CHAPTER 7

A meta-synthesis of qualitative research on effective teaching practices for English Language Learners

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Qualitative studies in second language teaching are increasing in both number and quality. Such studies are addressing familiar questions regarding effective teaching practices as well as underscoring the importance of context in language learning. Yet there have been no systematic compilations or analyses of this body of research literature. This chapter reviews and synthesizes the qualitative research studies in the field of second language instruction with a focus on effective practices for English Language Learners in US schools.

Using techniques for coding and categorizing qualitative data suggested by Noblit and Hare (1988) and others (Flinspach 2001), we synthesized the results of 25 studies. Our synthesis revealed practices congealed around four instructional orientations: (a) communitarian teaching, a manner of instruction built around community; (b) protracted language events, a strategy in which teachers work to maximize verbal activity; (c) building on prior knowledge, an overall approach to teaching in which teachers work to connect students' lives to school themes; and (d) the use of multiple representations, a method designed to support language with objects and indexes.

In addition to our review, we compare our findings with results of quantitative research syntheses, noting important methodological differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches. Finally, we explore the role of the future of qualitative research syntheses in second language teaching and learning.

Introduction

In a 1995 special issue of the *TESOL Quarterly*, Lazaraton (1995) suggested that the number and quality of qualitative studies in second language learning was bound to increase and, consequently, have a greater impact in the instructional domain. In the years since this publication, this prediction has been only partly realized. Qualitative studies in educational settings have indeed become more commonplace, and the quality of such studies, although difficult to assess, seems to be improving. More important perhaps is the type of research that qualitative methods and analyses encourage. Qualitative studies in second language instructional settings have paid attention to important contextual features (e.g., the cultural backgrounds of learners) of second language learning that quantitative studies often failed to recognize. Educational ethnographies, in particular, have allowed researchers to explore nuances of learners and learning environments and explain their work in "thick descriptions," allowing their readers to gain an appreciation for the complexity of language learning under varied conditions and contexts.

In addition, a new focus on teacher research in second language education suggests a new source of qualitative investigations, although teacher research studies thus far have been largely descriptive in nature only (Bailey & Nunan 1996). Lazaraton also pointed out that qualitative research holds great potential for assisting practitioners in their work. Instead of the manipulation of experimental conditions using large data sources (important features of any educational research program, but largely inaccessible to teachers), the naturalistic and contextualized nature of qualitative research has more appeal to teachers and other educators who work directly with students in classrooms. Further, using the inductive logic assumed in most qualitative studies, policymakers may find in this body of research literature recommendations for restructuring and thereby improving existing language learning programs.

The potential yield of findings taken from qualitative research in second language settings suggested to us that it was time to consider what qualitative researchers had found with respect to effective instructional practices for English Language Learners (ELLs). The present review addresses what the recent qualitative literature adds to our understanding of good teaching practices for second language learners.

Focus on effective teaching practices

In conducting the present meta-synthesis, our interest was in illuminating best teaching practices for ELLs. Thus, we are not concerned with studies that focused on effective *programs* for ELLs, preferring instead to inform the practices of teachers in classrooms. For instance, we did not include research evaluating the relative success of bilingual education vs. English immersion, or studies that addressed the ongoing debate over early exit vs. late exit bilingual programs. We anticipated that the qualitative research in English language instruction would yield studies more focused on context and the direct experiences of teachers and students. We were interested in how educators can increase ELLs' achievement in English, but we did not expect to find, for instance, qualitative researchers reporting growth in standardized test scores in their studies. Rather, we anticipated that we would locate studies focused on broad and innovative teaching practices that encouraged language growth in a variety of contexts. We also expected that qualitative studies would consider the role of the teacher as a crucial element in effective practices.

Qualitative researchers, perhaps by nature, tend to focus on the experiences of actors as they negotiate their worlds. Consequently, we predicted that all of the studies we found would examine the effect of practices that required much teacher direction. On the other hand, we anticipated finding studies interested in more than descriptions of context alone. Contemporary English Language Development (ELD) teachers in the US and elsewhere are under increasing pressure to teach English more quickly and efficiently (Brennan, Kim, Wenz-Gross, & Siperstein, 2001), in no small part owing to the federal No Child Left Behind legislation (Goertz & Duffy 2003). This pressure has encouraged teachers to seek practices that yield broad gains.

New accountability pressures notwithstanding, teachers of school-aged children, in contrast to those working with adults, have always been concerned with knowing and using a wide range of teaching practices. This concern is reflected in the importance of methods courses in teacher education programs (Mosenthal 1996). In the early elementary grades, specifically, ELLs possess few individual learning strategies. For instance, an adult learner might naturally make a set of flashcards to memorize terms. By contrast, young learners lack the capacity for such a task. Of course, teaching methods can take a teacher only so far (Bartolome 1994), but teachers of younger ELLs must devote a significant part of their professional planning to linking curriculum with an appropriate teaching practice or technique.

ELLs and the importance of context

Recently, the focus and interest in effective practices has increased among educational researchers (Fisher, Frey, & Williams 2002). However, this new emphasis on experimentally based "best practices" is receiving much attention, with controversy at every turn (Howe 2004). The primary disagreements emerge not from the search for effective practices, but the experimental procedures used to assess them, and whether effective practices, once discovered, should be mandated for use in all contexts. One of the persistent problems in education is that we often talk about best practices in education without consideration of context or possible interaction effects (Eisner 1998, 2001). Unfortunately much of the research on effective teaching practices as well as in other substantive areas does not address important contextual differences. For example, in the area of ELLs, many studies and reviews of research have merely prescribed generalized best practices for ELLs without taking into account the important individual and contextual variables that represent the great diversity of conditions or risk factors that students encounter. There is much variability, however, within the population of ELLs. G. N. García (2001), for example, pointed out that 45% of the current ELL school-aged student population is foreign-born immigrants, while the remaining 55% are U.S.-born. Foreign- and native-born students as well as other subgroups of students have different dialects, levels of schooling, and degrees of access to preschool experiences, all of which differentially impact their achievement in school. This heterogeneity makes it highly problematic to describe a "typical" ELL and therefore appropriate interventions. Many conceptual articles and studies generalize to a larger population without taking into account the great diversity among types of ELLs. Consequently, recommendations from research should take into account this diversity among ELLs.

Whatever disagreements might exist with respect to best practices, all sides agree that the academic achievement of ELLs in the US is unacceptably low. The academic achievement scores of the 4.5 million "Limited English Proficient" students in US K-12 schools – a figure that grows at an annual rate of about three percent (Kindler 2002) – suggest that ELLs are struggling. Although such data are less than complete (state and federal agencies tend to report on racial/ethnic differences rather than language status), studies show that ELLs are well below their native-English-speaking counterparts on tests of literacy (Kindler 2002). Mexican American ELLs, who comprise by far the largest group of ELLs, fare worst of all (Schmid 2001), with dropout rates as high as 40 % in some regions (Hispanic Dropout Project 1998). Teacher profes-

sional development is falling short in providing teachers with the preparation required to address the needs of ELLs. A recent national survey showed that in many states, even those with large and growing ELL populations, less than 10 % of the teachers had received more than eight hours of English development in-service in the previous three years (U.S. Department of Education 2002). Given these data, it is no surprise that educators and policymakers are in search of the most effective and efficient practices for ELLs (e.g., August & Hakuta 1997).

Meta-analysis and meta-synthesis in education

It is also obvious why there is such interest in meta-analytic studies and other research syntheses. Quantitative research meta-analyses in education have led to findings important to both researchers and policymakers. For instance, Elbaum, Vaughn, Hughes, and Moody (2000) conducted a meta-analysis of Reading Recovery, a literacy program distinguished by one-to-one tutoring with a highly trained teacher. The resources needed to maintain Reading Recovery had made it somewhat controversial. To the surprise of many, the meta-analysis revealed that other one-on-one tutoring produced results similar to those of Reading Recovery and that small-group tutoring programs yielded similar results. The results of this study have altered tutoring programs in many schools.

Research syntheses of effective instruction may lead to the adoption of more efficient techniques or offer proof of the benefits (both social and academic) of instructional practices such as cooperative learning (e.g., Nath, Ross, & Smith 1996). Indeed, meta-analyses hold the potential to alter many large-scale instructional practices. However, we must point out that in the US educational research context, all studies of educational practice, both original research studies and meta-analyses, are now part of an ongoing discussion regarding what constitutes a valid scientific study in education (Eisenhart & Towne, 2003). The federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, for example, is placing a new emphasis on scientifically based research and requires states and school districts to choose "evidence-based" programs for their schools and classrooms. This change is providing support to the growing numbers of researchers (Glass 2000; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg 1993) and organizations, such as the Campbell Collaboration (2002), to synthesize findings from research. It is argued that these systematic reviews of the research will firm up the "soft science" of education and finally begin to provide empirical evidence that

certain programs or approaches are effective in improving student outcomes (Viadero 2002).

An important role of research in language teaching is the evaluation of teaching practices. Historically, such research has guided teachers to the most effective instructional methods. However, much of the research on effective language teaching practices has used quantitative methods, employing large data sets or experimental conditions unfamiliar to practitioners. Qualitative research strategies, on the other hand, typically reflect and illustrate the classroom conditions teachers recognize. This present review of research suggests that new, qualitative research may provide a different set of instructional strategy recommendations for English language teachers working in a wide variety of settings.

The methods for conducting a research synthesis of qualitative studies are not so well developed as those for aggregating quantitative research. A qualitative research synthesis cannot, for instance, rely upon an agreed upon treatment metric such as effect size (e.g., Glass, McGaw & Smith 1981; Norris & Ortega 2000). Indeed, in the most widely cited paper on qualitative reviews, Noblit and Hare (1988) argued that the goal of a qualitative and interpretive research synthesis is less about generalizing what constitutes effective practices across contexts than informing readers of the contexts themselves. To wit, one of the most widely read ethnographies in education, Shirley Brice Heath's "Ways With Words" (Heath 1983), compelled educators not because it was a prescription for how schools should use language, but rather a description of how the language of the school fit or failed to fit with the language of the family.

Another primary difference between our review and other, more quantitative works is the size of the research base. It is true that qualitative studies are growing in number, but we found that our exhaustive review of the literature did not yield the number of studies typically found in most meta-analyses of quantitative studies in the field of educational research (cf. Bus & van Ijzendoorn 1999; Swanson, Trainin, Necoechea, & Hammill 2003), though this phenomenon may be related to the incipient nature of work on language learning per se (as indicated by the sample sizes in chapters in the current volume).

In addition to lacking great numbers of previous studies, qualitative researchers have struggled to fit the terms of quantitative work to their purposes. Recently, Finfgeld (2003) developed a set of definitions unique to qualitative reviews. First, she recommended that qualitative reviewers avoid the term *meta-analysis* when referring to their work. In its place, she suggested that qualitative research summaries use the term *meta-synthesis*, an "umbrella term referring to the synthesis of findings across multiple qualitative reports to create a new

interpretation" (p. 895). This term's meaning implies that researchers engaged in meta-syntheses are bound to inform the results of their work with additional analytic and theoretical frames. On the basis of Finfgeld's typology, we henceforth refer to our work as a meta-synthesis.

Methodology

The literature search

Despite the variations from a typical meta-analysis, we began our meta-synthesis in the manner common to all literature reviews: by circumscribing a time period for inclusion (1990–2000, in our case) and selecting indexing tools for our search.

Although we recognize that many studies predate this period and that many important works have been published since, the time frame we chose coincides with the rapid growth of qualitative studies in education. Our review begins at 1990, at the same time several influential works on qualitative data analysis were published (e.g., Strauss & Corbin 1990). Whereas a decade seems an arbitrary period, we believe that it allowed us to find enough quality studies to develop themes useful for language educators.

We relied on five primary search source indexes or databases in preparing this meta-synthesis: Education Abstracts, Educational Resources Information Center, California Digital Library Social Science Citation Index, and Dissertation Abstracts. Table 1 describes our search indexes in detail. We did not limit our search to articles published in English, but found none published in other languages. Neither did we limit our search to studies conducted in the US, but most of the research we found had been conducted there. Search terms used in the meta-synthesis were all combinations of the following terms: English, English Language Learner(s) (ELLs), ESL, ELD, Instruction, Instructional, Effective, Ethnography, Qualitative, and Second Language.[1] We did not exclude studies because they did not fit the document type typically indexed in a database. For instance, if we found a book or dissertation of topical relevance in Education Abstracts, we did not exclude that work. In addition, we conducted several "cross-checks" of our searches, finding that research articles found in Education Abstracts were also found in the Web of Science database.

Table 1. Sources used to search for studies

Index/Database	Description	Usage
Ovid Technology's Education Abstracts[a]	Education Abstracts is a bibliographic database that indexes and abstracts articles of at least one column in length from English-language periodicals and yearbooks published in the United States and elsewhere from 1983-present. Abstracting coverage begins with January 1994. Abstracts range from 50 to 300 words and describe the content and scope of the source documents.	Education Abstracts was used primarily to locate published, often refereed research papers, typically found in academic journals (e.g., *Reading Research Quarterly*).
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)	ERIC is a national information system designed to provide ready access to an extensive body of education-related literature. Established in 1966, ERIC is supported by the US Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement and is administered by the National Library of Education (NLE). At the heart of ERIC is the largest education database in the world containing more than 1 million records of journal articles, research reports, curriculum and teaching guides, conference papers, and books.	ERIC served to locate primarily unpublished reports and references to papers presented at conferences. In addition, ERIC will often index evaluation reports not published in journals.
California Digital Library (CDL)	CDL is a collaborative effort of the UC campuses, organizationally housed at the University of California Office of the President. It is responsible for the design, creation, and implementation of systems that support the shared collections of the University of California. CDL includes Melvyl Union Catalog (CAT) and the California Periodicals database (PE). Library materials are owned by UC and others.	CDL served to locate books and book chapters.
Web of Science's Social Science Citation Index (SSCI)	The Social Science Citation Index is a multidisciplinary index to the journal literature of the social sciences. It indexes more than 1,725 journals across 50 social sciences disciplines.	SSCI was used to locate additional works or citations by specific authors, as well as searches using keywords and subjects.

Table 1. (*continued*)

Index/Database	Description	Usage
Dissertation Abstracts	Dissertation Abstracts indexes US dissertations and theses completed in the past 30 years.	This index was particularly useful because many qualitative research projects in education generally and second language education specifically are lengthy and therefore unlikely to be compressed to journal form from their original length.

[a] Ovid is no longer the title of the database we used for our search. It is now known as Wilson Web's Education Index.

Inclusion and exclusion of studies

Our literature search yielded approximately 50 studies that initially appeared relevant. The full text of eight of the papers could not be located (typically ERIC documents). Twelve of the studies were oriented more towards sociocultural themes or structural elements of schooling (e.g., Chintapalli-Tamirisa 1995) than classroom practices. We acknowledge that many of these studies addressed critical issues in the education of ELLs, but their focus was not on classroom practices, and therefore they were excluded from the meta-synthesis.[2]

With the remaining studies both found in full text and relevant to our theme, we then applied several criteria for selection in the review. First, the study was required to have provided a rationale for choosing its participants and context. Why did the author(s) select a particular school or group of students or teachers instead of others? We believed that such a requirement was reasonable given the importance of context in qualitative research. We did not, however, require studies to have engaged in efforts to find a "representative" context or participant. Such an effort is often impossible given the wide and open access needed for qualitative – especially ethnographic – research. In one instance, the researcher had chosen a specific school because she had formerly been a teacher there and was promised free and unfettered access to interview students and teachers, take field notes, and review certain school curricula (Giacchino-Baker 1992). Often the level of familiarity and trust needed between the qualitative researcher and the research participants dictates or even

mandates the use of a particular context. Therefore, we did not eliminate studies in which the author(s) acknowledged a previous personal or professional connection to the context. We did, however, require that the author(s): (a) describe the process in selecting a research site, (b) acknowledge any previous relationships with the site and its participants (if applicable), and (c) provide a clear description of the research context, including those features that might limit the generalizability of the findings. The parallel to this criterion found in the quantitative research syntheses criteria might be whether a study made use of a valid sampling strategy.

Second, data had to be collected using a systematic strategy; that is, primary data were collected using a recognized qualitative technique (e.g., Miles & Huberman 1994). Studies that did not make clear their data collection methods, or those that failed to use any systematic procedure, were not included in the analysis. For instance, we excluded a study that addressed literacy strategies for early elementary ELLs. The topic was clearly of interest to the synthesis, but the author simply offered strings of quotes from learners and teachers but provided no evidence on how or when the interviews were conducted, whether or not the interviewees were given a chance to review their comments (member check), or even context of the interviews.

Third, to be included, the study had to apply some sort of careful, systematic analysis and interpretation of the data. We hoped that this criterion would offer us a measure of rigor, tantamount to the fidelity of treatment groups required of a quantitative, experimental study. Of course, rigor cannot be fully determined in a qualitative study report, just as qualified researchers may have disagreements over whether experimental groups represent the effect of treatment or merely existing differences. Nevertheless, we found that Wolcott's (1994) typology of qualitative research, in which a researcher engages in description, analysis, and interpretation, is a good proxy for rigor in the qualitative realm. Wolcott argued that qualitative research has the responsibility first to describe its data; that is, to treat descriptive data as a matter of fact. Using this guide, we insisted that the study be comprehensive and coherent in its presentation of the data.

Next, we required the included studies to contain a comprehensive analysis of the data. Wolcott called for the qualitative researcher to "extend beyond a purely descriptive account [...] that proceeds in some careful, systematic way to identify key factors and relationships among them" (Wolcott 1994: 10). Finally, Wolcott suggested that qualitative research "reach out for understanding or explanation beyond the limits of what can be explained with the degree of certainty usually associated with analysis" (p. 11). The use of this final feature

in Wolcott's typology required the studies to have an analytic lens that connected the data and theory to larger implications (i.e., corroborate their data with extant theory or existing research).

The application of these criteria excluded another 10 studies, most of which were presentations at professional meetings. Several of these studies were of interest, but their method of data analysis was not fully reported. It was difficult to eliminate relevant studies, but we argue that these requirements served the purpose of including only those studies that represent sound qualitative strategies. This final round left us with 25 studies in the meta-synthesis, all marked with an asterisk in the reference list.

In spite of our strict criteria, we did not discriminate based on a study's adherence to a particular ontology of qualitative research. For instance, we did not quarrel with whether a study began with explicit hypotheses or instead allowed the results to emerge, refining the analysis *en route*. We recognize that this is an important point of disagreement in the way that qualitative researchers analyze data (Glaser & Straus 1967) but decided that we should not be drawn into the merits of inductive vs. deductive research logic. Nor did we constrain our review to studies published in refereed journals. Indeed, eliminating relevant works uncovered in doctoral dissertations – publications not routinely considered refereed – would have severely curtailed the number of studies in the analysis. Some meta-analyses have excluded such "fugitive" studies (cf. Norris & Ortega 2000), but we found that the space needed to convey fully the results of a qualitative study is often found only in dissertations. We included only one mixed-method research study (Ochoa & Pérez 1995) but were open to including additional such studies had they emerged from the search process.

Coding and development of study themes

Once the papers had been selected, we faced the task of determining how the studies might coalesce into themes of effective instruction. In the quantitative world, one might rely on algorithms of matrix algebra (i.e., exploratory factor analysis) to determine which studies fit together, but qualitative studies offer no comparative strategy. Instead, we looked to other qualitative research syntheses from education and other social sciences. For instance, Sandelowski, Docherty, and Emden (1997), in their review of methods used in "qualitative meta-syntheses," suggest three general strategies for synthesizing qualitative studies. The first strategy integrates the findings of one researcher's work over time. A second integrates the results of studies across both time and researchers. The third strategy transforms qualitative data into counts and frequencies, which

can then be analyzed using quantitative methods. The task we faced suggested the second strategy, integrating the results of studies across time (1990–2000) and researchers. Flinspach's (2001) work was also useful in determining a strategy for coding and organizing the studies. Baumann and Duffy's (2001) synthesis of themes in the teacher education research literature provided an important insight. Using the constant comparative method applied to written documents (cf. Glaser & Straus 1967), their iterations of category identification suggested that our syntheses would benefit from a similar strategy.

We began with an a priori list of codes and categories (Miles & Huberman 1994). The results section of each study was examined and classified into one of the following initial categories, themselves based on what previous meta-analyses found. Our initial categories included: (a) effective literacy practices, (b) effective speaking/listening practices, (c) practices promoting pragmatic skills, and (d) other. We then engaged the open and axial coding scheme common to original research in qualitative studies (Straus & Corbin 1990).[3] In the open coding procedure, we tried to fit the studies into our a priori categories.

This strategy forced us to fit the studies to previous work in large-scale reviews of the literature, but it soon became clear that these categories were not taking advantage of the specialized themes of these qualitative studies. The inadequacy of these initial categories compelled us to consider the analytic nature of a meta-synthesis. We maintained that with the aid of some general theoretical references, we could recode the studies into categories more meaningful and coherent. We should also point out that our task was made both easier and more difficult because we had only 25 studies to sort.

Based on the failure of our original, open coding strategy, we proceeded to an axial coding of the studies, in which we now used our theoretical frames as guides. With the aid of foundational works (e.g., Dewey 1916), the coding was made both easier and coherent. For instance, a large number of the studies dealt with student-teacher, student-student, and, in one case (Clark 1999), teacher-teacher interactions. In several of the studies, the practice affiliated with such interaction was not specific to literacy or oral development but rather focused on the linguistic value of the interaction itself. The axial coding informed by the frames taken from the theoretical literature revealed that several of the studies could be considered part of a new "interaction" category, and thus a new, meta-synthetic category was developed, which we named "communitarian" teaching practices. Continuing using a wider analytic lens afforded us in the axial coding, four additional categories were developed.

As a test of the reliability of these new categories, we returned to the original categories (e.g., literacy, speaking/listening) and tried to "retrofit" the stud-

ies. This attempt failed, largely because the second set of categories held more explanatory value and appeared to us as a more coherent set. Most important, these new categories fit better the results of the qualitative research.

Results

Four effective teaching practices emerged from the meta-synthesis. They are: (a) communitarian teaching practices, (b) protracted language events, (c) multiple representations designed for understanding target language, and (d) building on prior knowledge. The following sections summarize the research in these four areas in addition to exploring a fifth theme, structural obstacles to effective instruction, often addressed in the literature.

Communitarian teaching practices

The first effective teaching strategy uncovered by the qualitative research synthesis was related to, but extended well beyond, what is commonly known as cooperative learning. Many experimental (and most often quantitative) studies have demonstrated the positive effects of cooperative learning among ELLs (e.g., Calderon, Hertz-Lazarowitz, & Slavin 1998). However, the qualitative research reviewed here suggested a broader and more comprehensive role for cooperative learning. Each of the papers addressing the importance of social interactions for learning language considered group tasks as crucial experiences for language learning. However, they generally believed that interactional learning encouraged a strong form of social cooperation and discourse that *in turn drove language learning.* This is a crucial difference between experimental studies of cooperative learning among language learners and qualitative and ethnographic studies of the same; that is, the difference between the ethnographers' perspective on group learning and the traditional perspective on cooperative learning turns on the distinction between teaching practices alone and much broader views of teaching based on social relationships. Perhaps it is because of the way that ethnographers approach their research, or perhaps it is simply their predisposition to see all interactions as socially meaningful, whether or not such relations serve a learning function. But for the most part, they saw genuine social relationships and the talk that emerged from these relationships as the primary engine of language learning.

The term cooperative learning fails to capture fully the type of learning under study by these researchers. Because the qualitative researchers' focus is

trained on the social aspects of language use, the term *communitarian learning*, first used by Kahne (1996) in the educational context, appears to be a more apt description. Communitarian thought in education has its roots in John Dewey's vision of community as a society in which rational and democratic decision-making processes enable the pursuit of common goals (Dewey 1961). Communitarians of this type see open discourse as an essential feature of democracy. Further, communitarian ideals call for community norms and values that help open to public critiques. In essence, a communitarian belief in human societies suggests that open discourse leads to shared social values and free, unfettered social intercourse. Clearly, the goals and interests of a communitarian society are not necessarily the development of language, but such social interactions cannot proceed without a heavy reliance on language.

The qualitative and often ethnographic research studies reviewed here began their interest in language and literacy growth among ELL students but in many cases discovered that the social growth resulting from students from diverse language and cultural backgrounds preceded and sometimes overshadowed language learning. For instance, Goatley, Brock, and Raphael (1995) found that inviting ELLs to join native English speaking book clubs not only improved their language skills but also allowed them an opportunity to share their cultural frame with other students. For one particular student, a Vietnamese immigrant, the effect was profound. Naturally, she made great language gains but also came to understand her role in the larger class as a spokesperson on many issues unknown to her native US classmates. Their ethnography revealed important language and social development made by the native US students as well.

The movement for conversation as a primary means of learning has its roots in Socrates' view of the function of language, which, stated plainly, was to communicate from individual mind to individual mind, resulting in ontological agreements. More recently, the work of Vygotsky (1934/1986) has been called upon to support the notion that language development is yoked to the development of thought, with language doing the pulling. And Vygotsky's now famous refutation of Piaget's theory of private speech as sharply limited in function supports the view that our early private language "serves mental orientation, conscious understanding [...] in overcoming difficulties" (p. 228). Egocentric speech becomes inner speech, which transforms into dialogue with others, each transition resulting in more complex thinking. In this model, language, spoken language in particular, drives understanding. Contemporary educational researchers have built on this body of theory and research

by promoting academic discourse as one important tool for learning in formal schooling settings (e.g., Barnes 1976; Hall & Verplaetse 2000; Wells 1986).

A study by Tujay, Jennings, and Dixon (1995) represents well this traditional research line of shared language use as a means for language growth. These researchers based their year-long ethnography of a third-grade classroom of diverse language learners on principles more aligned with language learning goals than communitarian ideals. Nevertheless, their conclusions sound remarkably like those found by Goatley, Brock, and Raphael (1995). As they observed a group of third-grade students who varied in their English language proficiency, they found that although a focus on common task (creating a "planet" story) did not necessarily offer each student the same opportunities to learn, it allowed students varied ways in which they could organize their own learning, essentially creating an individual learning plan. Hruska (2000) also used ethnography to show the relationship between social identity and language use for enhanced language achievement. As a study of communitarian language learning, this line of research also suggests that the interaction of the students served to create an important solidarity among the students that encouraged language events. A focus on communitarian learning practices seems to enhance language learning even when no student in the group has strong proficiency in English (McConnell 1996). More evidence comes from Joyce's (1997) study of ELL writers in which text production and accuracy increased when peers were responsible for each other's work, guided in part by teacher direction. In addition, the introduction of computers as a mediating factor in language development seems to enhance language development insofar as students remain in groups – or at least dyads – while working at the computer (González-Edfelt 1990).

The effectiveness of the communitarian strategy has an historical and sociological rationale. For the better part of our history as a species, the only reason to learn another language was to communicate with people who spoke that language. Before nation-states identified "official" languages and enforced the learning of these privileged languages in formal schools, people learned additional languages because the people who spoke other languages had something they wanted, did something they thought was fascinating, or maybe were members of a group they needed in alliance against yet another group, among dozens of other purposes. The research reviewed in this section seems to build upon this ancient tradition. By creating conditions in which dialogue is genuine and in which social solidarity (i.e., getting to know these different people who speak this different language) and a shared goal are the primary purposes

of interaction, educators who use communitarian teaching practices enhance language learning.

The conclusion from these studies suggests that inviting students who are learning English to engage in academic conversations with their peers is a fundamental tool of language learning. These studies suggest that the teacher should serve as a language model, but that the teacher is merely one model of many. It is perhaps more important that the students understand the teacher's role in the classroom discourse as part of the community's discourse rather than the arbiter of accuracy in the language.

A final observation suggests that cooperative, communitarian practices have long been associated with Latino culture, but communitarian knowledge-building practices may in fact be a key element in all immigrant households. Mikyong (1995) argued that Asian families demonstrated a distinct propensity for cooperative strategies. Of course, Asian cultures, which are very often built on the Confucian value of filial piety, might be expected to rely on family learning structures (Sue & Okazaki 1990). But it has been suggested that all immigrant families, irrespective of ethnicity, are more likely to rely on family members (both nuclear and extended) during the stressful acculturation process (Kwak 2003). Therefore, teachers who use communitarian teaching practices are using a teaching strategy familiar to immigrant families. A full explanation for communitarian practices among recent immigrants need not be fully explored here; however, schools must be cognizant of the value placed on cooperative knowledge-building among ELLs' families and exploit teaching practices that resonate with this learning tool.

Protracted language events

Language is learned through its use. Dialogic interaction is the primary tool through which we learn language. The research reviewed here supports this assertion but also suggests that effective second language instruction must be built upon lengthy dialogues, referred to in this chapter as *protracted language events*. This concept is similar to Gallimore and Goldenberg's (1992) instructional conversations in language learning classrooms. In these qualitative studies, however, the specific form of the language events seemed to be less important than its expansiveness.

In some ways, the use of protracted language events mirrors the essential features of first language development. Brown and Bellugi (1964), in their landmark research of children learning language, found an essential pattern to syntax and semantic speech when children are learning language with an

Table 2. Child-adult language event (adapted from Brown & Bellugi 1964)

Speech Act (Child)	Notes
Child: "Look, doggy run."	Using this form of telegraphic speech maintains the word order of a more proficient speaker of English.
Adult: "Yes, that funny dog is running fast. Look at him go."	Adult repeats meaning of speech act, but expands using target form of the dialect, adding additional information and correcting form if necessary. The child is supported in her observation by having her meaning repeated. In addition, the adult has built additional meaning upon the child's initial statement. Brown and Bellugi noted that many rounds of this pattern provide enough language for the child to acquire the syntax – among other proficiencies – of the target language.
Adult protracts the language event by asking a question of the *child*: "Why is that funny dog running after that stick?"	Many child/adult interactions continue in this way. The adult has invited the dialogue to expand further, providing yet another opportunity for the child to learn both syntax and meaning.
Child: "He want stick."	Child's response is focused on meaning in spite of incorrect form.
Adult: "Yes, he wants to get that stick so that he can bring it back to the boy."	Again, adult repeats meaning of speech act, expands using target form of the dialect, and adds additional information.

adult (or more capable speaker). Table 2 offers an example of this pattern with explanatory notes. We can assume that children raised in this language environment are better prepared for the language events of the classroom.

As we consider the application of Brown and Bellugi's research when working with ELLs, we must first note that the content and complexity of protracted language events will be age appropriate. We must also note that the social relationship among teachers and students is certainly different than that between a parent and a child. However, teachers who utilize protracted language events understand the value of "keeping the conversation going," a feature of language acquisition that not only bonds teacher and student socially but also enhances the development of language comprehension (Bridges, Sinha, & Walkerdine 1981). They set in motion for their students a dialogue that continues moving. They engender conversations that offer ELLs an opportunity to be understood, a chance for their speech acts to be valued, and the occasion to be corrected for form without humiliation.

Several of the studies fit this category of protracted language use. Giacchino-Baker (1992), for instance, discovered that secondary ELLs reported that they

needed more time and more interactions with their teacher to learn English. The students noted that in large classes, those in which teacher-directed lessons were common, they had few experiences of simply talking with a native speaker. A similar concern was reported in another study of secondary ELLs (Poglinco 1997). These students understood that when teachers were able to engage in protracted language events with them they acquired more language. Villar (1999) found that the methods of instructional conversation when combined with the time to engage in expansive lessons served to improve English language acquisition.

Pilgreen and Krashen (1993) found that protracted language events with text alone encouraged increased English skills. After implementing a sustained silent reading program with secondary ELLs, they found that students enjoyed books more, read more, and understood more of what they read. Even protracted language events when discussing mathematics appeared to advance English skills, as shown by Kaplan and Patino (1996). This study examined ELLs' achievement in both mathematics (word-problem solving) and English when teachers guided students through a "linguistic warm-up" to the problem (i.e., encouraging the students to use the terms of the problem in context), a breakdown of the problem into natural grammatical phrases, cooperative problem solving, and the creation of like problems of their own. Finally, Clark (1999) found that teachers who committed to language interactions created a schoolwide environment for language learning. This study implies that protracted language events among teachers results in increased achievement among ELLs.

Returning to the meta-synthetic lens, we find additional theoretical evidence for the category of research cited here. Wells (1986), for instance, is among those who argue that protracted speech acts form the foundation upon which all academic learning is built. He suggested that the "co-construction of meaning" between teacher and students (and among students) must be at the center of all schooling endeavors. His research, among many others (e.g., Tharp & Gallimore 1988), offers evidence that effective instruction among all learners begins with genuine and protracted discourse. ELLs may simply need more.

Multiple representations designed for understanding target language

A third instructional strategy suggested by the meta-synthesis is the heavy reliance on multiple representations in second language instruction. The wholly symbolic nature of all oral languages and most written languages makes linking the meaning of words with some other representation of meaning mandatory for learning. Instructional practices that build on this linkage include the use of

graphic organizers, juxtaposed text and images, multi- and hyper-media, and film (e.g., Tang 1992).

Although not working from the tradition of second language education, Tufte (1990), whose work has become popular among cognitive theorists who study comprehension of scientific concepts, helps us to understand the valuable role visual images can play in learning:

> Visual displays of information encourage a diversity of individual viewer styles and rates of editing, personalizing, reasoning, and understanding. Unlike speech, visual displays are simultaneously a wide-band and a perceiver-controllable channel. (p. 31)

Tufte's point is particularly germane to students learning a second language, for whom rate of delivery, comprehensible input, and self-regulated attention are key factors in developing competence. Qualitative researchers have begun to explore the role of images, most notably among these is Kinsella (1996). This research found that struggling secondary school ELLs engaged in "coping" strategies that included the use of visual aids as "bootstraps" to comprehension, even when the instruction failed (or perhaps even discouraged) the use of images as a tool to aid language learning.

The use of multiple media, primarily video, has not been lost on teachers, many of whom have discovered that video language support is highly effective in promoting language skills (e.g., Clovis 1997). The rationale for combining words and images as aids to comprehension has come largely from Mayer's (1997; Mayer, Heiser, & Lonn 2001) generative theory of multimedia learning. This research tradition, largely based on experimental and quantitative measures, has now been applied to L2 settings (Jones & Plass 2002), where researchers have found that images enhance comprehension. In a qualitative study, Astorga (1999) investigated the role of pictures in promoting second language acquisition and found that pictures illustrating the written narrative facilitated the decoding process for children learning English.

Although the study of visual images such as pictures and word learning is an important part of language teaching, learning a language is clearly more than acquiring the meaning of discrete words. Rhythm, meter, and phonology are also language elements the thoughtful teacher must understand, suggesting that music may play a role in developing L2. McMullen and Saffran (2004) made a compelling argument, suggesting that language and music development are not only similar, but in fact yoked to one another. The quantitative research has shown that music aids language learning (Lowe 1998), and Medina (1990), working in the qualitative tradition, found that music can benefit

second language learners by helping students to learn the rhythm and diction of a new language. Finally, in their ethnography on several kindergarten ELLs, Toohey and Day (1999) found that music "seduced" the learners into language activities, encouraging participation by even the most reticent learners.

The meta-analysis conducted by Moore and Readence (1984) suggests that non-ELL students benefit greatly (effect sizes up to .68) from text accompanied by graphic organizers. We anticipate that qualitative research will soon produce research supporting the general effects of graphic organizers as an effective teaching practice. To date, however, we could not locate such a paper.

The study of multiple representations deserves more attention from the research literature. Media sources that provide an important context for language learning appear to make instruction more effective.

Building on prior knowledge

Nearly every effective lesson design model suggests that one of the first tasks of the teacher in the instructional event is the activation of prior knowledge. The simplicity of the phrase *activate prior knowledge* belies the deep complexity and multiple interpretations the phrase suggests. For one teacher, activating prior knowledge may be simply reminding students of what was covered in yesterday's lesson. For another, it means investigating the most sacred cultural values held by the students and creating lessons incorporating what she has learned. For yet another, it means simply teaching what you know because your own cultural background mirrors the students'. So the operational definition of *activate prior knowledge* is quite indeterminate in the educational community. Yet in spite of this indeterminacy, the rationale runs clear: Teachers must understand what students already know, so that they may build on the knowledge students have. This crucial idea in the formation of any educational experience has been repeated in one form or another since the formal study of education began. Plato, in his "Meno's Paradox," made the problem of prior knowledge the centerpiece of his epistemology. Dewey, in *Experience and Education*, noted "that the beginning of instruction shall be made with the experiences learners already have" (1938:74). Contemporary cognitive psychologists point out the centrality of prior knowledge when they use terms such as *schema*. And each time educators talk of constructivism, they are admitting to the importance of prior knowledge (Windschitl 2002).

The role of prior knowledge and its importance in working with ELLs is the focus of several papers in this review. Most notably, G. E. Garcia (1991) found that prior knowledge played an important role when Latino ELLs were

asked to demonstrate their knowledge on several tests of literacy. The qualitative evidence reported in this study indicated that students' limited background knowledge of the content (knowledge assumed by the teacher to be held by all students) reduced their performance on questions that required use of background knowledge, impacting most their understanding of vocabulary and literal interpretation of the test. Because it was found that students used Spanish to interpret vocabulary and understand English reading passages, it was suggested that literacy in Spanish should not be overlooked when trying to improve English reading comprehension.[4] In another study of Mexican American high school ELLs, Godina (1998) found that teachers who used Mexicano culture were much more successful than those teachers who ignored the cultural and linguistic knowledge altogether.

Hornberger's (1990) work demonstrates how literacy teachers can interpret and use the concept of prior knowledge in diverse ways and contexts. After spending a year in two classrooms, Hornberger noted that in the classroom where several native Spanish speaking children were placed together, the teacher was more likely to use cultural knowledge as prior knowledge in making text comprehensible. In the other classroom, where only a few ELLs of diverse native languages were placed, the teacher used more immediate instances of prior knowledge of which all the students had knowledge (e.g., a story they had read earlier in the school year). In both cases, the teachers' use of prior knowledge created an effective tool for English literacy. Floriani (1994) arrived at a similar finding, pointing out that learners who shared both a local (i.e., socioeconomic, ethnic, and native language) and classroom (i.e., students working at the same table group for the school year) background were more successful in negotiating the meaning of texts than those learners who shared a classroom only. Olmedo (1996) also found strong evidence for the importance of a common context.

Aninao (1993) tested the effectiveness of metacognitive strategies among secondary ELLs. Although metacognitive strategies are not typically considered building on prior knowledge, Aninao's research had the best fit in this category. In a year-long study designed to test the effectiveness of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, each student was instructed in the use of imagery (the use of visualization techniques to help them remember vocabulary words), transfer (the development of semantic connections with their native language), recombination (the use of known words rearranged within sentences), and reciprocal teaching (the use of strategies designed to prepare students to ask questions to assess comprehension, summarize, and clarify). The metacognitive strategies used were self-monitoring and self-evaluation. Students were instructed to ask

themselves the following questions: "What do I already know?", "Am I sure that I know this?", "What do I still need to learn?," "How am I going to learn this?" and "How can I be sure that I have learned this?" By extensive interviewing and classroom observation, Aninao found that students were able to use recombination and imaging effectively, but strategies of cognitive transfer and reciprocal teaching were more difficult. Students were not successful in using the metacognitive strategies of self-evaluation and self-monitoring. It was suggested that metacognitive strategies such as planning, self-monitoring and self-evaluation should be taught before cognitive strategies in order to maximize student achievement. It was also emphasized that because of the complexity of some of the tasks, teachers who use learning strategy training need to be fluent in the student's native language. The overall results of the study were equivocal. The fact that the students were able to use imagery and recombination effectively (while other strategies were less successful) suggests that the metacognitive strategies used in this study are part of a larger effort to connect students to their previous knowledge. Varela (1997) found that learning strategies were beneficial in providing students with the language tools they needed in content classes taught in English. These learning strategies, similar to those studied by Aninao, enhanced performance in English and content courses.

Several of the studies suggested that the students' native language (as a form of prior knowledge) is an important component of English instruction. For instance, Ochoa and Pérez (1995) reported that teachers in schools where ELLs were very successful had sufficient materials in assisting their students in the transition from Spanish to English. This study also notes that the successful schools were those in which teachers understood clearly the transition to English processes salient in US bilingual education. Huang and Chang (1998) found that instruction based on prior knowledge in the form of self-efficacy (confidence in one's capacity to learn) also served to enhance English learning.

Building on students' cultural and linguistic knowledge remains one of education's greatest mysteries. The role of prior knowledge, far from being a specific strategy, is one that will require much more research. Qualitative studies, such as those reviewed here, have begun a line of inquiry that may bring us closer to understanding how effective instructional practices make use of the knowledge students already have.

Corollary category: Structural obstacles to effective instruction

The themes of the qualitative and ethnographic studies included here, at least in this point in their development, tend to draw a particular focus on the struc-

tural educational supports and barriers encountered by ELLs. Many of these studies set out to study classroom practices but also were bound to lay bare the structural elements that *prevented* effective practice. For instance, many studies of ELLs find that their achievement is limited because their teachers are not specifically prepared for working with them. Godina (1998) interviewed a teacher who was quite willing to share her ignorance of instructional practices for language teaching, in spite of teaching many ELLs: "It's really hard for me because I am not trained in ESL. And, it's really frustrating for me since I don't know how to deal with it" (p. 95). This dilemma presents itself as a clear structural barrier rather than the use of an ineffective teaching strategy. This teacher could not implement effective language teaching practices because she had no knowledge of them. This structural barrier could be removed if the school were able to provide training for such teachers.[5]

In addition to unprepared teachers, several studies pointed to inappropriate placement in ESL classes or lower track courses, an uninspired curriculum, a lack of thematic instruction and a general failure in helping ELLs in making personal and cultural connections (e.g., Giacchino-Baker 1992; Godina 1998).

Given the contextual nature of qualitative and ethnographic studies, we were not surprised that the authors chose to point out the lack of preparation among teachers in their studies. Conducting interviews, taking field notes, and engaging in other qualitative strategies provide the researcher access to the greater universe of the learner, and it is sometimes the case that the teachers or features of school hinder learning. Qualitative researchers tend to point these out.

Closing remarks

Qualitative research in education has explored new concepts of effective instruction. Further, it has exposed new relationships among familiar ideas. It has encouraged educators, researchers, and policymakers alike to reconsider some of our common assumptions about second language learning. Listening to the voices of ELLs, teachers, and the community, qualitative studies have encouraged us to pay closer attention to the context and processes of learning while also attending to outcomes. Far removed from the process-product research that once dominated educational research, qualitative studies have, to the lament of some, complicated our views of schooling. But the full realization of qualitative research in the study of effective teaching practice in language education will require more time.

The use of meta-syntheses in education is even more inchoate, and our work here is best considered a first attempt at using the strategies for compiling qualitative works into coherent themes. As such, we recognize several limitations of our study. For example, we remain concerned that our coding schemes and categories would be replicated by other researchers examining the same studies. The choice of external theoretical frames in the development of research themes (Wolcott 1994), in particular, remains a challenge to replication, but we came to recognize that, without such frames, our categories would not have the coherence they do. However, it is easy to imagine that other researchers would select alternative frames and perhaps arrive at different conclusions. These limitations caused us to wonder at times that our meta-syntheses could be distinguished from a simple research narrative. Like many qualitative researchers, we kept in mind the so-called objectivity found in meta-analyses and had doubts about the external validity of our study when compared to compilations of quantitative research. But these are problems that all meta-syntheses in educational research will be required to face, and we anticipate that future work in this area will help forge a more common method for the development of themes, as well as an analog to the effect size we find in traditional meta-analyses. Finally, in spite of our best efforts, we have likely missed studies that should have been included in the meta-synthesis. To the authors of studies we overlooked, we send our apologies and kindly ask for a notice or update of their work.

The themes that we derived, we admit, do not necessarily break new ground in the effective practices realm of second language teaching. For instance, building on prior knowledge is a common practice validated by both quantitative and qualitative research. Nevertheless, we believe that this meta-synthesis has emphasized the key role these practices play in teaching ELLs. On the basis of anecdotal evidence, teachers who read a previous version of our work have reported that the meta-synthesis has given them a tool to promote communicative forms of teaching they favor over the form-based drills promoted by their administration.

While the primary purpose of our meta-synthesis was to identify features of teaching practices for ELLs that have been shown to be effective, a secondary purpose was to explore the potential for qualitative studies to inform such practice. The studies reviewed here found that communitarian teaching practices, protracted language events, using multiple representations designed for teaching new languages, and building on prior knowledge are practices likely to increase learning among ELLs. These practices are less determinate than the instructional methods often uncovered in a quantitative review. Teachers

who wish to adopt these practices will likely find that they must adapt and fit them to their own context and purposes. Some may even encounter an incommensurable gap between their own beliefs about teaching language and these practices. Such adaptations are likely to be a consequence of a meta-synthesis. McCormick, Rodney, and Varcoe (2003) suggested that the results of meta-synthesis, rather than point to clear and unambiguous social and educational practices, will require practitioners to consider their praxis, the terrain between theory and practice but informed by both.

It remains to be seen if practitioners will implement practices revealed in a meta-synthesis with more enthusiasm than those identified in meta-analytic studies. Educational theorists (e.g., Robinson 1998; Winch 2001) are increasingly troubled by the apparent lack of relevance of educational research for practice. Researchers conducting meta-analyses have wondered whether practitioners will trust their work sufficiently to inform classroom practice (Gersten & Baker 1999). This same concern applies to meta-syntheses.

Our review revealed what we believe to be several effective practices based on a limited number of studies. The future of research in effective teaching practices for ELLs may be well represented in the mixed-methods approach taken by Yedlin (2003). This study assessed first-grade ELLs' achievement in English literacy using quantitative measures while using a qualitative, ethnographic approach to understand how the teacher orchestrated an approach to literacy development using multiple, concurrent zones of proximal development and the myriad informal assessments needed to facilitate children's comprehension and language development. The growth of mixed-method studies such as Yedlin's suggests that a new type of research synthesis, neither meta-analysis nor meta-synthesis, but a weaving together of multiple practices, may reveal the overarching strategies needed to improve the academic achievement of ELLs. Some of the new conceptual frameworks and models for incorporating mixed methods hold great promise for the future of educational research (Cresswell 2003; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie 2003).

Finally, given the effective practices we found in this meta-synthesis, what might be the implications for English language teachers and teaching? First, preservice teacher education can help beginning educators to understand the ways in which non directive approaches to teaching (e.g., communitarian practices) foment language development for ELLs. This knowledge may also help beginning teachers overcome their impulse to consider effective instruction as "teacher talk" (Goodlad 1984). Practicing teachers may also enhance their teaching effectiveness by considering how their current practices are corroborated (or contradicted) by the practices we found in this meta-synthesis. If

experienced teachers lack faith in protracted language events, for instance, why do they think this way and what might change their minds?

Conducting this meta-syntheses and sharing our results with other educators has reminded us of the crucial nature of instructional context and the importance of teachers' beliefs and practices, as well as the power of questions and reflection to enhance teaching practice. On the basis of our experiences, we suggest that rather than mandate "proven" practices, meta-syntheses in education should seek to provoke deep reflection and debate. In the main, the goal of the meta-synthesis in education recalls Geertz's (1973) comment on the fruitless search for "truths" in anthropology: "What gets better is the precision with which we vex each other" (p. 29).

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Notes

1. Whereas our search terms did not include *bilingual* or *biliteracy*, we do not want readers to conclude that we are opposed to programs promoting bilingualism. On the contrary, we are very troubled by the English-only movement in the US and have proposed strategies for reestablishing bilingual education in those states where it has been legislatively erased (Téllez, Flinspach, & Waxman 2005). Nevertheless, teaching English is a key goal for ELLs in the U.S.; students who lack strong English skills will struggle, especially when they reach secondary school. We were also concerned that a focus on both L2 (English in our case) and bilingual teaching practices would result in a set of papers too large for a coherent review. Finally, the practices we identified could apply to teaching English in bilingual settings and perhaps be useful in other language teaching contexts.

2. Many classic qualitative studies have been conducted that deal with ELL issues and are not reviewed in this meta-synthesis because they fall outside the scope of what we set out to synthesize. For example, Fillmore's (1982) oft-cited study was out of our date range, as was Duff (2001). Other excellent ELL qualitative studies published between 1990 and 2000 are not about teaching practices but instead focus on peer support (Beaumont 1999), social-

ization (Willett 1995), program quality (Freeman 1996), school policies (Harklau 2000), or teachers and culture (Jimenez & Gersten 1999).

3. Coding was conducted by the researchers; the themes were validated by two second language specialists.

4. Whereas we have not specifically considered the role of L1 development as an instructional practice, some research has shown that L1 competence in reading, in particular, predicts success in L2 literacy (van Gelderen et al. 2004). However, other studies (e.g., Bernhardt & Kamil 1995) attribute L2 reading capacity to a more global metalinguistic capacity. This important debate in the field of bilingual and dual language education is beyond the scope of our chapter, mostly because we consider the development of L1 literacy skills as part of a program rather than a teaching practice.

5. One compelling study demonstrated the importance of an expert teacher in the education of ELLs. Fitzgerald & Noblit (1999) shared a qualitative work written in the "confessional" style of the anthropological literature. Because this chapter was constructed more as personal narrative, choosing not to employ qualitative methods, we did not include it in our meta-synthesis but nevertheless consider it noteworthy for two reasons. First, it showed the importance of a well-qualified teacher for ELLs, one who takes care to document and reflect on student achievement and its relation to instructional practice. Second, it raised issues regarding the criteria for inclusion in a meta-synthesis. Should narratives and confessional accounts, clearly qualitative in nature, be considered scientific, qualitative research?

* Studies included in the meta-synthesis are marked with an asterisk (*).

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