

**INVESTIGATING THE ENGLISH RE/CERTIFICATION JOURNEY FOR
PUERTO RICAN TEACHERS:
LESSONS FROM AN ACCELERATED PROGRAM**

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By:

Fiorelys Mendoza Morales
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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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**Investigating the English Re/certification Journey for Puerto Rican Teachers:
Lessons from an Accelerated Program**

Fiorelys Mendoza Morales
K-12 Bilingual Education Certification,
Universidad Adventista de las Antillas, 2014
Master of Arts in English Education, 2013
University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez
Bachelor of Arts in English Linguistics, 2009
University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez

Approved on April 19, 2024 by the Dissertation Committee:

Kevin S. Carroll, Ph.D.
Dissertation Chairperson

Mirerza González Vélez, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Aníbal Muñoz Claudio, Ed.D.
Committee Member

ABSTRACT

The study investigates the journey of the PRDE's PADE Academy accelerated English teacher preparation program, in preparing special recruitment and permanent PRDE teachers for the English content area re/certification. Through qualitative research using a case study design, the research examines various aspects of the program, including academic offerings, logistics, and participant experiences. Participants enrolled in the PADE I English Academy cohort at UPR-RP were diverse in background and geographic location yet shared a common goal of enhancing their English teaching skills. Data collection methods included surveys, interviews, and coursework analysis, revealing themes such as learner-centered approaches, translanguaging, phonetics, self-reflection in their teaching practice, and interaction with peers. The PADE Academy emerged as a transformative space that enriches participants' personal, academic, and professional development. Post-structuralist principles inherent in the program promoted diverse perspectives, challenged binary oppositions, facilitated transformative learning, and encouraged reflective practice, ultimately fostering dynamic and effective teaching practices for the benefit of teachers participating in the academy and their students alike.

RESUMEN

Esta investigación tiene como objetivo investigar el trayecto de la Academia PADE del PRDE, específicamente su programa acelerado de preparación de maestros contratados bajo reclutamiento especial y con posición permanente para la re/certificación en el área de especialidad de inglés primario (K-6) e inglés secundario (7-12). A través de una investigación cualitativa utilizando un diseño de estudio de caso, la investigación examina varios aspectos del programa, incluidas la oferta académica, la logística y las experiencias de los participantes. Los participantes matriculados en la cohorte de la Academia de Inglés PADE I en UPR-RP eran diversos en trasfondo y ubicación geográfica, pero compartían un objetivo común de mejorar sus destrezas y confianza para enseñar inglés. Los métodos de recopilación de datos incluyeron encuestas, entrevistas y análisis de cursos, revelando temas como enfoques centrados en el estudiante, translenguaje, fonética, autorreflexión en su práctica docente e interacción con los compañeros de la academia. La Academia PADE surgió como un espacio transformador que enriquece el desarrollo personal, académico y profesional de los participantes. Los principios posestructuralistas inherentes al programa promovieron perspectivas diversas, desafiaron oposiciones binarias del lenguaje y la comunicación bilingüe, facilitaron el aprendizaje transformador y fomentaron la práctica reflexiva, fomentando en última instancia prácticas de enseñanza dinámicas y efectivas en beneficio de los maestros participantes en la academia y los estudiantes a los que impactan por igual.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	vii
Dedication	ix
Acknowledgments.....	x
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Problem	2
Purpose	6
Justification	6
Research questions	7
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE	9
Puerto Rico Language Policy	9
Post-War Language Policies	10
PR Contemporary Language Use	14
English Teachers in Puerto Rico	17
Teacher Recertification Program.....	20
PADE Academy for English Teaching Re/Certification.....	22
The Basis of Knowledge within a Postmodern/Poststructuralist Paradigm.....	29
Critical Language Awareness.....	34
Post Structuralism in a Teacher Re/Certification Program	36
Implications for Teacher Certification Programs.....	39
Chapter Summary	41
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY	42
Research Design	44
Research Context.....	45
Participants	50
Data Collection Method	51
Ethical Considerations.....	53
Confidentiality.....	55
Data Analysis	56
Chapter Summary	57
CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS	58
A. Survey.....	60

	vi
B. Interviews and Course Assignments.....	70
Category 1: Learning-centered approach to teaching.....	72
Category 2: PADE staff and faculty support.....	77
Category 3: Self-awareness	82
Category 4: Interactions with peers.....	89
Chapter Summary.....	94
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSIONS & CONCLUSION.....	96
Learner-centered approach.....	97
Relevant material/examples/connections	112
PADE Staff and Faculty Support	115
Professors' accessibility	119
PADE Professors Provide Modeling.....	119
Self- Awareness.....	121
Interactions with Peers	125
Research Questions	130
Pedagogical Implications	144
Limitations.....	144
Suggestions for Future Research.....	147
Concluding Remarks	149
REFERENCES:	152
Appendix A.....	166
Appendix B.....	170
Appendix C.....	178
Appendix D.....	180
Appendix E	181
Appendix F.....	182

LIST OF TABLES

Number	Page
Table 1. PADE English Sequence Across UPR-Campuses	46
Table 2. Participants’ Demographic Self Report	61
Table 3. Participants’ Self-Reported Age Range	61
Table 4. Students’ English Competency Self Appraisal	62
Table 5. Participant’ Self-Reported Academic Degrees	63
Table 6. Current Teaching Level	63
Table 7. Years of Teaching Experience	64
Table 8. Encouraging factors for enrolling in PADE	65
Table 9. Understanding of student population	67
Table 10. Evaluating PADE Academy components	68
Table 11. Survey respondent 2 shares their thoughts on their favorite class	68
Table 12. Respondent 7 pinpoints the elements of their favorite class	69
Table 13. Favorite class develops understanding	69
Table 14. Relevant assignments in PADE course	69
Table 15. Importance of materials linked to Puerto Rico	70
Table 16. Recurrent categories	72
Table 17. Ronnie’s self-assesses her class plans post-PADE	73
Table 18. Amy reflects on teaching practices after PADE	73
Table 19. Aria talks about interdisciplinary approaches to incorporate poetry	74
Table 20. Zepol discusses how to use ‘translanguaging’ for teaching English	75
Table 21. Xavier uses pop culture examples to make learning memorable	76
Table 22. Amy’s EING 4019 reflection “Myself as a Bilingual Reader”	77

Table 23. Aria’s student-centered approaches: translanguaging and culturally relevant content	77
Table 24. Helpfulness of PADE Academy staff	78
Table 25. Alexis discussed PADE staff approachability amid difficulties	78
Table 26. Miss A. talks about the PADE faculty openness to communicate	79
Table 27. Alex talks about highs and lows	80
Table 28. Educational staff and faculty support as key elements for language learning	81
Table 29. Zepol discusses the importance of empowering learners	81
Table 30. Mariam discusses self-awareness of planning short comings	83
Table 31. Aria discusses self-awareness of planning short comings	84
Table 32. Software developer improves English content and pedagogical knowledge through PADE	84
Table 33. Amy learns core concepts to be taught in Elementary English	85
Table 34. Isa feels confident in her lesson plans due to PADE guidance	85
Table 35. Ana did not use books before PADE	86
Table 36. Mariana loses fear of speaking with PADE video assignments	87
Table 37. Ana on how program helped boost her confidence	87
Table 38. Violet discusses how self-awareness led her to improvement	88
Table 39. Xavier re-teaching self-awareness	89
Table 40. Isa reflects on how her interactions with peers enhanced the PADE experience	90
Table 41. Amy on PADE Academy Elementary peer interactions and thrust	91
Table 42. Miss A. on peer interactions	91
Table 43. Violet talks about professionalism of peers	92
Table 44. Zepol on his experience with peers after PADE	92
Table 45. Aria discusses her students’ language perspectives	93

DEDICATION

This dissertation is first and foremost dedicated to God who has guided my path and being my source of strength and inspiration. Thank you, Lord!

To my beloved husband, whose infinite love, encouragement, and firm support have been the foundation of my journey. I am forever grateful for your presence in my life.

To my precious daughter, whose innocence and joy bring light to my darkest days. You remind me of the beautiful miracles that occur within simplicity. You greatly inspire me to strive for excellence in all I do. May you always chase your dreams as forcefully as I hold you in my heart.

This is also dedicated to my dear friends, whose prayers, encouragement, and understanding have sustained me through the challenges of this endeavor. Your loyalty and assurance in my abilities has been a constant source of motivation, and I am profoundly grateful for your presence in my life.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Teachers are one of the most multifaceted individuals in the workforce. Their daily routine is highly subject to change, as they must be widely adaptable to the transformations and needs that arise on a regular school day. However, from kindergarten through high school, one theme remains consistent in all subjects offered at school: the teacher's duty does not end with their school day. Due to the teachers' involvement and continuous responsibility in educating growing people, the formers hold unique responsibilities within our society: 1) as protagonists in the education processes, 2) simultaneous appraisers who evaluate their own performance while in action and, 3) witnesses on the effects of educational policies and processes firsthand.

Every year, roughly 100,000 teachers are hired in the U.S. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), there were approximately 3.3 million teachers in 2017. Without a doubt, teaching is a life-long learning process. It requires college preparation but also personal commitment: there is constant studying, lesson preparation, continuous feedback, faculty contributions, self-reflection, and then, some more professional development on the side. The multiple challenges, continuous expansion, along with the teachers' own personal trials, make the teacher's professional preparation an arduous and constant road. The job is one of high demand, both in the hiring process and in the job responsibility. Likewise, for the educational system administration, the subsequent recruitment of a prepared and energetic workforce that responsibly educates children becomes an unending challenge.

Problem

In 2020, there were approximately 54.6 million students enrolled in public and private schools in the United States (NCES). This number is an indicator of the hefty responsibility withheld by teaching professionals. One could argue that the continuous birthrate declines in the last decades coupled with the Covid-19 lockdown two years ago have been decisive in decisions such as the closing of educational institutions, and the teaching formats, have impacted student enrollment in schools (Bassok and Shapiro, 2021). Nevertheless, the physical distancing brought upon by Covid-19 had teachers piloting remote instruction without a proper introduction to the required computer equipment and software nor technology assisted teaching training prior to the abrupt transition. In fact, many of them took on the task by learning to teach in this new medium, while simultaneously dealing with other pressing situations, such as sickness, taking care of their own children who were also at home, and the overall uncertainty brought upon us by the global pandemic. The unforeseen disruption of traditional classroom and family routines along with other significant factors that have shaped the current workforce is thought to have led 600,000 teachers in the USA public education system to quit between January 2020 and May 2022 (Bureau of Labor Statistics; Mayer, 2022; Lurye 2022; Edelman 2022).

Massive resignation has gravely affected the timely teacher recruitment process during the past years, resulting in a widespread staff shortage to deal with students as the school year begins. Although teacher recruitment has been a pervading challenge throughout the nation, the Great Resignation (Morrison, 2021) has led to a historic teacher shortage of 44% part time or full-time staff in schools (NCES, 2022). Apparently, those professionals who left the education force did it to either pursue another career or to retire early. As of today, there is a 17% job opening for aspiring teachers in the USA. Teacher retention concerns have led to developing

other options for amplifying and securing the teacher force in public school classrooms throughout the nation.

Puerto Rico (PR) has also experienced teacher shortages for subjects yet hiring challenges are more persistent with jobs applicants for English teacher positions, as the English subject has consistently been regarded as one of difficult recruitment (Figueroa Rosa, 2016; *El Nuevo Día*, 2017). English class is taught as a special subject in most public schools across the island given our colonial ties with the USA (Algren de Gutierrez, 1987). Despite the primary language spoken in Puerto Rico continues to be Spanish (Mari and Carroll, 2020), throughout time, the population has seen value in learning a second language (in this case English) for economic advancement (Blau and Dayton, 1997). Ideologies regarding multilingualism have somewhat shifted positively throughout the decades and English is seen less as a linguistic and political threat and more as an asset (Mari and Carroll, 2020). However, the limited spaces for using and practicing the target language have posed, for decades, a drawback for universities seeking to train English individuals that would feel comfortable and confident enough with their English proficiency to get certified and pursue a career as an English teacher in the island.

In general, teacher unions and fellow teachers in the island have recognized the multiple professional, personal, and financial challenges teachers face in undertaking opportunities for professional development and educational progression, particularly when it comes to obtaining additional certifications or a graduate degree. In the past, some even benefitted from programs established upon Law 158, of June 18, 1999, coined as *Ley de Carrera Magisterial* or “Teaching Career Program Law” which allowed teachers to continue their graduate education with the promise of increasing pay as the applicant completes each of the four required stages. However,

the program ceased in 2014, when it stopped paying teachers. Law 9 of March 7, 2022, to push the payment of money indebted to teachers for concept of Carrera Magisterial in the years preceding 2014-2015 (Cybernews Metro, 2022). Although on April 5, 2023, according to Metro Puerto Rico, a source published by the *Metro* newspaper, the current government promised to reimburse teachers who invested in graduate school courses across private and public higher education institutions by reestablishing the Carrera Magisterial retroactive payments and activating it for new applicants through an online platformed enabled exclusively for these purposes.

Geared towards hiring more and better qualified teachers, in 2021, PRDE and the University of Puerto Rico Río Piedras (UPRRP) have established an innovative recertification program called *Profesionalización Acelerada del Departamento de Educación*, or PADE (the acronym stands for “Accelerated Professionalization for PRDE Teachers” in English), along with *Impulso UPR*, which offered PRDE teachers from the Arecibo, Bayamón, Caguas, Mayagüez, Ponce, Humacao, and San Juan the opportunity to amplify their coursework through free professional development courses offered across University of Puerto Rico system and taught by its corresponding professors. These 18 to 21 credit academies not only contributed to the advancement of teachers’ individual professional and personal goals but also sought to allow the university to model and transmit the best and new teaching practices from university educators to K-12 teachers. Offerings impacted more than 1,000 teachers. In general, PADE included 35 curricular sequences such as/but not limited to preschool teacher, elementary education teaching, neuroscience, physical education teacher, among others.

Among the previously offered curricular sequences is the elementary and secondary teaching academies. These are available to teachers interested in obtaining an English elementary

or secondary certification. To obtain the certificate, participating teachers must complete the PADE Academy, and then request a profile revision. After achieving the requirements established by Law 94 of June 21, 1955, the teachers will get an updated certification that will enable them to teach the subject areas for which they completed their corresponding coursework. Although this Academy was designed for teachers who already hold a certification to recertify, many of the participants are PRDE teachers who are not certified in any subject area or people who want to recertify. This creates a challenge given that teachers have no training in the subject area, or they are even working on the bachelor's degree.

The current teacher shortage has pushed PRDE administrators to hire individuals who possess some English proficiency to teach English, while there are also English proficiency shortcomings reported by Puerto Rico's Department of Education students for decades. It becomes crucial to consider an objective assessment of the competence that recently implemented English elementary and secondary training in participants so that these educators can become confident and skillful English teachers. Therefore, the hindrance is whether the PADE English Academy developed teachers who feel confident, knowledgeable, and skillful in establishing methodologies and practices that benefit Puerto Rican multilingual learners in the island's public schools. Although there have been some attempts to implement a recertification program, this is the first time that the UPR creates such a pathway, particularly of such scale designed for in-service teachers as the majority of the UPR's programs for teacher certification are designed for pre-service teachers. Aspects that one can critically evaluate its effectiveness will serve to assist future cohorts and planning managers in the creation of programs that vehemently support participants' learning, thus providing teachers with the tools to withstand the

new challenges of teaching a second language resourcefully and in an innovative modality to the multilingual and multifaceted learners of this new educational era.

Purpose

The content area recertification model offered to PRDE teachers through the PADE Academy has been welcomed with relative enthusiasm given 1) the opportunity to do credited professional development and 2) the widespread teacher shortage, especially in high need subject areas, as is the case of English at both elementary and secondary levels. However, there is a genuine need to examine whether this program, particularly the accelerated English teacher preparation program for elementary and secondary school, is effective for preparing in-service teachers in the English content area. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to inquire how the PADE functions in terms of academic offering, logistics, content, among others. Additionally, how do these aspects and particular considerations identified by the participants contribute to forging a program that consistently assists educators in becoming effective and confident in their English teaching skills.

Justification

The special recruitment processes that have led several willing but uncertified English teachers can be improved with a re/certification program option for such individuals as the model offered by the PRDE's PADE Academy. This academy provided a relatively fast track teacher development program without teachers having to pay for it, while also allowing teachers more flexibility to somewhat change career paths through the completion of 18 credits in coursework for Elementary English PADE and 19 for the Secondary English PADE, respectively, within an 11-month timeframe, to provide immediate amplification of the teaching workforce. One could say that the quality services do serve toward increasing teacher competence and skills throughout

the recertification route. Studies (Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Kraft and Papay, 2014) demonstrate that the stronger a professional development program is, the acuter the instructional competencies, and these consequently impact student outcomes. Therefore, this research project serves to identify exemplary teaching practices or strategies learned or experienced a teacher re/certification program, how the practices learned by the participants and teachers in the program align with expected learning-teaching results. Additionally, the research seeks to establish whether (and how, if affirmative) the academy provides the professional development experiences the PRDE teachers need to enhance their skillset.

Research questions

The questions that guide this research proposal are:

- What personal, academic, or professional factors would the participants describe as significant for participating in the PADE English Academy?
- To what extent do program variables (coursework, the preservice field experience, mentoring support, seminar support, peer support, supervisory support, and the adjustment to teaching) influence teaching efficacy, participant satisfaction, and overall retention?
- How do identified successes and challenges of the PADE Academy play a role in participants' learning of English and language related instructional practices?
- In which ways does the PADE English Academy contribute to helping support English learning in the classrooms? /Demonstrating exemplary English teaching practices for participants in the program?

- In which ways does the PADE academy enrich participants' personal, academic, and professional philosophy?

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

For more than a century, Puerto Rico (PR) has battled with core issues regarding language policy and how these policies have changed and shaped the island. Constant fluctuations in government, including modifications and contradictions to educational policies regarding the language of instruction in public schools have provided an environment where the language used has inevitably been linked to the controversy of the political status (Barreto, 2020). Thus, what seems to be a never-ending debate regarding the future relationship of the island with the USA, be it independence, statehood, or the current status quo, has ultimately impacted educational policy. This chapter will provide an overview of key historical points that have influenced language(s) instruction in PR, the recruitment of English teachers in PRDE, and an explanation of the theoretical underpinnings that guide the study.

Puerto Rico Language Policy

The socio-cultural experience in the early stages of colonization of both Spanish and subsequent US colonization, greatly influenced social changes regarding traditions, culture, and even language. These transformations can still be witnessed and identified daily in the shared interactions among fellow Puerto Ricans.

Puerto Rico was a colony of Spain, but by the end of the 19th century the Spanish American War threatened PR's social and political situation. The war lasted approximately three years but ended with the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1898. According to the agreement, Cuba was given independence, while the Philippines, Guam, and PR were ceded to the US. On October 15, 1898, the US raised the American flag which meant the beginning of a new military government on the island. The US occupied all municipalities in PR and began an

Americanization effort to reform and educate islanders in, including the English language. As stated by Barreto (2020) “Intellectuals responded to Americanization by incorporating language as identity into their nation-building project. Federal officials originally saw assimilation as a means to secure their hold on the island; the rise of nationalism changed that assumption.” (p. 21). As a result of PR being a bounty of war from Spain to the USA, many Americans established communication with some of the locals. English was spoken by a very small percentage of the population. Before the American colonization, Spain, despite more than 400 years of colonization, had sparsely developed a public school system. Illiteracy on the island was extremely high when Puerto Rico was ceded to the United States (Ladd and Rivera Batiz, 2005). There was a frequent and very noteworthy contact between the Spanish and English speakers on the island. After the war, the high illiteracy rate, coupled with the US goal of Americanization, policy makers in Washington D.C. justified the implementation of a public education system that used English as the sole medium of instruction (Algren de Gutierrez, 1987). Among most of the Puerto Ricans who were mostly illiterate, there were a small group of islanders with substantial financial resources who had access to higher education and mastered both languages. Nevertheless, from the moment the Treaty of Paris took place, Puerto Ricans and their culture began what seemed like a political and cultural battle against Americanization (Algren de Gutierrez, 1987).

Post-War Language Policies

The goal of the first Commissioner of Education, General John Eaton, was to create American citizens with English (Algren de Gutierrez, 1987). Since the population was expected to learn English, educators had to be extremely proficient in the target language as well. Eaton resigned after a year, but he led the way for Victor Clark, a supervisor who classified Spanish as

an inferior language and pushed English among the islanders (Pousada, 1999). In 1900, the Foraker Act was put into effect and a civil government was created. What was then known as the Department of Instruction (now known as the Department of Education or PRDE) was established under this law and Martin Brumbaugh became the new Commissioner of Education. Brumbaugh recognized it was virtually impossible to change the vernacular from Spanish to English, especially for children. Therefore, his ideology consisted of continuing the use of Spanish, but keeping English for local and commercial use. The plan to “Americanize” included “the celebration of American holidays, named schools after American patriots, and instituted the raising and salutation of the American flag and the singing of the national anthem in the schools” (Pousada, 1999, p. 38). This decision brought general discomfort in the population, especially among teachers who avidly expressed the unfairness and irrationality behind implementing what seemed to be outside ways. As a result of this institutional decision, teachers created a union. For these reasons, in 1902, The Language Law was endowed, and English held a co-official language status with Spanish (Muñiz-Arguelles, 1988). The Language Law made the island’s governmental policy a “bilingual” one, while providing a solid justification for the use and teaching of English in schools. In 1902, Samuel McCune Lindsay became the commissioner who would oversee the changes enacted. Among his accomplishments were the training of 540 Puerto Rican teachers at Cornell and Harvard University to work with Puerto Rican students. He also founded the University of Puerto Rico at Río Piedras and developed an English test for teachers to determine hiring priorities (Navarro Rivera, 2006). In 1904, Roland Faulkner succeeded him as the Commission of Education and his plan to suppress Spanish completely was put underway immediately.

With the new language policy taking effect, teachers in PR became the focal point for English instruction. To enact the new language policy, mandatory English classes were required for all educators. Aptitude examinations were also established. Even a ten-dollar raise was offered to those members of the faculty who were qualified to teach their respective classes in the English language (Pousada, 1999). The government had the absolute power to suspend teachers from their instructional duties if found unfit for the teaching of classes in English. With their jobs in jeopardy if there was in compliance, teachers were forced to water-down the curriculum for students (Pousada, 1999) as these first ones were unable to transmit the class content in English, either due to lack of training in the target language or language constraints from students. Although at first, everyone was quite calm, by 1911 parents and teachers alike fought against this imposition. In their eyes, this attempt was seen as “cultural colonization” (Pousada, 1999, p. 39).

The decade from 1910 to 1920 brought new changes for education on the island. The recently founded *Puerto Rican Teachers' Association* petitioned Commissioner Edward M. Bainter, the new head of the Commission of Education, to change the policy. The teachers association was pro-vernacular, teachers made a series of demands. The first one was for Spanish to be included as the official language of instruction in first grade, along with courses in Spanish and English until eighth grade. High school was to remain taught in English. In 1913, Puerto Rico's House of Representatives passed a bill to institute Spanish as the main language of instruction for all courses and English was to be taught as a preferred subject. The bill went to the senate, and although the Puerto Rican Senate vetoed the bill, it sent a strong message on language and identity in the island (Pousada, 1999). It was clear that islanders viewed the compulsory use of English as the language to be used in schools as a clear manifestation of US

imperialism and shredding of the traditional social values instilled in the islanders (Algren de Gutierrez, 1987). This also proved how, from early on, the close extent of political reasons guided the educational policies in the island.

In 1915, a new bill presented by Puerto Rico's House of Representatives established the use of Spanish in every school and court. However, the bill was also vetoed and there was general discontent among the population. This caused the recently appointed Commissioner of Education, W.A. Barlow to resign; Paul G. Miller took over the position in 1916. Miller had been a teacher for the Education Department of PR during the American takeover. Given his prior position, he was aware of the needs and concerns of the teaching of English among the faculty, students, and community in general (Pousada, 1999). His ideology focused on having students preserve their native tongue, yet that they should also be given the opportunity to acquire a second language. He believed kids should learn content in Spanish from first to fourth grade. In fifth grade, students were taught in both English and Spanish. From sixth grade on, the schools would follow an English-only policy (Gómez-Tejera and Cruz López as cited in Pousada, 1999). The Teachers' Association, however, wanted Spanish as the sole medium of instruction. The issue resulted in the language policy in PR to become the target of heated debate once again.

Puerto Rican political leaders continued to battle Americanization efforts and particularly the use of English as the medium of instruction until President Franklin Delano Roosevelt appointed José M. Gallardo as Secretary of Education in 1937. The former US president thought all Puerto Ricans should be bilingual. After much deliberation, the resolution was that the main language in elementary schools would be Spanish, yet English would be the main language in

junior and high school. Eventually, the plan backfired, as the Teacher's Association and the US Senate did not approve of the policy. Sometime later, Gallardo resigned, and President Harry Truman appointed Mariano Villaronga as Commissioner of Education in 1946. Villaronga suggested the use of Spanish as the first language for schooling, but English was to be appointed a "preferred" second language (Algren de Gutierrez, 1987). In the end, this idea cost him his position.

Finally in 1948, after the military regime imposed by the US came to an end, Luis Muñoz Marín became the first elected governor of Puerto Rican. Villaronga was reinstated as the Commissioner of Education. Under Villaronga's administration, Spanish was immediately established as the medium of instruction and English as a special subject. This policy is still in place to this day.

PR Contemporary Language Use

Presently, both English and Spanish are co-official languages in Puerto Rico. Given the island's steady relationship with the U.S, English has a noteworthy presence in certain communication forms such as TV, radio stations, commercial signs, and printed media. As a result of this influence, Puerto Ricans tend to combine certain aspects of the English language creating novel linguistic forms (Pérez-Casas, 2016). Spanish and English are meshed in the form of loanwords, anglicisms, and phonological and morphological changes. According to most recent data regarding English language use in PR from the 2017-2021 U.S. Census Bureau Puerto Rico Quick Facts concluded that about half of residents of Puerto Rico speak English, but only 5% speak it at home. Estimates of fluency linger at 20% since 2010. According to the US Census, although the number of Puerto Ricans reported to speak English somewhat increased from the numbers reported in 2010, 16.7% of Puerto Ricans between the ages of 18 and 64 felt

that they communicated “very well” in English. Although onlookers would argue that more Puerto Ricans communicate or attempt to communicate in English, the self-reported data show how only a small percentage of the population feels confident in their accurate ability to articulate in English in spite of the 125 years of colonial status with the US, mandatory English courses imparted daily, and the prevalent influence of English pop culture and mass media (Alvarez, 1999; US Census Puerto Rico Quick Facts).

Researchers such as Zentella (1997) and Algren de Gutierrez (1987), among others, agree that language is intrinsically embedded in the acculturation experience as it transmits values, ideas, and common knowledge. In 1949, educational policies required public schools on the island to provide an English course to their students as part of the requisites from first to twelfth grade, while every other subject is taught in Spanish (Algren de Gutierrez, 1987). And indeed, Spanish is used for most educational and professional duties and English is rarely used daily. Nevertheless, despite of students’ feelings of nervousness caused by fear of being mocked or ridiculed, the influence that English has had in PR is real and visible even in the use or attempts to correctly use English for social media and business signage in the island.

English has positioned itself as a global language and it is highly valued among islanders and often linked with social advancement and success (Blau and Dayton, 1997). It is also greatly associated with the domains of higher education, tourism, business, and technology (Blau and Dayton, 1997). The influence has been so prevailing that sometime after PR’s governmental intent of political “Americanization”, it was met with resistance. Eventually, Spanish was made the language of schooling in public schools, and there were reported declines in public school enrollment. As they go to high school, many students from middle and wealthy classes, exited

and continue to exit the PRDE to go off to private schools. The latter institutions are generally perceived to offer an environment focused on academic development, more safety, less disciplinary issues with students, and due to the emphasis, most of the private schools give to the English language (Ladd and Rivera Batiz, 2005).

Private schools created and have continued to develop private schools with bilingual curricula. Many are described as “bilingual programs”. However, their curricula focuses primarily on English language immersion (Barreto, 2020). To contest that, and attesting to the influence that English has gained across the islanders, the PRDE also developed public regional bilingual schools that are meant to train students in the subject areas of math, science, and language arts in English while teaching Spanish, history, and physical education in Spanish or a combination of both languages. These schools usually follow an application process that includes an entrance exam. Despite these additional language focused school programs, the rate of PR children in private school is significantly higher in PR than that in the US (Ladd and Rivera Batiz, 2005). Mainly because private school education in the island is associated with a better-quality education than that of public school (Mari and Carroll, 2020). Not all private schools on the island are immersion schools. At a minimum, all K-12 schools must offer English as a special subject, like public schools.

The emphasis on the teaching of English and Spanish (bilingualism) is not seen in any other school system in Latin American or European countries (Mari and Carroll, 2020). Individuals nowadays, do see the value of knowing both languages. However, there is a contradiction when observing the educational policies regarding English with the actual use of the English language in Puerto Rico. Apart from instrumental activities, such as the daily 50-minute-long English class, business signage, health-related written diagnosis (CT scans and other

written reports are in English), and content-based courses in college, English is not commonly used for daily activities. Given the lack of real application/need for using the target language on a regular basis, those students who lack intrinsic motivation for learning (Gardner and Lambert, 1959) or who use English to fulfill a foreign language requirement, tend to be less experienced. These hold a spur-of-the-moment attitude that makes it more arduous to withstand the challenges of English communication in academic settings and/or in prolonged social interactions. Some students remain with linguistic gaps in English for their entire twelve years of schooling and bring these insufficiencies to the context of higher education in Puerto Rico where English language courses and English medium courses are the norm and often requirements for college completion.

English Teachers in Puerto Rico

According to Puerto Rico's Department of Education, teachers are expected to promote bilingualism for "students' intellectual enrichment and growth" (Puerto Rico Department of Education, 2016, p. 32). Although Spanish and English bilingualism in Puerto Rico is reportedly increasing, most islanders only use Spanish on a day-to-day basis. Most students do not feel confident in speaking English regularly (Pousada, 2017). This presents a challenge for English teachers in the island since communication apprehension is associated to a decline or overall avoidance of practicing the language in the English classroom (McCroskey, 1983). The linguistic landscape becomes diverse and more complex nowadays given that English could be perceived by some students as a second language (Maldonado, 2015). Although the problem has been recognized by some educators, the issue has not been systematically addressed as a language acquisition policy concern (Pousada, 2017). Language acquisition policies as well as macro and

micro ideologies on the matter have created conflicting situations in the teaching of English, which have become somewhat extensive to the hiring of Puerto Rican teachers to teach English. The lack of confidence when speaking English self-reported by Puerto Ricans on the island has resulted in the English teaching profession to be considered one of “difficult recruitment” throughout K-12 and even in tertiary education across the island. However, some people could argue that the number of monolinguals is decreasing.

Traditionally, becoming a teacher for the PRDE is done through a series of steps delineated by Law 94 of June 21, 1955. The issuer of a teaching certificate is the Department of Education in Puerto Rico. According to Law 94, in order to obtain this certificate, the teacher candidates must have completed a certificate known as *Certificado Negativo de Antecedentes Penales* (negative certificate of penal record) issued by PR’s state police. The applicant must provide evidence of a completed bachelor’s degree from an accredited university with a minimum of 3.00 GPA, along with the required coursework for the type of teaching or academic training. This includes at least 9 credits in the subject area, three credits in history of PR, three for history of the USA, along with a course aimed at the exceptional student population (approximately 21 credits). The candidate must have also completed classroom observations, and a teaching practice 4 hours a day (approximately 300+ hours) for an entire semester. Then, the applicant must take the *Prueba para la Certificación de Maestros* (PCMAS) or “Test for Teachers’ Certification”, which assesses basic knowledge from course subjects, professional competencies regarding the teaching profession, pedagogical foundations, and the analysis of a pedagogical situation. The test arises from the PRDE’s need to systematize the selection criteria, thus certifying awareness of the theoretical underpinnings and applications related to classroom instruction. Applicants are required a score of 89 to pass, and hence solicit

and obtain a regular teaching certificate in PR. For English teachers, there is an additional step. Those who complete the coursework and pass the PCMAS are then summoned to the PRDE headquarters to complete the Oral Proficiency Language Exam before issuing the applicant's regular English teacher certificate. Once all these processes are completed, the applicant goes to into a recruitment list where they are assigned a turn. This turn is like a seniority ranking list, based on GPA, and PCMAS score. Teachers are placed on schools on a yearly basis as job openings become available in the teacher's top three municipalities of their preference.

Many of those applicants who do pursue a teaching degree and are confident bilinguals, are often lured by constant recruitment campaigns offering teaching jobs in school districts across the US where bilingual employees are in high need and starting salaries are often two to three times that of a starting PRDE teacher. Other situations such as employee shortage worldwide occurring after COVID, and massive teacher retirement has propelled the PR government to focus on trying to retain current PRDE teachers. Efforts have included intermittent raises to PRDE teachers' base salary and awarding permanent teaching appointments in hopes that these working conditions will provide certain stability and a competitive salary and encourages educators to remain in the island (Jover, 2023). Another step that PRDE has undergone to address difficult recruitment vacancies is appointing temporary contracts to individuals who do not hold an education degree or a teaching certificate. PRDE has hired the teachers through job fairs and special recruitment processes and there are countless teachers teaching in PRDE who still lack proper credentials. Through this method, candidates are eligible for a job as a PRDE teacher if they hold a bachelor's degree and 18 credits in the subject area,

along with a certificate of good behavior issued by the police, a health certificate, and a permit to work.

Generally, teachers are considered professionals who, once they have received tenure, generally have job security and stability. However, factors such as low economic remuneration, burnout, boredom, or even physical constraints of fulfilling a physically and mentally demanding job for decades, create an additional load for educators in schools (Chang 2009, Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006). Hence these barriers could make them indifferent to pursuing a teaching career. Others realize they would be capable teachers but face many obstacles for paying college studies or dealing with their day-to-day responsibilities along with a full class load. This has led to the development of alternate routes to ease teacher shortages (Pires, 2022), which has changed the composition of the teacher workforce in the USA and throughout the island. The latter has been an opportunity for those transitory teaching candidates who did not pursue an education-related college degree but are teaching in schools, to complete related coursework while working fulltime. Alternative teaching certification programs offer teachers opportunities to diversify their preparation and switch classes without the usual barriers of employment, recertification, and financial debt associated with obtaining new qualifications or transitioning to different teaching specialties.

Teacher Recertification Program

On March 25, 2022, the US Department of Education announced a partnership across states, school districts, and Colleges of Education to address widespread teacher shortages across the nation and lack of prospective candidates (US Department of Education) With this partnership, willing teacher candidates would be able to complete their teaching-related preparation, while simultaneously providing support to students' academic and emotional needs

in schools. The COVID-19 pandemic augmented this situation across school districts. The recertification route has changed the composition of Departments of Education in the USA and even the composition of many Colleges of Education across US universities. Colleges across the nation have engaged in traditional route programs for teachers and alternate route programs to overcome the teacher shortage. These new accelerated programs differ from the traditional teaching route but also from conventional professional development programs as these new programs are created by universities in a liaison with local Department of Education offices to train and/or retrain candidates which hold a minimum of a bachelor's degree. These eligible candidates do not have to stop working to complete an education related training. Participants may complete an expedited teacher preparation program while employed as a public-school educator while holding an interim teacher certification.

Within PRDE, there are two types of teachers: permanent and transitory teachers. Some transitory teachers have a teaching certificate and have not been assigned a permanent school to fulfill their appointments. Transitory teachers may or may not hold a PRDE subject certification but are appointed on a yearly basis to a vacancy within their area. Some transitory teachers fall under the category of special recruits. With a bachelor's degree, candidates may teach certain subjects, including English, which has consistently been a subject of difficult recruitment. For current teachers with permanent or transitory status the PRDE, along with a consortium with the University of Puerto Rico (UPR), developed a teacher academy that presents an alternate professional development route for recertification in the subject that they are teaching (if they do not have any teaching credentials) or in a different subject (if they already possess teaching credentials).

In PR, former PRDE Secretary Eliezer Ramos Parés, and the former UPR Interim President Mayra Olavarría Cruz, informed that regular and transitory teachers from the public education system would have the opportunity to obtain professional development courses with college credits through the launching of the *Profesionalización Acelerada para Docentes del Departamento de Educación* (PADE), along with *Impulso UPR*, in collaboration with the University of Puerto Rico (UPR). According to the article *Secretario de Educación y Presidenta interina de la UPR anuncian matrícula abierta para la profesionalización acelerada en colaboración con la Universidad de Puerto Rico* found on the UPR website, the PADE academy/program offered unique opportunities for teachers in the academic regions of Arecibo, Bayamón, Caguas, Humacao, Mayagüez, San Juan and Ponce.

The academy began its first phase in December 2021, when teachers enrolled. Once enrolled, PRDE teachers were asked to attend a compulsory orientation meeting regarding program requirements in preparation to the beginning of their courses in January of 2022. For the second phase of the program, teachers could select among 96 academic sequences usually ranging from 18 to 21 college credits each. This offer was available for courses in areas such as Spanish, English, math, STEM, labor relations, autism, bilingualism, learning technologies, chemistry, music, linguistics, and entrepreneurship to help teachers advance their professional and personal goals without incurring additional college education-related expenses. The academies differed in their offerings. Teacher participants examined a long list of offerings and choosing the academy that they felt best suited their needs and interests.

PADE Academy for English Teaching Re/Certification

In Puerto Rico, there has been an ongoing and pervasive shift towards multilingualism, characterized by a growing acceptance of English as an essential tool complementing the

Spanish language (Blommaert and Rampton, 2012; Mazak and Carroll, 2017). In contemporary society, English is increasingly perceived as vital for both professional success and social interaction. Governmental institutions, such as the Puerto Rico Department of Education (PRDE), are actively promoting this multilingual shift through educational and professional development initiatives, aimed at assisting teachers in effectively integrating English into their pedagogical practices.

Educators must not only attain proficiency in English but also navigate a spectrum of responsibilities, including acquiring content knowledge, planning lessons, assessing students, fostering collaborative learning, and continuously refining their foundational knowledge. Clark and Lampert's (1986) concept of "teacher thinking" encapsulates this cognitive process, serving as a strategic framework for contemplating classroom dynamics, information assimilation, and informed decision-making, ultimately leading to effective problem-solving. This concept aligns with what Lunenberg and Korthagen (2009) terms "practical wisdom," demonstrating the value of experiential insights garnered through reflection on teaching experiences.

Teacher preparation and recertification programs, such as the *Programa de Profesionalización Acelerada de Docentes del Departamento de Educación* (PADE) in Puerto Rico, cater to diverse individuals who may have transitioned between professions, taken extended breaks from the job market, or pursued higher education in unrelated fields. These programs offer a purpose-driven pathway for individuals seeking to engage in practical pedagogical activities. The emergence of such programs underscores the potential to attract talented individuals who aspire to contribute to their school municipalities or districts. These

individuals, motivated by personal and practical considerations, often view traditional teacher training programs as tedious in terms of practical classroom preparation.

Therefore, the PADE Academy for Elementary and Secondary Education is dedicated to fostering teaching skills and instilling a transformative philosophy among educators as its core mission. A central focus of these programs lies in enhancing English language proficiency and pedagogical competencies that can be effectively applied in the classroom. These goals are achieved through a research-based approach, emphasizing the dissemination of transferable knowledge and skills. Course components include assigned readings, content-driven reflections, and data collection for course-related research purposes. The 18-credit elementary sequence and 19-credit secondary sequence, respectively, encompassed a six-course undergraduate sequence which was conducted over a series of six to seven weeks per class and completed within one year. It included topics such as literacy, reading, linguistics, phonetics of the English language, and pedagogical guidance with a multilingual approach to English education in Puerto Rico.

Furthermore, alternative, fast-track teacher preparation programs in the US, such as *Teach For America*, often target academically accomplished individuals, positioning this approach as a step towards professionalization within the field of education. However, these programs simultaneously pose challenges to professionalization by lacking a substantial focus on pedagogical training, dedicating limited time to teacher preparation, organizing inexperienced personnel in challenging school environments, and adopting inconsistent teaching practices. Also, scripted, and narrowly defined curriculum can undermine the professionalization of teaching by limiting educators' autonomy and preventing them from exercising professional judgment in curricular decision-making, ultimately compromising opportunities for higher-level thinking and learning, creativity, classroom flexibility, and the extent of knowledge acquisition.

Challenges Faced by Non-Native English Teachers

Within the educational landscape of Puerto Rico, and based on my experience as a Puerto Rican English teacher, non-native English teachers face innumerable of obstacles, ranging from linguistic aptitude to cultural nuances and perceptions of their authority in teaching a language that isn't their native tongue. Among these challenges, linguistic proficiency stands out prominently, impacting both self-perception and external evaluations that often lead to our skills and competence being underestimated. These is particularly true for those teachers appointed through special recruitment hiring and which have taken university the 9-credits in English language college courses required by the PRDE, but do not necessarily possess formal English teaching training, and/or experience.

Despite having a solid grasp of spoken English, these appointed teachers often encounter challenges such as pronunciation intricacies, deciphering unfamiliar idiomatic expressions, and navigating the complexities inherent in teaching a second language. Primarily because they lack formal English teaching training, and due to the challenges associated to teaching in a landscape where English is mainly used for academic purposes. And, in contexts besides college or professional careers, it is viewed for some as a completely foreign language. These barriers, either real or perceived, can hinder the teachers' effectiveness in conveying concepts to students, potentially affecting instructional outcomes. Additionally, the teachers may also struggle with self-doubt, inadvertently boycotting their own individual efforts.

Furthermore, the cultural disconnections experienced by us as non-native educators in Puerto Rico add layers of complexity to our pedagogical landscape. Originating from diverse backgrounds and the ambivalent central administration educational framework, which fails to

address whether the English teaching approach should be as a second or foreign language, us teachers deal with divergent English perceptions across various Puerto Rican municipalities, not to mention dissimilarities observed in distinct regions of the United States. Negotiating these, among many other disparities, pose challenges in comprehending cultural norms, expectations, and communication modalities within the classroom, hindering efforts to foster meaningful connections and establish rapport with students.

Combining with these challenges are instances of language bias and perceptions of authority. Us non-native teachers, who have learned English as a second language in an environment where English is hardly used in informal cultural contexts, encounter biases or discriminatory attitudes stemming from our ethnic and/or linguistic backgrounds. Consequent stereotypical presumptions regarding our English proficiency or pedagogical competence establish remarkable barriers to their professional advancement, recognition, and ongoing development. Subsequently, us educators contend with the struggle to affirm authority and generate reliability as language instructors, especially in contexts where native English speakers are favored. The prevalent notion that proficiency in English correlates with a particular way of speaking or with cultural proximity to American norms perpetuates the misconception that native speakers or those immersed in American culture are inherently superior educators, thereby undermining the confidence and effectiveness of their non-native counterparts.

A salient concern pertains to the limited options for professional development available to non-native English teachers. Access to tailored training programs and workshops catering to ESL instructors in the Puerto Rican context is constrained, impeding opportunities for skill refinement, staying up to date with pedagogical innovations, and acquiring pertinent resources and methodologies tailored to the unique demands of their teaching environment and student

demographics. The multifaceted challenges faced by us non-native English teachers in Puerto Rico, developing linguistic proficiency, cultural disparities, biases in language perception, and authority paradigms, highlight the importance for targeted support mechanisms and inclusive pedagogical frameworks tailored to the diverse needs of these PR teachers. Instead of viewing language as a problem, finding ways to address these challenges, and enhancing support for non-native English teachers can significantly contribute to the quality of education in Puerto Rico without diminishing one's capabilities or minimizing our commitment and dedication to the teaching profession.

Theoretical Framework: What is Poststructuralism?

The theoretical framework that guides this research is based in a post-structuralist approach (Morgan 2007, McNamara 2012). Post-structuralism is a term coined to describe a series of intellectual elaborations initiated in France during the 1950's to 1960's that have important implications in English as a Second Language (ESL) learning and teaching. Post-structuralism resists the idea and analysis of human cognition, interaction, culture, and experience as interconnected through rational, centered, and universal structural relations. In this sense, post-structuralism is not in binary opposition to structuralism but rather a social vision resulting from collective representations of the cultural experiences and relations of power over time. Its aim is to foster the multiplicity of meaning, diverse manifestations of creativity and intelligence, and multi- 1) lingual-2) cultural(ism)- through the reassessing of language foundation structures for logically interpreting and contesting the notions of linguistic (in)alterability (Morgan, 2007).

Historically, the nature of the power imbalance interactions has led to a politically and socially charged linguistic turmoil in PR. However, us islanders as language learners and global citizens have managed to position ourselves as role models for active English use and learning. Some, such as I, have attended bilingual schools and others immersion schools, participate in integrative activities where English is a communicative must, or overall, have a friendly disposition towards the language. Although up to this point, governmental efforts to create public policies and programs that aid in the promotion of English inclusion have not necessarily been successful, for us Puerto Ricans, bilingualism holds an economic capital for social advantage that, to some extent, also traces back to the island's sociopolitical context. This linguistic distinctiveness represents our cultural membership and connection to our roots but also our current social and political realities (McNamara 2017).

The post structuralist viewpoint of language(s) as having centered and universal configuration is representative and examined in numerous linguistic settings, especially those where multiple languages interrelate. However, regardless of our educational background as Puerto Ricans and the PR government autonomy, the constant political collision has overwhelmingly distorted Puerto Ricans' view of how exemplary English/Spanish practices must equate perfection to align with an ethnic or linguistic group. This insistence on achieving linguistic and pronunciation perfection carries adverse effects on our language identities, given that we Puerto Ricans tend to compare our English skills with that of our Anglo counterparts (Carroll and Mazak 2017). Power relations and status have predominantly dictated the way in which socio-politically driven linguistic groups interact with one another. The influence embedded in the power dynamics, while subjective and construed, has traditionally portrayed discourses as definite, synchronic, and unquestionable (Morgan 2007, McNamara 2012). Post-

structuralism, with its emphasis on deconstruction and critique of power structures, complements post-colonial perspectives by challenging dominant discourses and hierarchies in education. In teaching recertification programs, post-structuralism encourages us educators to question the authority of canonical knowledge and recognize the plurality of voices and perspectives (Morgan, 2007). It prompts us to deconstruct binary oppositions between colonizer and colonized, center and periphery, and traditional and modern, fostering a more inclusive and equitable approach to education. By engaging with post-structuralist principles, us teachers can promote decolonization views by acknowledging diverse cultural knowledges, challenging hegemonic narratives, and empowering marginalized voices within educational contexts (Kögler, 2011). Thus, post-structuralism offers a valuable theoretical framework for addressing the complexities of post-colonial educational contexts such as those in our island of PR, and promoting transformative pedagogies that aim for social justice and equity.

From a post-structuralist standpoint, language ideologies and representations develop over time, through consensus and lived experiences of its participants. Therefore, in ESL teaching and learning, this perspective urges us educators to acknowledge the diverse linguistic backgrounds and experiences of learners. It emphasizes the importance of understanding language not as a set of rules, but as a dynamic tool for communication and meaning making. Language speakers continuously adjust language structures to meet their specific communication needs.

The Basis of Knowledge within a Postmodern/Poststructuralist Paradigm

From an epistemological stance to postmodern constructivism, knowledge and meaning is created from the interplay between the subject and object: the subject controls the reality of the

object. Constructivism funds knowledge upon the ethics of convergence, democracy, and tolerance. This model poses how reality is not independent of one's own existence but rather a part of the structures that an individual knows. Social constructivism critiques the traditional vision of reality as a mental eye that sees things as they are (Rorty, 1979). The latter classic vision of truth promoted by the Greek affirms determination of archives within the mind as a mirror of the outside world. Philosophers such as Glasersfeld (2007) establish that there is bias for what our mind perceives as "most correct" in our distorted vision of reality, a vision that could relate to any conception of the world, including perceived linguistic structures themselves.

Glasersfeld's (2007) work poses a criticism of traditional epistemology of philosophers by which he states how knowledge presumes the adaptation of our knowledge to "things as they are in an independent outside 'reality'" (p. 76). The constructivism stance negates the traditional doctrine that presupposes that the mind is a passive entity. Mind is a creator and constructor of truth by means of sensorial data. Glasersfeld (2007) expands on this notion of 'sense data' by stating how:

The fact that we can coordinate our own sense data into recurrent structures can never prove that these structures are ontologically real-it only proves that the individual data occur frequently enough in our experience for us to establish 'invariant' co-occurrences (p. 82).

Humans construct objects of experience and project these objects as external independent realities. We all create it by biological, cognitive, and linguistic processes that are very complex and unique. Given that we are the ones who create structures and move along them, Rorty (1979) problematizes the issue from a linguistic stance by reiterating how verbs and nouns are not copies of the reality. The conceptualization of the mind is an issue of isomorphism; we have

assumed that the way to classify language is real and correct yet, everyone has their own linguistic bias embedded within its interpretative communication processes.

Modernists argue that this postmodernist proposition poses a problem against language as the object of knowledge because, despite organisms own construction and deconstruction of their own environment, society cannot withstand its citizens to live under individualistic linguistic bubbles. However, just as it happens with Puerto Rican English variety, “what we know, non-inferentially, is a matter of what we happen to be familiarized with” (Rorty, 1979). The way a society and hence, the educational setting establishes as knowledge correlates to physical, generational, and sociological motives and desires. Because there is no correct linguistic form, as it is one’s personal inability to transcend linguistic, conceptual, and contextual biases limit other individuals to engage in it as a productive activity. This is why it requires that people in democratic societies resort to consensus, or as Habermas (1981) calls it, “communicative rationality” (p. 1-2). The contextual existence is a result of a constructive agreement of the world. However, that constructive agreement must come from a standpoint of servitude. If languages are not treated as living institutions that service citizens, these eventually die.

From a post-structuralism lens, languages are amorphous in nature. Although there are rules established by power entities on the way language(s) should be used, these relations of influence are active and frequently contested by its speakers. In the case of people like me, who happens to be an ESL learner, like many other Puerto Ricans (and consequently Puerto Rican English teacher), we come from diverse linguistic backgrounds (social, educational, and ideological backgrounds) and may be exposed to various accents, and registers of English. Viewing languages as fluid and adaptable enables English educators in Puerto Rico to embrace a

flexible approach to language acquisition, recognizing and appreciating the linguistic diversity among their students, as well as fostering a mindset of lifelong learning for teachers themselves. According to Morgan (2007), Kramersch (2008), and McNamara (2012), language learning is not organized in a lattice pattern. Whenever these discourse constraints inhibit one's ability to express, understand and/or interpret meaning, the learners usually overcome these barriers by using alternative linguistic routes (Canagarajah 2011). Generally, in ESL teaching, educators can emphasize the contextual aspects of language, such as appropriateness, idiomatic expressions, diverse cultural norms, and communicative purpose. However, through the knowledge and usage of the target language arises a "failure of conformity" (McNamara 2012, p. 476). Challenging of the pre-existing ideas of inadaptation in the target language(s) fosters an "emergentism" (Kramersch 2008) which entices its producers to accomplish their intended cultural, social, and conversational goals (Carroll and Mazak, 2017). By engaging ESL learners in authentic language use within meaningful contexts, as educators, we can help them develop not only linguistic proficiency but also pragmatic competence: the ability to use language appropriately in different social situations. This proves to show that linguistic structures do not make the experience possible but rather the opposite. It is an individual's willingness to try and bespeak experiences in different forms and varieties what achieves performance, thus highlighting the importance of context in shaping language use and meaning.

In the case of PR, one could say that is not that we islanders are unskillful in English, but rather that its contextual circumstances have greatly influenced our perceptions and our interaction with both languages. The contention of withholding a second-class American citizenship (Algren de Gutierrez, 1987), and the fact that English has positioned itself as a universal language (Carroll and Mazak, 2017) has aroused a response in us Puerto Ricans where

we have had to reassess the foundations of our linguistic inalterability. Although this does not necessarily mean that all islanders are bilingual, it attests to show that perhaps, there is an occurrence of a post-structural relational shift as to how we Puerto Ricans perceive our bond with English and Spanish as one that is not deemed as mutually exclusive. English is no longer the subtractive force that has come to compete with Spanish, hence causing our culture to become a casualty of the political and language war. I can confirm that during my studies of English at UPR Mayaguez, there has been a noticeable shift in perception among peers. Previously seen as a foreign language detached from our culture, English is now increasingly regarded as a valuable tool for professional advancement and engagement in ongoing global conversations about current events (Blommaert and Rampton 2011, Carroll and Mazak, 2017). It is now seen as a necessary complement that can coexist with Spanish. This affirmation suggests a historical change in the islanders' viewpoint of many islanders from their social and political past to our current reality, which is evident in the massive enrollment in the English Elementary and Secondary PADE re/certification program, respectively.

The Puerto Ricans' post-structuralist outlook also relates to the paradigm of languages as diachronic units. In the island of Puerto Rico there is a dynamic and interactive language learning environment for English. Due to this reality, teachers may create opportunities for collaborative learning, peer interaction, and real-world communication experiences. By engaging in meaningful language activities that reflect the fluidity and complexity of language use, ESL learners can develop their communicative competence holistically, integrating linguistic, sociocultural, and pragmatic aspects of language learning. The connectedness of language as a system of symbols and how linguistic walls or gateways contribute to language

ecology (Kramersch, 2008): its dynamics and performance. And most certainly, how these exchanges have a collateral effect on the social organization, values, and behaviors of any setting, especially multilingual ones (Kramersch 2008; McNamara; 2012; Morgan, 2011). Linguistic drifts, however, are not achieved instantaneously. The communicative interactions that dictate these diverse adaptations result from the ongoing involvement among varied language systems and the people who speak them. Studies such as Kramersch (2008), Morgan (2011), McNamara (2012), and Carroll and Mazak (2017), respectively, prove that this relative linguistic merge is not a current trend or phenomenon but rather, a heuristic and versatile process that reflects how individuals, in this case us Puerto Ricans, use language to negotiate, as opposed to transfer, our identities as social creatures, (aspiring) professionals, *Boricuas*, American citizens, and people of the world.

Critical Language Awareness

One of the most significant claims of post-structuralism relates to how meaning and understanding are open-ended and transposable. The system and the significances pertaining to linguistic structures are founded on interpretative experiences constantly subject to the encoding and deciphering of its counterparts. The process is the essence of the ongoing connection and relationship that exists among the people who communicate within a multilingual hub (Kramersch, 2008; Carroll and Mazak, 2017). Therefore, its malleable and perceptual nature exerts potential effect in its participants. Language can be used to nourish human relations. However, dominance affairs may also emerge from this negotiation of significances. Misinterpretation, bias, and the exertion of group supremacy over others may promote a subordinate/subordinating relationship (McNamara, 2012). This atmosphere of knowledge dominance could certainly inhibit positive target language enrichment.

In the context of PR particularly, the English language was previously used to Americanize Puerto Ricans (Algren de Gutierrez, 1987). Initially, programs that required an English-only policy and the transferring of these communicative requirements into English classrooms result in ineludible fear. Additionally, the sole recognition of the American monolingual native speaker as the appropriate model for communication skills in the language (Morgan, 2007; Canagarajah, 2011) somewhat exacerbate Puerto Ricans' feelings of language inadequacy in using English given that if a person is not fit within these characteristics, they can be subject to marginalization. Speaking from personal experience, in the eyes of some Puerto Ricans, levels of English proficiency correlated/correlates to intelligence. This apparent truth has led to an ingrained intellectual insecurity that basically hinders some islanders in general to use the English language freely. In the past, Puerto Ricans have also constrained in adopting English for communication because Spanish was viewed as the map of our culture (Algren de Gutierrez 1987). Using English, even sporadically, seemed politically charged and suggested treason to our roots. Given our current colonial status, Spanish is indeed a precious emblem which withholds cultural preservation and enhancement of Puerto Rican self-identity as Caribbean Islanders, but also sets tone for a discussion on the ways in which English is approached from an applied linguistics and language-as-a right (Ruiz, 1984) stance: as second language learners, and ineludible American citizens.

Anthropological procedures and social sciences have allowed for the documentation on the use of languages, in this case Spanish and English in PR, to further understand the transformation of the historical communicative arrangement in the island over the course of time (Kramsch, 2008). Although the initial response to the imposition of English was that of

resistance (Algren de Gutierrez, 1987), the revelation and accessibility of diverse cultural and linguistic varieties through the internet, television, and other mediums has sparked integrative motifs to enhance ones intellectual and language perspectives. Global citizenship enabled by the means of social media, cable television, and the internet in general, individuals are exposed to the complexity of linguistic weaving. Comprehensible input through multiple channels becomes a means which provides valuable linguistic information that not only fosters the exposure, questioning, and enhancement of varied linguistic alignments but also provide an open space for users to create and exhibit their own displays of language knowledge. Through (un)conscious post structuralist mentality, this practice, that is now much more inescapable due to technological openness, has somewhat appeased some of linguistic and ideological constraints as to what/who/how Puerto Ricans prescribe and ascribe as knowing English (Carroll and Mazak 2017) thus making it a part rather than a substitute of their daily communicative practices, therefore, rejecting the hegemonic grammatical, social, and political structures that these represent. Moving towards accepting diverse standards of knowledge is potentially the starting point to designing language policies that buildup our strengths, previous knowledge, and language repertoires to further foster multilingualism in our communities. However, this effort should not be seen merely as a way for PR academic institutions to trigger a higher development of fluent communication skills both in English and Spanish in its student population but, also using this realization strategically to close gaps of inequality.

Post Structuralism in a Teacher Re/Certification Program

Poststructuralist perspectives shed light on how teachers with non-standard accents navigate power dynamics within the broader educational system, influencing pedagogical practices and institutional norms. Humes and Bryce (2003) state how, “immersion in problems

identified by educational practitioners in a wide range of contexts; professional dialogue with stakeholders from within and beyond the world of education; and involvement in political processes that serve to challenge the dominant configurations of knowledge, power and discourse.” (p. 185). Poststructuralism highlights accents as sites of power negotiation and resistance, challenging dominant ideologies of linguistic superiority. Teachers with non-standard accents may face challenges in gaining credibility and authority within the educational system, as their linguistic variations are often stigmatized or devalued. This can impact their professional advancement, opportunities for leadership roles, and interactions with colleagues, administrators, and students.

Poststructuralism also recognizes the potential for resistance and subversion among teachers with non-standard accents, who may reclaim agency by celebrating linguistic diversity and challenging hegemonic language ideologies. These educators, such as myself, can disrupt normative notions of linguistic competence and advocate for inclusive pedagogies that validate diverse linguistic identities. By embracing their accents as a source of cultural pride and resilience, teachers can challenge the linguistic hegemony inherent in the educational system and promote social justice, equity, and awareness of equal preparedness and competency.

Viewing this teacher re/certification program through a poststructuralist-informed approach entails a revolutionary pedagogical practice by foregrounding critical reflection on language use, promoting inclusive teaching strategies, and fostering a classroom environment that values diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The approach focuses on a re/certification program that deconstructs language norms but that also the program would encourage teachers to deconstruct “language as a problem” normative language ideologies and

challenge essentialist notions of linguistic superiority such as the popular slogan “Idioma defectuoso, pensamiento defectuoso” (Defective language, defective thought). However, Peters (2005) affirms, “Cultures overlap geographically; they are mutually defined through complex historical patterns of historical interaction, and they are continuously transformed in interaction with other cultures (p. 443).” Through readings, discussions, and reflective exercises, educators interrogate how language shapes power dynamics, social hierarchies, and identity formation within educational contexts. Additionally, a program such as PADE encourages teachers (and myself as an English teacher and a PADE co-coordinator) to engage in critical analysis of language hierarchies and linguistic biases that marginalize non-standard accents, and linguistic variations. By examining the sociohistorical contexts that shape language norms, all educators involved in the academy would develop a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between language, culture, and power.

Coming from the first public bilingual school established in 1995 on the west side of Puerto Rico, I can attest to how a post structuralist approach to teaching works. My teachers were Puerto Rican bilingual educators who received students from all municipalities from the west and even from the south. The school allowed for elementary school kids to enroll in a public school with highly qualified teachers at a time where English immersion schools was rare (due to lack of teachers) and inaccessible. My teachers would integrate culturally sustaining practices into their teaching, acknowledging the rich linguistic and cultural resources that students brought to the classroom, and allowing Spanish among peers because almost no student came from English speaking backgrounds (the school opened in mid-September and classes in PR begin in August). Bringing these same experiences I had into a teaching re/certification academy such as PADE, would encourage a responsive pedagogy that focuses on inclusive

practices, emphasizing the importance of linguistically relevant pedagogy, which recognizes and values students' diverse language backgrounds and experiences. Teachers would be encouraged to scaffold instruction, provide linguistic supports, and create inclusive learning environments that affirm students' linguistic identities and foster language development. The re/certification program would cultivate a classroom environment that celebrates linguistic diversity as a strength rather than a deficit. Teachers would model linguistic acceptance and appreciation, creating opportunities for students to share their linguistic repertoires and learn from each other's language practices. By incorporating culturally relevant texts, experiences, and perspectives into the curriculum, teachers would validate students' lived experiences and promote cultural pride and resilience.

In essence, viewing the PADE Academy structure through a poststructuralist-informed lens would instill and empower PRDE educators to critically examine their language ideologies and that of their students and their families. It would also encourage an embrace of linguistic diversity and foster learning environments that affirm students' language identities and promote unbiased educational outcomes. By centering the principles of social justice and cultural responsiveness, such a program would lay the foundation for transformative pedagogical practices that honors the students' culture, and promotes linguistic and cultural empowerment for effective target language learning.

Implications for Teacher Certification Programs

The implications of a post structuralist framework in a teacher re/certification program such as PADE entails the integration of critical pedagogy, multilingual education strategies, and culturally responsive teaching practices. Some of these involve interrogating the idea of a

standard or correct form of language, and assumptions of language proficiency. Language proficiency is often measured against monolingual standards, which may privilege certain linguistic forms and/or cultural backgrounds over others. Canagarajah (2011) suggests, “There are good reasons why we should develop teaching practices from the strategies learners themselves use. (p. 415).” Challenging assumptions recognizes the value of multilingual and translingual practices for students to acquire learning. This also includes acknowledging the linguistic resources and cultural capital that individuals bring to their language learning contexts.

Another implication of post structuralism in a re/certification program is the implementation of a reflective pedagogy approach which aims to develop learners' critical consciousness, or their ability to critically analyze and question social, political, and economic structures. This involves helping learners recognize and challenge systems of oppression, inequality, and injustice in society through dialogue and collaboration. Rather than adopting teacher centered model of education where knowledge is deposited into passive learners, reflective pedagogy among educators promotes interactive, participatory learning environments where learners are actively engaged in co-constructing knowledge with their educators (Canagarajah, 2011). We must assess our learning as ESL learners to reflect on the practices that work or disservice students in the classroom.

In this sense, a post-structuralist view aims to empower learners to become active agents in shaping knowledge through authenticity and self-awareness. This involves fostering learners' sense of agency, self-efficacy, and responsibility for their own education and for effecting positive social change, while promoting authentic learning experiences that connect classroom learning to real-world issues and contexts. Incorporating relevant, meaningful content that reflects learners' lived experiences encourages critical reflection and action. Therefore, the

learners are encouraged to critically reflect on their own assumptions, beliefs, and experiences, and to take action to effect positive social change based on their newly found understanding.

A post structuralist gains importance in the way professional development opportunities are thought of. Programs should focus on supporting teachers in exploring their students' linguistic identities, understanding the power dynamics of language in education, and developing pedagogical approaches that are responsive to the diverse needs of their students. In this sense, a framework that aids in weaving together poststructuralist theory with the lived experiences of Puerto Rican English teachers both in the PADE Academy and their experiences teaching in their English classrooms may offer insightful perspectives on the role of teacher re/certification programs in either perpetuating or challenging existing power structures and linguistic hierarchies within education. Additionally, it highlights how teacher re/certification programs can be aimed to not only update teachers' knowledge and skills but also to encourage a deeper, transformative impact on their professional identities and practices. These approaches acknowledge the complexity of teaching as a profession and the critical role of teachers as reflective, transformative practitioners in linguistically diverse educational settings.

Chapter Summary

This chapter focuses on the socio-historical factors that have influenced Puerto Rico's language use throughout the decades. Language is intrinsically embedded in the acculturation experience as it transmits values, ideas, and common knowledge. Although Spanish and English bilingualism in Puerto Rico is reportedly increasing, most islanders only use Spanish on a day-to-day basis. Many students do not feel confident in speaking English regularly, except for those whose motivation is intrinsic (Pousada, 2017). This presents a challenge for English teachers in

the island since communication apprehension. The growing demand for bilingual education and the resulting teacher shortage have prompted colleges nationwide to develop alternative route programs. These accelerated programs target individuals with at least a bachelor's degree who aspire to a teaching career or wish to switch teaching subjects. For instance, the PADE academy focuses on elementary and secondary education, emphasizing the development of teaching skills.

This research draws upon a post-structuralist framework to explore how language shapes educational practices, policies, and student identities. By encouraging current and future English teachers to critically analyze educational discourse, it aims to foster a deeper understanding of how language influences perceptions of students, their learning, and teaching approaches. The goal is to develop, implement, and evaluate teacher re/certification programs that are not only informative and skill-based but also transformative and reflective, promoting holistic educator development.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to identify factors that impacted effectiveness and success in the PADE Academy in terms of its offering, logistics, course content, among other aspects, and how these contribute to the preparation of skillful and confident English teachers. This chapter focuses on the methodology, which encompasses the set of procedures and rules that guided the research and helped answer the research questions. This chapter is organized in the following manner: 1) discussion of the methodological approach, 2) description of research design, 3) description of participants, 4) data collection methods, 5) analysis, and 4) ethical aspects to avoid research positionality.

Qualitative Research Approach

The approach used for this study is qualitative research. Its focus is on exploring ideas gathered in non-numerical data for creating a hypothesis. According to Creswell and Poth (2016), qualitative research relates to "... the use of interpretative theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem." The qualitative account incorporates the voices of the participants along with the inductive reasoning from the researcher to establish recurrent themes. The goal is to contribute to the body of research or establish change.

A particular aspect of qualitative research is that it is used when an issue must be explored. Therefore, one turns to the population or voices thus minimizing the power relationships that are usually embedded in the researcher/participant dynamics. Also, qualitative studies help in the understanding of context and particularities of the situation and participants in question. Overall, qualitative research seeks to present a holistic, complex picture, is conducted

in the natural setting where the situation happens and focuses on participants' perspectives and the meanings given to a specific experience.

Research Design

This research study followed a case study design. In a case study, the researcher aims to grasp a deep understanding of a single case or an issue or problem through a comprehensive illustration from the participants' voices (Creswell and Poth, 2016). Therefore, the case study might either be the object of a study and/or the product of an analysis. In a case study, the specific case is identified for further description and analysis. Usually, the cases are recent so that the information is not disconnected or adrift in time.

Another key aspect of case studies is that they are bounded. There are parameters to be established by specific dates, times, or spaces where the case takes place. The intent of conducting a case study is to understand the case: its issues, problems, and concerns. According to Stake (1995) there are three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective case study. The intrinsic case study is used to illustrate a unique case, situation, or program. The instrumental case study is used to understand specific issues relating through a series of cases to understand a specific problem. For instrumental case studies, the researcher focuses on an issue or concern and then selects ways to illustrate the issue. Finally, in collective case studies, the researcher selects one issue or concern, but multiple case studies are used to illustrate the issue. This is a tendency in intrinsic case studies.

The procedure for case study is defined by specific parameters. The case study design is appropriate when identifying a case that holds specific considerations and the study aims to provide a deep understanding of the case(s) presented. Next, it is important to establish the intent of the case study and the type of case. In this instance, the case study design is appropriate as it

focuses on the English PADE academy at the UPR Río Piedras campus, which focuses on a specific core issue within an educational program: aspects of effectiveness and areas of improvement. Then, one must devise instruments conducive to an intrinsic issue which includes several individuals in a program, and the array of opportunities that lead to purposeful sampling. This last concept will be further discussed in the ‘Data Collection Methods and Procedure’ section.

Research Context

The PADE Academy was an accelerated program aimed toward PRDE teachers who wanted to get certified in the subject area they are currently working at or teachers who cared to add an additional certification to their academic preparation. The academy resulted from a liaison among the University of Puerto Rico (UPR), PR’s public tertiary institution and the PRDE. PADE programs focused on different subject areas were spread around the UPR campuses across the island. The courses ranged from (list the subjects).

The first and second phase of the PADE Academy took place in different UPR campuses across the island: Aguadilla, Arecibo, Bayamón, Carolina, Cayey, Humacao, Mayaguez, Ponce, Medical Sciences Campus, and Río Piedras, respectively. The courses ranged from secretarial sciences, entrepreneurship, STEM academy, school social worker, afro descendance, human rights, among others (<https://impulso.upr.edu/catalogo.php>). As for the educational areas related to English teaching for elementary and secondary students that taught concurrent to this sequence in the Río Piedras campus were as follows:

Table 1: PADE English Sequence Across UPR-Campuses

UPR- campus	Recertification focus	Credits	Modality
Aguadilla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary (K-6) English Teacher • Secondary English Teacher 	18	online
Arecibo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary (K-6) English Teacher 	18	online
Cayey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary (K-6) English Teacher • Secondary English Teacher 	18	face-to-face
Humacao	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary (K-6) English Teacher 	18	online
Ponce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary (K-6) English Teacher 	18	hybrid
Río Piedras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary (K-6) English Teacher • Secondary English Teacher 	18 19	online

At the UPR Río Piedras, these PADE courses were administered by the *División de Educación Continua y Estudios Profesionales* (DECEP) from the UPRRP. This department (which literally translates to ‘Division for Continuous Education and Professional Studies’ in English) has provided services to the university and the community since 1957 by supporting education through professional trades. Courses and academic activities offered through the DECEP are typically geared to young adults, students, professionals, governmental agencies, the private sector, and all organizations who need to train their personnel and develop their knowledge on any given area. Therefore, this division oversaw the development of the academic offering for the PADE courses. The division worked with PRDE and appointed coordinators for the multiple sequences. In the case of PADE for English teachers, the DECEP appointed Dr. Kevin Carroll as main coordinator and I, Prof. Fiorelys Mendoza as co-coordinator.

The academy itself encompassed an 18-credit course sequence for Elementary English and a 19-credit course sequence for Secondary English, which were established by the Puerto Rico Department of Education (PRDE) as prerequisites for English teacher certification. Each course was delivered by a distinct college professor, with classes held twice a week and complemented by weekly asynchronous assignments due every Saturday evening. Synchronous meetings were conducted through Microsoft Teams, while assigned asynchronous coursework and readings were disseminated via the Moodle platform. Facilitators were assigned to each class to streamline communication and support students throughout the learning process.

Dr. Kevin Carroll took the initiative to create two distinct WhatsApp groups, one for Elementary and another for Secondary PADE. These groups comprised the academy's staff, students, professors, and facilitators. Upon the conclusion of each course, Dr. Carroll updated the group composition by removing the previous professor and facilitator and adding the incoming faculty member. This platform facilitated seamless communication, allowing students to pose questions or seek assistance with technical difficulties. They could reach out to the professor, course facilitator, or coordinators, who were readily available to provide guidance and support through WhatsApp messages.

All the participants enrolled in PADE were PRDE teachers, therefore, eligible to enroll in the professionalization academy. The participants took six courses over the period of 11 months. Each course lasted 6-7 weeks. The PADE Elementary course sequence consisted of 18 university credits. The courses for PADE Elementary were: 1) EING 4016: Literature for Children, 2) EING 4047: Teaching English Grammar to Spanish Speakers, 3) EING4018: Linguistics and the Teaching of Reading, 4) INGL3227: The Phonetics and Phonemic of the

English Language; 5) EING4045: Teaching Writing in English as a Second Language; 6) EING4019: Literacy Instruction for Elementary School ESL Learners. The PADE Secondary course sequence consisted of 19 university credits.

The courses for PADE Secondary (7th to 12th grade) were: 1) EING 4045: Teaching Writing in English as a Second Language; 2) INGL 4206: Grammar of Modern English; 3) EING 4005: Literature of Adolescents; 4) EING 4018: Linguistics and the Teaching of Reading; 5) INGL 3227: The Phonetics and the Phonemics of the English Language; 6) EING 4020: Methodology of English as a Second Language Secondary Level.

Research Site

The research site for this investigation presented unique characteristics, particularly in its modality. The University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras (UPR Rio Piedras), served as the one of the host institutions for the second phase of the PADE sequence. However, the conventional in-person interaction typically associated with academic settings was particularly absent. Instead, the entirety of the course interactions happened within a virtual environment.

The primary medium for class meetings was Microsoft Teams, a digital platform facilitating remote communication through video-conferencing calls. This virtual space was utilized consistently throughout the academic year, replacing traditional face-to-face classroom interactions. Instructional sessions convened within this online domain twice weekly, establishing a regular, though virtual, meeting place for participants. Furthermore, within the Teams platform, faculty integrated the use of breakout rooms within the Teams environment. Breakout rooms in online education served multiple purposes, enhancing the experience by providing opportunities for interaction, collaboration, and deeper engagement. These smaller, separate virtual spaces, are featured in online meeting platforms like the one used by the PADE

Academy (Microsoft Teams), allows the professor to divide a large group of students into smaller groups for various activities. The key purposes of breakout rooms in online teaching for building a learning community, focused discussion, fostering collaborative learning, among other benefits.

For asynchronous work and pre-class readings were available via Moodle, an online learning management system, augmented the interactive capacity of the program. Besides structuring readings and weekly course content, the platform allowed for the use of Moodle forums. These provided a structured chance for asynchronous discussions, further enriching the learning experience beyond the scheduled virtual meetings.

In addition to the structured class meetings on Microsoft Teams, the program participants engaged in complementary communication through a designated official WhatsApp group created by Dr. Kevin Carroll (coordinator). WhatsApp is a freeware, cross-platform, centralized instant messaging, which allows users to send text, voice messages and video messages, make voice and video calls, and share images, documents, user locations, and other content. This digital channel served as a connection for announcements and inquiries, augmenting the primary communication platform. It provided a more immediate and informal mode of interaction, facilitating a continuous exchange of information and feedback among participants, faculty, administrators, and course aids.

The site's distinctive virtual format represents a significant variation from traditional academic environments, offering understandings into the changing landscape of higher education, particularly in the context of professional development programs like PADE. Although there was no face-to-face joining through the yearlong program, these digital spaces

allowed for more focused and close group discussions, fostering collaborative learning and peer-to-peer engagement. The reliance on and continuous integration of various digital communication tools emphasize the program's adaptability and innovative approach to fostering educational commitment in a remote setting. As the PADE co-coordinator, I had access to all academy related documents: the Moodle courses, participant assignments, WhatsApp groups, and the OneDrive administrative folders.

Participants

The participants were enrolled in the 2022 PADE I English Academy cohort at UPR-RP. These participants entered the program after the PRDE sent a call for enrollment to all teachers in their system. All individuals' backgrounds were varied and their geographic location on the island was equally diverse as well. Some who enrolled in the PADE sequence were currently certified teachers in subject areas other than English but wanted to receive certification as English teachers after taking the courses. Others were temporary English teachers hired through special recruitment. All participants were hired by the PRDE during that academic year. Below is an overview of the PADE participants who took part in the interview portion of the study:

- **Zepol:** A UPR Modern Languages major who currently serves PRDE as a special education teacher for secondary school students. Enrolled in PADE Secondary.
- **Violet:** A PRDE drama teacher to secondary school students. Holds a non-certified master's degree in English as a Second Language. Enrolled in PADE Secondary.
- **Xavier:** Software developer college graduate. Currently a secondary English teacher. Enrolled in PADE Secondary.
- **Miss A.:** Completed a bachelor's in English elementary but currently teaches English secondary. Enrolled in PADE Secondary.

- **Ronnie:** A communications major from the UPR-Río Piedras. Currently a middle school English teacher hired through special recruitment. Enrolled in PADE Secondary.
- **Mariam:** An elementary education teacher. Currently working as an English elementary teacher. Enrolled in PADE Elementary.
- **Amy:** An elementary school teacher working as an elementary English teacher. Enrolled in PADE Elementary.
- **Alexis:** Political sciences major at the UPR-Río Piedras. Holds PhD credits. Fulfilled the required English credits established by PRDE as a special recruitment. Enrolled in PADE Secondary.
- **Aria:** Special education teacher who is currently teaching English elementary. Enrolled in PADE Elementary.
- **Ana:** Elementary school teacher who is currently teaching English elementary. Enrolled in PADE Elementary.
- **Mariana:** Elementary school teaching currently teaching elementary school (all classes except English). Enrolled in PADE Elementary.

Data Collection Method

The next step was approval from the *Comité Institucional para la Protección de los Seres Humanos en la Investigación* (CIPSHI) or “Institutional Committee for the Protection of Human Beings in Research” (Appendix A). This study obtained approval as I was proposing to use data for an ongoing study regarding teachers’ views on teaching practices. After IRB approval, there was call for participants who would voluntarily like to participate in survey, and a focal group to discuss their experiences in the PADE Academy after the last PADE course. The process

entailed inviting participants to the focus groups or individual interviews, whichever they preferred. The process was voluntary.

Given how time sensitive it was to collect data, after the last class, a group announcement was made in the PADE Elementary and PADE Secondary WhatsApp groups. WhatsApp is a freeware, cross-platform, centralized instant messaging, which allows users to send text, voice messages and video messages, make voice and video calls, and share images, documents, user locations, and other content. The platform was used to communicate with participants on how they would like to participate in a survey and focal group to share about their experiences in the PADE Academy. Participants were given the link to the survey and were asked to respond in a public or private message via WhatsApp if they were available and are willing to participate in one of three to five focus group meetings or an individual interviews via Microsoft Teams, whichever option they preferred. Teams is a business communication platform developed by Microsoft, as part of the Microsoft 365 which offers a workspace chat and videoconferencing, file storage and application integration. Once participants willingly accepted on the most feasible date for them, each were required to sign an online consent in Microsoft Forms (a Microsoft application for conducting surveys) prior to the focus group or interview, whichever the participant preferred. Ultimately, none of the teachers desired to partake in the focus groups. When approached individually, all volunteers expressed their desire to schedule one-on-one interviews. Participants did not volunteer at once. Participants were assigned a date once they contacted me expressing interest to participate in the study.

On the day of the interview, before starting the questioning, the participant logged in to the Teams meeting, and was given the consent form link again. I read the consent form aloud and there was a brief discussion of all the topics regarding participation. Each participant was

reminded that their involvement in the study was voluntary. Once the consent form was signed, I corroborated that the participant's signature was registered in the Microsoft Forms platform. Only then, the interview would officially begin. The focus groups and/or interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Participants were given a pseudonym, and all direct identifiers were removed from the transcription. Follow up might be given to the participants during three months after the transcription of the interview to clarify participant's answers due to clarity or technical issues.

Along with the interviews/focus groups and survey, the study included the analysis of the following participant assignments: EING 4016 (assignment: Making Connections), EING 4045 (assignment: Home Language survey: Essay on writing experience), EING 4018 (assignment: Roadmap to literacy), EING 4019, EING 4020 (assignment: Digital portfolio via Weebly), EING 4020 (assignment: Myself as a Bilingual Reader and English Teacher). Assignments were not evaluated in quantitative terms or based on the grade obtained. The purpose was to scan for recurrent themes under a qualitative lens that would allow for an evaluation and understanding of program effectiveness, participants' introspection of their personal growth, and professional development, prior, during and after completing the program.

Ethical Considerations

a. Research Positionality

As the PADE co-coordinator who supported PADE faculty and participants, and as a successive researcher, I had complete access to documents, participants, and platforms; it entailed an insider's perspective. This means that I had a deeper understanding of the context and dynamics of the research setting and was constantly communicating with the participants within

the duties of my roles and tasks to fulfill the goals of the program and the retention objectives for participants, prior to scheduling any interviews for this study. While my positionality provided rich insights and depth to the research, it could have led to potential biases or assumptions taken for granted because of the familiarity with the subject matter. The contact I had makes it imperative to consider how this access shaped the research narrative, what documents were prioritized, and how they were interpreted. It also led to reflecting on the responsibility that arises with such contact, including issues of confidentiality, representation, and the potential for selective interpretation of data both during the collection of information, during the transcription process, and in the final process of analysis.

Acting as both a coordinator and researcher allowed me to interact with participants in various dimensions. This dual role enabled me to see different facets of participants' experiences and struggles, offering insights that might have remained unseen to someone engaged in a single role. My unique position facilitated a deeper empathy and connection with PADE participants. By being closely involved in the logistics of the program and the emotional aspects of the teachers' journey through constant contact, I was able to understand not just the surface-level struggles but also the greater, often silent challenges they faced. This empathy is crucial in qualitative research, where understanding the nuances of human experience is key to interpreting data accurately and sensitively.

Additionally, my role as a co-coordinator played a significant role in building trust and rapport with participants. This trust, which was cultivated over time, allowed participants to be honest and share more of their experiences and thoughts, leading to richer data collection as a researcher. The close communication rooted in my role helped alleviate potential power imbalances and made participants feel more comfortable and understood. Also, my continuous

and multidimensional engagement with participants allowed me to witness their growth and changes over time. This perspective is invaluable in research contexts such as this one, where understanding the impact of interventions on participating teachers was and continues to be critical to their experiences.

It is noteworthy to mention that I did not start collecting data until after the PADE Academy had ended. No assignment from other classes had been revised nor interviews had taken place. Although I did engage in communication with the participants, this was done for retention and outreach purposes and not to collect information for the study. Also, after conducting the interviews and downloading all identified coursework, I triangulated the information and verified findings by revisiting all data sets twice to identify and confirm recurrent themes within the interviews and assignments.

Confidentiality

To avoid research bias in grading and bias in data collection, the call for participants was scheduled after the PADE sequence was completed. Therefore, there was no effect on their ultimate outcome or grades in the course sequence. Participation in the interviews/focus groups, however, possessed the risk that participants might share information from the focal group. Participants were to be encouraged to maintain all information confidential. Additionally, everyone was given a pseudonym in the transcript and the researcher eliminated direct identifiers. Ultimately, none of the participants agreed to do a focal group. All of them decided to schedule individual interviews. Therefore, 12 different interviews were scheduled throughout the course of the data collecting sequence, one for each participant. The satisfaction survey administered prior to the interviews/focus groups was anonymous. The survey was done via

Microsoft Forms and it did not collect personally identifying information. This includes names, email addresses, IP addresses, photos, videos, or physical characteristics.

Data Analysis

The methodological framework for this study was substantiated in a comprehensive qualitative analysis. The process began with the prerequisite that participants had to have completed the survey. Moreover, the interviews conducted were accompanied by careful transcription processes. Furthermore, course assignments from teachers who participated in the interview phase were thoroughly gathered and analyzed. Following this initial data collection phase, all pertinent documents were uploaded to *Dedoose*, a modern yet user friendly web-based analytical tool designed to facilitate the interactive visualization of data, regardless of its quantitative or qualitative nature. This platform is particularly good at assisting researchers to precisely identify, categorize, and combine quotes and information according to predefined thematic categories.

The analytical approach implemented in this study was clearly qualitative, avoiding any quantitative evaluation of assignments based on the grades awarded. Instead, the focus was directly on identifying and interpreting recurrent themes through a qualitative lens. This approach was instrumental in evaluating the efficacy of the program under inquiry, while also offering insights into participants' self-reflection on their personal and professional growth, both prior to and after their program participation.

Document analysis was conducted with the aim of selecting recurrent, overarching themes. This process was repeated twice to ensure analytical rigor. Initially, the data endured preliminary coding, which served as a foundation to a more attentive analysis of emergent

themes. This subsequent analysis was vital in determining the convergence of specific terms, concluding in the formation of final categorizations.

Upon the end of data collection, participants were presented with the opportunity to enter a raffle, with the opportunity of being one of four recipients of a \$25 Amazon gift card. The winners of this raffle were subsequently announced within the PADE WhatsApp groups, adding an element of participant engagement to the research process.

Chapter Summary

This chapter focuses on the methodological aspects of this study. It is a qualitative case study focused on the characteristics of PADE and its areas of improvement in the development of English teachers for PRDE schools. The participants are PRDE teachers enrolled in the English Elementary and English Secondary PADE sequences at the UPR Río Piedras, respectively, during January 2022- December 2022. This study stems from the need to explore what was done in the PADE Academy and has been used for the purpose of this dissertation. Given the fact that the information is time sensitive, and the study had CIPSHI approval, the interviews have already started by the time this proposal was drafted.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

The study at hand explores an innovative model of teacher professional development, specifically an accelerated professionalization program tailored for current PRDE teachers who aspire to be English educators. This program, characterized by its intensive nature, aims to endow educators with an advanced array of skills and knowledge within a compressed timeframe. The focal point of this research is the PADE Academy, an initiative that covered 11 months, beginning in late January 2022, and concluding in December of the same year. The subsequent year witnessed participants participating in a reflective exercise, pivotal to this study, to articulate their experiences and determine the program's influence on their personal and professional advancement.

To research deeper into the impact of the program's various components on the participants, the study was guided by five research questions. These questions were instrumental in directing the gathering and analysis of information, thus facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the program's effectiveness in enhancing participants' teaching efficacy, perceived program satisfaction, and participants' retention of content and pedagogical knowledge. These were:

- What personal, academic, or professional factors would the participants describe as significant for participating in the PADE English Academy?
- To what extent do program variables (coursework, the preservice field experience, mentoring support, seminar support, peer support, supervisory support, and the adjustment to teaching) influence teaching efficacy, participant satisfaction, and overall retention?

- How do identified successes and challenges of the PADE Academy play a role in participants' learning of English and language related instructional practices?
- In which ways does the PADE English Academy contribute to helping support English learning in the classrooms? /Demonstrating exemplary English teaching practices for participants in the program?
- In which ways does the PADE academy enrich participants' personal, academic, and professional philosophy?

The results presented are gathered from the three data collection methods employed in the two-year long case study with teachers who participated in the PADE Academy at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus. The first section of the chapter discusses the categorical results found in the surveys, which entails the techniques identified by students as the most useful information about courses, comments, among others. The second major section presents participants' most salient teaching tactics, support, and efficacy seen the PADE Academy. To facilitate the reading of this section, the results of the most relevant items in the questionnaires are presented first, to then address the most salient themes found in the individual interviews along with the recurrent themes that converged in the course assignments. The curricular assignments within the program provide insightful narratives that capture the participants' firsthand journey through two distinct yet interconnected phases of their educational trajectory. Firstly, these narratives reflect upon their foundational learning experiences during their formative academic years. Secondly, they offer a reflective examination of their continual educational development as part of their engagement with the PADE Academy, thus serving as a testament to their development as lifelong learners.

Survey

The participant survey (Appendix B) served a pivotal component in the educational landscape of the PADE Academy and this research study. A student self-proficiency report is not merely a record of self-perceptions; but rather, it is a dynamic reflection of a learner's journey toward mastery and personal growth. This short, 31-item survey served as the basis to understanding participants in their educational chronicles, reflection on their strengths, areas for improvement, and the strategies that propel their learning forward. As we explore the significance of this survey, one may conclude the potential for these assessments to foster a culture of accountability, self-directed learning, and a nuanced understanding of individual learning styles.

The survey, which was distributed a month and a half after the one-year program had ended, serves as the basis for the rest of the sections discussed in this chapter. By answering the survey titled, *Factores de Éxito en PADE*. Although the title of the instrument is in Spanish, all questions were written in English. The link to the Microsoft Forms was sent through the still existing PADE Whatsapp group. This instrument served not only as an opportunity for self-reported information about their communication skills in English, but also allowing participants to anonymously express their satisfaction in the program, rate self-assess feelings of confidence and English teaching preparedness after experiencing the program, evaluate the difficulty of courses, and even pinpoint which were their favorite and least favorite courses of the sequence.

Sociodemographic information about enrollment

The first few questions of the survey were focused on student sociodemographic information. Biological, social, and professional aspects contribute significantly to an individual's learning process. These factors interact in complex ways to shape cognitive

development, learning styles, and educational experiences. Below is the gender of participants who ultimately remained in PADE and decided to participate in the survey. The PADE Academy confirmed a total enrolment of 47 teachers; 30 enrolled in PADE Elementary (K-6), and 17 enrolled in PADE Secondary (7th-12th grade). Ultimately, of the 31 participants who answered the survey, 20 of them were enrolled in PADE Elementary (K-6th) and 11 participants in PADE Secondary.

Table 2. Participants' Demographic Self Report

Gender	Number	Percentage
Female	24	77%
Male	7	23%

Age also plays a significant role in shaping social aspects, influencing how individuals interact, form relationships, and navigate social structures. Various developmental stages bring distinct social challenges and opportunities. Below is the age range of participants who ultimately remained in PADE and decided to participate in the survey.

Table 3. Participants' Self-Reported Age Range

Age Range	Number	Percentage
18-25 years	1	3%
26-30 years	8	26%
30-40 years	11	35%
41-50 years	8	26%
50 or more years	3	10%

Participants were also asked to self-report English competencies as a simple reflective evaluation of their use and skillfulness in the English language across the various domains. These questions covered areas such as reading, speaking, listening, and writing. The purpose was for declaring the participant's strengths, and areas of improvement in relation to their peers, which were their skills benchmark within this learning community.

Table 4. Students' English Competency Self Appraisal

Domain	About the same	Lower	More advanced
How does your English proficiency compare to your peers in PADE with regards to SPEAKING?	17 (55%)	2 (6%)	12 (39%)
How does your English proficiency compare to your peers in PADE with regards to WRITING?	18 (58%)	1 (3%)	12 (39%)
How does your English proficiency compare to your peers in PADE with regards to LISTENING?	17 (55%)	1 (3%)	13 (42%)
How does your English proficiency compare to your peers in PADE with regards to READING?	19 (61%)	1 (3%)	11 (35%)

As can be observed in the previous table, only 1-2 students reported their communication abilities in English as "lower" than their peers; one being the predominant report for aspects such as writing, listening, and reading. Most students self-reported their communication abilities in their second language were "about the same" or "more advanced"; the numbers reflect contrast in each category. In fact, the highest score was given to self-report on how students' read in English. Almost all of them evaluated their performance as "about the same" as their peers. The next question asked, "How does your English proficiency compare to your peers in PADE with regards to WRITING?" with 58% of the participants stating that they do so "about the same" as

their peers. As seen in the table, most participants felt that their skills matched or surpassed that of their classmates during the PADE sequence.

The 7th item of the survey asked participants to inform of the highest academic degree they had earned. Understanding the educational background serves as a reference point for measuring participants' growth and achievements during the certification program.

Table 5. Participant' Self-Reported Academic Degrees

Highest Degree Earned	Number	Percentage
Bachelor's degree	19	61%
Bachelor's degree with master's credits	4	13%
Master's degree	1	3%
Master's degree with doctoral credits	1	3%
Doctoral degree	1	3%
Post-doctoral degree	0	0%

On the 8th item, participants were asked to share the current level they are working with. Participants shared the following information about their current teaching assignment at the time:

Table 6. Current Teaching Level

Currently teaching the following level	Number	Percentage
Preschool	0	0%
Lower Elementary (K-3 rd)	10	32%
Upper Elementary (4 th - 6 th)	11	35%
Middle School (7 th -9 th)	2	2%
High School (10 th to 12 th)	8	26%

The 9th item on the survey asked participants to self-report all their years of experience as teachers, including that in the private or public sector, without considering the time it took them to fulfill their teaching practicum.

Table 7. Years of Teaching Experience

Currently teaching the following level	Number	Percentage
1-5 years	16	52 %
6-10 years	9	29%
11-15 years	1	3%
16-20 years	4	13%
21-25 years	1	3%
26-30+ years	0	0%

Most of the participants had been teaching for 5 years or less. The second highest response was for 9 participants who reported to have been teaching for 6-10 years. Interestingly, survey item 13 asked participants, “How did you receive your current teaching position?” Out of the 31 respondents, 32% reported to have received their current position through certification and testing; 68% of survey respondents reported to have received their current teaching position through a special recruitment process.

Another salient item in the *Factores de Éxito de PADE* survey was the source of motivation for participant’s enrollment in the academy. Participants were asked, “Were you encouraged by anyone else to enroll in PADE?”, to which they answered the following:

Table 8. Encouraging factors for enrolling in PADE

Encouragement factors	Number	Percentage
Yes, my supervisor.	4	13%
Yes, my peers	6	19%
Yes, my family.	0	0%
No. I decided to participate on my own.	22	69%

Interestingly, most of the participants were hired through special recruitment process due to a lack certified English teachers in their respective districts. Under normal circumstances, these individuals would not be currently teaching in PRDE or in their assigned classrooms given the lack of credits, experience, or both. Participants may have voluntarily enrolled in this program for various reasons, driven by personal and professional motivations. However, understanding that they were hired to teach temporarily, with the expectation that they would gain necessary certifications to change their hiring status. Providing this opportunity for free routes to certification and recertification was the goal of the PADE program for PRDE. The fact that most participants acknowledged ‘self-motivation’ as the source for pursuing the certification process, could be interpreted as how participants in the PADE Academy: had a motivation for learning, were seeking career advancement, were motivated for staying current, wanted to obtain teaching credentials, and/or were seeking performance improvement.

PADE Academy Participant Satisfaction, Confidence, and Relevance

From questions 19 on, participants were asked to discuss participants' perception of the PADE Academy satisfaction, among other related aspects. When asked, "[a]s a participant of PADE, how satisfied are you with your experience in courses taken thus far?" Twenty-five out of 31 participants (81%) responded to be 'extremely satisfied,' and 9% reported to be "somewhat satisfied. No one reported to feel, "not too satisfied" or "totally unsatisfied," In fact, teachers were asked, "Considering your academic experience in PADE, would you recommend it to a colleague?" 87% responded "most likely", 9.68% of participants responded with 'likely" and 3.23% (one out of thirty-one) responded 'maybe'. The fact that a significant majority (81%) of participants reported being "extremely satisfied" with their experience in the PADE Academy courses indicates a high level of satisfaction and approval of the program. This is a strong endorsement of the quality and relevance of the courses offered. Additionally, the willingness of teachers to recommend the program (87% responded "most likely" to recommend it) is a critical indicator of the program's perceived value. Recommendations from peers are often considered more trustworthy than other forms of advertising or promotion.

Another relevant question is item 20: "At this point in the course sequence, how confident are you in your ability to implement the concepts about English education in your own setting? If you do not currently teach English at your school, answer this question assuming you were transferred to an English teaching position." In this question, 48% participants responded, "Extremely confident", 48% responded "confident", and 3.23% responded, "Not too confident, but I could do it." The responses to question 20 suggest that 96.77% of participants feel confident about implementing the concepts learned in their own settings. This is crucial for any educational program, as the goal is the practical application of learned skills and knowledge.

Question 21 asked teachers, “At this point in the PADE Academy sequence, how would you rate your preparedness to teach English in a school (to plan, create, incorporate, and implement activities that meet the English education expectations and area standards)?” Overall, 80.6% of participants reported to feel ‘extremely prepared’, while the other 19.35% reported to feel somewhat prepared. None of them reported to feel even slightly unprepared. The responses to question 21 highlight that nearly all participants feel prepared to teach English, with 80.6% feeling "extremely prepared". This indicates that the program is successful in equipping teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to meet educational standards in English teaching.

Items 22 and 23 asked participants about the importance of using relevant content in the English classroom, and about the understanding of students’ social context for learning. Here are the teachers’ responses:

Table 9: Understanding of student population

Question	Extremely significant	Somewhat significant	Slightly significant	Insignificant
How significant do you believe culturally relevant material is for students’ learning of English?	84%	12.9%	3.23%	0
How significant is a students’ social context while learning English in Puerto Rico?	90%	9.68%	0	0

Another aspect worthy of highlighting is the level of satisfaction for the different areas of the PADE Academy, including program organization, professors’ knowledge about topics, grade keeping, academic support, course content, assessment, asynchronous work, weekly online classes, class hours (length), class schedule (Mondays and Thursdays), length of classes (6 weeks), length of PADE (11 months), and Moodle. Although most participants reported to feel

‘extremely satisfied’ or ‘satisfied’ with PADE components, the three areas that were significantly rated as ‘extremely satisfied’ and ‘satisfied’ were the following:

Table 10: Evaluating PADE Academy components.

Rating participants’ satisfaction in various areas	Extremely satisfied	Satisfied
Professors’ knowledge about topics	80.6%	19.4%
Course content	61.3%	35.5%
Program organization	58.1%	41.9%

As for the courses: students mentioned the following about their favorite classes and why. Some of the most specific responses were selected. The first one relates to one of the courses for PADE Elementary. The professor asked them how they were. She assessed and graded in a timely manner, demonstrating overall classroom management while connecting with her students. Here is the extract shared by survey respondent #2.

Table 11: Survey respondent 2 shares their thoughts on their favorite class

Favorite class-response 2	The EING 4018 course professor- She kept you up all the time. She was worried about our highs and lows. The grades were always on time. Her discussion was pertinent all the time. She knew everything and was confident. She made me felt important. In the asynchronous work, she commented. She gave feedback that help me improved. I learned a lot with her class. ¹
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For respondent 7, the most important aspect was the relevance of the content, and entertainment. Although being captivating is not essential for a class, there are benefits of incorporating elements of enjoyment and active engagement to classes. According to the participant, the

¹ The survey responses integrated into the text closely resemble the originals but have been revised for clearer syntax and to safeguard the anonymity of PADE faculty members.

professor who taught EING 4047 was able to balance relevance of content with an element that kept the respondent engaged.

Table 12: Respondent 7 pinpoints the elements of their favorite class

Favorite class-response 7	My favorite class was the grammar class because of its professor. She kept the class entertaining and assigned us relevant reading and work.
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Respondent 8 talked about the EING 4047 and again mentioned aspects of awareness and relevance of content targeting the target students.

Table 13: Favorite class develops understanding.

Favorite class-response 8	EING 4047 because it helped understand the purpose of creating assessment correctly and [made the class] relevant to our students.
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Respondent 13 talked about their favorite class and was extremely happy with all the courses.

However, the participant did talk about assignments that were relevant and could connect to the classroom activities.

Table 14: Relevant assignments in PADE course

Favorite class-response 13	All the courses were excellent. So, I can't point out a favorite. All the professors were excellent as well. Something I can recall that really impacted my life as a professional was the course ENG 4018. I learned how language integrates in our culture. The linguistic landscape assignment was very interesting and fun because I had to visit parts of my community. The assignment was a challenge but very rewarding. I could see different ways the English language is integrated in Puerto Rico even though we speak Spanish. I really liked the assignment.
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This participant appreciated how some of the course content was relevant to Puerto Ricans.

Table 15: Importance of materials linked to Puerto Rico

Favorite class-response 19	“EING 4018- In all courses, most of the academic readings were related to the United States educational setting. In this course [EING4018] the children’s books presented and the discussion were somehow linked to <i>puertorriqueños</i> (Puerto Ricans) in the <i>diáspora</i> .”
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The forthcoming section discusses the outcome of the interviews and designated class assignments, which complement aspects of the 31-item participant survey. Each category and specific examples demonstrate the extent to which the survey, interviews, and coursework which aim to offer an understanding of the program’s impact, by corroborating the findings through a triangulation of varied sources of information.

Interviews and Course Assignments

This study allowed me to gain insight into the transformative impact this PADE Academy has on the teachers and their students, thus transforming the educational ecosystem. Throughout my experience as co-coordinator and professor of one of the courses in the PADE Academy and subsequent individual time with program participants to conduct the individual interviews, I was able to witness the variety of experiences that the participants dealt with and how they allowed effective acquisition of the course content and clearer understanding of the topics posed, thus resulting in a better educational attainment and more self-assured teachers in the classroom.

Participants engaged in a semi-structured interview (Appendix C) that lasted approximately 1.5 to 2 hours where they were inquired about distinctive curricular and operational aspects of the PADE Academy, along with aspects related to their teaching practices. However, the incorporation of some class assignments served to comprehensively explore the

interrelation of interviews to class assignments as to how these contribute to the participants' developing literacy, as students and teachers. Along with the interviews, the assignments reviewed were the following: EING 4019 assignment: Myself as a Bilingual Reader and English Teacher (PADE Elementary), EING 4045 assignment: My Experience as a Writer and Teaching Writing (PADE Secondary), EING 4018 assignment: Roadmap to Literacy (PADE Secondary), and EING 4020: Teaching Philosophy (PADE Secondary).

Upon detailed examination of the extensive dataset, encompassing 451 pages and amounting to a total of 151,642 words during three different instances, I finally engaged in a thorough thematic analysis, leading to the identification and definition of various themes. Notably, the most prominent categories emerging from the interview data were: 1) Learning-Centered Approaches to Teaching, 2) Support from PADE Staff and Faculty, 3) Self-Awareness, and 4) Peer Interactions. Presented below is a representation that catalogues these recurrent themes identified in both the interviews and class assignments, accompanied by their respective descriptors.

Table 16: Recurrent categories

Recurrent categories	Definition
Learning-centered approach to teaching	Instruction of teaching strategies centered on the needs, interests, experiences, and active involvement of students. Effective learning involves adapting content knowledge, learning centered resources such as multimedia, tailoring the learning experience with tools such as translanguaging, phonetic awareness, relevant examples, awarding flexibility and/or extra support, among other teaching practices used purposefully to meet the learning goals, needs of diverse students, adapting to students' language proficiency cultural backgrounds, and learning styles.
PADE staff and faculty support	Staff who develops coursework that is relevant, engaging, and aligned with the needs and goals of the teachers. It also entails providing constructive feedback to help improve skills and knowledge of the participants and offer academic and emotional support to teachers who may feel stress or face challenges during the program.
Self- awareness	Realistic recognition and understanding of one's own strengths, shortcomings, and areas of improvement in teaching.
Interaction with peers	Teachers recognize specific areas where students are meeting desired educational outcomes or performance standards and setting objectives, interventions, and monitoring progress to address areas that are not being met.

Category 1: Learning-centered approach to teaching

Teaching practices refers to the methods, strategies, and techniques that educators use to facilitate learning and engage students in the classroom. These practices encompass a wide range of activities and decisions made by teachers to manage the day-to-day classroom take and responsibilities, which may include effectively conveying information, foster understanding of content/activities, and promote student development. Effectively applying a positive classroom environment along with clear expectations in the lessons also falls under a stance of constant learning centered approach to teaching (Brown, 2003; Wright, 2011; Weimer, 2013), as the teacher is consciously maintaining a more positive and supportive environment to obtain better results. Another aspect that encompasses the learning centered approach to teaching relates to

areas of curriculum and assessment. Effective alignment ensures that what is taught, how it's taught, and how it's assessed are in harmony, leading to a teaching practice that feels more successful and fulfilling for the teacher. Table 9 also shows Ronnie, a teacher who admits that PADE has made her self-assess what is the teaching goal and how she will achieve it.

Table 17: Ronnie's self-assesses her class plans post-PADE

Background information:	There was a discussion on how PADE changed the way her classes were structured. Ronnie-PADE Secondary
Interview dialogue:	The objectives helped me very much to be clear, to be specific, to not overdo the planning. Because the reality is if we all were to plan just so that the [school] principal can see that we're doing a lot, it is not helpful. We're not being effective in the classroom. Being specific in the planning helped me very much. I'm very aware of my objective. When I go to the paper and I see it on my desk, I go back to it and I say, "I'm not doing what I'm what I was supposed to do in the beginning", and I go back.

Amy also reflected on how PADE helped her improve her teaching practices. Prior to PADE, she focused on writing on the board. Now, she reported the addition of a variety of activities to comply with learning objectives, but also to make students feel excited about learning.

Table 18: Amy reflected on teaching practices after PADE.

Background information:	Amy reflected on how her teaching is more centered in students' interests
Interview dialogue:	Este programa [PADE] me ha cambiado. Yo antes no hacía juegos, antes yo casi no cantaba. Ahora los nenes hasta se emocionan me dicen: "Misi, cuando vamos a cantar las canciones? Misi, cuando vamos a jugar? Hace tiempo que no jugamos. I tried to do one or two games per week con el tema de las classes. Todos los días por la mañana cantamos de rutina. <i>This program [PADE] has changed me. Before, I did not do games, and I hardly sang. Now my kids even get excited and tell me, "Ms., when are we going to sing songs? Ms. when are we going to play? It has been a while since we play. I try to do like a one or two games per week with the class topics. We sing routinely."</i>

Aria shared how what she learned in PADE allowed her to use interdisciplinary, interesting, and relevant class activities to integrate poetry in reading comprehension for students. In the interview she shared her thoughts.

Table 19: Aria talks about interdisciplinary approaches to incorporate poetry.

Background information:	Activities that have improved the teaching of concepts: Aria- PADE Elementary
Interview dialogue:	Well. OK, let me show you something I learned: the Diamante poem. That is an acrostic. Esto yo lo aprendí (this I learned) in one reading that I did for one of the classes. How can you integrate poetry in reading comprehension? Using reading comprehension in poetry. And I did music, poem, [then] music, and poem. You know, it's things that I learned through the PADE program.

Translanguaging refers to the dynamic and fluid use of multiple languages in communication (Mazak and Carroll, 2017). It goes beyond the boundaries of separate language systems, acknowledging the integrated linguistic practices of bilingual speakers. Based on the interviews, teachers identified translanguaging as a valuable strategy to enhance communication and understanding, and building confidence and engagement, supporting the needs of diverse learners, and improving learning outcomes. Some students do not need translanguaging given their advanced competency of the English language, yet Zepol does identified how, in his classroom, it helped those who are developing proficiency and confidence in using the target language.

Table 20: Zepol discusses how to use ‘translanguaging’ for teaching English.

Background information:	Discussing ‘translanguaging’ for in the English classroom Zepol – PADE Secondary
Interview dialogue:	Well, I always thought that it's gonna be like a helping tool[translanguaging]. That is not a Spanish class. If you transform it in your in Spanish, then it's in Spanish class and nobody is allowed to just hand me something in Spanish. You need to at least try. Show me one word in English that you tried, that you used your translator and your dictionary. So, it's not negotiable. If you want to show me a Spanish paper, that's not going to happen. But I do adjust the level according to the knowledge. Some students thrive in the English language, so I don't have to use translanguaging there, or if I use it, it's just for 1,2, 3 little words, right? They don't even use it. They don't even like to use it because they know that they don't require it. But for other students, this is the first time that they are in contact with the English language, or they just arrive to Puerto Rico. So, I must change, or adapt what I'm teaching based on what they do have, because I can't just throw them lesson #3 or lesson #4. So that'll be this: a respect for the English language in my classroom.

Throughout the progression of the interviews, educators expressed various instances where pedagogical examples were aligned with aspects of Puerto Rican culture, tailored to the specific age groups of their students, or connected to other academic subjects that the students might have previously encountered. This section delineates a particular instance where the educator skillfully established these connections for the students, thus integrating the concept of translanguaging to enhance the learning experience, emphasizing the approach embraced by teachers in contextualizing the curriculum to resonate with their students' backgrounds and educational trajectories.

Table 21: Xavier uses pop culture examples to make learning memorable.

Background information:	Theoretical concepts applied to planning lessons: Yadiel
Interview dialogue:	My students are from special education; I have a lot of students with a lot of learning disabilities, right. So, what I do is I start speaking English. But then, I assessed the room and I read the room. When I see that ellos se me pierden y los síntomas de sus condiciones empiezan a... Por ejemplo, deficit de atención y veo que se me van (they get lost and the symptoms of their condition start... what I do is I use example where I insert Spanish and English together. For example, if I teach verbs, I put a sentence about Bad Bunny.

An additional excerpt, pertinent to the exploration of student-centered pedagogical methodologies, is from a participant named Amy. This extract originates from an assignment titled 'Myself as a Bilingual Reader,' completed for the course EING 4019. Within this narrative, Amy described her experiences of disorientation and mechanical learning processes encountered during her English language learning process in the classroom. Despite deriving enjoyment from engaging with English media, such as films and music for integrative purposes, she recounted a sense of inadequacy that pervaded her academic journey, extending through her university years. Drawing from these personal educational experiences, Amy critically reflected upon her pedagogical objectives. She now envisions her teaching methodology as one that is not only dynamic in its linguistic application but also in the selection of activities. Her aim is to cultivate an interactive and enjoyable learning environment, thus instilling the educational experience with both fun and substantive meaning for her students.

Table 22: Amy’s EING 4019 reflection “Myself as a Bilingual Reader”

Amy PADE Elementary	<p>“With my childhood struggles I know that my children could feel the same way too. That showed me I can be flexible and let them be. I choose shorts stories with pictures in case they don’t understand, they still can comprehend what’s going on in the story. It is so important to me that my students understand my lessons and I don’t what the language to be a big trouble. I try to build a bridge between both idioms for the learners to understand and to practice what they know. No matter if it’s little or much.”</p> <p>“This type of experience has made a change of strategies for me and other teachers. We can work with changing our methods, but we cannot force our students to do something inside the classroom. That’s when I run out of ideas. I used to look for dynamics on the internet to engage my learners’ attention and to get them to complete my fun and practical lesson.”</p>
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The second excerpt derives from Aria’s reflective piece for EING 4019. In this assignment, Aria articulated her pedagogical strategy of employing translanguaging and incorporating culturally relevant materials. This approach is designed to resonate with students experiencing difficulties in comprehending English, aiming to present the content in an engaging and relatable fashion.

Table 23: Aria’s student-centered approaches

Aria PADE Elementary	<p>Surprisingly, they start reading aloud, part in Spanish and part in English, about the story of The Golden Coqui. A 100 percent activity that they loved and learned. It is hard to teach how to read because they are learning to listen and speak English first. I teach them to love English. I teach them to have fun and belong. It is imperative to me to get the same result that I just got when I was little. I want to be the teacher to be remembered, the teacher who woke up enthusiasm for English class.</p>
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Category 2: PADE staff and faculty support

Having both, a supporting administrative staff, and knowledgeable, accessible professors, is essential in an accelerated education program such as PADE. The human resources employed in the program provided practical lessons along with guidance, mentorship, resources, and a

conducive learning environment to help teachers succeed academically and professionally, while also empowering the teachers. Additional aspects besides preparedness of professors and practicability of lessons were also technical and/or content related support from PADE staff, and overall understanding of participants' trials and situations, both personal and social. One situation that impacted the teachers' experienced while in PADE was the aftermath of hurricane Fiona, which occurred on September 21, 2022, in Puerto Rico and caused damage to the infrastructure, and impacted water, electricity, and internet utilities.

Table 24: Helpfulness of PADE Academy staff

Background:	Aria was a woman in her late fifties, and she discussed how the STAFF helped her with technological issues, and other challenges.
Interview dialogue:	I think that in the yeah, I think the human resources, the teachers, the coordinator, the retention officer, and even the assistant. Everything. If we had a problem they were like, "Do this, and do this and do this." I think the human resources is the 1st main highlight. The first thing that I can say that the staff was extremely satisfactory, really.

During his interview, Alexis reflected on all the situations that occurred in Puerto Rico during the year-long PADE academy. There were students from all around the island, and classes were online. Students experienced connectivity issues during the synchronous courses, power outages, and the aftermath of Hurricane Fiona, which lasted for weeks in different parts of the island. In the excerpt below, he reminisced on the treatment received by the PADE staff.

Table 25: Alexis discussed PADE staff approachability amid difficulties.

Background:	Alexis talks about some highlights of the PADE Academy
Interview dialogue:	And, also with the hurricane and al sowith the hurricane professors were understanding about that situation... the connectivity problems and everything that we went through with Luma and whatnot. Professors understood that, and they reschedule assignments. I cannot remember one time that I wrote to you or any other professors that I had a personal situation where I needed some extra time or just a couple extra hours to submit an assignment. There was no problem with that.

Although the PADE courses were formal university courses with actual professors, the faculty demonstrated a level of approachability in them. The class environment was inviting and encouraged the participants to reach out and speak up. Miss A. talked about this in her interview.

Table 26: Miss A. talks about the PADE faculty openness to communicate.

Background information:	Miss A. talks about classroom dynamics in PADE
Interview dialogue:	When you know allowing us to ask anything at any time. So esa cosa de que no me interumpan. (They were not like, do not interrupt me). If something comes up. You gotta ask for it. You go because you're gonna get an answer. Like it allows us to do that. No estamos en ese escenario como que. Sino te contestaba a ti aquel decía “a mí me paso aquello y yo hice esa cosa” (We were not in a scenario of. If they did not answer, someone would say “of that happened to me and I did this”). Ese closeknit de nosotros mismos fue lo más beneficioso tener profesionales y tener gente que está trabajando en lo mismo. (Having that close knit of professionals and people in the same line of work was really beneficial).

The previous quote presents how PADE professors allowed a flexible classroom environment where is easy to deal with individuals, interactions are done effortlessly, and people are willing to share their views on the world. This environment eased some of the social constraints of being in an online environment, while posing opportunities for peers and professors in the program to connect with certain familiarity and ease. This was also the case for Alex, who pinpointed a class initial activity that really set a welcoming tone to the class, and he even took on it to implement it with students.

Table 27: Alex talks about highs and lows

Background information:	Alex remembers how Prof. Mendoza asked students about their ‘highs’ and ‘lows’ prior to starting class.
Interview dialogue:	It works wonders every time; they [the participant’s students] love it. sometimes, I start my class without doing the highs and lows and they would ask me to do it “Teacher, but I need to tell you that my high yesterday.” And I’m like “ OK, Tell me. Tell me, what happened to you? What was your high?” They [the participant’s students] loved that.

The ‘highs and lows’ was the initial activity a PADE professor did with students at the beginning of class, which provided a space for the teachers to chat, let it be sharing news or even vent about their day. The activity was very popular among teachers. During the interview, Alex admitted to having implemented the same ‘highs and lows’ routine with his students.

Despite the assignments being seemingly unrelated to the support provided by the PADE Academy's staff and faculty, they offered reflective insights into the participants' experiences as learners during their earlier educational stages. A particularly salient observation surfaced regarding the influential role played by their former educators in shaping their attitudes and competencies in English language attainment, as well as learning in general. Consequently, it can be postulated that this thematic category, while not directly pertaining to the PADE Academy, is intrinsically linked to the broader concept of faculty support in the educational journey of any student.

An illustrative case toward this idea is presented in Ronnie’s contribution to the 'Roadmap to Literacy' assignment. Here, she delineates the pivotal role of teacher support in her acquisition of Spanish. Her instructor, mindful of Ronnie’s initial lack of Spanish proficiency, strategically employed translanguaging techniques, effectively bridging English and Spanish. This approach not only facilitated Ronnie’s language acquisition during a critical period of

learning as an elementary school student, but also exemplifies the significance of tailored and differentiated educational support in language learning contexts.

Table 28: Educational staff and faculty support as key elements for language learning

Ronnie PADE Secondary	Two years went by and after completing my first semester of second grade, my parents, my sister, and I moved from New York to Puerto Rico and now I had to learn a new language. The little Spanish I knew was what my parents spoke to us at home. So, I understood Spanish moderately well, but it was here in Puerto Rico where I learned how to speak, read, and write it. Fortunately, my second-grade teacher here, Sra. Solá, basically taught me Spanish in my native language. Using “la cartilla fonética” she would give me examples that I could relate to. So, in one semester I was reading and writing first level Spanish while also getting to know the culture better through different reading selections. Fast forward to my teenage years I remember how in my Spanish class the novels we read for our written and oral reports and my history class specially helped me expand my vocabulary in Spanish.
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Zepol's “Teaching philosophy” assignment discussion extends beyond mere pedagogical strategies, examining into the philosophical underpinnings of his teaching approach and its impact on student empowerment. A central point to his educational philosophy is the notion of transforming learners into active participants in their own educational journey.

Table 29: Zepol discusses the importance of empowering learners.

Zepol PADE Secondary	“In my classroom, groups of students are built, and leaders formed. I present students with a repertoire of challenging and motivational tasks to encourage engagement with education, providing students with various types of knowledge. The harmony of the group is maintained by the implementation of a democratic diplomacy where students are presented with options and choices (Montessori M, Carter B. 1936) and the sense of everybody being cooperating and working for the overall well-being of the group. When the psychological necessities of love and acceptance are met, the student will move on to the highest part of the hierarchy: the auto-realization, where they transform school chores into a routine that defines them as students and as human beings. This sense of belonging will naturally look for the self-assessment and a constant search for improvement. The state’s grading requirements are completed for compliance purposes, but the real assessment for an English language student is when they assess themselves, so they realize their strengths and weaknesses and are motivated enough to improve upon them.
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By purposefully adapting conventional routines and integrating topics of interest, he tailors the learning experience to resonate with his special education students. This approach facilitates a perception of the educational process as not merely academic tasks but as meaningful and relevant activities, aligning with their aim towards becoming independent adults. Such a method emphasizes the importance of contextual relevance and student agency in the learning process, particularly in special education settings.

Furthermore, he illustrates the impact of self-awareness in recognizing and understanding one's own strengths and weaknesses. The emphasis on self-awareness stresses the necessity for learners to engage in self-examination/assessment, which is key for fostering a more personalized and effective learning experience. This theme aligns with the broader objectives of the study, which seeks to explore the multidimensional extents of the educational process.

Category 3: Self-awareness

Teachers who participated in the study exhibited a significant degree of self-awareness and a reflective stance towards their pedagogical practices, combined with an acknowledgment of areas requiring improvement. An exemplary illustration of this occurrence is presented through the case of Mariam. In her narrative, she articulates the challenges she faced with aspects of instructional planning prior to her involvement with the PADE Academy. Her experiences during the program facilitated a significant advancement in her approach. Post-PADE, Mariam reports to not only addressing her previously identified limitations in consistent planning but also refining and enhancing her planning methodologies. This instance exemplifies the transformative impact of professional development programs in enabling educators to critically assess and strengthen their instructional strategies.

Table 30: Mariam discusses self-awareness of planning shortcomings.

Background information:	Mariam talks about inconsistent planning before PADE and consistency afterwards
Interview dialogue:	Yes, because that was my Achilles heel: planning. It's planning because you have to plan with your curricular maps and there's so... [makes a face] OK, I used to do my own planning, whatever I wanted. This is what I think I need to do. Now, [if] the [PADE] classes helped me, no, tampoco así. Pero yes, they [the classes] helped to take the curricular maps and and with what they are teaching you, meaning [the] content, you make it work. not a perfect world YET, but...See, I'm planning. I'm planning every week and I didn't do that [before].

Aria is another participant who shared an insightful perspective on interdisciplinary professional development. Although her primary role is that of an elementary school educator, teaching grades 4 to 6, she is not a specialist in the English language. However, her proactive engagement in the PADE Academy's Elementary certification process was indicative of a commitment to enhancing her pedagogical inventory and her readiness. Aria acknowledged the instrumental role of the PADE program in strengthening her confidence, thus optimizing her efficacy in the classroom environment. This case highlights the value of professional development initiatives in empowering educators to transcend their traditional subject boundaries. Aria talked about the fact that she is an elementary school teacher (4th to 6th grade) not an English teacher, yet she was taking the certification process in PADE Elementary to improve and be prepared. She acknowledged how PADE had helped her feel more confident to perform her role in the classroom.

Table 31: Aria discusses self-awareness of planning short comings.

Background information:	Aria admits her limitations prior to PADE
Interview dialogue:	When I started teaching English, that [teaching English] wasn't my fortaleza, my strength, because I am a teacher fof ourth to sixth. However, when I came back, my only possibility to work for PRDE was teaching English. What I said was, "OK, I will do it. I know English." But it's not to know English [only]. It iss how to pass knowledge. It is about how to learn about English and what is like to teach that class.

Within the cohort, participants such as Xavier demonstrate an intense intrinsic motivation towards teaching excellence. Despite their career preparation being in software development, a discipline dissimilar from English language instruction, he exhibits a profound recognition of the PADE Academy's significance in refining his pedagogical skills. Xavier's case, among others, highlights the crossroads of personal teaching hopes with the need for targeted professional development, particularly for educators transitioning into the field of English language teaching.

Table 32: Software developer improves English content and pedagogical knowledge through PADE

Background information:	Yadiel discussed how has the PADE Academy helped him be a better teacher.
Interview dialogue:	Remember, I was a software developer, so my training wasn't in education at all. So, I could teach because like I'm good explaining things better. Pero (but) I need it to fill that knowledge gap of especially planning, los indicadores(indicators). All those things, technical things that they give you and these courses, I really needed that because una cosa es la vocacion y otra cosa es el conocimiento. (One thing is your calling, and another is your knowledge on it. I needed the knowledge. So, it really helped me a lot. Like, I'm really grateful for PADE because. It really prepared me in a lot of areas that I really needed help with, you know, especially planning is one big one.

Following to her participation in the PADE program, Amy, an elementary English educator, gained a comprehensive understanding of the concept of sight words and their

pedagogical significance within the classroom setting. During her interview, she explained several key understandings and pedagogical strategies acquired through the PADE Academy.

Table 33: Amy learns core concepts to be taught in Elementary English.

Background information:	Amy discussed what she learned in PADE Elementary
Interview dialogue:	And ‘sight words’. Oh my God, I didn't know that. I didn't know I was supposed to teach them every single day. That was something I was missing. The ‘sight words’ I learned from the last class.

The PADE program had considerable influence on Isa's comprehension of classroom dynamics, resulting in a notable enhancement in her teaching practices that subsequently led to a higher sense of self-confidence. An excerpt summarizing her reflections on this experience is presented below.

Table 34: Isa feels confident in her lesson plans due to PADE guidance.

Background information:	This sums up Isa’s experience in the Academy. She reflected on her learning experience and her growth as a teacher.
Interview dialogue:	You know what? Besides everything that I've told you, my experience was so complete that I feel more confident as a teacher. I feel like I know now what to do with my students. Not like before. Like, if you would have seen my plans, my lesson plans from before, you would have been surprised to see how they have evolved.

Ana admitted that she had little to no contact with books in English, therefore failing to incorporate books in her classes. Things changed after doing some book-related assignments in the PADE program.

Table 35: Ana did not use books before PADE.

Background information:	Ana shared some of the meaningful content and pedagogical related aspects she learned about English teaching through PADE.
Interview dialogue:	In one of the different classes that I took in PADE, I created a PowerPoint presentation with one book. Before that, I did not know that books were so important in a English class. Before PADE, I brought a lot of copies [worksheets] and done. After PADE, I bring books because there my students can see words and pictures. They relate the picture with the words and it adds to their word banks. My favorite part out of all the PADE was to create that PowerPoint read aloud and create activities for that book.

Additionally, the PADE program's curriculum required the integration of technology for both synchronous learning sessions and asynchronous activities, such as video-recorded book readings. This requirement encouraged and accelerated participants' development in technological competencies, areas in which some previously lacked proficiency or confidence to appear in recording of themselves. While reflecting on this aspect of the program, Ana acknowledged a significant enhancement in her self-confidence regarding the use of educational technology, attributing this growth to her experiences within the PADE Academy. In a similar manner, Mariana, another participant in the PADE Elementary program, identified the technologically arbitrated activities, particularly those involving camera use, as particularly beneficial for her pedagogical development. These accounts highlight the program's effectiveness in fostering technological adeptness among educators, an essential skill in the contemporary educational landscape.

Table 36: Mariana loses fear of speaking with PADE video assignments.

Background information:	Mariana discussed some highlights of PADE. How the assignments contributed to her linguistic performance and, and how they challenged her was one of the most relevant aspects.
Interview dialogue:	To lose my fear of speaking English in front of a camera, or maybe [to speak in front of] another people. To organize when I have to talk to other people. It helped a lot. To do my best to to to speak with a better pronunciation.

Ana's conversation during the interview regularly touched upon the theme of confidence, a topic she revisited in various contexts throughout the dialogue. Presented here are two additional excerpts, expressed at separate intervals of the interview, which capture her perspectives on confidence and self-improvement. These excerpts provide a deeper insight into her reflective process and the progression of her self-perception, particularly in the realms of professional development and personal growth.

Table 37: Ana on how program helped boost her confidence as an individual and English teacher.

Background information:	Ana talked about PADE on different instances and how it helped her develop other areas that now make her a more confident English speaker and elementary English teacher.
Interview dialogue:	Are so confident for me and help me to open my my vocabulary and now I feel more confident in talking English, not only with my students. Some like with the other person my partners in in, in the school and something like that... [separate comment] PADE, helped me to feel more preparada (prepared) in in that area and fill me more confident in the things that I show to my students and the tools that I used to my students.

Within the class assignments, also emerges a pattern of how participants articulate their journey towards self-awareness, particularly in recognizing their areas of weakness. This introspective realization appears to have boosted a deliberate shift towards assuming greater responsibility for their own learning trajectories, with an explicit focus on continuous

improvement. A case in point is shown in Violet’s submission for the 'Roadmap to Literacy' assignment. In this piece, she critically reflects upon her specific challenges in English language proficiency and identifies the strategies she employed to transcend these obstacles. Such instances exemplify the profound impact of reflective practice in fostering self-improvement and educational advancement among participants.

Table 38: Violet discusses how self-awareness led her to improvement.

<p>Violet PADE Secondary</p>	<p>“I got you to grasp a little of my experience as a young reader and writing learner, but English as a second language is another drama. Let’s say that it wasn’t pleasant because at first it was like “gibberish”. I never got phonetical awesomeness, and even though I got very well on the language, I still have problems to comprehend spoken English. My teachers where [were]very passive instructors. They were so frustrated with the lack of participation that they rarely give us an oral talk or made us read out loud. I was very interested in learning because my sister and cousins talked English so well I wanted to be part of the conversation. But I got shy because they made fun of me every time I messed up. I grew up watching cartoons in English and Disney channel, and I roughly learn some idioms and colloquial language. By the time I got in college, I was so bored in class I got very bad grades. But when I finally understood how capable I was to get better, read more, I wrote more... and one day I said, “I will be the English teacher I needed when I was growing up” and started a ESL Master’s degree. I remember the laughing and skepticism in my family’s faces, but I graduated, and with honors. I know I still have a long way to go, I’m not perfect, I have so much more to learn, but that is a never-ending road that I love. Ps. Who’s laughing now? Cheers.”</p>
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In his teaching philosophy, Xavier pinpoints areas needing enhancement in student learning. He emphasizes the provision of tools, techniques, and positive reinforcement as pivotal strategies for fostering development in these identified domains. The approach he advocates for involves crafting activities that not only address student deficiencies but also consider their interests, innate talents, and the efficient acquisition of the English language.

Table 39: Xavier re-teaching self-awareness.

Xavier PADE Secondary	I identify my student's needs, strengths, and areas of improvement and offer feedback on what the student needs to correct and work on. Suppose I see that the student still needs help understanding the concepts. In that case, I use various resources to help the student pronounce words and understand the underlying concept and idea I am teaching that day. For instance, I can use videos to explain concepts, games, group activities, and other techniques and methods that support my students to develop as English learners.
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Remarkably, Xavier also engages in deep self-reflection, particularly in moments when he admits lack of student comprehension within certain topics. This introspection denotes a profound commitment to ongoing personal evaluation and refinement of his teaching practices, thus ensuring a responsive and effective and responsive environment for his students. This approach emphasizes the critical connection between teacher reflexiveness and monitoring student learning outcomes.

Category 4: Interactions with peers

The significance of a conducive educational atmosphere, where individuals can engage with peers sharing similar interests and objectives, is of utmost importance for effective socialization and goal devising. This aspect became evident in the interviews conducted with participants of the PADE Academy. The educators repeatedly told how their interactions with fellow participants during classroom interventions, breakout room discussions, and even informal communications via WhatsApp in both the PADE Elementary and PADE Secondary groups contributed to the cultivation of a community of learning. It is pertinent to note the structural organization within the program, where PADE Elementary and PADE Secondary maintained separate WhatsApp groups for communication purposes.

Furthermore, the entirety of the official interactions within the PADE program, encompassing the initial welcome meeting and all subsequent instructional sessions, were orchestrated through video calls via Teams and other asynchronous platforms, such as forums or written chats in Moodle. Other types of communication from PADE were done exclusively via phone, instant messaging or via email. Remarkably, the PADE Academy did not organize any official face-to-face gatherings throughout the duration of this 11-month cohort. This operational model highlights the program's reliance on virtual modalities to facilitate both educational delivery and community building among its participants.

A striking example of the community dynamic within the PADE program is exemplified in Isa's reflections. She recalls her peers in the PADE Elementary cohort with a sense of fondness and comradeship. Notably, this cohort was characterized by a predominantly female composition, with only one male participant, and an all-female faculty. Isa's conversation highlights the profound sense of connection and mutual support that was fostered among this group of classmates. Her report underlines the gender dynamics within the cohort and underscores the significance of interpersonal connections in creating a supportive and collaborative educational environment.

Table 40: Isa reflects on how her interactions with peers enhanced the PADE experience.

Background information:	On two separate instances, Isa mentioned how her peers, who were mostly women, were also a source of companionship and learning.
Interview dialogue:	<p>a-I actually enjoyed my time with all the all these women like I learned so much that it was only one guy in my classroom in my in my class.</p> <p>b-He aprendido tanto de ellas (I learned so much with them). Por ejemplo, yo tiré una pregunta de como, de como yo podia hacer una autoevaluación para los estudiantes y una salió al rescate, (For example, I asked about how to do a self evaluation for students and one classmate came to the rescue) “You may use exit tickets. Here it is then. Oh, yeah. Y ahí el mismo niño se monitorea.” Y yo lo he adaptado.</p>

Amy, who had previously acknowledged the influential role of the PADE Elementary program in her growth into a more skilled and self-assured educator, offered further insights into the dynamics of the cohort. She remarked on the collective helpfulness shown by her peers, underlining the significance of the supportive network established within the program and how it enhanced the professional development experience.

Table 41: Amy on PADE Academy Elementary peer interactions and thrust.

Background information:	Amy reiterates how PADE classmates shared ideas and answered each other's questions, even during classes.
Interview dialogue:	Hasta nos compartimos ideas (We even shared ideas).

Contrasting with Amy's experience in the PADE Elementary cohort, Miss A.'s participation in the PADE Secondary group presented a similar bond between peers, despite the distinct context. She equally encountered a dynamic of sharing and collaboration within her group. This similarity in dynamics across different program levels is validated by an excerpt from her interview, which serves as a confirmation to the supportive nature of the learning environment fostered within the PADE Secondary program.

Table 42: Miss A. on peer interactions

Background information:	Miss A. was asked how her experience with PADE had been. The first thing she pinpointed was her classmates, the PRDE teachers who shared this experience with and alongside her.
Interview dialogue:	Well, overall, I would say that it was positive. First of all, because I was with colleagues and it's not the same to be with just overall teachers. There's something about English teachers and the struggles that we have to deal with that made a lot of sense when we spoke to each other and when we shared stuff.

Violet's educational experience within the PADE program extended beyond the educational instruction of the professors; her peers also emerged as fundamental contributors to

her knowledge acquisition. This aspect of peer-to-peer learning highlights the extensive reach of educational environments, where learning is not solely a top-down process from professors to students, but also a collaborative exchange among the learners themselves.

Table 43: Violet talks about professionalism of peers

Background information:	Violet was discussing her overall experience in the PADE program, and this was the first aspect highlighted.
Interview dialogue:	It was positive. I meet a lot of colleagues and they were all of them were very friendly and very professional. I think I learned from everybody.

In his reflections, Zepol talked about the integral role of the academic relationships established through the PADE program, connections that were previously non-existent.

Table 44: Zepol on his experience with peers after PADE

Background information:	Zepol was highlighting some of the most salient aspects of the Academy; his peers were a highlight.
Interview dialogue:	We can share information. And although we don't speak that much anymore because time passes and everybody's busy for the time being, I felt that I had a new group of friends and a new group of motivated people that were looking forward for the same goal. I could share information with them.

He highlighted how these recent professional relationships have developed into a support system, a factor he believes crucial for success in the context of an accelerated educational program. This observation underlines the importance of peer support systems in facilitating the learning process and enhancing the overall effectiveness and (social and professional) value of intensive professional development initiatives.

Class assignments were also a testament to the unequivocal importance of support networks within one's learning process. While the assignments were primarily centered around the participants' literacy development, their evolution as educators, and their introspections as language/second language learners rather than explicitly focusing on the PADE program peer

interactions, an intriguing pattern emerged in the data. It was observed that participants frequently revisited the theme of peer interactions and its influence on both their personal educational trajectories and those of their students in the context of learning English as a second language.

Aria, for instance, delved into her experiences with students engaged in second language acquisition. She explored the perceptions that these learners form, which are influenced by audio inputs from individuals within their immediate social circle, including parents, relatives, friends, or other relevant communities of practice to which they belong. This aspect highlights the significance of social and relational factors in the language learning process, suggesting that the educational journey is deeply embedded within broader social networks and community dynamics.

Table 45: Aria discusses her students' language perspectives

<p>Aria PADE Elementary</p>	<p>My experiences learning to read and write are present in every step of my daily classes. Even these courses helped me to be different and dynamically manage my teaching. I loved Paulo Freire, I actually read the book, <i>Pedagogía del Oprimido</i>, a long time ago at the university. Those ideas rumbled in my head and changed my mind about seeing the way of learning. So, it is very hard trying to teach and follow the curriculum. Adding to this idea, how Puerto Rican families internalize our political and social norms is another not unspoken discourse:” We are USA citizens, but I am not too fond of Inglés”. “I love Disney World, but I do not need to speak Inglés”. “I love Minecraft, “teacher ,mi amigo me enseñó hacerlo”. Expressions like, “mi papa odia LUMA, él no quiere gringos en el país”. Is the message of English attached to Colonialism, Estado 51, Monopolización, Odio, and the fact that I do not need to speak Inglés because I talked very well my native language, and it is an official language for 483 million people in different countries of the world. How I convinced a child to learn English is very complicated. I need to bring my past, most unconventional experiences to deliver the message of learning a second language's importance.”</p>
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In her reflection, Aria implicitly acknowledges the prevailing impact of parental or acquaintances' negative perceptions of the English language, or negative perceptions of the sociocultural groups associated its language use, on students' attitudes towards the language and their motivation to learn it. By the same token, she recognizes her influential role as an educator in potentially counteracting these influences. Aria is aware of the fact that her position as a teacher places her in a unique situation to not only offset potential negative preconceptions but also to actively foster a positive disposition in her students towards English language acquisition. This dual recognition highlights the difficult back-and-forth between external societal attitudes and the educator's ability to shape the learning environment in a manner that encourages students to excel in the language and explore their potential.

By the same token, Zepol reaffirms through a reflective perspective on the role that reading and writing played within his familial setting, and how these initial experiences have shaped his self-perception as an avid reader and a proficient writer. His narrative emphasizes the significance of peer interactions in the learning process, in this case, his own family. Zepol's reflections suggest that the literacy practices promoted and modeled in his early home environment not only influenced his personal development in these areas but also matured his understanding of the broader educational possibilities. This insight expresses the interconnectedness of familial influences and peer dynamics in shaping individual learning trajectories and competencies.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlines the findings of the study, focusing particularly on the three most prominent categories that emerged from the triad of data collection methodologies utilized. The initial segment of this chapter probes into the outcomes derived from the PADE Academy

Satisfaction Survey. This instrument facilitated the identification by the teachers of various critical elements pertinent to classroom dynamics and highlighted the most saliently positive attributes of the PADE Academy experience.

The second section of the chapter combines insights from both the interviews and the class assignments. And the subsequent portion explained the key aspects within the PADE Academy that significantly contributed to the participants' increased awareness regarding their pedagogical practices or personal professional development. The findings aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the multidimensional impact of the PADE Academy, as perceived and voiced by the participants.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSIONS & CONCLUSION

The objective of this study was to examine the focus and success factors of the *Profesionalización Acelerada de Docentes del Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico* (PADE), offered by the University of Puerto Rico in collaboration with the PRDE along with the participants' journey within it. This investigation aimed to determine the influence of various program implementations and variables on the experiences and developmental trajectories of participating educators. The focal point of the analysis encompasses the overall efficacy of the program, participant satisfaction, and the retention and application of pivotal English-focused content and pedagogical knowledge.

The subjects of this study were educators from the PRDE who voluntarily enrolled in the PADE program. The reasons for their participation varied: some were teaching English without formal qualifications and viewed PADE as a requisite for continued employment while others wanted to extend their educational credentials in pursuit of a broader employment scenarios. Data was gathered through a satisfaction survey, interviews, and analysis of class assignments, revealing the consistent themes that appeared to enrich the learning process for students. When analyzing the data from various sources, four main themes surfaced. These were: (1) a learner-centered pedagogical approach, (2) assistance from PADE staff and faculty, (3) self-awareness in the learning journey, and (4) peer interactions. Each theme requires individual discussion which will take place in this chapter. In some instances, the correlation in themes was not necessarily because participants explicitly referenced PADE, the program's content, or its staff in their interviews, nor class assignments. Rather, it was due to the implicit elements of the learning process which teachers pinpointed as significantly influential, either in their own formative

stages as learners or in the context of their current students, often pertaining to past teachers acknowledged by participants as impactful in their educational journey.

The focal structure of this chapter is initially placed on the analysis into these primary themes gathered from the interviews, followed by addressing the research questions. The chapter concludes by summarizing the key findings, conclusion, pedagogical implications of the study, and offering suggestions for future research.

A. Learner-centered approach

The initial section delineates the tenets of a learning-centered approach to teaching imparted to participants within the PADE program. The principle within this approach is embedded in a long-held constructivist notion that recognizes individuals learn to their greatest potential when they actively construct knowledge that builds on prior understanding based on firsthand experiences, along with data and evidence. It surpasses the conventional notion of knowledge consumption, but rather highlighting the significance of a rounded lifelong learning process depicted by the cultivation of problem-solving skills, self-directed learning, reflective practices, and self-regulation within the educational environment (Numan, Raman, Sadat, 2010; Nunan, 1988; Weimer, 2013). It emphasizes these components as integral aspects of true, authentic education and effective learning. Within the context of development-oriented learning in PADE, the discourse revolves around perspectives and methodologies geared toward crafting impactful lessons. PADE participants acquired proficiencies and competencies during the program to aid them in the design of lessons that can elicit a substantial impact within classroom environments. The emphasis of the program was on empowering educators to engage actively with content, teaching methodologies, and a deep focus on the target language: learning to

impact the students themselves, to pose analyses pertaining to the target content, by tapping into their existing knowledge tanks about the content, to then move on into the construction of new skills that are rooted in the content.

Throughout the interviews, when correlated with survey responses and assignments, PADE participants recurrently emphasized the vital importance of subject matter content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and curricular knowledge. However, it is crucial to recognize that participants needed more than mere theoretical discussion on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories to grasp these theories comprehensively and apply them effectively in their future teaching endeavors. Shulman (1986) contends that besides content and pedagogical knowledge, it is essential to confront the pre-existing beliefs and assumptions that shape these educators' perspectives, as these beliefs, in conjunction with knowledge, influence their self-development and reconstruction of individual teacher's identity. This mindset transformation does not entail the mere acquisition of prescriptive teaching formulas but rather the fine-tuning of expertise founded on 1) an intricate understanding of fundamental concepts, 2) enabling the conscious application or redirection of teaching elements to effectively address diverse learning situations that might arise within the confinements of their own classrooms.

Identified subtopics pertaining to theoretical and pedagogical concepts, along with strategies, and interactions have either amplified participants' awareness or endowed them with an understanding of how to integrate a learning-centered approach to education. This methodology involves a shift from a subject centered view of language education, which views language learning as the mastery of a set group of texts, vocabulary, and linguistic structures, to a view that emphasizes the acquisition of language skills, participation in communication processes, and the construction of language knowledge. This approach is validated through

empirical research (Nunan, 1988; Wenden 2002; Weimer 2013), and participants' own testimonials affirming how they rest assured that some of their classroom practices, previously guided primarily by their intuition, now align with recognized 'best practices' for strategically helping and encouraging student communication towards the latter's' language learning improvement. Within the context of the PADE Academy and its participants, this categorical shift transcends a mere enhancement of pedagogical performance; it signifies a paradigm shift in educators' mindset of teaching about content toward a teaching to learn focus that ultimately translates into greater student learning outcomes. Weimer (2013) states that "learner-centered teachers opt for those instructional strategies that promote deep and lasting learning" (p. 123). Learning involves the active construction of meaning. This is why learning facts and learning to do are two different processes; it is the reason why students may seem to understand but still fail to apply theory. In this sense, McNamara, Murray, and Phillips (2017) highlight the pivotal role of teachers not only holding subject-specific foundational knowledge, but also adaptive skills, and practical competencies in their professional preparation. These competencies afford newly qualified teachers with adaptability, along with a robust knowledge base and pedagogical agility, all of which are essential for navigating the ever-evolving landscape of educational institutions and curricular methodologies that lead to results within students' meaningful, world-oriented learning.

The learner- centered approach to teacher education and professionalization promoted in the PADE recertification program emphasize the shift from traditional teacher-centered methods to approaches that place the student at the heart of the learning experience. By nurturing teachers' originality, flexibility, and encouraging role of teachers as reflective practitioners

armed with critical thinking abilities, and the capacity for real-world theorization/educational action research foresight, the PADE Academy courses advocate for deep subject matter expertise coupled with integrated pedagogical skills that focus on understanding the importance of learners' construction of meaning drawn from previous knowledge and experiences. This blend of reflexive pedagogical competencies become indispensable in the dynamic realm of professional education, which differentiates itself from a conventional apprenticeship training model primarily focused on formula-oriented, one-size fits all pedagogy, as it may not necessarily align with the demands of the ever-changing school and classroom setting. Understanding the importance of the PADE focus, the following sections touch up on some of the subtopics that were impacted by this learning centered approach and how the practices highlighted within the subtopics attest to the importance of stimulating the improvement of effective teaching practices, consequently leading to the increase of student learning.

Planning within a learner- centered approach

An aspect essential to the metacognitive learning process, in conjunction with a focus on learning-centered approach to teaching pertains to the way instructors in the PADE program provided support for participants through scaffolding. In nurturing participant development, PADE faculty effectively modeled and transitioned from participants' existing knowledge base regarding the planning process to unknown areas, facilitating the expansion of their background knowledge, forging novel connections, and enabling autonomous self-monitoring of errors.

One illustrative instance of this learning-centered approach was evident in the formulation of instructional plans for classroom lessons. Numerous participants from both the elementary and secondary cohorts, respectively, emphasized the pivotal role of planning procedures in shaping their pedagogical practices (See Tables 17, 30, 31, 32, 34). According to

their accounts, these meticulously devised plans exhibited greater comprehensiveness, elucidated learning objectives more explicitly, and empowered participants to craft classroom experiences that amplified their awareness of what students needed to learn and how to impart knowledge effectively through purposeful activities. The planning scaffolding, again, was not a one-size fits all formula for solving all planning issues but rather, it involved an informed and self-directive role in the pursuit of their teaching goals, balancing external requirements with personal relevance and style.

Mini lessons within a learner- centered approach

Planning for learner-centered instruction requires a thoughtful examination of students' educational requirements and the subsequent adaptation of pedagogical approaches. Among the versatile and explicit instructional techniques at educators' disposal, mini lessons emerge as invaluable tools. These succinct, focused tutorials, typically lasting 10 to 15 minutes, were designed to reinforce specific content previously addressed in the classroom, thereby recapitulating essential concepts that warrant comprehension and application.

The primary objective of the mini lesson was to solidify the learning process in an explicitly noticeable manner by capitalizing on students' prior experiences with the subject matter. It achieved this by exposing a pivotal aspect of the content, making it perceptible, and instilling in students a sense of accountability to consistently use the acquired knowledge. The strategic implementation of mini lessons within pedagogical planning and lesson development serves as a keen method to imparting understanding in a renewed and concentrated manner. Doing so allows for efficiently conveying knowledge within the framework of more extensive instructional units, concentrating complex concepts into more manageable clusters of ideas.

The concise duration, ranging from 5 to 15 minutes, grants teachers who use mini lessons with several advantages. The mini lessons permit the comprehensive exploration of a specific concept without overwhelming learners. Additionally, mini lessons offer the flexibility to integrate effortlessly into various phases of the instructional process, whether as an introductory activity, a developmental segment, or a concluding unit. They foster active student participation and prove to be momentarily efficient to tackle the specific area/skill/topic or challenge. Furthermore, as expanded by Dorji (2021), the persistent implementation of mini lessons followed by constructive feedback accentuates the former's role of mini lessons as functional intervention strategies and essential pedagogical instruments. Ronnie from PADE Secondary, articulated the ways in which mini lessons have proven a success in her classroom:

I have the daily plan, but if the students uhm, *se me trancan* (if they get stuck) in something specifically, I stay there. And I have the mini lesson in mind, and I target that specifically. And then I keep on with the class maybe 5-10 minutes. I take it just for that. For whatever it is, and then I keep on with the class, but I am aware that the student or most of them have this doubt. I stop, I do it. *No me quedo*; I don't stay there. I don't stay stuck. I go specifically to what it is and then I continue. And that I didn't know how to do that before (Ronnie, interview).

Tools such as these, empowered PADE participants to, within their role as educators, provide tailored support and individualized instruction to students, consequently contributing to enhanced educational outcomes across the board. Tutors (2018) accentuates the significance of mini lessons in concurrence with feedback as mechanisms for self-revision of the teaching practice and for students to revise their learning. This pedagogical approach is deemed commendable, as it aids students in retaining information and revisiting topics previously

covered, even over extended periods. Notably, the mini lesson framework capitalizes on the inherent capacity of constructive criticism to spur/promote change and facilitate improvement. In the context of academic settings, individuals frequently struggle with self-consciousness driven from the fear of committing errors or total failure. Remarkably, within the framework of a mini-lesson, critique is not perceived as a warning or weakness but rather as a catalyst for growth and refinement, further enhancing its pedagogical merit.

Ivan, from PADE Secondary also mentioned the benefits of engaging in the development of mini lessons with classmates from the Academy. He commented,

We had great ideas about mini lessons, and I wanted to teach them, teach them about adjectives, about irregular verbs, reading comprehension or different things and there were great ideas. But the way we would explain what we wanted to do had something missing. Simply by providing an [academic] article, it would help us understand how we were going to achieve that.

Paradoxically, participants in the PADE program were initially introduced to mini lessons as a pedagogical approach they could employ. However, they themselves were consistently exposed to mini lessons throughout the entirety of the PADE curriculum, even amongst informal interventions their peers. This observation stresses that the instructional methods taught were aligned with their developmental learning needs. Participants drew from their own educational experiences within the PADE program as archetypes for engaging students, while adhering to research-supported best practices. This educationally rational way to support classroom practices was a component that participants such as Ivan appreciated and emphasized.

Translanguaging within a learner-centered approach

An additional salient topic within the framework of the learning-oriented approach was the concept of 'translanguaging.' Translanguaging constitutes a flexible bilingual pedagogical approach, as delineated by Creese and Blackledge (2010). In bilingual or multilingual settings, it encompasses both a practice and a intentional approach where individuals draw upon their entire linguistic repertoires for effective and premeditated communication in the context of teaching and learning (Mazak and Carroll, 2017, p. 4). This may involve the incorporation of words or phrases from various languages or the seamless transition between languages, thereby provoking a linguistically dynamic atmosphere.

Throughout the course of interviews, participants consistently stressed the social nature of language acquisition, shaped by students' interactions with family, peers, popular culture, and media, including television. Consequently, translanguaging, as presented to and by the participants, assumes profound educational significance within the context of an English language classroom situated in a Spanish-dominated environment. As a pedagogical approach, the encouragement of students to leverage their entire linguistic repertoire for learning and communication does not advocate the exclusion of the English language but rather serves as a conduit for students to employ their existing English proficiency in conjunction with Spanish to bridge gaps in their discourse (Mazak, Mendoza, Pérez Mangonéz, 2017).

Many PADE participants articulated how, with the support of academic and theoretical underpinnings, they have come to view translanguaging not as a pretext for conducting English language classes in Spanish but rather as an assistance strategy meant to empower student, so that the students express themselves utilizing the linguistic resources at their disposal: a scaffolding mechanism. This pedagogical scaffolding transforms the English classroom into a

community of practice that furnishes all participants with linguistic support, thus enhancing students' proficiency and metacognitive awareness, and consequently enabling them to engage with the target language in a more liberating manner. This idea greatly resonates with the findings of Mazak, Mendoza, and Pérez Mangonez (2017), particularly in the case of Professor Ray, whose disposition towards students' utilization of their bilingual resources for learning content was prominently featured in their study (p. 82). Interestingly, Professor Ray infrequently initiated or employed the Spanish language in the classroom. It was the students who were confident in using Spanish despite the dominant use of English for class content, exams, assignments, as it was the professor's first language. Comparable sentiments were shared by several PADE participants, including Zepol who shared various thoughts on it:

When I went to college and took my English courses from college, you weren't allow to say anything in Spanish. It was English only. It was shocking to me that there was a term to coin this and that there were studies behind it [translanguaging] to back it up and workshops that you can use to use it immediately.

He also states how translanguaging helps in communicating with students. Zepol mentioned:

I connect with them. I allow certain students that don't have the necessary vocabulary and necessary tools to interact in English, that they feel that they are interactive. It makes a connection. It made me connect better with my students.

While Zepol employed the metaphor of translanguaging as parallel to a spare tire, intended for short-term use rather than extended journeys, he repeatedly voiced the tactic of translanguaging facilitated his students' engagement with the English language and as part of their efforts to engage in meaningful communicative exchanges. PADE participants reported that they can support their

students in developing their English skills more effectively while fostering a broader sense of identity and inclusivity for language learners within the classroom. Both, in her interview and reflective piece titled "Myself as a Writer," Ronnie shared her personal experience of acquiring Spanish proficiency in Puerto Rico after residing in New York for five years. As the offspring of returning migrants, she was enrolled in a Puerto Rican elementary school where Spanish was the predominant language of instruction. This posed a challenge after having been immersed in an English-only environment in the USA that discouraged the use of Spanish. Fortunately, according to Ronnie, her second-grade teacher, Ms. Solá, employed a translanguaging approach, employing the use of *La Cartilla Fonética* to provide Ronnie with relatable examples and explanations in English. Within a single semester, she attained proficiency in reading and writing at the elementary Spanish level while simultaneously gaining deeper insight into the Puerto Rican culture through various reading selections. Reflecting on her teenage years, Ronnie recollected how the novels assigned in her Spanish class, along with the content covered in her history class, played a pivotal role in expanding her Spanish vocabulary and language skills.

Granting flexibility emerged as another attribute used to characterize translanguaging by Miss A. Emphasizing the utilization of students' existing knowledge as a foundation for progressing in the learning and communicative attempts fosters their confidence and willingness to actively participate in the learning experience. As Cummins (2019) states how "...these initiatives, albeit inspirational in many cases, represented only a tiny fraction of instructional practice, which remained predominantly rooted in monoglossic assumptions" (p. 31). Therefore, the translanguaging approach is one, in a universe of strategies, that helps assure students that they will not encounter an undefeatable linguistic barrier hindering their journey from point A to point B, thus mitigating any perceived limitations.

Phonetic awareness within a learner-centered approach

Another sub-theme that surfaced on the topic of development-centered learning was the necessity of explicit teaching pertaining the cultivation of phonetic awareness among English educators. This awareness equips them with the capacity to impart direct instruction, while employing techniques such as modeling, scaffolding, monitoring, and providing constructive feedback to students in the classroom. Angelova (2020) explained how personal experiences in the language learning process, coupled with reflective introspection, enable trainees to internalize language acquisition concepts, subsequently applying this knowledge in their future teaching endeavors (p. 28).

This theme became particularly salient in the context of class assignments and participant interviews. While PADE participants expressed substantial insights regarding the phonetic class integrated into the Academy's curriculum, several, particularly those in the PADE Elementary program, candidly acknowledged their prior lack of explicit awareness or instruction regarding phonemic awareness and phonetics in general. To the extent that they admitted how, if they happened to possess knowledge on this subject, it had been acquired intuitively, devoid of formal or explicit instruction, whether in their school years, nor elsewhere. PADE participants identified various aspects related to how they could assist students in strengthening their speaking confidence, encompassing the design and implementation of pronunciation exercises aimed at fostering metacognitive awareness regarding the articulation of English sounds now, post-PADE.

For instance, after PADE, Ronnie delineated an exercise where students employed their smartphones in selfie mode to record video footage capturing the precise placement of their lips and tongue while articulating specific English sounds (Ronnie, interview). Some educators even

confessed that prior to PADE they had yet remained oblivious to distinctions in sounds, despite intuitively recognizing inaccuracies in their pronunciation when hearing themselves speak. This underscores the considerable utility of the course, particularly for these educators who openly acknowledged their own experience as English language learners and comprehended the challenges posed by certain English sounds and letter combinations that are absent in the Spanish language, along with the limitations that their past English teachers had regarding pronunciation. Zepol, who was an extremely fluent and well skilled English speaker admitted finding the phonetics class useful as some of the material used and discussed in the PADE phonetics class proved valuable for designing a unit for his own students.

Another salient feature of the program was the notable improvement in pronunciation skills reported by PADE participants, coupled with an enhanced understanding of fundamental vocabulary concepts relevant to elementary-grade instruction. The explicit instruction of elements such as 'sight words,' which were previously unfamiliar to many PADE participants, emerged as one of essential pedagogical emphasis. For example, Amy highlighted how the cultivation of phonemic awareness and the incorporation of sight word instruction significantly contributed to advancements in students' reading and spelling proficiencies. These advancements, in turn, resulted in increased self-expression and a more profound grasp of the English language, as reported by several PADE participants. These changes, despite being subtle, impact students' self-perception as English language learners and shifts the language classroom environment to one of more positivity and assurance.

This observation aligns with Mitchel's (2007) exploration of phonetic awareness in Jamaican schools, which revealed that a substantial number of students performed below expected levels when it came to little or no phonemic awareness. The author also highlighted the

lack of clear policies regarding the use of phonics in literacy instruction, as well as uncertainty surrounding the most effective age and strategy for its implementation. This aligns with Ana's recount of her educational experiences in Puerto Rico's grade schools, where she encountered the absence of explicit instruction on phonetic sounds. Given that the way one is taught unconsciously influences how one learns, and subsequently impacted how she taught, it rendered her unaware of the significant impact that phonetic awareness could have on literacy development and, consequently, on students' self-confidence, prior to the PADE experience. Nowadays, she recognizes the pivotal role of phonetic awareness in second language instruction and its influence on students' attitudes toward learning underscores the imperative nature of phonetics instruction within the PADE Academy curriculum and broader pedagogical discussions.

Interdisciplinary approaches to teaching English

Another component incorporated into the explicit acquisition of concepts was the notable combination of an interdisciplinary approach to English instruction. Several participants reported attaining the ability to seamlessly integrate diverse elements that encompassed the English language content, encircling aspects like grammar and literature, with broader components connected to students' own experiences. This approach accentuated the significance of relating classroom content to other subjects or to individual situations, revealing the pivotal purpose of elements such as text to self, text to world, text to text connections provided relevant in the learning process. Many participants perceived the material covered in the PADE program as exceptionally pertinent, as it proved instrumental in their daily planning, material development, student monitoring, feedback provision, and the formulation of effective assessment strategies.

Certain PADE participants reported successful integration of diverse elements, significantly enriching their students' learning experiences and furnishing a framework for a deeper comprehension of the target language. For example, Xavier reported to use music videos projected in his classroom television to do karaoke versions of popular songs. This to make learning fun and to engage students in activities related to reading and analyzing lyrics. Paradoxically, this mirrors the very pedagogical practice characterized by relevance and meaningfulness instilled in PADE participants, which they were in turn encouraged to implement in their own classroom settings. As Jones (2009) contends, this approach "enhances both the teaching and learning of the disciplines throughout a lifetime" (p. 78). The interdisciplinary approach to teaching facilitates the establishment of connections from English to other academic subjects, prompting students to contemplate the real-world applications of these connections.

Within the Academy, PADE participants also conducted fieldwork focused on photographing and analyzing discourse within diverse linguistic landscapes, an assignment that fostered a keen socio-cultural understanding of English and Spanish language usage in Puerto Rico. They also completed reflective assignments, and road-mapped their own path to literacy in both the Spanish and English languages. The assignments aligned with the course objectives by provoking participants to reflect on their learning processes, identify areas of deficiency, discern patterns replicated in their teaching practices, and ascertain elements beneficial to them as educators.

For instance, in her interview, Isabel shared how the mother to one of her students approached Isabel as the English teacher to insist that she helped the kid get good grades in English class by using Spanish. Isabel stressed to the parent how she could help the teacher in the class. Later, Isabel recounted the experience of assigning a task related to Earth science within

her English class, resulting in her students' enthusiastic engagement with science topics in an English language context. Despite initial parental concerns about the students' English proficiency, the student excelled and won the group Kahoot! quiz, which included complex and subject-specific questions presented in English. Isabel, as the teacher, encouraged parental involvement in the learning process, indicating a collaborative approach to education. Lumsden (1997) states how, "The expectations teachers have for their students and the assumptions they make about their potential have a tangible effect on student achievement. (p. 1)" This scenario highlights the adaptability and potential of students facing significant challenges like language barriers when teachers set high expectations for them.

Another example is from an interview with another PADE Elementary cohort Mabel, who, on the other hand, discussed the reciprocal relationship between English and Spanish, illustrating how she could transfer many English-focused content and teaching ideas acquired in all her PADE courses towards the courses she teaches her elementary Spanish-focused students. This attests to how English and Spanish are not meant to be taught in definite isolation. There are content and linguistic aspects of both languages, that when combined or transferred from one class to the other, prove useful in establishing context and framework for students' bilingual progression.

In the case of PADE reflective course assignments, these not only generated meaningful learning experiences for the participants but also translated into perceptible benefits for their students. Students profit from their educators' contemplations and the interconnectedness of the English language across various disciplines, extending beyond the confines of the language classroom. Moreover, this interdisciplinary approach fosters critical thinking skills, as students

are compelled to analyze and synthesize information from diverse sources and perspectives, enabling them to make inferences and draw informed conclusions. This approach aligns with established research findings, as articulated by Jones (2009), culminating in a cross-curricular cooperative synergy that enhances the overall curriculum integration.

Relevant material/examples/connections

Within the realm of interdisciplinary approaches to teaching English, the incorporation of relevant examples emerges as a pedagogical strategy accentuated by instructors. The integration of elements from popular culture, such as the inclusion of references to contemporary figures like "Bad Bunny," as illustrated by Xavier in one of the data sets in Chapter 4, or the imaginative creation of a Puerto Rican Pokémon, that was a project idea shared by Isabel, assignment that was followed by subsequent written piece or poster board presentations describing these creatures, are elements that effectively capture students' interest and renders the content more relatable. This refers to the technique of "contextualization" to accomplish knowledge building. González, Moll, and Amanti (2006) refer to the term and how it is:

[c]oncerned with making meaning and connecting school to students' lives. What better way to engage students than to draw them in with knowledge that is already familiar to them and to use that as a basis for pushing their learning? (p. 6)

Using culturally relevant examples allows the transportation of knowledge with ease, which might increase when new material is being discussed in a language that is not your own. Therefore, drawing on context of what is culturally known might have various positive outcomes. When learners encounter snippets of their own cultural experiences reflected in the instructional materials, their personal experiences and motivations find resonance within the curriculum, lessening the perception of English as an external or foreign entity. Consequently,

students are more likely to become active and emotionally engaged in the learning process (Gardner, R.C. 1983; Goleman, 1995; Wilks, 1998; Ferdowsian, 2003; Weisinger, 2006;) . Making references to objects, places, or individuals that hold cultural significance for the students elicits responses, laughter, and at times, contribute to enriching classroom discussions. This culturally relevant approach enables the negotiation of meaning within the classroom, facilitating students' collaborative sense-making and processing of information as a cohesive group (Brooks, 1968).

It is essential to recognize that culture extends beyond mere traditions or rituals and is more fittingly characterized as "a set of meanings and values shared by a group of people" (Alvesson, 2012, p. 29). In this context, shared norms, beliefs, values, and traditions within a group guide the negotiation of meaning between message senders and receivers. Given that communication is an intentional and intelligible transaction, educators should remain attuned to students' perceptual processes and strive to integrate their existing knowledge and prior experiences into classroom instruction. Wood (2007) underscores the existence of a "perception process," whereby our minds process information received through our five senses, actively generating thoughts, organizing, interpreting, and analyzing information. As exemplified by the participants in this study, when students perceive their environment as relatable to their existing knowledge and prior experiences, they can more readily connect with and comprehend the material presented.

The consistent use of examples related to their own age group, such as making the Puerto Rican *Pokémon*, and/or literature or content pertaining to aspects of Puerto Rican culture served to facilitate these connections to the concepts conveyed in class. Roxá, Martensson, and Alveteg

(2010) underscore the importance of a cultural negotiation approach to teaching, emphasizing the significance of focusing on the norms, values, shared assumptions, and other guiding elements that shape the practices of university educators. Such an approach, if successful, manifests itself in transformed classroom experiences and shifts how academic instructors discuss and interpret teaching, learning, and assessment practices.

It is unmistakable that prior knowledge plays a pivotal role in the learning process. The more information students possess before a lecture, regardless of the language employed in the classroom, the easier it becomes for them to comprehend the material. Wood (2007) highlights several factors influencing the stimuli one notices, emphasizing the tendency to focus on elements that "STAND OUT" (p. 46). While education inherently involves the acquisition of new knowledge and attention to previously undetected processes, teachers can enhance classroom interactions and students' comprehension by highlighting specific ideas by culturally relevant examples, as consistently demonstrated by participants such as Zepol, Xavier, and Ivan.

The findings arising from this learner-centered approach category indicate that, although educators in the PADE program possessed some autonomy to select course materials, assessments, and pedagogical strategies, the approach to selecting and preparing the material transcended mere coverage. The topics and lessons were oriented toward the development of participants' learning skills and heightened awareness of learning processes. The selection of PADE content was informed by participants' specific needs and their aspirations for success in their classrooms. The integration of pertinent materials designed to foster reflexivity and leverage research-proven strategies played a fundamental role in enhancing participants' second language acquisition, and in furthering the refinement of their teaching abilities. This in turn, is a cyclical process that was also understood by PADE teachers and consequently reflected in their

own culturally relevant assignments, examples, enunciation, and the use of translanguaging, within their respective classrooms as well.

B. PADE Staff and Faculty Support

Another salient aspect stressed during the interviews pertained to the role of the PADE staff and faculty. A substantial number of participants spoke highly of the professors' expertise and their proficiency in modeling the pedagogical practices that participants were encouraged to implement in their own classrooms. The academy extended substantial support to participants, including assistance with course content, communication with professors, and resolution of technological issues. A recurrent theme in these accounts was the professors' profound grasp of course content, translating into an immediate and demonstrable application of classroom concepts, eliciting positive outcomes in PADE participants' classrooms.

Participants also highlighted the accessibility and supportiveness of the PADE staff, particularly during challenging circumstances. For instance, participants with limited technological proficiency greatly benefited from the additional support offered by the PADE Academy. In moments of need, such as approaching assignment deadlines, some participants recounted instances when PADE staff, even late at night, were readily available to aid. The importance of instructor presence is well-known in research into online education. Instructor presence can be defined as "how an instructor establishes his or her presence in an online environment can have important implications for the students' overall learning experience" (Richardson, Besser, Koehler, Lim, & Strait, 2016, p. 82). Researchers such as Dalton (2018) go beyond this notion to identify the teaching faculty as being the most important factor of student achievement in the online environment. Aria, one of the PADE participants, emphasized how all

member of the PADE staff was consistently responsive and helpful whenever she encountered an issue.

Another significant event that had a pervasive impact on the entire island and consequently on the academy was Hurricane Fiona. This meteorological phenomenon produced extensive damage in various municipalities across Puerto Rico, affecting critical infrastructure and essential services. PADE participants resided in diverse locations, each with varying degrees of damage inflicted upon their towns. The aftermath of the hurricane posed considerable challenges, as participants heavily relied on electricity and internet connectivity for class attendance, assignment completion, and overall course engagement. Given the extended duration of power and water service outages, which exceeded several days, and even weeks, and the compressed nature of these intensive courses (spanning just six to seven weeks), numerous participants encountered difficulties accessing classes and fulfilling their coursework obligations. For many, this dilemma took a toll on their emotional well-being. Concerns emerged surrounding access to food and water, given the unavailability of electricity for refrigeration and the added financial strain of acquiring electric generators or fuel to mitigate the situation. Here is an excerpt of Amy's recount:

Amy: Estuve alrededor de dos semanas sin electricidad y el agua me llegó muy muy tarde. Yo apenas podía hacer un trabajo. En mi casa no tenía comida. No tenía dinero. Perdí todo. Y se me hacía tan difícil. Era abrumador. Yo le decía a mis compañeras: “No puedo. Me voy a quitar. Era abrumador. Después de cinco clases, me voy a terminar quitando.” Ehhh...Y a veces sentía que había presión. Y hablaba con ella. Y a veces sentía presión. Yo sentía que los demás podían hacerlo y yo no. Y me sentía que que vergüenza que le estoy hablando con ella de esto que no he podido. Que incompetente. Ella no me conoce. Incluso, llegué

a hablar con usted sobre eso particular y usted me dió ese abrazo cibernético ahí. Ese apoyo. Y fue la ayuda que necesitaba. A pesar de que las clases son una parte muy fuerte del PADE, el apoyo de los coordinadores siempre estuvo ahí.

(For about two weeks, there was no electricity, and the water arrived very, very late. I could barely do any work. At home, I had no food. I had no money. I lost everything. It was so difficult. It was overwhelming. I would tell my colleagues, 'I can't. I'm going to quit. It's overwhelming. After five classes, I'm going to end up quitting.' And sometimes I felt pressure. And I talked to her. And sometimes I felt pressure. I felt that others could do it and I couldn't. And I felt ashamed that I was talking to her about this, that I couldn't do it. How incompetent. She doesn't know me. I even talked to you about this specifically, and you gave me that cyber hug right there. That support. And it was the help I needed. Despite the fact that the classes are a very strong part of PADE, the support from the coordinators was always there.)

It is within this context that Amy, dealing with the post-hurricane challenges, considered withdrawing from the PADE program. Amy honestly shared the hardships she faced in the hurricane's aftermath; she was without essential services, nor food, evoking an evident sense of desperation of her experience. In response, in my role as co-coordinator, I encouraged her to engage in a constructive dialogue with her professor, collaboratively devising a plan to address assignment completion and offering my assistance in whatever capacity she needed. During the interview, she recounted how knowing that there were coordinators who were willing to listen and/or give a helping hand during those uncertain times, was a relief. This goes hand in hand with Miller, Dickson, and Koch (2019) research on how, "...the institutions that are most successful in

retaining students are the ones in which there is concerted, coordinated effort across the institution to help students persist.” (p. 96). There is a profound correlation as to how professors’ efforts towards empowering and motivating students lead to the latter’s academic persistence.

The fact that PADE faculty and staff were so accessible and communicative allowed for participating teachers to feel comfortable in the program. Some of the participants expressed the true vocation that the staff and its faculty exhibited through the constant communication. Some of the communication was done through the WhatsApp groups, for which each PADE Elementary and PADE Secondary had their own. The groups were not announcement type chats meant exclusively for PADE faculty and staff. It was an open group where everyone could communicate at any hour. Although it did become a bit intense sometimes, especially during class times, when people had trouble logging in to the Teams meetings or during weekends when there were long assignments scheduled for submission at 11:59 p.m., everyone felt physically apart but interconnected and informed.

PADE participants remained certain that their academic journey was supported by the PADE staff assistance throughout the duration of the program. Ana also mentioned something to that effect about how whenever participants complained or voiced concerns, Kevin, the main coordinator, would appear in the chat to ease the situation or clarify doubts. She also mentioned how I would periodically call and ask them how they were and how they were doing in class. Dr. Kevin Carroll consistently maintained open lines of communication, broadcasting timely updates regarding schedules, and diligently addressing inquiries within the WhatsApp group. Furthermore, the periodic individualized calls I made, where participants were inquired about their well-being, accentuated the program's commitment to fostering a supportive environment. There was also a retention officer, Dr. Edward Contreras, who constantly made calls to

participants and sent messages to make sure participants were logging in to classes and remained on task. This perceptible demonstration of attentive follow-up and genuine concern played a key role in enhancing students' overall performance. While the academic expectations remained rigorous, the presence of such tenacious support ensured that these expectations were not only met but many times surpassed.

B.1. Professors' accessibility

An additional significant feature of the PADE faculty related to their approachability. Frequently, when engaging with figures in authoritative positions, individuals may experience a sense of apprehension and intimidation. Nevertheless, participants consistently reported a distinct atmosphere within the PADE Academy characterized by a palpable sense of comfort and openness. Rokach (2016) states how, "The more students feel that their instructors care about them, the more likely they are to care about the class and consequently attend more regularly." (p. 11). This environment encouraged participants to freely voice their thoughts on various subjects and to pose inquiries without hesitation. Some participants even acknowledged sharing concerns that had arisen within their own instructional contexts (classrooms, schools, educational meetings), in the hope that either the faculty or their fellow classmates could offer solutions or recommendations for addressing these concerns.

PADE Professors Provide Modeling

Another striking component pertained to the PADE professors' incorporation of implicit teachable moments, which significantly contributed to participants' capacity to adapt and refine their own teaching strategies. During my time as a coordinator, in addition to aiding participants with course-related or technological concerns, I occasionally extended assistance to professors.

One instance involved a PADE Elementary class professor who encountered difficulties accessing the class through Teams. In my capacity as a co-coordinator, I volunteered to initiate the class's recording and retrieve the attendance sheet to validate the meeting's occurrence.

What I found intriguing was the professor's practice of starting each class by inviting students to share their "Highs and lows," a unique approach that encouraged students to reflect upon and articulate positive or negative experiences. Though I abstained from inquiring about the rationale behind this practice to the professor's practice, I was intrigued by it and decided to implement it with my undergraduate college students while in my other instructional roles, even though the practice began midway through the semester. In August, while I started instructing a PADE Secondary course, I decided to employ the "highs and lows" activity at the kickoff of the class. Remarkably, participants from both PADE Elementary (taught by the other professor) and PADE Secondary (taught by me) subsequently praised this practice during interviews.

Amy from PADE Elementary, for instance, acknowledged that while the subject matter of the course might not have been her favorite, nor did inspire her interest, she found the "highs and lows" exercise to be a valuable means of setting a positive tone for the class, fostering rapport between students and the professor, and affording students the opportunity to share their daily experiences. Ivan, from PADE Secondary, echoed these opinions as well, praising the "highs and lows" as an effective method for establishing a favorable class atmosphere. He further disclosed his adoption of this practice with his own students, citing their excitement when granted the opportunity to share their daily experiences before starting the lesson.

Additionally, professional development programs like PADE benefit from a panel of online faculty representing diverse backgrounds, experiences, and field expertise. By emulating the settings and technologies employed by online faculty, PADE participants gained insights into

and modeled various online instructional environments. This realistic approach allowed them to define their pedagogical benchmarks and identify best practices adaptable to their own classrooms. It is true that shortcomings in teaching, and lack of support and enthusiastic presence in classrooms, whether online or in traditional face-to-face settings, can undermine students' persistence, content retention, course satisfaction, and the overall perception of the university (Barczyk et al., 2011). Yet, the interviews stressed the significance cohorts bestowed on faculty presence and engagement to shaping their learning experiences. Indeed, students thrive when they perceive professors as actively involved and united to the former's educational journey. Timely learner support served as a pivotal determinant of success in their courses. The instances recounted during the interviews highlighted how PADE faculty diligently attempted to foster personal connections with students and, through these academic interactions, implicitly conveyed pedagogical principles. Rokach (2016) also points out how, "faculty members can serve as appropriate models for their students in becoming responsible people, who display pro social behavior. That can be done by modeling to students of professional boundaries, ethical responsibilities, and honesty." (p. 12). Although PADE participants exhibited these characteristics from the beginning of the program, PADE faculty demonstrated effective and respectful communication, caring, and prompt feedback which undoubtedly set an example of effective classroom management that resonated with PADE participants, while consequently influencing the participants' classrooms, both implicitly and explicitly.

C. Self- Awareness

One of the comments that echoed the most with these interviews was how the strategies taught and the faculty interventions led participants to develop a keen awareness and self-

reflection of their teaching practices now, identify strengths, and to come up with ways to improve weaknesses. The way participants started evaluating themselves in terms of beliefs, emotional responses, and behavioral tendencies in the classroom and how these patterns shaped their teaching practice and their students' outcomes. The cultivation of awareness regarding one's instructional strengths and weaknesses initiates a profound process of introspection concerning one's pedagogical methodologies. This sense of reassurance does not derive from the anticipation of specific future challenges; rather, it stems from the post-PADE contemplation that participants have acquired the essential knowledge and honed the requisite skills for adaptability, modification, or novel instructional content creation, all of which are aligned with the exigencies of the pedagogical context and the unique needs of their students. According to Schussler, Stooksberry and Bercaw (2010), they developed an Intellectual, Cultural and Moral (ICM) based on the essential areas for effective teaching: teacher knowledge (content and pedagogical knowledge), culturally relevant pedagogy, and teacher moral development and care (p. 352). In the interviews, Xavier mentioned that in a class there was a workshop on 'Growth Mindset'. He recalls reading the book and thinking it was a cool idea, yet it was not until he had taken the workshop that I had given that he realized that it applied to his experience in PADE. He too was not an expert in all aspects regarding teaching, however he continued to troubleshoot his practice until achieving the expected results. He also shared how the 'growth mindset' information was also something to pass on to students in his classroom.

Aria's reflections also emphasize a significant pedagogical shift brought about by her participation in PADE. In different instances she expressed, "Yes, I have progress." Stating that there has been an improvement in her teaching pre-PADE and post-PADE. Specifically, she expressed increased awareness that the art of teaching English transcends mere linguistic

proficiency. It encompasses the acquisition of pedagogical skills necessary for knowledge transmission and a deep understanding of both the content and instructional methodologies. This realization emphasizes the experiential and explicit nature of effective teaching. Aria honestly acknowledged that, prior to her involvement in PADE, she did not perceive her teaching practice as particularly robust. However, post-PADE, she reports a noticeable surge in self-assurance regarding her classroom performance. This transformation is further substantiated by the discernible responsiveness and engagement of her students, serving as empirical evidence of the program's substantial impact on her evolution as an educator.

Assignments served as a pedagogical instrument strategically used to cultivate perceptive self-awareness concerning both strengths and weaknesses, thereby facilitating the progressive refinement of participants' competencies and self-assurance. While participants in the PADE phonetics class were exposed to and reinforced their knowledge of phonetic concepts, some remained hesitant to their pronunciation abilities. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that PADE assignments were designed to encompass tasks such as the creation of video presentations, the production of recorded read-aloud videos for instructional purposes, and active participation via video conferencing during main lectures and Microsoft Teams breakout sessions. These multilayered assignments effectively pushed participants beyond their comfort zones, persuading them to engage in consistent practice of their own speaking abilities and to refine their listening insight. As a result, this deliberate exposure prompted an enhanced self-awareness of areas requiring improvement, resulting in a concerted and intentional effort towards skill enhancement.

Hassan, Robani, and Bokhari, (2015) states how,

Teachers need to understand the role of emotions in teaching and learning and how to use and regulate it productively in the process of teaching and learning. Teachers who demonstrate interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence in teaching and learning are able to handle conflicts and solve problems in class regardless of the students' diverse ethnic, socio-economic status or different skill levels. This will definitely contribute to positive and productive student-teacher relationship in turn, positive educational outcomes.

The quote captures the intricate impact of emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills in education. It emphasizes the notion that teaching is not solely an intellectual endeavor but also a deeply emotional one, where the ability to connect with, understand, and positively influence students is paramount to achieving educational success. The ability to use and regulate emotions productively is identified as a critical skill for educators. This indicates that teachers must not only be aware of their own emotional states and those of their students but also possess the capacity to manage these emotions in a way that enhances the learning environment. Productive regulation refers to strategies that teachers can employ to maintain a positive and focused classroom atmosphere, such as managing stress, fostering a supportive environment, and encouraging positive interactions.

This increased awareness, in turn, instills a profound sense of responsibility for one's ongoing growth and professional development within the educational field. Such self-awareness paves the way for an intentional path of implementation improvement and an increased sense of self-confidence, substantiated in the belief that educators possess the capability to troubleshoot, adjust, and regulate to handle their teaching approaches effectively.

D. Interactions with Peers

The interviews conducted with participants consistently highlighted a salient thematic component related to their interactions with peers. Participants frequently emphasized the transformative impact of fostering community with fellow classmates who were not only integral members of the same cohort but also shared a common student demographic, confronted analogous challenges and frustrations, operated within the same administrative structure, and were situated in educational institutions with a similar organizational culture. This cohesive community of learners served as a crucial scene where shared experiences converged with active engagement in the PADE academy, concluding in the formation of a mutually supportive network. This network, in turn, provided participants with a forceful platform for collaborative learning and knowledge exchange, ultimately fostering the development of an enhanced sense of confidence in confronting the multifaceted challenges characteristic of the professional atmosphere. Peer conversations among PADE participants created occasions to reflect on shared teaching anecdotes and develop enough trust to engage in peer conversations and make collaborations possible (Musanti & Pence, 2010; John-Steinner, 2006).

During the interviews, participants revealed their affable interactions with fellow classmates, emphasizing the centrality of this aspect within the PADE Academy. Isabel's interview effectively documents the perception of how peer interactions amplified her pedagogical perspectives and influenced her teaching practice (Table 40). The initial intent of the PADE Academy was to establish a community of learning, fostering an environment where PADE Faculty could engage in collaborative endeavors and mutually benefit from shared learning experiences to the participants. However, an unexpected but noteworthy observation

emerged: the construction of a community of practice, as conceptualized by researchers such as Hawkey (1995) and Wenger (1998); a needed strategic process of acquiring and refining the requisite skills for effective collaboration. This phenomenon was particularly noticeable within the context of the program's breakout rooms, designated online spaces where the instructor compartmentalizes the larger group into smaller ones. These breakout rooms afford participants a degree of privacy with their peers, conducive to facilitated discussions within the central Microsoft Teams platform, while concurrently allowing the instructor to exercise control over time constraints and the reintegration of groups as needed without having to physically observe the breakout room interaction. Mariam shared her frank thoughts about the breakout rooms:

Mariam: Los groups (The groups) I hate it. Los grupos?(The groups) I hated those...esos que uno tenía (Those that we had.)

Interviewer: The breakout rooms, the the breakout room.

Mariam: Que fueron en todas las classes (We had them in every class).

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mariam: Cuando lo hicieron la primera vez yo dije, “No me digas que esto va a ser en todas las clases?”

Fijate, se me había olvidado y yo dije, “No.” Y cuando lo dijeron la primera vez dije, No me digas que esto es lo que siempre va a ser... No me digas que esto va a ser ...Fue brutal So it was a great experience for us. Porque la mayoría tienen experiencias diferentes. It was a good class in general. In general, no todos pero in general.

(When these were done the first time I said, “Don’t tell me this will be done in all classes. In fact, I had forgotten and said, “No.” And when they said it for the first time I said, “Don’t

tell me this is how it will always be... don't tell me this will be it... It was great. So, it was a great experience for us. Because most people have different experiences. It was a good class in general. Not all, but in general.

Active participation in peer engagement requires firm commitment. While it is acknowledged that such engagement may occasionally fail to produce gratification or the desired level of support, the mediating discussions and interventions must support respectful interactions, even among individuals who may not align with our viewpoints. When they do, it the support serves as a potent mechanism for cultivating a positive reinforcement network within a community. The presence of supporters, in this case, the cohorts, who actively champion one's endeavors significantly enhance motivation and generate a heightened commitment to continued progress. This influence is not established on individual isolation or inadequate effort, but rather centers on the collective synergy generated by collaborative efforts, inspirational discourse, and the role modeling exhibited by peers. Empirical research (Hawkey, 1995; Musanti and Pence, 2010; Goker, 2006) underscore the pedagogical benefits of collaborative learning, affirming its capacity to facilitate apprentice growth through reciprocal interactions. Furthermore, collaborative learning has been empirically linked to the cultivation of advanced cognitive skills and the augmentation of learners' self-assurance and self-esteem.

This was mentioned by Amy,

One of the professors gave us an assignment. Ella nos dio como dos semanas. Lo hice rapidísimo. Incluso, lo llegué como que a compartir... Aquí estoy dando corrupción dentro de la clase. Pero era algo que los ayudó a ellos también a ver y cambiando en temas diferentes. Porque en realidad había que narrar todo. Las actividades, los acomodados.

Entonces, al yo proveerles mi plan. Ellos pues, ya tomaron sus notas y pues, pudieron hacer el de ellos Pero si, fue una tarea muy fácil para mi. Me gustó mucho. Y me siento segura de que lo estoy haciendo bien.

(One of the professors gave us an assignment. She gave us like two weeks. I did it super fast. In fact, I even share it... Here I am fostering corruption in class. But it was something that helped the peers also to see and change in different topics. Because in reality, one had to narrate...everything. The activities, the accommodations. Then, when I gave them my plan. They could, already make their notes and then, they did theirs. But yeah, it was an easy task for me. I liked it a lot. I feel certain that I am doing it well.)

Throughout the PADE Academy, Amy dealt with areas of confidence and self-perceptions of competency. She shared this anecdote about distributing one of her class assignments to her peers ahead of the deadline, an action that bolstered her self-confidence while also modeling to classmates so that they would know what to do.

Just like Amy other participants within the PADE Academy attested to the significance of collaborative engagement with peers, particularly within their professional spheres.

Collaborative interactions with fellow professionals in the same field offer a valuable opportunity for self-exploration and self-identity development as learners and educators alike. The contemporary educational atmosphere of PADE, along with the WhatsApp groups, online classes, and breakout rooms, bolstered the formation of professional learning communities and the active pursuit of developmental opportunities (Heinze and Procter, 2006). Consequently, collaborative endeavors with peers, even on seemingly unconventional or unconventional ideas, had the potential to evolve into innovative and uniquely creative lesson plans, as evidenced by instances within the PADE program. Miss A. shared on this aspect:

When you know allowing us to ask anything at any time. So esa cosa de que no me interrumpen. (They were not like, ‘do not interrupt me’). If something comes up, you gotta ask about it. You go because you're gonna get an answer. Like it [PADE] allows us to do that. No estamos en ese escenario donde no te contestaban. Sino te contestaba a ti [el profesor] aquel [el compañero] decía “a mí me paso aquello y yo hice esta cosa” (We were not in a scenario where the professor did not answer. If the professor did not answer, someone would say “of that happened to me and I did this”). Ese close-knit de nosotros mismos fue lo más beneficioso tener profesionales y tener gente que está trabajando en lo mismo. (Having that close knit of professionals and people in the same line of work was really beneficial, since they are working on the same).

Miss A.’s comment proved how although teachers have their own separate criteria, and work independently in classroom full of students, they should not operate detachedly from other peers; teachers need a professional community. In this sense, the interaction of peers within the PADE Academy provided social, emotional, and intellectual support amid the uncertainty and discouragement that could be experienced during the learning process, along with everything else that happens in the teachers’ lives. Additionally, the sharing of experiences influenced their self-perspectives on learning dynamics across setting and situations. As the true lifelong learners that teachers are, they were able to connect and learn not only from their own practices, but also benefit from the knowledge and experiences of peers to refine and apply to their own performance and life.

Research Questions

This study is examined adult learning and learning styles within a teacher re/certification program to analyze the participants' journey as acting teachers and the factors that may enhance teaching and learning for adult learners, specifically to enhance learning for current and prospective English teachers as educational professionals. Below are the five research questions guiding this study and their respective answers, as informed by the various data collected throughout the study.

Research question 1: What personal, academic, or professional factors would the participants describe as significant for participating in the PADE English Academy?

Participants in the PADE English Academy attributed personal, academic, and professional factors as motivation for their enrollment. Personal growth was a stimulus, with many noting increased self-esteem and confidence. The rigor within the program challenged the participants to test their endurance and skills amidst life's numerous challenges, including compressed class completion schedules, full-time employment, additional part time commitments, personal obligations, and engagement with extracurricular obligations. The PADE Academy played a crucial role in facilitating reflexive skills among participants. Activities helped them challenge limiting beliefs and improve teaching practices, fostering empowerment and preparedness. The activities helped them go beyond their pre-existing conceptions about learning and made them feel confident in their improved teaching practices and the evident results in student learning. An analysis of the narratives within the course assignments, coupled with the discourses obtained in the interviews, reveal that these self-limiting beliefs were often rooted in factors such as past experiences, societal influences, cultural ideologies, and even personal setbacks. Overcoming challenges in the program led to neurochemical changes and

improvements in mental functions like problem-solving and resilience (Best, 2010; Winne and Nesbit, 2010). This not only boosted self-efficacy but also enhanced emotional regulation and self-esteem. The observable results reported by PADE participants within their own classrooms fostered in these teachers a sharp sense of empowerment and preparedness to teach English classes (Richardson, 1999). Such outcomes underscore the transformative nature of PADE as a catalyst for personal growth. Post-structuralist theory, particularly emphasized by scholars like Michel Foucault, provided a lens to understand identity formation within educational contexts. Participants' experiences in the PADE program reflected the fluidity of subjectivity and the deconstruction of fixed identities, aligning with post-structuralist notions of power relations and discourse, which are constantly negotiated within social and linguistic contexts. In his work “Power Knowledge” Foucault (1972) states, “The individual, with his identity and characteristics, is the product of a relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires, forces.” Understanding the potential impacts of teaching recertification programs on participants’ identities by providing environments that foster critical reflection and dialogue, which result in further proficiency and personal growth.

Professional development extended beyond knowledge acquisition to include self-awareness alongside academic collaboration (Galiakberova, Khakimova, Khusnutdinova, Gao, 2020). Participants like Mariam highlighted how PADE fostered curiosity, critical thinking, and research insight, leading to continuous learning and skill enhancement by “putting order in my mind” to the extent that she was contemplating continuing graduate courses (Mariam, interview). These program attributes were crucial for navigating the complexities of modern classrooms and educational systems while nurturing a supportive community with shared professional goals,

reinforcing participants' sense of belonging and intellectual engagement. By bridging expert knowledge with practical application, teachers elevated their role as mediators in transmitting knowledge to wider audiences, contributing to educational and societal progress and further understanding of diverse learning contexts. For teachers to develop professionally, attention must be paid to acquiring knowledge and skills but also to fostering a positive self-relationship and a supportive learning environment. Mitina (1990) identifies one of the three substructures of teacher professional development as the affective structure, related to self-relation and an integrated feeling of acceptance or rejection of one's own self, and to self-respect, self-interest, and anticipate the attitude of others in the learning environment. Romanelli, Cain, and Smith (2006) also add that emotional intelligence plays a huge part in self-awareness development in teachers, as emotional intelligence includes empathy, problem-solving, optimism, and self-awareness, which allow individuals to reflect, react, relate, and understand situations. This is reinforced by participants such as Amy (refer to Table 18), who stated that PADE had changed her and gave her more professionalism. This relates to Flavian (2016) who asserts how once teachers reflect on their experiences, their professional self-awareness, consequently, transforms into an ordinary and routinary process within their professional lives.

Furthermore, the program encouraged cohorts to develop areas within scholarly investigation, and pedagogical undertakings. Among these attributes are a distinctive curiosity for knowledge, critical thinking know-how, and research insight. Their innate curiosity pushed them towards the continuous exploration of innovative concepts and ideas. Within the post-PADE academic perspective, participants such as Mariam and Miss A., expressed their aspiration to pursue further education, such as a master's degree in TESOL, specifically at the UPR Río Piedras, the institution hosting this PADE program. Participants highlighted the

importance of staying current with academic knowledge and research trends in the field, recognizing the value of continuous learning and skill enhancement to remain competitive and effective educators. In fact, Mariam drew a comparison between her academic experience at UPR and her undergraduate studies at a private university, highlighting the demanding nature of UPR's courses and how this rigor significantly contributed to participants' proficiency in the ability of teaching as it provided participating teachers with adaptive expertise to better navigate the complexities of modern classrooms and educational systems (Schön, 2017). The theoretical framework posited by Schön (2017) postulates that the evolution of an academic identity transcends the mere accumulation of new knowledge or skills. Rather, it necessitates a profound integration of these newly acquired competencies with the individual's extant values, beliefs, and personal experiences. Such a combination not only strengthens the educators' sense of purpose within their professional setting but also boosts their commitment to the teaching profession, thus consolidating their identity as educators.

Other cohorts, such as Zepol, also highlighted the academic rigor that the PADE courses demonstrated. And, although he was not one of the participants who expressed interest in doing a master's degree, as a UPR-RP alumni, he did say that the intensity of the PADE courses was an adequate prelude or preliminary test for those who did contemplate a graduate academic journey. And undoubtedly, participating in these academic communities of practices serves as a continuum for enriching academic identities, exposing teachers to diverse perspectives, continue to challenge their assumptions, and validate ideas of post structuralists theorists like Foucault (1982) and Derrida (1983) who encourage scholars to examine the implicit assumptions and power dynamics that underlie class driven and/or discipline-oriented boundaries, pedagogical

practices, and modes of scholarly communication. By deconstructing these structures, academic communities may foster more inclusive and equitable spaces for dialogue and deliberation, which in turn, support genuine, informed, and rational deliberation among citizens. Popkewitz (1994) states that professionalization is a highly trained, competent, specialized, and dedicated group that is effectively and efficiently serving the public thrust to demonstrate school improvement. However, for that to happen, there must be a practice of reflexive contemplation and deliberation, initiated within the educational practitioner and sustained in the actions of the education system that will support such efforts of improvement. On the professional front, participants regarded PADE as a means of elevating their status as teaching professionals. They spoke of feeling more prepared and therefore taking pride in their teaching careers, thus being able to speak with a group of individuals, their classmates, who expertly mediated their personal knowledge with their teacher thinking.

Professionalization was also fostered through the PADE Academy by encouraging a sense of belonging to a supportive community with shared professional development goals. The term "intellectual systems" likely refers to organized frameworks of thought or ideologies that guide understanding and interaction with the world (Popkewitz, 1994). Scholars, in this context, are the individuals who engage with, develop, or promote these systems. The distinction here implies a broad concern with both the abstract frameworks of ideas and the people who work within these frameworks; in this sense, professionalization is a record of intellectual, social, and cultural authority. The act of being a teacher is the supreme example of this intervention. Education remains a primary medium for negotiation since complex subjects are taught in more accessible ways. Teachers play a crucial role in this process, adapting content to suit the learning needs and levels of their students, thus ensuring that knowledge is not confined within solely

higher education academic or other “expert” communities. They too engage in the discourse as competent, highly trained individuals. This, in turn, elevates the role of teachers (and, by extension, the teachers themselves) as mediators by which expert knowledge and intellectual systems are transmitted to wider audiences. The role of the teacher is seen as a bridge between complex, contemporary expertise, their practical accessible, and an impactful application in everyday life. Foucault's ideas about power, knowledge, and discourse provide insights into how institutions shape and regulate communication practices. His work reflects in this study as to how it emphasizes the need for spaces that support genuine, informed, and rational deliberation among citizens. In this sense, the PADE Academy objectives align with Foucault (1982) theoretical framework by stating how professional and academic institutions are important at reforming and educating to ensure that the means of communication pursue their democratic function. The PADE Academy served as a space to professionally support genuine, informed, and rational deliberation among teachers as educators and individuals. Thus, granting participants with the resourcefulness and versatility in their communicative actions and interactions to consequently serve as a critical space where teachers, as private citizens, could engage in rational-critical debate about public education-related matters.

The PADE Academy also strengthened participants’ professional credibility. Cohorts understood the importance of building a professional reputation, which could provide concrete evidence for professional recognition and expand their network of connections. Such connections were seen as potential gateways to new opportunities, mentorship, exchanging ideas, negotiating meaning, and providing valuable support, all of which are bridges in their professional journeys. Moreover, participants demonstrated resourcefulness by effectively utilizing what are day to day

resources but would otherwise be noted as unusual resources for pedagogy, such as mobile phones for scholastic activities such as *Kahoot!* assessments or selfie videos to develop students' phonemic awareness. PADE participants emphasized the importance of embracing technology without demonizing it and avoid falling into the trap of over-reliance on traditional teaching methods. Plus, the PADE academy enabled them the adaptive expertise to focus on developing students' skills, not merely on teaching content, which leads to specific and meaningful results.

Participants' motivations for joining the PADE English Academy were multifaceted, encompassing personal growth, academic advancement, and professional development. The PADE Academy was a program which positively served towards their professional development journey. Testimonials from cohorts highlight the transformative impact of the program on both their individual capacities and their perspectives on the world around them. This represents a normative model of how individuals and should interact within societies to achieve mutual understanding, coordinate actions, and resolve differences through rational discourse suggested by Foucault (1982). The PADE Academy highlights the importance of discussion, comprehensibility, relatedness to real-world experiences, and fairness as elements for creating a more democratic and representative pedagogy, and consequently, a more just society.

Research Question 2: To what extent do program variables (coursework, the preservice field experience, mentoring support, seminar support, peer support, supervisory support, and its adjustment to teaching) influence teaching efficacy, participant satisfaction, and overall retention?

The PADE Academy served as a teacher recertification program aimed at assisting PRDE teachers in completing coursework for state-certified teaching credentials in various subjects. It catered to a diverse range of educators, including those teaching under special contracts without

certification, certified teachers in other disciplines seeking to expand their knowledge, and those looking to enhance their employment opportunities through English certification. The program's focus was on cultivating effective educators, with staff at UPR Río Piedras emphasizing active engagement and customization to meet participants' specific needs. By tailoring content to real-world educational settings, the program aimed to empower educators to apply learned concepts and strategies effectively in their teaching practices (Humphrey, Wechsler, & Hough, 2008).

The coursework, structured into PADE Elementary and PADE Secondary sequences, was designed to align with state requirements for English teaching certification in Puerto Rico. Participants engaged in significant courses aimed at enhancing teaching efficacy and aligning content with grade-level learning objectives (Roxá, Martensson, & Alveteg, 2010). Carefully selected content aimed to resonate with participants' professional needs, fostering engagement and commitment to the program (Nguyen, 2021). Additionally, hands-on projects like the linguistic landscape analysis provided practical insights into language use and cultural contexts, bridging the gap between theory and practice (Mardi, 2019).

Peer support and interactions, along with mentorship from PADE staff and faculty, played vital roles in enhancing teaching efficacy and program satisfaction. Encouraging participation, balancing contributions, and fostering an inclusive learning environment were key strategies employed to promote effective learning experiences (Hawkey, 1995; Davut Goker, 2006; Musanti & Pence, 2010; Mikami et al., 2011). Supervisory support, encompassing guidance, and resources, further bolstered participants' commitment to the program and their professional growth (Elliott, Isaacs, & Chugai, 2010; Lei, Cui, & Chiu, 2018). The PADE Academy's success lay in its holistic approach to teacher development, addressing academic,

professional, and emotional needs. By fostering a supportive community, providing tailored coursework, and offering robust supervisory encouragement, the program facilitated meaningful learning experiences and empowered educators to excel in their teaching practices. Ultimately, the program's commitment to participant success and ongoing improvement contributed to its effectiveness in teacher recertification and professional development.

Research question 3: How do identified successes and challenges of the PADE Academy play a role in participants' learning of English and language related instructional practices?

The PADE Academy aimed to recertify PRDE teachers as English instructors for elementary and secondary schools, enhancing their English proficiency and instructional practices. The yearlong program commenced with a compulsory session in early January, followed by an 18-credit coursework for elementary and a 19-credit coursework for secondary English, running from February to December 2022. Participants encountered both successes and challenges throughout the program.

Utilizing a post-structuralist theoretical approach, the Academy encouraged diverse perspectives, transformation, and self-reflection. Participants, like Xavier, recognized the array of teaching methods available, expanding their teaching "toolbox" as he mentioned in his interview, and fostering a more inclusive teaching approach. Precisely, PADE facilitated transformative learning experiences, leading to shifts in educators' perspectives and practices. Initial achievements within the program structure focused on enhancing teachers' subject matter content, pedagogical content, and curricular knowledge.

Through ESL theories, phonetics studies, and exposure to culturally relevant literature, participants reported functional advancements in their pedagogical practices, as evidenced by

survey responses praising the program's impact. Phonetics studies, in particular, equipped educators with a profound understanding of English phonetics, enabling them to improve students' pronunciation awareness and hone their English teaching skills.

Academic readings further enhanced linguistic competence and pedagogical excellence, guiding educators in selecting effective teaching practices validated by research. The incorporation of culturally relevant literature fostered engagement and a sense of belonging among students, promoting academic and socioemotional growth. Through communicative action, educators engaged in rational discourse, sharing best practices and refining their understanding of effective language teaching. Furthermore, the PADE Academy facilitated professional development, enhancing teachers' confidence in their pedagogical competencies and expanding their instructional methodologies. This transformative process prompted educators to reassess their beliefs about language teaching, aligning with deconstructionist approaches. In this sense, the PADE Academy achieved its goal of recertifying teachers while significantly enhancing their English proficiency and instructional practices. Through a combination of theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and the “reflection in action” (Schön, 2017) , participants emerged as more effective and confident educators, prepared to positively impact student learning outcomes.

Participants in the PADE Academy encountered various challenges as evidenced in surveys, interviews, and assignments. One significant challenge was time limitations, disrupting work-life balance due to compressed schedules and the need to juggle full-time jobs, part-time commitments, and family responsibilities. Suggestions from survey participants included incorporating more face-to-face classes and adjusting course schedules to alleviate these time

constraints. Interviews revealed teachers' struggles in managing personal job commitments alongside PADE participation, affecting their timely completion of assignments and readings.

Program constraints, particularly the unintentional omission of the Elementary Methodology course, emerged as a significant concern for PADE Elementary participants. This omission posed implications as successful completion of this course was crucial for Elementary English teacher state certification. To address this, Dr. Kevin Carroll organized the development of an online methodology course, although financial burdens shifted to participants themselves, causing fragmentation in the learning cycle.

Technological barriers and a singular course were also a challenge as well. The lack of technological abilities to the external constraints posed by electrical outages post-Hurricane Fiona added a layer of complexity to some tasks.. Participants faced difficulties adapting to online platforms, navigating Moodle course material inconsistencies, and coping with intermittent internet signals. The phonetics class offered as part of the Academy posed another notable challenge. Participants reported grappling with prior knowledge deficits, the extensive course content, and time constraints. Some participants perceived an imbalance in the course theoretical emphasis versus practical teaching methodologies, contributing to feelings of self-consciousness and dissatisfaction with their proficiency levels. Others had never taken a phonetics class before, and felt that the fast pace design coupled with other elements, led to their average performance in this course.

However, participants recognized the benefits of the phonetics class in expanding their understanding of phonetic awareness and teaching English literacy. Participants did admit how the study of phonetics equipped them with understanding of the phonetic complexities of the English language. Conscious awareness of phonological distinctions would enable educators to

explain the connections and/or differences in English pronunciation as they would with the phonemes in Spanish classes (Chen and Goswami, 2010). This understanding was beneficial for the participants, and, as they reported, for their own students.

Despite challenges, the PADE Academy played a significant role in enhancing participants' language-related instructional practices through a comprehensive and research-supported educational experience. It aimed not only to improve linguistic competence but also pedagogical skills, cultural awareness, and professional development, ultimately leading to more effective English language instruction.

Research Question 4: In which ways does the PADE English Academy contribute to helping support English learning in the classrooms?

The PADE English Academy significantly supported English learning in classrooms through various means, both tangible and intangible. The program offered advanced training in specific English language arts areas, deepening teachers' understanding of language structures, phonetics, grammar, vocabulary, and cultural nuances. This enhanced expertise enabled teachers to provide higher-quality instruction addressing the diverse learning needs effectively, a sentiment echoed by most participants in surveys and interviews, and which is supported by existing literature (Galambos, 1984; Zeichner and Wray, 2001).

Furthermore, the program exposed teachers to the latest pedagogical strategies and educational technologies. Participants expressed a desire for continued access to relevant materials and teacher development opportunities. From translanguaging to recorded book read-aloud projects, the PADE curriculum provided extensive learning experiences, including the use of culturally relevant examples to enhance comprehension. Participants also reported newfound

confidence in their teaching abilities, stemming from overcoming initial challenges and continuous reflection. This enhanced self-efficacy translated into dynamic classroom interactions and improved student motivation and outcomes. Additionally, the program offered opportunities for teachers to improve their own language skills, crucial for effective English language instruction. The PADE Academy emphasized the cultural aspects of language learning, incorporating iconic literature and age-appropriate material to foster students' interests and values (González, Moll, and Amanti, 2006). By introducing diverse literature and culturally relevant content, teachers were better equipped to create inclusive and globally conscious classroom environments.

Reflective teaching was another key aspect emphasized in the PADE program. Reflective teaching is a practice where educators engage in ongoing self-assessment and analysis of their teaching methods, strategies, and interactions with students (Hassan, Robani, and Bokhari, 2015). It involves carefully considering and evaluating one's teaching practices, experiences, and outcomes in order to identify areas for improvement and make informed adjustments. Reflective teaching in the case of PADE involved evaluating on their road to literacy, learning styles, students' interests among others. Achieving reflexive teaching, as reported by participants, led to enhanced teaching effectiveness, and the encouragement of professional growth, which ultimately improved student learning outcomes.

Lastly, the PADE Academy provided opportunities for networking and collaboration among peers, fostering professional communities and sharing best practices. By modeling lifelong learning, participating teachers inspire their students to pursue continuous education themselves, ultimately leading to improved student learning outcomes.

Research question 5: In which ways does the PADE academy enrich participants' personal, academic, and professional philosophy?

In this research context, a philosophy refers to one's approach to goals and expectations across various life domains. Based on emergent themes from interviews, surveys, and class assignments, the PADE Academy significantly enriched participants' personal, academic, and professional philosophies. The program aimed not only to renew participants' knowledge and skills but also to influence their core beliefs and values guiding their approach to teaching and learning. Convergent aspects within participants' teaching philosophies included a strong emphasis on learner-centered learning, adapting teaching strategies to diverse learner needs, valuing peer interactions, and fostering a supportive and inclusive classroom environment. Each cohort's teaching philosophy emphasized reflective practice, where educators continuously evaluated and refined their approaches based on student feedback and outcomes. Additionally, participants shared a belief in the transformative power of education, promoting personal growth and meaningful contributions among students.

On a personal level, the PADE Academy enriched participants' personal philosophies in three ways. Firstly, it encouraged a lifelong learning mentality, reinforcing the importance of continuous self-improvement. Participants embraced pedagogical approaches that instilled a passion for lifelong learning in students. Secondly, the program nurtured discourse environments for teachers to engage in reflective practice, fostering thoughtful and intentional attitudes towards teaching. Finally, it promoted adaptability and openness to change, with participants strategically revisiting and transforming aspects of their pedagogical practice.

In terms of the participants' academic philosophy, the PADE Academy introduced participants to the latest research and best practices in education, resulting in evidence-based and student-centered teaching practices. Additionally, exposure to diverse teaching strategies and theories encouraged participants to develop a holistic view of education, valuing social, emotional, and socio-cultural development. The program also instilled an interdisciplinary awareness and encouraged participants to make meaningful connections across various bodies of knowledge. This interdisciplinary approach promoted a deeper understanding of Puerto Rico's cultural and political climate.

Regarding their professional philosophy, the PADE Academy impacted participants' ethical standards and professionalism by reinforcing values of integrity, responsibility, and ethical conduct in the educational environment (such as avoiding plagiarism). Moreover, it emphasized respectful collaboration and community engagement, fostering a professional philosophy that values teamwork and community involvement. Participants emerged with a reinforced belief in learner-centered teaching, adapting to individual student needs and reflecting on effective teaching practices. Exposure to global trends and practices in education increased participants' perspectives, inspiring them to become advocates for positive change in their schools and educational systems.

In summary, the PADE Academy profoundly enriched participants' personal, academic, and professional philosophies, fostering a culture of continuous learning, reflective practice, and advocacy for transformative education.

Pedagogical Implications

The implementation of teacher recertification programs like the PADE Academy holds significant pedagogical implications, impacting both participating teachers and the broader

educational landscape. These implications span various aspects of teaching and learning, including:

1. Upholding and advancing professional teaching standards: Programs like PADE ensure teachers are not only proficient in their subjects but also in pedagogical practices. This fosters continual professional growth, adaptation to new educational challenges, and the delivery of high-quality education tailored to all students' needs. An analysis of surveys, interviews, and coursework from the PADE Academy highlights how it enhances teacher knowledge and skills, promotes self-reflection, integrates technology in teaching, cultivates lifelong learning habits, and elevates teachers as expert professionals committed to ongoing specialized development. The PADE program is designed to update and broaden teachers' knowledge and skills, being up to date with the latest educational research, methodologies, and technological advancements. Participant feedback highlights how the program addresses deficiencies, facilitates adaptation to educational trends, and enhances instructional effectiveness.

2. Implicit emphasis on reflective practice: The PADE Academy encourages teachers to critically assess their teaching methods and student outcomes, fostering a continuous improvement mindset essential for pedagogical advancement. This reflective process helps teachers understand their attitudes and beliefs towards students, enabling effective strategies for diverse learning needs. Exposure to new ideas also shapes a more student-centered, inclusive, and innovative teaching philosophy.

3. Integration of technology: Given the increasing role of technology in education, the PADE Academy focuses on incorporating digital tools and resources into teaching, preparing teachers to enhance student engagement and learning through technology-enhanced methods

4. Promotion of collaboration and networking: The PADE Academy provides opportunities for collaborative learning experiences, allowing teachers to network with peers and share best practices. This collaboration fosters improved pedagogical strategies and creates a supportive professional community.

Limitations

Conducting the PADE case study at the UPR-Río Piedras campus presented several limitations:

1. The approval process by CIPSHI was delayed, resulting in the distribution of the survey approximately 2 months after the PADE program concluded. This delay hindered participation, especially among individuals who had already completed the program, making it more challenging to contact them. The sole method of encouraging survey completion was through the active Whatsapp group.

2. Ideally, satisfaction surveys should have been distributed both midway through the Academy (mid-year) and at the end of the coursework. However, only one survey was conducted, missing the opportunity to track changes in participants' perceptions over time and identify any points of convergence in their responses. Additionally, the survey lacked sufficient space for participants to express their opinions about the content and current classes. While some participants declined interviews, incorporating more data from willing participants could have provided insights into the issues raised in the surveys.

3. Demographic information related to data collection methods was overlooked,. Having additional information could have enhanced understanding of teachers' trajectories. Although anonymity was ensured, a larger sample size and inclusion of identifiers would have facilitated a better comprehension of participants' trajectories from their undergraduate studies to their

decision to enroll in PADE. This approach would have enabled a comprehensive retrospective analysis of the diverse personal, academic, and professional factors influencing participants' entry into the teaching profession, including the impact of the PADE Academy on their decision to become English teachers. A thorough review could have provided deeper insights into the role of professional development recertification programs in shaping educators' paths and characteristics.

4. Teachers in PADE also faced challenges due to the aftermath of hurricane Fiona, which struck Puerto Rico on September 21, 2022. The hurricane caused infrastructure damage and disrupting essential utilities such as water, electricity, and internet services for days or even weeks in many municipalities within the island.

Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the limitations for conducting this research, I pose a few suggestions for future research. These are:

1. To conduct this study with other concurrent PADE Elementary & Secondary English Academies throughout the different UPR campuses. This would allow participating teachers to actively and consciously attest to the journeys as educators in programs with different variables, such as face-to-face modalities or hybrid modality, varying professors, and human resources.

2. To openly ask participants during interviews about their understanding of teacher professionalization and what it entails. This analysis should seek to understand participants' definitions and understandings of the concept of professionalization within the teaching profession. Furthermore, it is proposed to examine participants' self-perceptions concerning their professionalization, both prior to and after their engagement with the PADE academy.

3. It was evident throughout the data that teachers engaged in what Wenger (1998) described as a “community of practice.” Future research should analyze the data using this lens to more readily document how this cohort system ultimately evolved into a community of practice.

Understanding “Communities of Practice”

The term "community of practice" was first proposed by cognitive anthropologist Jean and educational theorist Etienne Wenger in their 1991 book *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (Lave and Wenger, 1991), which identifies a community that serves as a living curriculum for its apprentices. With this concept, communities of practice became recognizable even in contexts without formal apprenticeship systems. Learning within these communities extends beyond novices; everyone involved in the community engages in dynamic learning processes (Wenger, 1998; Wenger 2009). The essence of a community of practice lies not merely in shared interests but in the concerted efforts of practitioners to cultivate a collective repository of experiences, narratives, and problem-solving methodologies. This collaborative endeavor relies on a continuous commitment and transitory investment, extending beyond superficial interactions. Whether systematic or informal, these interactions contribute to the gradual formation of a shared practice, many times developing spontaneously.

At the heart of a community of practice are three essential elements: the domain (subject matter), the community (participants), and the practice (activities, processes, behaviors), all closely connected and supporting each other (Wenger, 1998; Wenger 2009). What defines the activities within these communities is that these include a series of collaborative efforts. These range from problem-solving sessions and knowledge-sharing initiatives to the coordination of efforts and the documentation of best practices. These activities serve as motivation for

professional growth and knowledge dissemination. Communities of practice serve as invaluable platforms for teachers, especially in the PADE Academy. Teachers enrolled in this program to develop professionally, yet they also found support and foster collaboration. Within these communities, educators can freely exchange their experiences, share resources, and offer insights to one another. This environment not only enriches individual teaching practices but also strengthens the collective knowledge base of the teacher community. Through collaborative efforts, teachers can work together on various aspects of their profession, such as lesson planning, problem-solving, and refining instructional strategies. Ultimately, communities of practice empower teachers to continuously improve their teaching methodologies and enhance student learning outcomes through collective expertise and collaboration.

Conclusion

This study was relevant given that it describes how the PADE functions, identifies exemplary teaching practices as reported by the PADE participants, and analysis elements that are conducive to teachers professional development. According to the participants themselves, what they learned aligns with better learning-teaching results. In this sense, the PADE *Inglés* Academy had the potential to profoundly enrich and reshape participants' personal, academic, and professional philosophies and practices. By providing a space for learning, reflection, and exposure to new ideas and practices, professional teaching recertification academies play a crucial role in educators' ongoing development as experts in their field. The PADE Academy, specifically, is essential for ensuring high-quality education, supporting teacher development and satisfaction, and upholding the overall status and value of the teaching profession. In programs like PADE, post-structuralist principles manifest in several ways, resulting in positive outcomes:

1. Educators recognize the multiplicity of perspectives, enriching practices through diverse ways.
2. Deconstruction of binary oppositions promotes a fluid and inclusive teaching approach, fostering critical thinking.
4. Reflective practice fosters ongoing refinement of teaching methods, enhancing student learning outcomes through continuous improvement and metacognition.
5. Communities of practice provide a supportive, collaborative and enriching environment. It also facilitates professional growth, skill development, and reflective practice among educators.

These principles collectively promote dynamic and effective teaching practices, benefiting both educators and students within the educational community. PADE and similar programs establish rigorous educational and certification standards, support ongoing professional development, and cultivate a strong professional identity among teachers, ultimately contributing to students' educational outcomes and societal progress.

The implications of this study suggest that the PADE recertification academy undoubtedly improves educational quality for PRDE teachers and students. When educators incorporate multiple forms of competence and comprehension into classrooms, students exhibit positive attitudes towards learning. To support this, instruction should be culturally relevant and inclusive, acknowledging students' linguistic experiences and interests. Additionally, the professionalization of teachers ensures expertise in subject areas and pedagogical considerations, facilitating the creation of engaging learning environments and guiding instruction effectively.

As the co-coordinator and researcher during the PADE Academy, I sought to understand and describe former students' experiences in the program. Through in-depth study and analysis, I

identified their self-perceptions of teaching, confidence levels, and professional aims. Serving in multiple learner roles provided invaluable insight into educators' growth and development within the Academy, inspiring advocacy for policies and initiatives aimed at their success. Witnessing their progression and implementing PADE program techniques into classrooms led to tangible positive outcomes, bolstering confidence and professional authority within a productive and supportive educational community. Alongside Dr. Carroll, I describe and cherish the PADE Inglés Academy as a nurturing environment for educators to excel and positively impact their students' lives and professional communities.

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APPENDIX A



Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras

[Se utilizará Microsoft Forms para la distribución ya que los participantes están en distintos puntos de la isla.]

HOJA DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO ²

Protocolo de Cipshi #2223-021

Participantes del Programa Acelerado de Estudios Especializados (PADE) de la División de Educación Continua y Estudios Profesionales (DECEP) de la Universidad de Puerto Rico Recinto de Río Piedras

Evaluating the English recertification process for Puerto Rican teachers:
A case study of an accelerated program's efficacy
(Versión 2: 08/09/2022)

Usted ha sido invitado a participar en un estudio sobre el Profesionalización Acelerada para Docentes del Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico (PADE) organizado mediante la DECEP de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, recinto de Río Piedras. Esta investigación se llevará a cabo por los co-coordinadores del programa PADE Inglés: Fiorelys Mendoza Morales, profesora del Departamento de Inglés de Estudios Generales y el Dr. Kevin S. Carroll, profesor del Departamento de Estudios Graduados de la Facultad de Educación de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras. Este proyecto tiene como objetivo puntualizar la experiencia de los participantes en el programa de recertificación en inglés elemental o secundario (PADE) y a su vez, determinar las fortalezas y áreas de mejoramiento de la Academia en cuestión.

Participantes

Se espera que participen los maestros activos del Profesionalización Acelerada para Docentes del Departamento de Educación de Puerto Rico (DEPR) auspiciado por la DECEP de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, recinto de Río Piedras. Se catalogarán de acuerdo con el área en que se estará recertificando: maestros de inglés elemental y secundario, respectivamente. A continuación, un desglose de los tres métodos de recopilación de información que forman parte de este estudio:

Procedimiento: Grupo focal o Entrevistas individuales sobre la experiencia en PADE. Se establecerán grupos de 6-8 participantes preparándose en la especialidad de inglés de escuela

² Este documento es una adaptación de la Hoja de Consentimiento Informado creada por Zuleika Guadalupe, candidata de doctorado de la Facultad de Educación de la UPRRP.

elemental y secundaria, respectivamente. Así se podrán realizar grupales virtuales (90-120 minutos) con cada grupo. Para facilitar la transcripción de la información recopilada del grupo focal, es necesario la grabación de audio y video de este procedimiento. Se grabará el consentimiento de los participantes antes de comenzar el procedimiento.

Los participantes quien no quieren participar en un grupo focal o que su horario no lo permite, tendrán la oportunidad de entrevistas individuales de forma virtual con una duración de 40-60 minutos. Se grabará el consentimiento de los participantes antes de comenzar el procedimiento de la entrevista individual, de igual forma.

Los temas a discutirse serán relacionados a la decisión de matricularse en PADE Inglés, factores, organizacionales, académicos de la Academia así como retos personales y recomendaciones a raíz de su propia experiencia para el mejoramiento de programas futuros. Para facilitar la transcripción de la información recopilada y para mantener la integridad de las respuestas dadas por los participantes, se grabará este el grupo focal o la entrevista. También se podrían utilizar trabajos entregados en las clases, participación en encuestas de satisfacción, contribuciones en clase y su asistencia a clases para así documentar diversos aspectos de la investigación.

Riesgos y beneficios

Los participantes pudieran experimentar agotamiento al participar en la evaluación de un programa ya que la recopilación de información les puede restar tiempo de sus labores y tareas cotidianas. Sin embargo, los investigadores promoverán el uso del tiempo eficazmente, además de un ambiente de confianza y confidencialidad para que sientan que su participación, además de ser valiosa, estará siendo protegida. Pese los investigadores no pueden garantizar que la información discutida en la entrevista grupal no sea revelada a terceros por otros participantes, se les exhortará a los participantes a mantener la confidencialidad de la información y no grabar la sesión. Las encuestas pueden proveer información que identifique indirectamente a algún participante con descripciones particulares. Sin embargo, asignará un seudónimo a cada participante una vez se produzca la transcripción e investigación. Las preguntas y las respuestas de cada participante serán confidenciales. De esta forma, ningún participante obtendrá información que identifique a un participante de forma directa, sino más bien al PADE y los factores de éxito en los maestros que participaron. Durante las entrevistas, los grupos focales e incluso en la encuesta se tiene acceso a indicadores de participantes con características particulares. Solo los coordinadores tendrán acceso a los materiales con identificadores directos. Durante la entrevista/grupos focales, la investigadora se esforzará por proveer y mantener un ambiente de confianza con los participantes y se les reiterará que pueden retirar su participación en cualquier momento. De igual forma, podrán negarse a contestar cualquier pregunta. Los investigadores considerarán el que los participantes del estudio están muy ocupados en su trabajo, y limitarán las conversaciones solo a aquello que esté directamente relacionado con la evaluación.

Otros datos que serán utilizados para esta investigación son la encuesta del programa y los siguientes trabajos de clase: EING4045 (Home language survey: essay on writing experience), EING 4018 (Roadmap to literacy), EING4019 (EING4020 (digital portfolio via Weebly), EING4020 (Myself as a Bilingual Reader and English Teacher).

Posterior a los grupos focales/entrevistas, se le podría estar contactando para que clarifique aspectos relacionados a sus intervenciones en la dinámica grupal o individual.

La investigación no conlleva beneficios directos para los/as participantes. La finalidad de esta investigación es poder compartir su experiencia en la Academia PADE para el mejoramiento de todos los aspectos relacionados a la misma. A su vez, al culminar la participación, los participantes estarían compitiendo para un sorteo donde los cuatro ganadores obtendrán una tarjeta de regalo digital de \$25 de Amazon enviada a su correo electrónico.

Confidencialidad

La identidad de cada participante se protegerá en todo momento. Cada documento será guardado por la investigadora principal, Fiorelys Mendoza, protegido por contraseña, en un sistema de almacenamiento de nube (ya sea ONEDRIVE o Dropbox). Las grabaciones de las entrevistas con sus respectivos identificadores solo se conservarán hasta que se transcriban y se verifiquen las transcripciones. Una vez las entrevistas sean transcritas, cualquier dato que pueda identificar a los participantes de forma directa (tal como su nombre, lugar de trabajo, nombres de familiares o patrono), se clasificará bajo un seudónimo (nombre inventado) para proteger su identidad, y los archivos de audio/video se eliminarán permanentemente de la computadora y cualquier método de almacenamiento digital que haya sido utilizado para la grabar. Solo se compartirá con el co-investigador, miembros del DECEP (transcripciones sin identificadores) y se podría compartir con futuros investigadores miembros del equipo de investigación **de la UPR**, presente y futuro.

La transcripción del grupo focal, la encuesta, y trabajos se conservarán permanentemente.

Pese que la encuesta y los trabajos pueden contener información para identificar de indirectamente a alguien con características únicas en el cohorte, los datos se usarán para propósitos de evaluar la eficacia del programa para con el participante. Del mismo modo, los datos compartidos en Moodle son parte del dominio de la DECEP de la Universidad de Puerto Rico. Las hojas de consentimiento se guardarán por espacio de tres años. Recuerde que la información que comparta electrónicamente en el dispositivo (computadora, celular u otro) o plataforma que utilice puede ser intervenida o revisada por terceras personas. Estas personas pueden tener acceso legítimo o ilegítimo al dispositivo y a su contenido como un familiar, patrono, hackers, intrusos o piratas informáticos, etc. Además, en el dispositivo que utilice puede quedar registro de la información que acceda o envíe electrónicamente.

Estas transcripciones, que utilizan seudónimos y que no contienen identificadores, serán registradas para futuros proyectos e investigaciones. El acceso a las grabaciones de audio antes de ser transcritas se limitará al equipo de evaluación dirigido Fiorelys Mendoza. Además, las hojas de consentimiento informado serán conservadas por un periodo de 3 años. *Oficiales del Recinto de Río Piedras de la Universidad de Puerto Rico o de agencias federales responsables de velar por la integridad en la investigación podrían requerirle a la investigadora los datos crudos obtenidos en este estudio, incluyendo este documento. *

Derechos

La participación en este estudio es voluntaria y, de rehusarse a participar o decidir retirarse de la investigación, esto no representará una penalidad ni pérdida de beneficios a los que el participante tiene derecho ni su proceso de evaluación para la certificación. Si leyó este documento y decidió participar, por favor entienda que tiene derecho y puede solicitar copia de este documento. Le exhortamos a que guarde y/o imprima el mismo. Si tiene alguna pregunta o

desea más información sobre esta investigación, por favor comuníquese con la investigadora principal de este estudio a Fiorelys Mendoza vía email a fiorelys.mendoza@upr.edu o por teléfono. Si tiene preguntas sobre sus derechos como participante o una reclamación o queja relacionada con su participación en este estudio, puede comunicarse con la Oficial de Cumplimiento del Recinto de Río Piedras de la Universidad de Puerto Rico al teléfono 787-764-0000, extensión 86773 o a cipshi.degi@upr.edu.

Consentimiento para participar del estudio:

Marque con una X si consiente a participar de este estudio.

Yo consiento a participar en una reunión grabada (grupo focal) con otros participantes del PADE y/o entrevista individual, a que se utilicen mis respuestas en la encuesta y mis trabajos como parte de los datos. También autorizo a comunicación de seguimiento luego de participar en el grupo focal para propósitos de abundar y/o clarificar en las respuestas dadas en el grupo focal inicial.

Certifico que se discutió la hoja de consentimiento informado y que accedo a participar de una reunión grabada para hablar de mi experiencia en la Academia PADE.

_____ (espacio para nombre completo del participante _____)
Escriba su nombre completo

Escribir su nombre constituye un acuerdo al consentimiento informado y a participar de la investigación.

APPENDIX B

Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras

Survey to be given to participants of PADE using Google Forms

Scan QR code:



Directions: Please answer each question as accurately as possible by circling the correct answer or filling in the space provided.

1. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

2. What is your age range?

- 18-25
- 26-30
- 30-40
- 41-50
- 50 or more

3. How does your English proficiency compare to your peers in PADE with regards to speaking?

- About the same
- Lower
- More advanced

4. How does your own English proficiency compare to your peers in PADE with regards to writing ?

- About the same
- Lower
- More advanced

5. How does your own English proficiency compare to your peers in PADE with regards to listening domain?

- About the same
- Lower
- More advanced

6. How does your own English proficiency compare to your peers in PADE with regards to reading?

- About the same
- Lower
- More advanced

7. What is the highest degree you have earned?

- Bachelor's degree
- Bachelor's degree with master's credits
- Master's degree
- Master's degree with doctoral credits
- Doctoral degree
- Post-doctorate degree

8. What teaching level are you currently working with?

- Pre-school
- Lower elementary (k-3rd)
- Upper Elementary (4th-6th)
- Middle School (7th-9th)
- High School (10th-12th)

9. How many years of teaching experience do you have (without considering the teacher practicum)?

- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21-25 years
- 26 -30+ years

10. What is your primary teaching certification in (with the PRDE)?

- Pre-School (K-3)
- Elementary (3rd -6th)
- History/Social Studies
- Science
- Math
- English Teaching: Elementary
- English Teaching: Secondary
- Spanish
- Physical Education
- Foreign Languages
- Other : _____
- I do not have a teaching certification. My preparation is in _____

11. Do you have additional teaching certifications?

- Yes, I have an additional teaching certification in _____
- No

12. How did you receive your current teaching position?

- special recruitment
- traditional method (college & tests)

13. How many years have you been teaching in the school you are currently at? (refer to the example. Example: Place a zero before the actual number.

0	5

Example: If you have been teaching for five years, place a zero before the actual number.

14. How many schools have you taught in (without counting the one where you are at right now?

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Example: If you have been in less than 10 schools, place a zero before the actual number.

0	5
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15. Have you taught a different level in the past?

- No
- Yes, in the past I have taught (mark all that apply):
- Pre-school
- Lower elementary (k-3rd)
- Upper Elementary (4th-6th)
- Middle School (7th-9th)
- High School (10th-12th)

16. Were you encouraged by anyone else to enroll in PADE?

- Yes, My supervisor
- Yes, My peers
- Yes, Family members

- No, I decided to participate on my own.

17. As a participant of PADE, how satisfied are you with your experience in courses taken thus far?

- Extremely satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Not too satisfied
- Totally unsatisfied

18. At this point in the course sequence, how confident are you in your ability to implement the concepts about English education in your own setting? If you do not currently teach English at your school, you can answer this question assuming you were transferred to an English teaching position.

- Extremely confident
- Confident
- Not too confident, but I could do it
- Extremely doubtful of my abilities to fulfill the role of an English teacher

19. At this point in the Academy sequence, how would you rate your preparedness to teach English in a school (to plan, create, incorporate, and implement activities that meet the English education expectations and area standards)?

- Extremely prepared

- Somewhat prepared
- Slightly prepared
- Unprepared

20. How significant do you believe culturally relevant material is for students' learning of English?

- Extremely significant
- Somewhat significant
- Slightly significant
- Insignificant

21. How significant is a students' social context while learning English in Puerto Rico?

- Extremely significant
- Somewhat significant
- Slightly significant
- Insignificant

22. Considering your academic experience in PADE, would you recommend it to a colleague?

- Definitely
- Likely
- Maybe
- Unlikely
- No, I wouldn't recommend it.

23. Please, mark (click) with an x, to assess your level of satisfaction with the following aspects.

	Extremely satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Somewhat dissatisfied	Extremely dissatisfied
Program organization					
Professors' knowledge about topics					
Grade keeping					
Academic support					
Course content					
Assessments (projects, reports, quizzes, exams, etc.)					
Asynchronous work					
Weekly online classes					
Class hours (length)					
Class schedule (Mondays & Thursdays)					
Length of classes (6 weeks)					
Length of PADE (11 months)					
Moodle					

24. Were the readings and content appealing and in-line with the course descriptions?

- Yes
- No

25. What certification did you enroll in?

- PADE English K-6 (Elementary)
- PADE English 7-12 (Secondary)

26.A For PADE K-6. Please, mark with an x, to assess the difficulty level of the following courses.

	Not difficult	Somewhat difficult	Neutral	Difficult	Extremely difficult
EING 4016- Prof. Layla Colón					
EING 4047- Prof. Johana Vivoni					
EING 4018- Prof. Sandra Quiñones					
INGL 3227-					

Prof. Katherine Morales					
EING 4045- Prof. Vanessa Mari					
EING 4019- Prof. Nathaly Batista					

26.B For PADE Secondary. Please, mark with an x, to assess the difficulty level of the following courses.

	Not difficult	Somewhat difficult	Neutral	Difficult	Extremely difficult
EING 4045- Prof. Vanessa Mari					
EING 4206- Prof. Alison Torres					
EING 4005- Prof. Layla Colón					
EING 4018- Prof. Fiorelys Mendoza					
INGL 3227- Prof. Katherine Morales					
EING 4020- Prof. Elenita Irizarry					

27. On average, how much out of class time did you spend working on preparing for courses and completing assignments for PADE courses on a weekly basis?

- Less than 1 hour a week
- Approximately 1 hour a week
- Approximately 2 hours a week
- Approximately 3 hours a week
- Approximately 4 hours a week
- Approximately 5 hours a week
- Approximately 6 hours a week
- Approximately 7 hours a week
- Approximately 8 hours a week or more

28. Besides working as a teacher for the Department of Education and being a PADE student, what other tasks do you comply with on a weekly basis? Mark all that apply.

- Taking care of minors (family)
- Taking care of elders (relatives)
- After school tutoring
- Volunteer at an organization
- Enrolled in another institution of higher education
- Additional job (part time)
- Other: _____

29. How many jobs outside the PRDE do you have?

- 1 additional job
- 2 additional jobs
- 3 or more additional jobs
- I do not have additional jobs

30. What was your favorite class of the PADE sequence and why?

31. What was the least favorite class of sequence and why?

32. Is there anything else that you would like to add regarding your experience in the PADE thus far?

33. In what ways might PADE better support your needs?

APPENDIX C



Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol**To be used for both the Individual Interviews as well as the Focus Group Interview**

The following questions will serve as guide questions throughout the individual interview process.

1. Why did you decide to enroll in PADE?
2. Tell me a little about your overall experience in PADE. Overall: What is positive or negative? What aspects of the program made it that way?
3. What were some of the theoretical or content related concepts that stood out for you?
4. In which ways will what you learned throughout the courses help you be a better English teacher, either now or at some point in the future?
5. What activities assigned or completed through the PADE program have proven to be relevant to your teaching training and/or classroom practices? Why?
6. What would you say about the time allotted for the six-course sequence?
7. How would you describe your daily routine while working full time and simultaneously taking PADE?
8. Are you comfortable with the time you spent working on your courses doing both synchronous and asynchronous work, respectively?
9. What readings assigned through the PADE program have proven to be relevant to your teaching training and/or classroom practices? Why?
10. What guidance/implementations done through the PADE program have proven to be relevant to your teaching training and/or classroom practices? Why?
11. Could you assess student progress towards the English language and the four domains of language communication? How?
12. Could you adapt your instruction based on the progress of your students? How?
13. Could you modify instruction to fulfill the needs of diverse students or students experiencing difficulties with learning? How?

14. How could you design effective lessons, daily tasks, projects, different types of assessment integrating both, English language standards and relevant material?
15. Is there something the program coordinators could have done differently to improve the PADE experience?
16. Is there something that you would have done differently during your passing through PADE?
17. Many teachers who are supposed to be teaching in English teach most of the class in Spanish. What would you say to your colleague who comes to you and is having this problem? What advice would you give to them?

Q.2: How satisfied do teachers feel towards the PADE academic offering?

18. State five things experienced in PADE that benefitted your professional career
19. Mention two highlights that you recall from any of your PADE courses.
20. Is there something you would have liked to see in PADE?
21. Is there something you would have liked to do in the PADE courses?
22. Do you have any further comments that will help us improve PADE?
23. With intensive courses like those you have experienced in this course sequence, it is common that participants are left with additional questions, concerns or doubts regarding course material. Is there a particular area or concept that you wish to know more about?

APPENDIX D

Universidad de
Puerto Rico

COMITÉ INSTITUCIONAL PARA LA PROTECCIÓN DE LOS SERES HUMANOS
EN LA INVESTIGACIÓN (CIPSHI)

IRB 00000944
cipshi.degi@upr.edu ~ http://graduados.uprp.edu/cipshi

AUTORIZACIÓN DEL PROTOCOLO

Número del protocolo: 2223-021

Título del protocolo: Evaluating the English recertification process for Puerto Rican teachers: A case study of an accelerated program's efficacy

Investigadora: Fiorelys Mendoza Morales

Tipo de revisión: Inicial Renovación

Evaluación: Comité en pleno
 Revisión expedita:
Categoría(s) de exención 45 CFR §46.104(d): 2 (iii)

Fecha de la autorización: 22 de diciembre de 2022

Además, el CIPSHI:

- Concedió la dispensa solicitada para modificar el procedimiento estándar de toma de consentimiento informado.

Cualquier modificación posterior a esta autorización requerirá la consideración y reautorización del CIPSHI. Además, debe notificar cualquier incidente adverso o no anticipado que implique a los sujetos o participantes. Al finalizar la investigación, envíe el formulario de Notificación de Terminación de Protocolo.

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e Investigación

18 Ave. Universidad STE 1801
San Juan PR 00925-2512

787-764-0000
Ext. 86700
Fax 787-763-6011

Página electrónica:
<http://graduados.uprp.edu>



Aida Jiménez Torres, Ph.D.
Presidenta del CIPSHI o
representante autorizado

APPENDIX E

Elementary English PADE Academy Course Sequence

Timeline	Course	Description
Jan- Mar.	EING 4016: Literature for Children (3 crds.)	For elementary and secondary school teachers. The prospective teachers will read intensively in the fields of children and adolescent literature in order to become familiar with such fields. Literary selections that best appeal to children and adolescents in Puerto Rico and other parts of the world will be presented, preferable those with the best literary style. Students will read about and perform such creative activities as choral speaking, play acting, dramatization and choral singing in relation to the various grade levels. Careful analysis of those literary genres most appealing to children and adolescents such as short stories, nursery rhymes, ballads, tales, myths, poems biography, plays, essays, drama and informative material will be an integral part of the course. Special attention will be given to the appraisal and discussion of cultural patters presented in selected readings as a mean of interpreting American ways of live and American values to Puerto Rican students.
Mar.- Apr.	EING 4047: Teaching English Grammar to Spanish Speakers (3 crds.)	Provides teachers with methodological alternatives and strategies to be utilized in the teaching of the grammatical structures of the English language to Spanish speakers
Apr. -Jun.	EING 4018: Linguistics and the Teaching of Reading (3 crds.)	For future elementary and secondary school teachers of English as a second language. Designed to have the student propound a definition of a consistent theory of learning through the understanding of the psychology of the reading process and the relationship of the reading aspects to language. The factors in reading, readiness, the new trends in reading instruction, initial reading activities as related to students needs will be presented. Experience will be provided in teaching, procedures and preparation of lesson plans, units concerning the development of readings skills, and their transmission at the various grade levels.
Aug.-Sept.	INGL 3227: The Phonetics and Phonemics of the English Language (3 crds.)	The Phonetics and Phonemics of American English INGL 3227 is a practical course directed towards improving the understanding and pronunciation of American English (AE). It provides students with the tools, tips, theories, and techniques to speak English clearly and accurately. The course provides students with a variety of activities and tasks which involve both academic and everyday spoken English, intending to increase their working knowledge of a five-part structure, namely <i>vowels, consonants, syllables, and stress in words, rhythm, and intonation.</i>
Sept.-Oct.	EING 4045: Teaching Writing in ESL (3 crds.)	This course is designed for both elementary and secondary teacher candidates. The main emphasis is to refine teacher candidate's ability in composition writing and at the same time engage them in the art of teaching writing. Teacher candidates will plan instruction for a series of activities to help students develop writing from the sentence to expository text. It will also focus on the ability to draft, revise, conference, edit, and publish, and to form well-constructed, effective texts. Teacher candidates will model these skills in teaching students how to write sentences and compositions in English as a second language.
Nov.-Dec.	EING 4019: Literacy Instruction for Elementary School ESL Learners (3 crds.)	This course emphasizes on how to teach reading as a second language to beginning readers. It is designed for ESL elementary school teacher candidates. The developmental stages of reading from emergent to independent readers will be studied along with developmentally appropriate practices. Current issues will be explored in the topics of phonics instruction, literature-based approaches, phonemic awareness, and the competing theories of emergent literacy and "reading readiness." Best practices in developmental writing are also studied. Teacher candidates will learn how to plan instruction for literacy development. Assessment procedures for diagnosing the students' levels of literacy development and achievement are also included.

APPENDIX F

Secondary English (7th-12th grade) PADE Academy Course Sequence

Timeline	Course	Description
Jan- Mar.	EING 4045: Teaching Writing in ESL	This course is designed for both elementary and secondary teacher candidates. The main emphasis is to refine teacher candidate's ability in composition writing and at the same time engage them in the art of teaching writing. Teacher candidates will plan instruction for a series of activities to help students develop writing from the sentence to expository text. It will also focus on the ability to draft, revise, conference, edit, and publish, and to form well-constructed, effective texts. Teacher candidates will model these skills in teaching students how to write sentences and compositions in English as a second language.
Mar.- Apr.	INGL4206: Grammar of Modern English: Sentence and Clause Structure	Syntactic analysis of the constituent structure of English, proceeding from the simple sentence to the complex, including the noun phrase, adjective clause, noun clause, gerund, and infinitive phrases, and compound structures. Additional Information: This course is designed for those students who are interested in understanding the syntactic structure of Modern English for analysis, criticism and/or composition. Our aim is to provide students with information about and experience in analyzing, parsing, and composing grammatical constituents in English. The course is designed so that students will take control of their own learning needs and outcomes. This is different from your regular lecture course; students will dedicate time to reading and learning content outside class time and completing exercises both in class and as assigned homework with structured guidance from the professor. Classes will be interactive and students will be given ample opportunity to work individually and to participate in small group work and whole class problem solving activities. This course has a two-fold purpose: to familiarize the student with field specific problems and terminology; and to provide a theoretical background for those interested in continuing the study of grammar. To enroll in this course, students should have taken English 3103-3104, or 3011-3012, and/or have scored at level five on the Placement Test.
Apr. -Jun.	EING 4005: Literature for Adolescents	This course is designed to familiarize the teacher candidates with a broad scope of English literature. Outstanding authors and literary works of different genre will be read and discussed in class sessions. Innovative and traditional strategies for teaching literature as well as student-centered activities will be examined and practiced. Extensive reading of literary works is required. Emphasis will be placed on the enjoyment of literature and on stimulating the love of reading in teenagers.
Aug.-Sept.	EING 4018: Linguistics and the Teaching of Reading	For future elementary and secondary school teachers of English as a second language. Designed to have the student propound a definition of a consistent theory of learning through the understanding of the psychology of the reading process and the relationship of the reading aspects to language. The factors in reading, readiness, the new trends in reading instruction, initial reading activities as related to students needs will be presented. Experience will be provided in teaching, procedures and preparation of lesson plans, units concerning the development of readings skills, and their transmission at the various grade levels.
Sept.-Oct.	Ingl 3227: The Phonetics and the Phonemics of the English Language	The Phonetics and Phonemics of American English INGL 3227 is a practical course directed towards improving the understanding and pronunciation of American English (AE). It provides students with the tools, tips, theories, and techniques to speak English clearly and accurately. The course provides students with a variety of activities and tasks which involve both academic and everyday spoken English, intending to increase their working knowledge of a five-part structure, namely <i>vowels, consonants, syllables, and stress in words, rhythm, and intonation</i> .
Nov.-Dec.	EING 4020: Methodology of English as a Second Language Secondary Level	The course is designed to emphasize the relationship among short- and long-term planning. The candidate will learn to plan for standard-based ESL instruction and to determine culturally appropriate practices for diverse students. The course is designed to emphasize the relationship among assessment, planning, and implementation of instruction and student's achievement. Different assessment tools and techniques will be used to diagnose and assess academic progress and achievement. The results or assessment will be analyzed to determine planning and instruction that address student's needs in a classroom setting in small groups or individual instruction at the secondary level. As part of this experience, students will evidence their field experiences with a digital portfolio.