists, connecting their mission to serve ELLs with parent liaisons and administrators). Their collaboration broadened the network of resources in the classroom both by bringing in another teacher’s areas of expertise and ability with instructional tools and materials as well as connecting the classroom to a broader set of people and services. Furthermore, the development of a network was recursive, because as the teachers *viewed* their work as collaborative, they engaged in *doing* more collaborative work, and as they *did* more collaborative work, they increasingly *viewed* collaboration as critical to their teaching and connected to the larger school community.

Implications

The findings from this study have implications for school policies, teaching practices and teacher education. Although much has been written about how to increase access to mainstream curriculum for ELL students, little attention has been given to increasing ESOL *teachers’* access to the mainstream curriculum. This study found the ways the teachers envisioned their practices, their common goals, and their counterparts’

expertise powerfully impacted opportunities for ESOL teacher inclusion and collaboration with mainstream teachers.

As teachers in this study suggested, both teachers and students are often isolated from the rest of the school with a 'pull-out' model. Including ESOL teachers in mainstream classrooms ('plugging in') may lead to less marginalisation of ESOL teaching school-wide. Our findings suggest that when ESOL and mainstream teachers spend time together in the mainstream classroom, the ESOL teacher has access to the kinds of demands 'on the ground' that the mainstream classroom generates for ELLs, and an opportunity to share context-specific feedback with the mainstream teacher about the challenges that ELLs experience and resources they bring to that setting. Thus, if teachers cannot co-teach regularly, even occasional plugging in by the ESOL teacher into the mainstream classrooms of the students she/he teaches will provide important insights about how both teachers can best support ELLs; however, it requires more than simply placing teachers together. Certainly, for the teachers who envisioned their work as collaborative, this led to more inclusion of the ESOL teacher in the activities of the mainstream classroom as well as greater connection of both teachers to other people and resources outside of their individual classrooms.

As the teachers in this study expressed, co-teaching requires a desire on the part of the teachers to spend time working and constantly improving collaboration. When collaboration is mandated (see Hargreaves 1994; Hargreaves and Macmillan 1994) or strongly encouraged (as in the case of Dorothy and Hannah), rather than emerging organically from the teachers themselves (as in the less usual case of Kathleen and Gina), the reality is that teachers may not want to plan and teach together, and they only have limited (if any) official time in which to do so.

It was clear from looking at the differences in the relationship between Kathleen and Gina, who had initiated their collaborative teaching themselves, versus the more strained co-teaching relationship between Dorothy and Hannah, which had been motivated by the pilot project in their district, that successful collaboration cannot be forced. Indeed, Kathleen and Gina were co-teaching against the odds, because they did not share any common planning time, and did all of their planning together outside of school time. However, they made this arrangement work because they had a strong desire to teach together and they shared a common vision of teaching and learning. Dorothy and Hannah, although they were given affordances to work together (such as additional pay for some of the extra time that their co-planning required), were struggling to maintain a good working relationship.

In order to foster stronger relationships between ESOL and mainstream colleagues, this study suggests that administrators create opportunities for teachers to interact beyond the classroom in order to protect and support important spaces for collaboration. One recommendation would be to offer opportunities for teachers to interact with colleagues on other projects outside their individual classrooms which might foster future collaborative teaching relationships that would be initiated and desired by the teachers themselves.

Finally, this study has important implications for teacher education, which until now has done little to address collaboration between ESOL and mainstream teachers. Teacher preparation programmes should lead the way in developing opportunities for ESOL and mainstream specialists to work together and learn about each other's expertise. In many programmes, these pre-service teachers participate in separate tracks, with little interaction. This is often because content area university faculty and ESOL university faculty work separately as well – there is also need for much greater

collaboration between university faculty related to the teaching of ELLs (Athanases and de Oliveira 2010; Costa et al. 2005; Lucas and Grinberg 2008). Future research is needed to examine how teacher educators from different disciplines can work together to bridge epistemological gaps and create spaces for shared visions of teacher preparation for linguistically and culturally diverse students.

Notes

1. We use the term ELL to refer to students who are 'in the process of acquiring English, and whose primary language is not English' (Shore and Sabatini 2009, 3).
2. All names are pseudonyms.

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