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Preparing ESL Educators for Diverse Classrooms: A Thematic Analysis of M.Ed. Graduates' Perceptions

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Abstract

This qualitative study examines graduates' perceptions of an M.Ed. in ESL teacher preparation program at a public university in the Southwestern U.S. to identify strengths, areas for growth, and recommendations for improvement. Using thematic analysis of written reflections from program graduates, the study explores how well the program prepared educators for diverse classrooms. Findings indicate that graduates felt well prepared in second language acquisition theory, sheltered instruction, integration of language domains, and asset-based pedagogies. However, participants expressed a need for deeper preparation in assessment, technology integration, support for diverse learners, and differentiation between language acquisition and learning disabilities. Graduates also recommended enhanced practicum experiences, interdisciplinary collaboration, and increased focus on advocacy and sociopolitical issues. These insights align with existing research emphasizing the importance of clinically rich preparation and continuous improvement. Implications for ESL teacher preparation and future research are discussed.

Keywords: ESL teacher preparation, thematic analysis, strengths, areas for growth, recommendations

1. Introduction

This study examines the perceived strengths and areas for growth within an M.Ed. in ESL teacher preparation program at a public university in the Southwestern U.S., drawing on

qualitative reflections from program graduates. As U.S. schools continue to serve an increasingly linguistically diverse student population, the preparation of highly qualified ESL educators has become essential. Understanding how graduates evaluate their preparation provides critical feedback for continuous improvement and for aligning programs with current research, policy expectations, and K–12 instructional realities. The purpose of this study is to analyze graduates' perspectives on their readiness to teach multilingual learners, identify areas in which the program is succeeding, and highlight opportunities for enhancement. The research questions are as follows:

- How do graduates perceive the strengths of their M.Ed. ESL teacher preparation?
- What areas of ESL teacher preparation do graduates perceive as needing further development?
- What recommendations do graduates offer for strengthening ESL teacher preparation?

2. Literature Review

Teacher preparation for English as a Second Language (ESL) educators is grounded in several interconnected domains: theories of second language acquisition, linguistically responsive pedagogy, culturally sustaining practice, assessment, and interdisciplinary collaboration. These domains collectively inform how teacher candidates develop the knowledge, beliefs, and instructional strategies needed to support multilingual learners in complex K–12 contexts.

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of Second Language Acquisition

Foundational theories—including Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982) and Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory (1978)—shape the design of ESL instruction by emphasizing meaningful interaction, comprehensible input, and scaffolded learning environments that promote both language and academic development. Krashen's framework positions naturalistic acquisition over explicit grammar instruction, arguing that learning accelerates when students encounter language slightly above their current level (i + 1) while maintaining a low affective filter. This perspective has remained influential in K–12 ESL classrooms, guiding teachers to provide rich linguistic exposure through authentic texts, collaborative tasks, and thematic units.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory further contributes to language pedagogy by viewing learning as a socially mediated process (Vygotsky, 1978). The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) illustrates how learners can achieve higher levels of performance with strategic support from more knowledgeable peers or adults (Vygotsky, 1978). This principle underlies instructional scaffolding practices, such as modeling, guided practice, sentence frames, visual supports, and structured dialogue. Gibbons (2015) extends these ideas into ESL pedagogy by emphasizing scaffolding through classroom interaction, collaborative learning, and the integration of language development with academic content. Building on these theories, Peregoy and Boyle (2017) emphasize that effective ESL teachers support the four language domains—listening, speaking,

reading, and writing—within integrated content instruction rather than isolating language skills from curricular learning.

2.2 Linguistically Responsive Pedagogy

Linguistically responsive pedagogy frames language not as a barrier but as an instructional resource. Lucas and Villegas (2013) argue that teachers need to understand the connections among language, culture, and identity and how these factors influence English learners' school experiences. Linguistically responsive educators identify the language demands of classroom tasks, draw strategically on students' linguistic resources, and use scaffolding strategies to make academic content accessible to English learners (Lucas & Villegas, 2013). Central to this approach is the recognition that language learning intersects with disciplinary knowledge: students need support in understanding the language demands of mathematics, science, social studies, and other academic subjects while simultaneously accessing grade-level content.

This competence is not solely technical; it requires teachers to interrogate their assumptions about what counts as "standard" or "appropriate" language. García and Kleyn's (2016) translanguaging framework challenges monolingual approaches to instruction by recognizing how bilingual learners draw on their full linguistic repertoires to make meaning and engage with academic content. For teacher preparation programs, this perspective can support both practical translanguaging strategies and a more identity-affirming stance toward multilingualism.

2.3 Culturally Sustaining and Asset-Based Approaches

Culturally responsive and asset-based approaches also play a central role in preparing educators to serve multilingual learners. Peregoy and Boyle (2017) emphasize the importance of drawing on English learners' cultural and linguistic resources and providing meaningful opportunities to use language in instruction. Ladson-Billings (1995, 2014) further emphasizes academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness, including the need for teaching that affirms students' cultural identities and engages questions of equity and justice. While culturally relevant pedagogy established an important foundation for connecting students' cultural experiences with academic learning, Paris and Alim (2017) advance culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP), which calls for schools to sustain and affirm students' cultural and linguistic practices while supporting their academic development.

In teacher education contexts, this means preparing teachers to engage in critical reflection, analyze systemic barriers, and cultivate inclusive environments. de Jong, Harper, and Coady (2013) argue that effective preparation for teachers of ELLs requires expertise that extends beyond instructional techniques to include understanding students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds and mediating contextual factors within schools and classrooms. Graduates who internalize asset-based orientations are more likely to challenge deficit narratives, recognize discrimination, and respond compassionately to the cultural and linguistic challenges immigrant communities face.

2.4 Assessment and Instructional Decision-Making

Assessment and data-informed instruction have become increasingly important areas in ESL teacher preparation. Popham (2014) emphasizes the importance of teachers developing the knowledge and skills necessary to design, interpret, and use classroom assessments effectively. For multilingual learners, however, assessment requires additional attention to the role of language in demonstrating content knowledge. Bailey and Heritage (2014) emphasize the importance of understanding students' developing academic language and using language-learning progressions to support formative assessment and instructional planning. Language proficiency assessments such as WIDA or TELPAS present additional interpretive considerations, requiring teachers to distinguish challenges associated with developing English proficiency from difficulties related to content understanding or potential learning disabilities.

Ortiz and Robertson (2018) emphasize the need to prepare teachers with a shared knowledge base for addressing the language-, literacy-, and disability-related needs of English learners. They argue that teachers across bilingual education, ESL, general education, and special education need competencies in linguistically and culturally responsive instruction and intervention. Such preparation is particularly important when distinguishing language and literacy difficulties associated with second-language development from those related to disabilities.

2.5 Field-Based Experiences and Interdisciplinary Collaboration

Authentic field experiences play a pivotal role in shaping ESL educators' instructional identities. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) argue that clinically rich teacher preparation models—those involving sustained mentoring, co-teaching, and classroom immersion—enable teacher candidates to translate theoretical knowledge into adaptive practice. Zeichner (2010) similarly contends that traditional "placement-based" practice is insufficient; instead, teacher candidates need structured opportunities to experiment, reflect, and observe expert ESL practitioners navigating real instructional complexities.

Collaboration across disciplines is also essential. ESL teachers rarely work in isolation: effective programs cultivate partnerships between ESL specialists, general education teachers, bilingual educators, and special education professionals. Such collaboration becomes particularly critical when distinguishing language acquisition needs from other academic or developmental challenges. Research suggests that collaboration between ESOL specialists and content-area teachers creates opportunities for shared professional learning, helps teachers negotiate instructional goals and responsibilities, and supports the development of practices responsive to linguistically diverse learners (Martin-Beltrán & Peercy, 2014). Thus, interdisciplinary preparation not only enhances instructional quality but also supports teachers' professional agency and continued professional development.

Taken together, an examination of previous studies reveals that ESL teacher preparation is

multidimensional. Successful programs develop teachers' theoretical understanding, nurture linguistically and culturally responsive mindsets, cultivate assessment skills, and provide authentic opportunities for practice and collaboration. These domains offer a lens for interpreting graduates' perceptions of the program and for identifying areas in which preparation can evolve to meet shifting educational demands. Ultimately, the literature affirms that preparing ESL teachers requires more than technical skill; it requires a coherent blend of theory, reflective practice, sociopolitical awareness, and sustained engagement with multilingual communities.

3. Methodology

This qualitative study employed thematic analysis to examine the perceptions of graduates of an M.Ed. in ESL program. Data were collected from written responses generated during the program's required Comprehensive Exams. Since the establishment of the M.Ed. in ESL program in Fall 2017, all candidates in their final semester have been required to complete these exams as a culminating assessment. The exam consists of three essay questions, each written by a faculty member with whom the student has taken coursework during the program. Students are allotted three hours to respond to all three questions.

As the faculty advisor for the program, the researcher administered one of the exam questions to every graduate. This question prompted students to reflect holistically on their learning experiences across all ESLN courses and to examine how the program prepared them for working with second language learners. It also required students to identify areas in which they still felt underprepared and to offer recommendations for improving educator preparation. The prompt read:

"I would like you to reflect on all the ESLN courses you have taken throughout this program and synthesize what you have learned and how the learning has prepared you for your future work with second language learners in your teaching setting. Moreover, please talk about what knowledge and skills you think you may still lack when working with second language learners (your weaknesses) and provide your informed ideas on how educators can be better prepared to meet the needs of second language learners according to your experience and perspectives."

All students submitted their written responses as part of their Comprehensive Exam requirements. These responses served as the primary dataset for this manuscript. Approximately 20 students have graduated from the program since Fall 2017, and therefore, about 20 responses were collected and analyzed for this study. Only content relevant to program preparation, perceived strengths and weaknesses, and recommendations for improvement were included in the analysis. To protect confidentiality, all identifying information was removed after final grades were submitted and before analysis began.

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis process, supplemented by trustworthiness criteria outlined by Nowell et al. (2017). The researcher first conducted an inductive review of all responses, generating initial codes that captured recurring

ideas about preparation, confidence, challenges, and recommendations. Codes were then organized into conceptual categories, leading to the development of three major themes: (1) perceived areas of strong preparation, (2) areas of need or weaker preparation, and (3) recommendations for strengthening ESL teacher preparation. This systematic and iterative approach facilitated the identification and organization of recurring patterns in graduates' experiences and perspectives.

The researcher served as faculty advisor for the M.Ed. ESL program and provided the Comprehensive Exam question used as the study prompt. This position provided contextual knowledge of the program but also created a potential power relationship with participants. The researcher therefore interpreted participants' responses cautiously and maintained confidentiality throughout the analytic process.

To support trustworthiness, the researcher maintained an analytic record of coding and theme-development decisions and repeatedly compared emerging interpretations with the original responses. The researcher also revisited the complete dataset throughout the analysis to ensure that the identified themes were grounded in participants' responses and accurately represented recurring patterns across the data.

4. Findings

The findings of the study reflect graduates' evaluations of their preparation and reveal three overarching themes that illuminate both the strengths and weaknesses of the program, as well as recommendations for future enhancement.

4.1 Theme 1: Areas of Strong Preparation

Most participants reported that the ESL teacher preparation program equipped them with a strong foundation in both theoretical frameworks and practical instructional strategies. Participants described gaining a sophisticated understanding of second language acquisition (SLA) theory, noting the program's emphasis on connecting abstract concepts to concrete classroom practices. Several respondents referenced their ability to draw on Krashen's Input Hypothesis, particularly the role of comprehensible input and low affective filter, to structure lessons in ways that promote authentic language development. Others highlighted Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as a lens for scaffolding learner progress, emphasizing the importance of gradually increasing linguistic and cognitive demands in line with students' emerging proficiencies.

Emma, for example, reflected on how the program helped her connect second language acquisition theories with classroom instruction, "Through the program, I developed a better understanding of how students acquire a second language. I learned how to apply theories such as Krashen's Input Hypothesis to provide comprehensible input and create a supportive learning environment."

Graduates also discussed the utility of communicative language teaching and cognitive approaches, noting that they felt prepared to design instruction that nurtures both linguistic competence and academic engagement.

Importantly, participants emphasized that they described the program as transformative rather than simply informational. They noted a shift in mindset from viewing linguistic differences as barriers to understanding students' multilingual repertoires as assets. The integration of sheltered instruction, explicit scaffolding practices, formative assessment, and attention to the four language domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) was repeatedly described as central to their professional growth. Graduates reported that they could confidently differentiate tasks, adjust linguistic load, and incorporate strategies such as sentence frames, visuals, and cooperative learning to support language development across content areas.

Daniel highlighted the importance of using a range of instructional strategies to support English learners' language and content development, "I learned that teaching English learners requires more than simplifying the lesson. Teachers need to provide appropriate scaffolds, visuals, and opportunities for students to practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing while learning the content."

Cultural responsiveness emerged as another major area of perceived strength. Participants described how coursework and reflective practices encouraged them to examine their own assumptions and biases. They noted that this emphasis on cultural awareness promoted their ability to engage in asset-based instruction, draw on students' lived experiences, and develop inclusive classroom environments. Several graduates identified this cultural lens as a long-term shift in their teaching identity, reporting that it shaped their instructional decision-making, interactions with families, and advocacy for multilingual learners. Sofia's reflection illustrated this shift toward recognizing students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds as valuable classroom resources, "I learned to see students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds as strengths rather than obstacles. Their experiences and home languages can be valuable resources in the classroom."

4.2 Theme 2: Areas of Perceived Need or Weakness

Despite reporting strong overall preparation, graduates articulated several areas in which they felt underprepared or in need of further development. A dominant concern was assessment. While participants understood the role of formative assessment conceptually, many expressed uncertainty about creating assessments that account for varied language proficiency levels, especially in mixed-ability classrooms. They also described challenges in interpreting assessment data and translating it into individualized instructional planning. In particular, respondents struggled with distinguishing whether student difficulties reflected normal stages of language acquisition, limited content knowledge, or potential learning disabilities.

Michael described assessment as an area in which he would have benefited from additional preparation and practical experience, "I still need more experience with assessing English

learners at different proficiency levels. Sometimes it is difficult to determine whether a student is struggling because of language development or because of another learning difficulty."

Several graduates also expressed a need for more targeted preparation in fostering authentic oral communication. They reported feeling confident using structured speaking tasks such as think-pair-share or small-group discussion, but less prepared to facilitate sustained academic discourse or spontaneous language use. Participants explained that large class sizes, limited instructional time, and rigidly paced curricula constrained opportunities for language exploration and interaction. As a result, they often defaulted to lower-risk or tightly scripted speaking activities rather than more open-ended communicative tasks. Olivia pointed to the challenges of moving beyond structured speaking activities to promote more natural and sustained communication, "I would like to learn more strategies for helping English learners communicate naturally and confidently. Structured activities are helpful, but I sometimes find it challenging to encourage students to participate in longer conversations."

Another area identified as insufficiently addressed was technology integration. While some graduates described using digital tools to support multilingual learners, most indicated that they relied primarily on personal experimentation or informal peer support. They desired more explicit guidance on leveraging technology for language development—for example, designing multimodal tasks, providing linguistic feedback through digital platforms, or integrating translation and accessibility tools strategically rather than superficially. Liam emphasized the need for more practical preparation in using technology to support multilingual learners, "I would have benefited from more hands-on experience with technology tools that could help English learners improve their language skills and participate more actively in classroom activities."

Finally, participants noted that structural constraints in real-world school environments often limited the extent to which they could apply best practices learned in the program. They cited large class sizes, insufficient instructional materials, and limited institutional support as barriers to implementing differentiated instruction, project-based learning, or extensive planning for language scaffolds. Several respondents expressed a sense of tension between their pedagogical ideals and the pragmatic realities of their teaching contexts. Grace described the difficulty of consistently implementing effective instructional strategies when faced with classroom and resource limitations, "Even when I know which strategies would benefit my English learners, it can be difficult to implement them consistently because of limited time, large classes, and the resources available at my school."

4.3 Theme 3: Recommendations for Enhancing ESL Teacher Preparation

Graduates offered several recommendations to strengthen the ESL teacher preparation program. First, they consistently advocated for increased hands-on opportunities, particularly structured field-based practice in multilingual classrooms. Respondents suggested that early and repeated exposure to real learners would provide valuable opportunities to apply theory, experiment with

scaffolding strategies, and receive targeted feedback. They emphasized that working alongside experienced ESL teachers would help bridge the gap between program expectations and school realities. Isabella emphasized the value of gaining direct classroom experience before entering the profession, "More opportunities to observe and work directly with English learners would help future ESL teachers understand how to apply what they learn in their courses to real classroom situations."

Participants also emphasized the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration. They suggested that preservice teachers should experience models of co-teaching, collaborative planning, or professional learning communities (PLCs) that mirror the interdependent nature of multilingual learner support in schools. Graduates explained that understanding how to communicate with content-area teachers, negotiate shared responsibilities, and advocate for multilingual learners within collective decision-making processes would better prepare them for professional settings. Noah highlighted the importance of preparing ESL teachers to work collaboratively with colleagues across subject areas, "ESL teachers need to work closely with general education and content-area teachers. More opportunities to practice collaboration and co-planning would help us understand how to support English learners across different subject areas."

Ongoing professional development emerged as another key recommendation. Graduates specifically cited a need for continued learning in the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), assessment, and technology integration. They noted that SIOP strategies often made sense theoretically but were difficult to sustain without opportunities to refine practice and troubleshoot implementation challenges. Similarly, they requested additional professional development on designing linguistically responsive assessments, interpreting TELPAS (Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System) data, and leveraging digital tools in pedagogically meaningful ways. Chloe stressed that professional learning should continue beyond the completion of a graduate program, "Teachers need ongoing training after completing their degrees. More professional development in SIOP, TELPAS, assessment, and technology would help us continue improving our instruction and better meet students' needs."

Finally, participants emphasized the importance of cultivating educators' sociopolitical awareness. They argued that ESL teachers must be prepared not only to instruct multilingual learners but also to advocate for equitable policies, challenge deficit narratives, and engage families as partners. Graduates highlighted the need for coursework and experiences that contextualize language education within issues of immigration, policy, identity, and systemic inequities. For many respondents, this cultural and political dimension was critical for sustaining commitment, countering biases, and positioning themselves as change agents within their schools and communities. Mia's comments reflected the view that ESL teachers have an important responsibility to advocate for multilingual learners and their families, "ESL teachers should understand the challenges that immigrant and multilingual families face. We need to advocate for our students, help families understand their rights, and make sure students are treated fairly in schools."

5. Discussion

The findings align with and extend the existing literature on ESL teacher preparation, highlighting the complexity of preparing educators for increasingly multilingual and culturally diverse learning environments. The graduates' strong grounding in theory and reflective practice underscores the central role of conceptual knowledge in informing instructional decision-making. This outcome supports Darling-Hammond et al.'s (2017) assertion that robust teacher education requires purposeful links between research, pedagogy, and practical experience. Participants' references to constructivist frameworks—such as Vygotsky's ZPD and Krashen's Input Hypothesis—illustrate the enduring relevance of theoretical models that position language learners as active agents navigating scaffolded learning opportunities. Similarly, Peregoy and Boyle's (2017) work emphasizes that integrating language acquisition theory with classroom strategies strengthens teacher confidence and efficacy in supporting multilingual learners. Graduates' reflections demonstrate this integration in action; they reported not only understanding theoretical constructs, but also applying them to design sheltered instruction, differentiate tasks, and cultivate culturally responsive pedagogies.

Moreover, the emphasis graduates placed on cultural responsiveness and asset-based perspectives reinforces a growing body of research advocating for socioculturally grounded teacher preparation. Scholars such as Villegas and Lucas (2002) and Ladson-Billings (2014) emphasize the importance of culturally responsive and culturally relevant teaching that recognizes students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds as resources rather than deficits. Participants in this study described a transformative identity shift, noting that the program challenged them to critically reflect on their assumptions, enact inclusive practices, and advocate for multilingual learners. These findings suggest that reflective processes embedded within coursework and experiential components foster dispositions aligned with equity-oriented teaching. Importantly, participants described these changes in mindset as influencing their instructional judgments and interactions with families and colleagues.

Despite these strengths, the graduates' reported areas of need reflect persistent tensions present in teacher preparation literature. Concerns about assessment—particularly teachers' ability to select, interpret, and use assessment information effectively—reflect longstanding concerns about assessment literacy in teacher preparation (Popham, 2014). Inadequate preparation in this domain may be further compounded by systemic pressures such as standardized testing, accountability mandates, and variable district resources. Similarly, the challenges graduates expressed in facilitating authentic oral communication highlight a common instructional dilemma. Gibbons (2015) emphasizes the importance of providing English learners with meaningful opportunities for classroom interaction and oral language development alongside reading and writing. Participants' experiences suggest that while they possessed conceptual tools to support oral language development, they struggled to embed them within the constraints of real-world classrooms.

Technology integration emerged as another area of concern, reinforcing existing scholarship on the uneven adoption of digital tools for language learning. While digital resources have the potential to support multimodal expression and personalized learning pathways, they require pedagogical intentionality to be effective. Graduates' reliance on trial-and-error approaches suggests a need for more structured preparation in integrating technology to meet multilingual learners' needs (Durham, 2024; Mahalingappa et al., 2018). This gap is consequential in contemporary instructional environments, where technology increasingly mediates student engagement, assessment, and access to content.

Participants' recommendations point toward a need for programmatic innovation. Calls for more structured practicum experiences align with broader national movements toward clinically rich teacher preparation. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) emphasize the importance of teacher preparation that enables professional practice, including meaningful opportunities for preservice teachers to connect preparation with authentic teaching contexts. Graduates' desire for co-teaching models and interdisciplinary collaboration also echoes research advocating for partnerships between general education and specialized support services. Such embedded collaboration may help teachers navigate complex classrooms, advocate for multilingual learners, and negotiate the social, pedagogical, and political dimensions of teaching.

Finally, the graduates' emphasis on advocacy and sociopolitical awareness reflects a shifting paradigm in ESL teacher preparation. As language education becomes increasingly entangled with immigration policy, identity politics, and equity discourse, teachers must be prepared not only as instructional facilitators but also as advocates and cultural mediators. This sentiment underscores that ESL expertise involves understanding legal rights, navigating school structures, and addressing systemic inequalities. Preparing teachers to engage in advocacy work—whether through family partnerships, leadership roles, or community engagement—may be essential for sustainable systemic change.

Taken together, these findings suggest that strengthening ESL teacher preparation requires balancing theoretical rigor, experiential learning, interdisciplinary collaboration, and sustained professional development. Successful programs cannot rely solely on coursework-based mastery of ESL pedagogy; they must scaffold teachers' ability to translate theory into adaptive practice across varied instructional contexts. Additionally, preparation must be responsive to evolving educational landscapes, incorporating emerging technologies, culturally sustaining approaches, and ongoing opportunities for reflection and refinement. By attending to these dimensions, teacher education programs can better prepare educators to meet the linguistic, cultural, and academic needs of multilingual learners in increasingly diverse K–12 settings.

6. Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the participants were graduates of a single M.Ed. ESL program at one public university, which limits the transferability of the findings to other teacher preparation contexts. Second, the study relied on participants' written reflections and therefore

represents perceptions of preparation rather than direct evidence of classroom practice or instructional effectiveness. Third, the reflections were produced as part of a required comprehensive examination, which may have influenced how participants described their experiences. Fourth, the researcher served as a faculty advisor within the program, creating a potential power relationship and the possibility of response bias. Finally, the study did not include longitudinal follow-up to determine whether participants' reported changes in knowledge, beliefs, or instructional practice persisted after program completion. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings and their implications for ESL teacher preparation.

7. Conclusion

The thematic analysis of graduate reflections reveals a program that participants perceived as academically rigorous and influential in shaping educators' understanding of second language acquisition, linguistically responsive pedagogy, and culturally sustaining practice. Participants expressed strong confidence in their theoretical grounding, instructional design skills, and culturally responsive approaches. At the same time, their reflections highlight key opportunities for growth in assessment, technology integration, and preparation for working with linguistically and cognitively diverse learners. These findings align with national research emphasizing the need for clinically rich preparation, interdisciplinary collaboration, and ongoing professional learning.

Guided by principles of continuous improvement in teacher education (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016), this study provides actionable insights for strengthening the M.Ed. in ESL program. Future revisions may include expanded practicum opportunities, enhanced coursework on assessment, structured collaboration with general and special education partners, and greater emphasis on advocacy and sociopolitical issues. By addressing these areas, the program can continue preparing highly qualified, reflective, and equity-driven educators who are equipped to serve multilingual learners in diverse K–12 settings.

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Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare that there are no competing or potential conflicts of interest.

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