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From Small Talk To Academic Dialogue: An Online Professional Development Course For The English Language Proficiency Standards For Adult Education

Debra H. Cargill
Hamline University

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FROM SMALL TALK TO ACADEMIC DIALOGUE: AN ONLINE PROFESSIONAL

DEVELOPMENT COURSE FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

STANDARDS FOR ADULT EDUCATION

By

Debra H. Cargill

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master
of Arts in English as a Second Language.

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Capstone Advisor: Trish Harvey
Content Expert: Susan Watson
Peer Reviewers: Joel Hanson and Dae Selcer

To Clyde: Thank you for the endless supply of chocolate and lattes just when I couldn't read or write another step. Most of all, thank you for your enduring love and dedication to us. You're my ol' hometown.

To CH and Sarah: ((LYTM)).

To Uli: Your doggy love is priceless and gives me comfort.

To my family: Thank you for believing in me.

To my ESOL teachers: Thank you for your complete dedication to your students and our program. You deserve so much more than I can give. Thank you to my program colleagues.

To our ESOL students: Your quest for learning is a model for us all. Thank you for believing that our program can support you in achieving your dreams.

To Susan: We have been on quite a journey together, changing roles back and forth, and working on many projects together. Your expertise and feedback on this capstone was invaluable and underscores your true calling as the professor you will become.

To the VALRC: Thank you for every professional opportunity you have given me.

When you learn, teach, when you get, give. – Maya Angelou

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Adult Education standards support both the teacher and the learner in the field of adult education by providing instructional guidance for teachers and identifying fundamental language skills needed by adult learners. With the 2016 introduction of the English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards for Adult Education (AE), (American Institutes for Research, (AIR), (2016), adult English as a Second Language (ESL) programs are working to understand and implement the ELP Standards for AE at the national, state, and local levels. To facilitate the implementation of the ELP Standards for AE in my state, I am studying the ELP Standards for AE. How do the standards support teacher's understanding of integrating academic language learning into instruction to support English language learners (ELLs) in transitioning to careers and postsecondary education? What do I need to know about a teacher's understanding of implementing standards-based instruction in the adult ESL classroom to design an online professional development course that supports the use and implementation of the standards at the classroom level?

The ELP Standards for AE incorporate academic standards-based instruction to meet the language needs of learners and provide support in preparing adult ESL learners in transitioning to academic, postsecondary education, and vocational training programs. In my state, ESL programs that receive Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Investment (2014; WIOA) funding are tasked with aligning instruction with state-adopted

state and federal standards. My program is located in a diverse, urban community and nearly six percent of the county speaks English less than well (VEC, 2017).

As the Lead for ESL for my program, it is my professional pursuit and work assignment to provide professional development (PD) for teachers in my program so that they are familiar with the ELP Standards for AE to support instruction that helps learners demonstrate content knowledge, thinking skills, and language proficiency. While developing PD at the local level is important to comply with funding priorities, it is also a goal at the state level for adult education programs and organizations. This capstone project supports both local and state goals for the implementation of the ELP Standards for AE. It is also important to note that PD for the ELP Standards for AE is at the beginning stages throughout programs around the state.

This chapter is an historical overview of standards-based instruction initiatives in Adult Education and includes or covers how standards-based instruction supports both learners and teachers. A brief description of my journey through the standards-based initiatives in Adult Education and how that journey has set the stage for my capstone project is outlined. I highlight how the ELP Standards for AE support standards-based instruction in the adult ELL classroom, as well as support adult ELLs as they transition to academic language learning, postsecondary education, and career training. A brief profile and the professional development needs of the adult education teacher are discussed. As this project is an online professional development course, best practices in online professional development for adult educators is an important aspect of the project.

My Pathway to Standards-based Instruction

In 1997, I stumbled into the field of adult education while looking for part-time work to support our family's income while focusing primarily on raising a young child. The minimum educational requirement was a Bachelor's degree in any field and no teaching experience was required. I was hired with a limited background in teaching, and in particular, teaching ELLs. I gravitated toward all sources of learning (e.g. reading, seminars, face-to-face PD) that would support my new role as an adult educator for English language learners. I cringe today at how little I knew then, but I knew I needed to learn quickly and consume every bit of knowledge I could if I were to face my students everyday with integrity and commitment to supporting their life dreams and goals. During this time of seeking knowledge, I discovered standards-based instruction as a way to inform my practice and create a framework in which to build and attach newly acquired knowledge. Educational standards have a variety of contexts and focus on different aspects of education at the instructional and program levels (TESOL International Association, 2008). In adult education ESL programs, standards-based instruction has focused primarily on content and program standards.

Standards Based in Adult Roles

Standards-based instruction for adult education began with the Equipped For the Future (EFF) project (Stein, 2000) in the 1990's when standards focused on the roles of adult learners at home, in the community, and at work (Young, 2006). As a new teacher to the field of adult education ESL, I participated in PD through study circles using the EFF (Stein, 2000) model of standards-based instruction. The 16 EFF Content Standards

identified skills and knowledge that adults needed in their roles as parents, citizens, community members, and workers (Stein, 2000). The EFF model (Stein, 2000) formulated my basic knowledge of the many facets and contexts of the adult learner and fostered my interest in standards-based instruction. As a new teacher, standards provided me with a road map for instruction and supported my interest in filling significant gaps in my educational and teaching experiences.

The EFF standards (Stein, 2000) laid a foundation for the next phase of instructional standards in Adult Education by preceding the call to action from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Adult and Vocational Education (OVAE), now known as Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE), for individual states to create content-driven standards for adult ESL programs. Beginning in 2005, OVAE funded initiatives that supported the development of content standards by developing an online warehouse, publishing guides to support development, and assisting states in developing, piloting, implementing, and promoting content standards (Young, 2006).

Standards Based in Content

Our state began its work on content standards-based instruction for ESL programs in 2006 when the state level English for Speakers or Other Languages (ESOL) Content Standards were written and introduced to educators through a series of pilots, reviews and revisions, PD, and then finally, the adoption of the standards by state office of OVAE in 2012. Four teams, working together for a week, wrote content standards organized around the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) that included a

framework of overarching standards, benchmarks, and indicators for six levels of instruction aligned to the National Reporting System (NRS). I was the team leader for the Speaking Standard. The state ESOL Content Standards provided teachers with the opportunity to implement standards-based instruction with lesson planning, curriculum development, and aligning instruction at the program level. Further, these ESOL Content Standards have provided ESL programs and teachers with clear guidance on standards-based instruction that supports the critical roles of adult ELLs in their life roles of parents, workers, and community members that include life skill topics such as health, community, and work.

My work as part of the development team of the state's ESOL Content Standards further supported my interest in standards. It also sparked a new interest in facilitating PD both locally and statewide when I had the opportunity to join the standards team that provided teachers with an introduction to standards-based instruction and supporting instruction for ELLs that met their specific language learning goals.

In 2006, to continue the effort in building knowledge of standards-based instruction with a content focus, the federal project, Standards-in-Action, was introduced to the field (Spacone, 2009). MPR Associates, Inc. (an education research firm) through a contract with OVAE developed the Standards-In-Action materials (Spacone, 2009). Our state was one of six states that piloted the series of professional development materials and my program was one of two programs in the state that were selected to participate in the piloting of the PD materials. Under my leadership, we participated in a year-long implementation of the Standards-in-Action model as I facilitated a group of six educators in building an understanding of content standards, using standards with curriculum and

instruction, focusing on relevance to classroom assignments, and using a classroom observation process that was standards-based (Spacone, 2009). We continued working with the Standards-in-Action system for four years, laying a foundation for standards-based instruction (Spacone, 2009).

Standards Based in Linkages to Careers and Postsecondary Education

In the last decade, standards-based instruction has become firmly planted in my program and around the state, as programs have utilized the state level ESOL Content Standards to improve instruction, develop standards-based curriculum, and provide PD for the implementation of content standards. While standards-based instruction at the state level has supported learners with learning about content specific to adult learner life roles, a further step in supporting learners who wanted to transition to postsecondary education, work, or citizenship was necessary to support academic learning (Pimentel, 2013). To provide the next step in standards implementation and to support the need to create a link between adult education, postsecondary education, and the workforce, OVAE created the College and Career Ready Standards (CCRS) in Adult Basic Education (ABE) (Pimentel, 2013). In the last four years, Adult Education ESL programs in the state have contemplated how to align instruction to the CCRS, but most of this alignment has taken place with ABE learners who are primarily native speakers of English and whose goals are focused on high school completion. ESL programs in the state and beyond recognized the need for academic standards that prepared adult ELLs for the opportunities of postsecondary training while also recognizing the need of language learners that would support the progression to entry to college or careers.

Standards Based in Academic Learning

During the last four years, as state ESL programs contemplated and tested out working with standards that supported academic language learning and transitions to postsecondary education, a new set of standards focusing on academic language learning have been developed for adult ESL instruction. The ELP Standards for AE were developed and released to the field in the fall of 2016. This release of a new set of standards has coincided with my professional need to address an understanding and implementation of the ELP Standards for AE through our funding mandates and priorities. It also coincides with my interest in standards-based instruction that is the focus of my capstone project, and presents a new opportunity to increase my understanding of providing instruction and PD focused on academic language that is aligned with state-adopted content standards, and emphasizes language beyond the interpersonal language focus of many adult ESL programs. The ELP Standards for AE are to be used by states as a framework to understand their state-adopted content standards, take language from the interpersonal to the academic focus, and provide an opportunity for programs and teachers to design lessons that support rigor and effective instruction (AIR, 2016). The goal for using these standards is to support the acquisition of language that helps adult ELLs to achieve goals related to postsecondary education and transitions, employment training, and careers. In examining how the ELP Standards for AE are structured and support transitions to postsecondary education and career readiness, I have an opportunity to increase my understanding of how languages are learned. An increased understanding of language learning is critical for supporting language learning needs of adult ELLs who need both functional and academic learning

skills if they are to make the transitions between learning language to support life skills (e.g. banking) and learning that supports increased academic rigor (e.g. earning a professional credential) (Johnson & Parrish, 2010).

Role and Background of the Researcher

As an ESL program leader, I am vested in the implementation of the ELP Standards for AE in order to support the highest quality of instruction that meets the goals of each learner as they seek to meet the many demands of life and pursue their dreams and goals here in the United States (U.S.). In the twenty years that I have worked as a teacher and administrator, the voices of our learners, their lives, and their communities have become my purpose in the world of work, and have become my community. I have taught all levels of learners in all contexts of learning programs, which included family literacy, workplace instruction, and transitioning to postsecondary learners. In my daily contact with adult learners in every program and at every level, ELLs have similar goals of self-sufficiency, independence, and quality of life. According to Batalova and Fix (2010), "The prospects of increased work productivity and opportunities to secure better and higher paid jobs, more meaningful engagement with schools, and greater participation in the life of one's community provide benefits not only to immigrants and their children but also to the broader society" (pp. 511-512). Standards-based instruction can support these goals and dreams by providing instruction that meets learners where they are, provides rigor that is level appropriate, and supports learner's transition to postsecondary and career opportunities.

Teachers are equally important to me. Since 2000, it has been my work assignment to support adult education ELL teachers who have a common mission to serve adult learners in their quest to learn English. All the teachers I have employed, mentored, and provided PD for in my program are part-time and temporary, making the need for PD that is timely and accessible critical. Online learning is one way to meet the needs of part-time, temporary staff because it provides real time learning where teachers are in control of the pace and focused on content relevant to instruction. Teachers strive to meet the learning and social needs of their learners, and the ELP Standards for AE provides a resource to help them meet those needs.

Beyond the environs of my program, I have supported state level initiatives in PD for ESL programs for twenty years as a facilitator of ESL instruction in face-to-face and online PD opportunities in my association with the Adult Learning Resource Center (ALRC). The ALRC is a division of The Literacy Institute at a university located in my state. The ALRC supports adult education in the state by providing professional development, resources, and collaborating with partners in education. Through my contact with teachers as a facilitator of PD with the ALRC, I have learned we all have a common goal for success for our learners, and teachers want and need access to knowledge in much the same way as teachers at my local level. By partnering with the ARLC, I can collaborate and support teachers around the state by sharing my capstone project. By seeking input from other teachers and programs, and by accessing the support of ALRC, I bring learning, teaching, and leading full circle.

Guiding Questions

To facilitate the implementation of the ELP Standards for AE in my program and the state, I am studying the ELP Standards for AE to support teacher's understanding of implementing standards-based instruction in the adult ESL classroom. I want to design an online professional development course that supports the use and implementation of the standards at the classroom level so that teachers can prepare learners for careers and postsecondary education. To meet these goals, I am investigating standards-based instruction and how it applies to adult education ESL. I am studying what academic language learning is and how the ELP Standards for AE support implementing academic language learning. In tandem with this project, I am utilizing a constructivist approach used by ALRC to support the development of the ELP Standards for AE online professional development courses. Constructivism is discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

Summary

In this project, I am focusing on understanding the ELP Standards for AE and how I can utilize that understanding to support my program and other adult education ESL programs in my state by developing a PD course that adult education teachers can access online in order to have flexibility in overcoming the complexities of scheduling. To support the online PD aspect of my capstone project, I explore best practices for online distance education models for PD in chapter two. It is my aspiration that by developing the PD course for the ELP Standards for AE, I support teachers in my program and the state, and elevate the effort to support learners who seek to learn English at the highest levels of understanding to make meaningful transitions that support their

goals to find meaningful employment and engage in further educational opportunities beyond adult education.

Chapter Overviews

In chapter one I introduced my capstone project by establishing a reason to understand, synthesize, and develop a professional development course that provides online training for adult education ESL teachers on the ELP Standards for AE. The context of the development of standards-based instruction was briefly introduced. A brief background and interests of the researcher were also provided to merge the professional interests and goals of this project.

In chapter two, I review the literature relevant to the ELP Standards for AE that provide an overview of standards models, academic language learning, the ELP Standards for AE framework, and PD for adult ESL teachers. Chapter two provides an understanding of the framework of the ELP Standards for AE that includes what they are, their guiding principles, and how they guide instruction for Adult ELLs. It also includes the components of the ELP Standards for AE, including a historical overview, the design parameters, the ten ELP Standards for AE, the Level 1-5 descriptors, and two views of the ELP Standards for AE. Finally, I also highlight why the ELP Standards for AE are a model for academic language learning in the adult education ESL context, and important to my project for gaining an understanding of academic language learning.

Chapter three provides a detailed description of the current project and the online PD courses to develop. Chapter four presents the conclusions and reflections, including how my perceptions about standards-based instruction have been influenced by the ELP

Standards for AE, how I can apply my learnings going forward, and how I can support PD locally and statewide. This capstone project brings together my interests of standards-based instruction, academic language learning, and online PD to support professional development for my program and adult education programs statewide.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The English Language Proficiency Standards (ELP) for Adult Education (AE), released to the field of Adult Education in October 2016, provided an opportunity for adult ESL teachers to integrate academic standards-based instruction into the adult ESL classroom. With the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) (2014; WIOA) mandate to bring content standards created by individual states in alignment with state-adopted academic standards, the American Institutes for Research (AIR) stated in the ELP Standards for AE document that they are "intended to address the urgent need for educational equity, access, and rigor for adult English language learners" (2016, p. 1). To facilitate the implementation of the ELP Standards for AE, I studied the ELP Standards for AE. How did the standards support teacher's understanding of integrating academic language learning into instruction to support English language learners (ELLs) in transitioning to careers and postsecondary education? What did I need to know to support teacher's understanding of implementing standards-based instruction in the adult ESL classroom to design an online professional development course that supports the use and implementation of the standards at the classroom level? This knowledge was used to design an online professional development course that supported the use and implementation of the standards at the classroom level, and prepared learners for careers and postsecondary education.

By aligning content standards with academic standards, adult ESL teachers received the standards-based instructional tools they need to design lessons that were

effective and delivered instruction that was focused on academic language. The ELP

Standards for AE supported integrating instructional rigor that was necessary to prepare

ELLs to meet their postsecondary and career goals by gaining language and skills that

supported those goals (AIR, 2016). Rigorous instruction included incorporating critical

knowledge, complex tasks, analytic and reasoning skills, and strengthening oral and

written communication skills (Pimentel, 2013). Topics that were relevant to the ELPS for

Adult Educators course included an overview of standards-based instruction,

incorporating academic language learning in the adult ESL classroom, an understanding

of the transitional needs (personal, professional, and educational) of the adult English

language learner (ELL). In order to design an online professional development course

that supported the use and implementation of the standards at the classroom level and

prepared learners for careers and postsecondary education, an understanding of the

constructivist approach to professional development in an online learning was discussed.

Standards-based Instruction for Adult English Language Learning

According to the Alliance for Excellent Education Policy Brief (Haynes, 2012),

the number of students who speak languages other than English has increased

significantly (doubling between 1980 and 2009). With the increase, standards-based

instruction for all levels of ELLs has been a focus of programs and policy since the

1980's. The National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) communicated a goal of

demonstrated competence in rigorous content for all American students to reach by 2000

(NEGP, 1999). This goal set in motion the standards movement in Adult Education. In

the 1990's, standards-based instruction gained a footing when the educational needs of all

children were not being served, consequently leading to scrutiny of the educational

system, and a call for reform (Young, 2006) through the No Child Left Behind Act

(NCLB). As Karlsson noted, "Before the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, the

use of language standards was not required" (p.10). The U.S. Department of Education,

other federal agencies, and foundations began to offer funding to educational institutions

and professional organizations to begin the process of developing the models for

standards-based instruction in content subject areas (Young, 2006). With the release of

the Equipped for the Future project (EFF) (Stein, 2000) in the 1990s, the field of adult

education understood the need for standards that could clearly articulate and demonstrate

what adults know and are able to do through the roles adult learners have in their

community, at home, and in the workplace (Young, 2006). Since the EFF project (Stein,

2000), frameworks for future standards development in adult education have been funded

by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Adult and Vocational Education (OVAE)

and have led to the development of publications, resources, and curriculum frameworks,

all of which were made available online to the field of adult education on The Adult

Education Content Standards Warehouse (Young, 2006). In 2005, the American Institutes

for Research and the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult

Education released the publication, *A Process Guide for Establishing Adult Education*

Content Standards. In 2006, our state used this guide to develop, pilot, and implement the

state level Department of Education Content Standards for English for Speakers of Other

Languages (ESOL) Instruction standards (ESOL Content Standards). The state ESOL

Content Standards were aligned to the National Reporting System (NRS) levels and the

four language skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. With content standards

in place, our state began to build content knowledge of standards-based instruction that focused on functional language skills for adult ELLs.

The State Level ESOL Content Standards

The state level Adult Education Content Standards for ESOL were released in 2006 and were written by four teams of ESL practitioners from the state. Each team was based on the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. I participated in the writing of the standards as the leader and a writer on the Speaking Standard team. The four teams were led by the Office of Adult Education and Literacy staff and national experts, who were invited to provide expertise and groundings in theory and practice related to second language acquisition (Faux, 2017). The state level ESOL Content Standards that are still used today were organized around the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The standards focused on life skills, survival language, meeting the functional needs of adult English language learners, and defined what learners should know and be able to do to exit an Educational Functioning Level (EFL). Each language skill had an overarching standard, benchmarks, and indicators for each corresponding National Reporting System level (Literacy through Advanced). The outline below of the ESOL Content Standards shows an example of the organization of the levels (VDOE, 2006)

1. ESOL Speaking Standard: Adult English language learners communicate in spoken English for a range of purposes, contexts, and audiences using appropriate levels of **fluency** and **accuracy** to participate actively in discourse relevant to their **life roles**.

Exit Benchmarks with Progress Indicators

Beginning Literacy: To exit this level, learners will be able to:

Benchmark: S.1.1 Speak about basic needs using simple learned phrases.

a) Produce simple learned phrases that are understood in the ESOL classroom (e.g., by ESOL teachers, classmates).

b) Make a **simple** request (e.g., "Open the door.", "Call me.")

c) Reply to a **simple** request or question using simple learned phrases.

After the release of the state level ESOL Content Standards in 2006, the standards were implemented through ongoing professional development through the state resource center. As part of the implementation process, our state participated in the national Standards-in-Action project in 2008 (Spacone, 2009). In August 2012, they were adopted as the official state standards for ESOL by the state Department of Education.

Standards-in-Action (Spacone, 2009)

The Standards-in-Action federally sponsored project provided support for states to implement standards-based instruction (Spacone, 2009). The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE), developed materials to support four priority areas for professional development that included understanding standards-based instruction, using standards with curriculum and instruction, examining relevance and standards alignment in classroom assignments, and using a standards-based approach to classroom observation (Spacone, 2009).

The Standards-in-Action project conducted a series of pilots from February 2007 through May 2009. Our state was selected as a pilot state and my program was one of two sites in the state to pilot Standards-in-Action professional development and classroom observation materials. As the leader of this effort, I had the opportunity to further my understanding and persistence to provide standards-based instruction at the program and classroom level. I furthered my understanding of standards-based instruction by becoming knowledgeable by learning, facilitating, and utilizing the Standards-in-Action model to align instructional materials with standards and strengthen instructional rigor (Spacone, 2009).

College and Career Readiness Standards (Pimentel, 2013)

The next evolution of standards-based instruction at the national and state level came with the 2013 release of the College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards for Adult Education (Pimentel, 2013). The CCR Standards for Adult Education provided for a set of standards that gave teachers a tool to fine tune and teach critical instruction and content that prepared adults to transition to college, technical training programs, careers, and civics (Pimentel, 2013). While the CCR Standards for Adult Education were not fully explored in this capstone project, the standards represented a pathway in the standards-based education process for adult education (Pimentel, 2013). The ELP Standards for AE were created to provide focused instruction in academic language learning in ESL instruction that bridged to the CCR Standards for Adult Education (AIR, 2016).

The ELPS for Adult Education (AIR, 2016)

The ELP Standards for AE (see References for access to the complete document)

were released to the field of adult education in October 2016 and were a key document in providing a bridge between content and academic standards-based instruction for the adult ELL. Understanding how content and academic standards work together required an understanding of the distinction of using language for social interactions and using language in academic contexts (Frantz, Bailey, Starr, & Perea, 2014). The ELP Standards for AE were linked to the CCR Standards for Adult Education and presented a continuum of instruction that focused on academic language for college and career readiness for both ELLs and native English speakers. The ELP Standards for AE addressed access and equity for adult ELLs to educational workforce opportunities that prepared adult ELLs for careers and postsecondary education (AIR, 2016). The ELP Standards for AE provided for an emphasis on academic language and supported implementation of standards at the classroom level, and integrated rigorous instruction for adult ELLs (AIR, 2016).

The ELP Standards for AE were created to support the academic language learning needs of adult ELLs who were preparing to transition to postsecondary education and training. These standards were intended to provide ESL teachers with the tools they needed to focus instruction that aligned to the CCR Standards for Adult Education. The ELP Standards for AE emphasized the academic language ELLs needed to assist the transitions to education and workforce programs (AIR, 2016).

The ELP Standards for AE were divided into five sections:

1. Introduction
2. Why English Language Standards for Adult Education?
3. Process of Selecting English Language Proficiency Standards for Adult

Education

4. The Results: English Language Proficiency Standards for Adult Education with Correspondences to the College and Career Readiness Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy and Mathematical and Science Practices

5. Understanding and Using the Standards With the Correspondences

There were ten ELP Standards for AE that were divided into two groups: Standards 1-7 and Standards 8-10. Standards 1-7 described language skills that were needed for content-specific skills associated with academic content standards that have been adopted by states (AIR, 2016). They began with a focus on meaning and lead to an engagement in practice of the English language arts and literacy, mathematics, and science (a bridge to the CCR Standards for Adult Education) (AIR, 2016). Standards 8-10 supported Standards 1-7 with linguistic supports at a micro-level. All ten of the standards supported the four language domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (AIR, 2016). ELP Standards 1 and 8 focused on the receptive skills of listening and reading and ELP Standards 3, 4, and 7 focused on the productive skills of speaking and writing (AIR, 2016).

The ELP Standards for AE had five level descriptors that provided details of performance targets for each specific standard. Level 1-5 descriptors specified what "ELL performance should be achieved by the end of each ELP standard level" (AIR, 2016). Level 1-5 descriptors were formatted in a linear progression that showed acquisition of specific knowledge, skills and abilities (AIR, 2016). It was noted that language proficiency may not progress in a linear route in language acquisition and that

students may achieve proficiency higher or lower across the levels (AIR, 2016).

Lastly, the ELP Standards for AE report presented two views of the standards. View One supported ESL instructors who were focused on language and skills that supported academic learning for ELLs (AIR, 2016). View One also supported leveling ESL instruction when classes are multi-level and instructors needed to differentiate instruction to meet varying needs (AIR, 2016). Under this view, the ELP standards were presented first to highlight their use as a basis for instruction (AIR, 2016).

View Two supported Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Adult Secondary Education (ASE) programs that may have ELLs that enrolled in these programs where the focus was specific to high school completion and transitions to postsecondary educational programs (AIR, 2016). View Two supported ABE and ASE teachers who may also be utilizing the CCR Standards for Adult Education (AIR, 2016). View Two begins with CCR Standards for Adult Education and then correlates to the ELPs (AIR, 2016). Each of the views presented correspondences to the CCR Standards for Adult Education (AIR, 2016).

Section Five describes or discusses how the ELP Standards for AE correspond to the CCR Standards for Adult Education for English Language Arts and Literacy, Mathematical Practice, and Science and Engineering Practices (AIR, 2016). This section provided teachers with an overview of instruction focused on academic content that bridged to CCR Standards for Adult Education. The Correspondences (pp. 71-77) specifically shared a relationship to the CCR Standards for Adult Education English Language Arts and Literacy where the two focused on the language domains of reading, writing, speaking, and language (AIR, 2016). Additionally, the Correspondences showed

connections to the CCR Standards for Adult Education for Mathematical Practice and the

Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) Science and Engineering Practices (AIR,

2016). As my focus was on English language acquisition, the Correspondences for

Mathematical Practice and the NGSS were not included in this capstone project.

The ELP Standards for AE supported the academic language learning needs of

adult ELLs who were preparing to transition to postsecondary education and training, and

they emphasized the academic language ELLs needed to assist the transitions to

education and workforce programs (AIR, 2016). The ELP Standards for AE also

provided ESL teachers with the tools they needed to focus instruction that aligned to the

CCR Standards for Adult Education (AIR, 2016).

The Transitioning Adult English Language Learner

Immigrants that came to the United States in previous years had a range of access

to adult education services due to their backgrounds in literacy, education, and language

skills (Parrish & Johnson, 2010). Adult education programs played an essential part in

providing learners with access to programs that would help them develop the skills

necessary to support transitions to their new community and country, the workforce, and

to postsecondary education (Parrish & Johnson, 2010). Parrish (2015) noted that the

language demands on adult learners required them to read a variety of text at higher

levels of complexity, have communication skills that were strong, and utilized critical

thinking skills in a variety of contexts which included the workplace, a postsecondary

setting, or in training related to the workplace. Twenty-first century skills that involved

problem solving, comprehending and producing written communications that have a level

of complexity, and apply concepts to new texts are skills that Casner-Lotto and Barrington (2006), and Trilling and Fable (2009) (as cited in Parish, 2015), felt were necessary skills for U.S. career and educational opportunities. Parrish and Johnson (2010) noted that adults utilized these 21st century skills in the workplace by using different reading strategies to read charts, forms, and work instructions. Success in the workplace or in postsecondary settings required ELLs to read with higher levels of comprehension with nonfiction texts, to write reports for the workplace or research papers in educational settings, and for ESL programs to increase rigor at all levels of instruction (Parrish, 2015).

The call for increased rigor of engaging in complex language that involved stronger communication skills, critical thinking skills, and increased reading skills in the ESL classroom was compared to the demands of life skills that adults engage in daily life, such as tasks like shopping, health care, banking, and attending to school-aged children (Parrish, 2015). Making critical decisions about health care, communicating with school staff related to their children's education, and being selective about important mail and messages, all have involved critical thinking skills that use print and digital literacy (Parrish, 2015). There has been a need for today's adult ESL programs to engage learners at all levels in academic and career readiness that supports an increase in rigor in instruction. While our state has fully implemented an understanding of how functional language is important to language learning through the implementation of the state level ESOL Content Standards, understanding and utilizing the ELP Standards for AE has supported integrating academic language teaching at all levels of ESL instruction. Bringing together both content and academic standards required an alignment of using

language for various purposes that involved both interaction in for everyday purposes and using language in academic contexts (Frantz, Bailey, Starr & Perea, 2014).

Academic Language Learning for Adult English Language Learners

Prior to the early 1990's, language-learning approaches in adult education programs emphasized survival and fluency for social interactions (Beckett & Haley, 2000). For immigrants today, life or speaker roles for work, family, and community have become complex and the language skills that adult ELLs have needed in the 21st century straddle both social and academic language functions (Finn, 2011). Johnson and Parrish (2010) noted that competition for in-demand occupations has required higher levels of education beyond high school, making the need to understand the differences between social and academic language teaching critical for adult ESL teachers.

English proficiency for language learners has meant both conversational fluency and academic fluency, and the multiple applications of language that included vocabulary, grammar, language domains, and language skills that were used in both informal and formal settings that required different language skill sets (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Zwiers (2014) defined academic language as "the set of words, grammar, and discourse strategies used to describe complex ideas, higher-order thinking processes, and abstract concepts" (p. 22). In tandem with how social and academic languages have been important for language learners has been the differentiation of social and academic language learning (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Children and adults used language in both social interactions and in academic settings, and the distinction between the two approaches to language use were distinguished in the formative work of Cummins

(1979).

       The language skills used in social settings were described by Cummins (1979) as Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and referred to the informal and social day-to-day interchange that was necessary for functional language literacy. For language learners, the BICS language skills required less complexity and generally were complemented with linguistic cues through pictures, realia, and gestures or facial expressions that emphasized and supported meaning (Zwiers, 2014). The state level ESOL Content Standards described above aligned to a BICS approach to language learning and the functional, and everyday language adult learners used in their multiple life roles (Faux, 2017).

       Cummins (1979) described the academic variety of language skills as Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and theorized that these were the cognitive and academic skills that learners needed for academic language literacy. CALP language synthesized abstract ideas that were less concrete, displayed levels of complexity, and came with less linguistic reinforcement (Zwiers, 2014). The ELP Standards for AE were structured to support academic language learning and the BICS and CALP model of English proficiency served as a framework for understanding the complexity of academic language learning and how it differed from the traditional functional skills approach found in adult education ESL programs.

       Connecting content or functional-based standards to academic-based standards required an understanding of how language was different. As noted earlier, the state level ESOL Content Standards focused on everyday language skills that students would primarily use in social contexts, whereas the ELP Standards for AE focused on academic

language learning that supported language learning in academic contexts. In the adoption (by my state) of the ELP Standards for AE, these standards supported the integration of both functional and academic language learning for adult ELLs in classrooms around the state. This capstone project played a supporting role in developing an initial understanding of the ELP Standards for AE for state adult educators through access to the online professional development (PD) course developed in this project, with oversight and in partnership with the Adult Learning Resource Center (ALRC). The ALRC played a significant role in PD for all state adult educators. In the last twenty years, I have had the opportunity to facilitate both online and face-to-face training for content related to teaching ELLs, assessment practices, and standards-based instruction and development. The working relationship I have cultivated with ALRC has become important as I designed and created my capstone project.

In this capstone project, it has been my quest to continue to meet the challenges of PD for both my program and for those ESL programs around the state that have been tasked with providing PD on the ELP Standards for AE. By partnering with ALRC, I provided a PD resource that supported other localities around the state. To support the partnership in developing PD with ALRC, it was important to note how significant the approach to creating PD partnerships were to the field of adult education. Spangenburg, president of the National Council for Adult Learning, wrote about the ongoing need for professional development in the blog, *Picking up the PD Challenge* (NCAL, 2016). In this blog, organization leaders (Whitfield, Corley, Rossen, Taylor, & Carter, 2016) in the field of adult education discussed the critical need to stimulate a discussion at all program levels that would address six priority topic areas. Priority 4: Build Professional

Development Explicitly into Adult Education Planning addressed the need for adult

education programs to have teachers who were highly skilled and could cultivate success

in adult learners. By supporting the success of teachers and learners, all agencies at both

the local and state level could benefit (Corley, 2016). In the *Picking up the PD Challenge*

blog (NCAL, 2016), Corley (2016) noted the concept of creating PD through

collaboration with partners who could come together to define their mission and agenda.

By partnering with the ALRC on my capstone project, it was important to explore the

philosophy and approaches used to develop PD by ALRC.

Professional Development for Teachers of Adult English Language Learners

In my ongoing role as a facilitator of PD with ALRC, I have not contemplated or

examined the basic theory and philosophy behind PD offered by ALRC. In recent

meetings (summer 2017) with pertinent staff at the ALRC, I began to understand the

approaches to PD utilized and presented through training. To accomplish the task of

developing this course, it was important to understand and align with the constructivist

approach to professional development integrated in ALRC PD courses. The constructivist

learning approach, utilized for PD in the state by the ALRC, provided an opportunity for

participants to create meaning through a series of activities relevant to the topic (Biggs,

1996).

The Constructivist Approach to Professional Development

The constructivist approach to learning as a way to construct meaning through

experiences and ideas began with the philosopher Piaget, as noted by Blake and Pope

(2008). Piaget saw knowledge as operative in that knowledge was produced through change and transformation (Blake & Pope, 2008). Piaget's approach to the construction of knowledge was primarily based in a biological orientation centered in the individual. Vygotsky was also a contributor to the constructivist approach to learning. Vygotsky believed that learning was influenced by the social-cultural environment, as noted in the theory of Zone of Proximal Development (as described by Blake & Pope, 2008). While Piaget focused primarily on the individual and Vygotsky focused on active learning through social interaction, both approaches supported the constructivist approach to learning that was the framework for PD programming at the ALRC.

I used a constructivist approach to learning to design activities and assignments so that learning was active rather than passive, and that learning occurred as participants engaged in discussions, collaborative assignments, and cooperative creation of resources (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Important to the design of the course was incorporating an active learning approach where participants created knowledge with direct application to their practice through problem solving, reading and reflecting on their learning (individual application), and by discussing their learning with other ESL educators (social interaction) (Merriam et al., 2007). Through my partnership with the ALRC, I supported building an understanding of the ELP Standards locally and throughout programs around the state. My capstone project provided an opportunity to develop an online PD course using a constructivist framework for teachers in my program and statewide to become familiar with the ELP Standards for AE.

Online Learning

Chitanana (2012) at Midlands State University in Zimbabwe conducted a study of

online learning offered through the International Education and Resource Network (iLEARN). The study's purpose was to understand teacher's learning through their discourse in an online learning environment that was supported by the constructivist framework (Chitanana, 2012). The iLEARN course utilized a Moodle learning management system that was designed using the constructivist principles where learners engaged in content readings, discussions, individual and group assignments, and reflections. As cited in this research, the advantage to using a constructivist approach for online learning was that learning was collaborative and reflective through active learning that encouraged engagement in authentic tasks (Chitanana, 2012). By incorporating discussion forums, chat rooms, and other online resources, learning became a social construct that mirrored best practices in professional development in the field of adult education (Merriam et al., 2007).

The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) provided a professional development framework focused on assisting teachers and administrators working effectively with English Language Learners (CAL, 2010). The goal of the framework was to provide educators with a systematic approach to improved instruction and ongoing professional development (CAL, 2010). The framework included three main components: (1.) Content, (2.) Process, and (3.) Context. The three components focused on *content* of the professional development that supports practitioners; the *process* that included planning, implementing, and evaluating professional development; and the *context* of how professional development was provided (CAL, 2010).

Findings from the Chitanana (2012) research and the Framework for Quality Professional Development for Practitioners Working with Adult English Language

Learners (CAL, 2010) supported building knowledge and skills that were inherent in PD

offered by the ALRC. While these frameworks supported the development of my

capstone project, it was important to note that PD opportunities for the ELP Standards for

AE were minimal in the state. Further, PD work at the federal level was under

development (at this writing) but it was important for programs in my state to move

forward in creating an online course for the ELP Standards for AE that was specific to the

needs of the state, as well as my program.

The Gap in Research and Fieldwork

The literature presented in this chapter presented different components of

standards-based instruction for adult English Language Acquisition teachers. The field of

adult education in my state has had numerous professional development initiatives and

resources for implementing standards focused primarily on content standards that were

functional (interpersonal) language driven. As teachers began to work with the ELP

Standards for AE that were focused on academic language teaching, programs needed to

address how the standards could be implemented and what shifts in instruction they

presented.

Not addressed in the research in this capstone project, but of significance to the

study of academic language learning and implementing academic standards in adult ESL

programs, were the varied qualitative developmental perspectives that adult learners had

based on prior experiences of learning (Oulette-Schramm, 2016). As noted in Chapter

One in the research on CALP, academic language learning utilized complex linguistic

demands at higher levels of learning (Cummins, 1979). Oulette-Schramm (2016) made

note of the importance for adult ESL educators to recognize that adult language learners

brought a range of developmental diversity to the classroom and it was important to

consider how to align instruction to include an awareness and adaptability to

developmental academic language diversity.

An additional gap in creating professional development for the ELP Standards for

AE was that this work has been in its beginning stages, both nationally and statewide. As

programs have been called on to begin to design professional development on the ELP

Standards for AE statewide, guidance or best practices models was just emerging

regarding effective implementation of the standards, and what professional development

models would best meet the needs of the field of adult education in the state.

Research Questions

This project addressed the professional development needs for local and state

programs and teachers through the design of an online PD course that provided an

understanding of the ELP Standards for AE. To facilitate the implementation of the ELP

Standards for AE into practice, I studied the ELP Standards for AE because I wanted to

find out how to support teacher's understanding of implementing standards-based

instruction in the adult ESL classroom and to design an online learning professional

development course that supported the use and implementation of the standards at the

classroom level, and prepared learners for careers and postsecondary education. The

following guiding questions framed the capstone project:

1. What is standards-based instruction and how does it apply to adult education

    ESL?

2. What is academic language learning and how does the ELP Standards for AE support implementing academic language learning?

3. How does the constructivist approach support the development and delivery of the ELP Standards for AE online professional development courses?

Summary

This chapter presented an overview of the historical pathways of standards-based instruction for adult ESL programs. An overview of how academic language learning connected to the academic focus of the ELP Standards for AE and supported a more demanding approach to standards-based instruction was included. It provided an understanding of the framework of the ELP Standards for AE that included an overview of the standards, their guiding principles, and how they guided instruction for adult ELLs. To understand developing an online course for PD for my state, this chapter discussed the constructivist approach and online learning for PD. Chapter three utilized the ELP Standards for AE and the guiding principles of the constructivist approach that supported the development of my capstone project for an online learning PD course for my local program as well as the state level.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Introduction

This project addressed the professional development needs for statewide adult education programs through the design of an online PD course that provided an introductory understanding of the 2016 ELP Standards for AE. Chapter three provided an overview of the course to be developed during the fall of 2017. The ELP Standards for AE had an academic language standards-based approach to support the language needs of adult learners who were preparing to transition to postsecondary education, and/or vocational training programs. The ELP Standards for AE also guided ESL instruction by giving teachers the tools they need to support academic language learning at all levels of ESL instruction.

In my state, ESL programs that received WIOA (2014) funding were mandated to align instruction with the ELP Standards for AE. The implications for my program were that as we received WIOA-based funding streams, we have worked to comply with this mandate. As the Lead for ESL for this program, it was my task to provide professional development (PD) for teachers so that they became familiar with the ELP Standards for AE in order to support instruction that helped learners demonstrate content knowledge, thinking skills, and language proficiency. While developing PD at the local level was important to support funding, it has also become a goal at the state level. This capstone project supported both local and state goals for the implementation of the ELP Standards for AE.

The ELPs for Adult Educators Course

To facilitate the implementation of the ELP Standards for AE in locally and statewide, I studied the ELP Standards for AE because I wanted to find out how to support teachers' understanding of implementing standards-based instruction in the adult ESL classroom. I used this knowledge to design an online learning professional development course that supported the use and implementation of the standards at the classroom level, and prepared learners for careers and postsecondary education. Primary to this project were the following guiding questions:

1. What was standards-based instruction and how did it apply to adult education ESL?

2. What was academic language learning and how did academic language learning align to the ELP Standards for AE?

3. How did the constructivist approach used by the ALRC in PD courses support the development of the ELPs for Adult Educators course? What factors were considered for best practices in a constructivist approach to online learning?

Audience and Context

The development of an online professional development course for the ELP Standards for AE supported an introductory understanding of the 2016 ELP Standards for AE for adult ESL instructors with my Adult Education program. This course was also developed to support local and state initiatives.

My local region represented a vibrant and growing community with diverse needs, but particularly the need English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction. In the

Community Profile (VEC, 2017) for our region, the county had a population of 394,219

people who speak English less than well, or 5.76%. This was nearly doubled that of the

state's population of 2.60%, and 1.19% above the national average of 4.57% (VEC,

2017).

Our county was a 'minority-majority' community where ethnic and racial

minorities represented more than half of the county's population, which highlighted the

pressing language, literacy, and social needs of the community (PWCGov, 2016).

Thirty-four percent of the state's foreign-born residents were reported to have Hispanic or

Latino origins, which constituted the second largest minority subgroup in the state, while

composing the largest minority subgroup in the county at 51% (VEC, 2017). Annually,

our school system served approximately 1,500 ELL adult education students. To support

ESL instruction that was effective and promoted rigorous instruction that could meet the

needs of this diverse community, the ELPs for Adult Educators course supported the

professional development needs of ESL programs statewide.

Finally, by partnering with the ALRC, this course was made available through the

ALRC website as an online learning PD option to all adult ESL programs that wanted to

provide PD training for ESL programs. As PD for the ELP Standards for AE was a

priority statewide, all programs in the state had access to the ELPs for Adult Educators

course. The ALRC supported and strengthened adult education professional

development, resources, and collaborative projects for adult education in the state. The

ALRC provided PD through online and face-to-face trainings for all adult education

teachers and program staff in the state. By partnering with the ALRC for my capstone

project, this project supported the ALRC goal of developing online training for the ELP

Standards for AE.

Frameworks for Standards-Based Instruction

In chapter two, I identified pertinent literature that provided an historical overview of standards-based instruction in adult education and the shift from the definitive functional language approach to standards-based instruction to a more encompassing approach that included both functional and academic language standards. In this expanded approach to standards, I included literature that touched upon the different approaches to language instruction from both the functional and the cognitive academic approach. Also, important to adult ESL standards-based instruction was the support of adult learners who were transitioning to postsecondary or vocational programs, or were seeking career opportunities in fields of work that were meaningful and could provide a livable wage (Parrish & Johnson, 2010).

Constructivist Approach to Designing the ELPs for Adult Educators Course

In using a constructivist approach to design the ELPs for Adult Educators course, I incorporated interactive and collaborative learning processes for participants, understood and utilized a constructivist course design model, and considered essential characteristics of the role of the course facilitator for the implementation of the PD for the courses (Chitanana, 2012). Chitanana (2012) included two frameworks by Northover and Salmon that promoted collaborative learning and design. I designed the activities, discussions, and assignments so that interaction and participation were part of the design. According to Northover (2002), factors that were essential for successful online

interaction amongst participants during discussion of course content included the following:

- that participants met their learning outcomes;

- the discussions were interesting and challenging;

- that students could take risks and feel safe in contributing to discussions;

- that the facilitator provided feedback to learners that was beneficial and encouraging;

- that the discussion forums provided opportunities for participants to engage in realistic and meaningful content.

The online design of the ELPs for Adult Educators course also reflected the constructivist approach to online course design and facilitation of content. Salmon (2004) framed eight design principles for online learning that I considered to improve the quality of learning and teaching:

1. Learning was authentic and applied directly to real-world applications;

2. Learning had elements of negotiation and mediation;

3. Participants engaged in content and skills that were relevant;

4. Participant's prior knowledge was considered when course content and skills were aligned to participant's framework of knowledge;

5. Participants were given a formative assessment that could be used to guide successive learning experiences;

6. Participants had the opportunity to self-regulate, negotiate, and become aware of self-directed learning;

7. Participants saw the facilitator(s) as a facilitator to learning, rather than as the

teacher;

8. Facilitators encouraged and supported multiple viewpoints and representations of course content.

By incorporating essential principles of models for successful online interaction and course design, I hoped to support a deeper understanding of the ELP Standards for AE so that teachers could fully implement academic language learning into instruction.

Online Professional Development: ELPs for Adult Educators course

The ELP Standards for AE were new to the field of adult ESL instruction and training at the national level was forthcoming at this writing. Locally, regionally, and at the state level, training had yet to begin other than to make programs aware of the ELP Standards for AE. This project provided timely PD for all stakeholders around the state. The ELPs for Adult Educators course was divided into four units over the timeframe of four weeks. Week one was an introduction to the ELP Standards for AE; week two introduced a comparison of functional and academic language teaching and juxtaposed the state level ESOL Content Standards (functional) and the ELP Standards for AE (academic); week three walked through the content and structure of the ELP Standards for AE and provided an in-depth look at the content of the standards. Lastly, week four introduced an integration process for aligning the ELP Standards for AE with ESL instruction. The ELP Standards for AE document can be found in the References at the end of chapter three.

The ELPs for Adult Educators course was featured as a new course in the ALRC service for online courses. The online courses provided for evidence-based explorations

of topics that focused on teaching adult learners, including working with ELLs. The ALRC courses used the Blackboard learning management system to deliver online content and the content for this capstone project followed a Blackboard format. To visualize and design my project, I became familiar with the Blackboard format so that the four-week delivery of the course for this project aligned to an online learning model where participants interacted with the material and other participants, while allowing the individual flexibility and convenience that online learning provided.

Week One:

In this first week, the ELP Standards for AE were introduced by exploring their introduction to the field of adult education (Introduction section). The week covered the historical pathway of standards-based instruction (Why English Language Standards for Adult Education section). Participants explored the pathway of standards-based instruction and why using standards was integral to adult education for programs in the state (Process of Selecting English Language Proficiency Standards for Adult Education section).

Week Two:

In week two, participants drew tangible comparisons to the state level ESOL Content Standards and the ELP Standards for AE. Participants compared functional and academic language learning and how each of these approaches to teaching language was based in the BICS and CALP theory put forth by (Cummins, 1979). The BICS and CALP theory (Cummins, 1979) was a primary aspect of academic language learning and teaching adult ESL instruction and directly correlated to the ELP Standards for AE.

Participants explored the Guiding Principles (p. 8) that supported adult educators in recognizing both abilities and needs of adult ELLs and laid a foundation for incorporating academic language learning into instruction (AIR, 2016).

Week Three:

Week Three provided an extensive opportunity for participants in the PD course to become familiar with the ELP Standards for AE document. Participants utilized section four (The Results: English Language Proficiency Standards for Adult Education With Correspondences to the College and Career Readiness Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy and Mathematical and Science Practices section). Participants examined the two views of the standards, related them to their educational practice, and utilized the "What It Looks Like in Practice" scenarios to understand section four.

Week Four:

This week focused on the instructional approach for integrating the ELP Standards for AE and how academic content standards provided more effective instruction when used to guide instruction. Participants applied their knowledge of the ELP Standards for AE by creating an activity that utilized the standards in their instructional practice, tied the standards to the linguistic supports that adult ELLs needed at the participant's level of instruction, and supported their learners in making transitions to postsecondary education and career readiness programs.

Summary

This chapter outlined the ELPs for Adult Educators course I developed for professional development for my Adult Education program and for the Adult Learning Resource Center (ALRC). The course was developed as an online learning course with a constructivist approach to professional development that incorporated an online learning platform so that the course would be available through the ALRC's PD system. Each of the weeks developed integrated activities and tasks that promoted active learning for participants and focused on the knowledge and skills that apply directly to their adult ESL teaching practice.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusions

Overview

At the beginning of this capstone project, my goal was to learn about the English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards for Adult Education (AE), a report for academic standards-based instruction released to the field of Adult Education in October 2016. I wanted to study the ELP Standards for AE to understand how to support teacher's understanding of integrating academic language learning into instruction to support English language learners (ELLs) in transitioning to careers and postsecondary education. I wanted to discover what research I needed that would support a teacher's understanding of implementing standards-based instruction in the adult ESL classroom. This information was used to design my project, an online professional development (PD) course for adult education teachers that would support the use and implementation of the ELP Standards for AE at the instructional level.

In this concluding chapter, I discuss my learning journey in creating the four-week PD course for the ELP Standards for AE. I revisit the literature that was important to the project. I touch on implications, limitations, and benefits to the profession of adult education. I conclude with recommendations on future research and projects.

My Learning Journey

My learning journey in creating the four-week PD course on the Standards for AE involved contemplation in two areas. I knew that I would be working with a national

level document and that I would need to be able to synthesize and understand how to interpret and translate my understanding of the ELP Standards for AE into meaningful coursework for participants who would take the course. Additionally, course participants would provide feedback on their learnings from the course and that I would receive this feedback after the capstone course had been completed.

By utilizing a national level report for the field of adult education, I worked both in isolation and with others to articulate my understanding of the ELP Standards for AE and how they impact teaching English Language Learners (ELLs). While I began with the idea that standards-based instruction and the course that I would create from the ELP Standards for AE would benefit teachers, I came to understand that ELLs would also be impacted through a teacher's interpretation of applying their knowledge of the standards. The course was designed to help teachers acquire this knowledge so the impact of learning came full circle from teacher to learner. As I began to synthesize the literature, write the chapters, and most of all, design and create my project, I began to see the full scope and possible impact my project would have on implementing standards-based instruction for teachers, learners, programs, and administrators.

My project, a four-week course that introduced the ELP Standards for AE, gave teachers an opportunity to become familiar with the document, and to begin to integrate the standards into instruction. At the end of the capstone project, the course was made available to the Adult Learning Resource Center. By making the course available beyond the scope of the capstone project, I began to see the need to embrace feedback on two important levels: (1) how I interpreted the ELP Standards for AE, and (2) the quality of the course itself. Though I have always been open to feedback, I felt the pressure of

knowing that as this project became available to adult educators that would utilize the course for professional development, I would need to be open to review and feedback beyond the capstone project. My goal was to make this course available as a professional development opportunity for adult educators on a broader scope and I realized that this brought me full circle in embracing the continuing cycle of learning, teaching, and reflecting.

Revisiting the Literature Review

In chapter two, I reviewed literature that was relevant to the ELP Standards for AE that included an overview of standards-based instruction, academic language learning, understanding the ELP Standards for AE report, the literature that supported the report, and providing professional development for adult education teachers in an online learning environment based in a constructivist framework.

Because I have been involved in standards-based instruction in adult education, I thought I had a basic understanding of what standards-based instruction entailed. My knowledge in standards-based instruction was solid as it applied to instruction that focused on interpersonal language learning for adult ELLs that included learning language in social setting, but I had just a basic awareness that academic language learning would require a focus on language topic areas that adults would encounter in school and work settings (Cummins, 1979). Important to this understanding was elevating language learning to incorporate language complexity that utilized vocabulary, grammar, and discourse strategies with a higher cognitive demand (Zwiers, 2014). The ELP Standards for AE were created to assist teachers in incorporating the standards as a

tool to integrate academic language learning into instruction (AIR, 2016). I relied heavily on Zwiers' (2014) work to create an understanding of what academic language learning looked like in the classroom.

Another aspect of the ELP Standards for AE report that was important to understand was that adult ELL students should have the opportunity to acquire language that supported the transitional nature of the adult ELL learner as they prepared for the workforce and postsecondary education. The demand on adult immigrant language learners has changed as the workforce has changed and Parrish (2015) noted that today's language learners must be able to understand language that is complex, and that included reading complex non-fiction texts found in the workplace and in postsecondary education. Communication skills that adult ELLs needed in the 21st century utilized critical thinking skills in contexts such as the workplace and workplace training, and postsecondary educational opportunities (Parrish, 2015). My understanding of this literature supported my increased understanding of how the ELP Standards for AE report aligned to postsecondary and career transitions through incorporating increased levels of academic content in adult ESL instruction.

Because my project entailed creating a four-week online course based on the ELP Standards for AE, it was important to gain an understanding of what components for professional development were important and how I could create a course that provided dynamic and engaging learning opportunities for participants. A focus on individual and social learning through social interaction as a way to construct meaning was particularly important as I reviewed literature related to a constructivist approach to professional development (Blake & Pope, 2008). Blake and Pope provided a framework for

understanding Piaget's approach to constructing knowledge through individual change and transformation, as well as Vygotsky's approach to constructing knowledge through social interaction (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). I wanted the course to incorporate opportunities for participants to experience learning at both levels. Activities and assignments throughout the four weeks utilized a variety of learning strategies and assignments that were both collaborative (group sharing and socially mediated) and introspective (individual using one's own thinking skills) (Merriam et al., 2007). There were many iterations of the course design and refinements as I focused on bringing together both content and course design that provided professional development that was engaging.

Implications and Limitations

When I began my capstone project, I had read through the ELP Standards for AE report a few times and started with what I thought was a basic understanding of what the report entailed and why we needed to implement academic standards-based instruction to support increased rigor and content in adult ESL programs. I had a basic understanding of the difference between functional and academic language learning (Cummins, 1979). However, it was not until I began to understand and translate the report into a course design and pair that with my increasing knowledge of academic language learning and how that relates to the adult learner, that I began to see some of the implications and limitations of this project.

Implications

In my program and in many adult education programs, the focus of instruction has been on functional language learning that supports the social needs of language learners in their life roles of parents, works, and citizens (WIOA, 2014). I have come to realize that the ELP Standards for AE have the potential to broaden the focus of what teachers chose to teach to include increased rigor that supports learners in acquiring skills that require critical thinking, adept communication skills in oral and written formats, and understanding complex language (Parrish, 2015). Further, that all adult language learners should have access to rigorous instruction in order to close the gap between teaching life skills and expanding content to include language that can meet the language demands needed in today's educational and workplace settings (Parrish & Johnson, 2010). I have supported the idea of equity in adult education by raising my personal awareness of why access to education is important for all adult learners, shared my expanded knowledge with teachers on staff, and I believed standards-based instruction supported equity by giving teachers the standards tools they needed to increase rigor and focus on 21st century skills students needed for success.

Limitations

My capstone project gave me the opportunity to understand the ELP Standards for AE report so that I could create a four-week course that would provide teachers with an initial understanding of the report. The course just touched upon the instructional application of the standards and gave teachers some initial examples of what instruction looked like utilizing the ELP Standards for AE. A limitation of the project was the course

provided teachers with one resource for increasing their understanding of the ELP Standards for AE. More resources will be needed, including resources that provide instructional and implementation guidance.

Standards signify the skills and knowledge that students should know and be able to do, the ways in which students are taught, and measures for teachers and students that show that skills and knowledge have been taught (Young, 2006). Next steps in fully implementing the report at the instructional level would need to focus on specific instructional supports that interpret the standards into instruction, connect to the College and Career Readiness Standards, and align to the state content standards.

Recommendations for the Future

While the ELP Standards for AE report created an opportunity for increasing rigor in adult ESL classrooms that supported postsecondary and workforce opportunities, it was important to note that adult ELLs have a range of development diversity based on prior learning experiences (Oulette-Schramm, 2016). In implementing the ELP Standards for AE that focused on increasing rigor in the adult ESL classroom, further awareness and research may be needed to understand how a learner's developmental diversity aligns to instruction aligned to the ELP Standards for AE.

Additionally, this capstone project did not fully consider the instructional needs of teachers in implementing the ELP Standards for AE. The four-week course was created to provide teachers with an overview of the report but stops short of aligning the standards to curricula and instruction. It would be beneficial to the field of adult education to develop curricula aligned to the ELP Standards for AE that supports

transitions. Development of curricula and resources aligned to the ELP Standards for AE that is based in research would further support the implementation of standards-based instruction.

Lastly, for programs or states that have had content standards in place and will be implementing the ELP Standards for AE, it may be important to align the sets of standards to insure that learners receive instruction based on their needs that support both social and academic language learning. Further, a comparison document of state-level content standards with the ELP Standards for AE would benefit states that will incorporate both sets of standards in their instructional framework.

<div align="center">**Communicating Results and Benefits to the Profession**</div>

Before this project began I met with colleagues at the state level (ALRC) who could support and endorse the full implementation of the project through the ALRC. This project will be fully implemented as an online learning course through ALRC and will be available early in 2018 to adult educators around the state. Additionally, I am scheduled to facilitate the course and will be able to experience the process of sharing results (and receiving vital feedback) first hand with participants who sign up for the course

As little professional development for the ELP Standards for AE has taken place in our state, the benefits to the profession in the state will initially be vital to supporting teacher's understanding of the ELP Standards for AE. As the course becomes available, teachers will have an opportunity to become familiar with the report and that understanding will be the framework for next steps that include creating instructional resources, alignment

with curricula, and supporting learner's transitional goals to careers and postsecondary education.

Summary

At the beginning of the process of creating my capstone project, I had just a basic understanding of the ELP Standards for AE. As I complete the project, I have learned so much more about the standards, but I do not think my understanding will be fully complete until I have the opportunity to integrate standards into instruction. I think this will be a similar process for teachers in that standards-based instruction happens when standards are 'tried out' in the classroom. While I have created what I hoped would be an engaging and rigorous professional development course that gives teachers an understanding of the ELP Standards for AE and how to use them, the real understanding happens in the classroom when learners respond to instruction, teachers process how instruction worked or did not work, and reflect on refining the process.

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