A Study of Preservice Teachers' Preparedness to Teach Reading

Kelli Williams-Page
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A STUDY OF PRESERVICE TEACHERS’ PREPAREDNESS TO TEACH READING

by

KELLI WILLIAMS-PAGE

B.S., Elementary Education, The University of New Mexico, 1993
M.A, Elementary Education, The University of New Mexico, 1995

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education

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December, 2023
DEDICATION

This dedication begins with my parents, Doug and Jan. Both my mom and dad have always been by my side and encouraged me to do my best. You instilled the importance of education and encouraged me to go to college. In addition, you have been supportive of me in all of my endeavors. Thank you for your guidance.

Next, I want to dedicate this to my Grandparents. Elton, Polly, Bill, LaWanda, and Charles. I am grateful to have Grandma Wanda still with me. She tells me every day how proud she is of me. I know my other grandparents are looking down from Heaven and are also proud.

I also want to acknowledge my sisters, Joei and Lezli, and their families, who are my best friends. Dale, Noah, Raquel, Nicholas, Jason, and Jay, each of you, have also supported me through this journey. Your love, friendship, and laughter made it possible to complete this achievement.

Finally, I want to dedicate this to my husband, Justin, my daughter, Justine, her spouse, Renee, and my sons Michael and Brenden. All of you have endured me sitting in my office for hours and witnessed my frustration and tiredness. However, each of you has shown understanding and reassured me. I hope I have set an example through my endurance and completion of my Ph.D. of what you can accomplish and that age doesn’t matter. To my husband, Justin, thank you for reading my drafts many times and constantly supporting me throughout the process. You have stood beside me, rooted for me, and, maybe most importantly, massaged my neck throughout this endeavor.

I love all of you!
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I have one last shout-out to all of my “Dissertation Buddies.” Hannah, Julia, Zack, Helen, Alma, Liz, and Tara, our weekly meetings helped to make it possible for me to obtain my Ph.D.! Thank you!
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ABSTRACT

Only 35% of fourth graders in the United States can read at the proficient level, and only 34% of eighth graders can read proficiently (National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP], 2022). The purpose of this study was to determine how preservice teachers (PSTs) describe their experience of the methodology of teaching reading in their literacy courses. In addition, what specific strategies for teaching reading do PSTs describe as the focus for their teaching reading preparation, and how do PSTs describe the potential of the strategies learned in their coursework to help them teach reading in their future positions? This study utilized a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological approach to analyze and interpret six PSTs’ experiences in their literacy methods courses. I analyzed transcripts from the six semi-structured interviews I conducted with PSTs who have completed all the required literacy courses in their teacher preparation program. My analysis revealed that the PSTs in this study were unable to describe specific methods for teaching reading. In addition, the PSTs also did not consider themselves ready to teach reading effectively. Thus, I recommend that teacher educators consider changing how they teach PSTs to
teach reading. In addition, preservice teacher educators should include the science of reading (SOR) in their preservice teaching programs.

*Keywords:* reading, literacy, teacher preparation programs, methods, Science of Reading (SOR), Simple View of Reading
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CHAPTER 1

Background of Study

The framework for this research began 30 years ago when I became an elementary teacher. I began my career teaching in a third grade classroom. It was my first day of teaching when I saw the many reading deficits that challenged my students. That is when I realized that although I graduated with an endorsement in reading, I did not really know how to teach reading. Based on this first experience, I have spent the last 30 years dedicated to becoming a reading teacher. I set my goals to determine if there is a best way to teach reading. Once I began teaching literacy to PSTs in their literacy methods courses in a teacher preparation program at a southwestern university in the United States, I became even more dedicated to the practice and research of teaching preservice teachers (PSTs) how to teach reading.

Three decades ago, while enrolled in teacher preparation courses at an institution in the southwestern part of the United States, I remember my reading methods course and the term “whole language” repeatedly mentioned; however, I did not have an understanding of the meaning of whole language. In addition, the required text for our reading methods course focused on whole language (Routeman, 1991), although I do not recall my methods course explaining the concept of whole language during class. I remember wondering, “When are we going to learn how to teach students how to learn to read?”

I began my student teaching in a first grade classroom, which my cooperating teacher declared a whole language classroom. My cooperating teacher was enthusiastic; she had a classroom library filled with rich literature, and she was passionate about
demonstrating teaching methods, which included using big books to incorporate shared reading with the students and large chart paper for the teacher to copy predictable text in order to perform choral reading (Goodman, 1989). Her methodology for reading instruction and the incorporation of thematic units were engaging and seemed fun for the students, and students were engrossed. However, I also remember thinking, “But how are students learning to read?” This question came to fruition when I became a third grade teacher and did not know how to teach struggling readers to read. It was not until I earned my Master’s degree and attended an abundance of professional development that I learned the science of teaching reading.

Over the last few decades, there has been disagreement about what constitutes reading in the classroom and teacher preparation. The debate between explicit phonics instruction and whole-word or whole language instruction is an issue in the United States (Adams, 1990; Chall, 1967; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Goodman, 1989; Moats, 1999, 2014; Pearson, 2004; Seidenberg, 2017). Educators, researchers, and parents have questioned whether phonics, a skills-based approach that breaks down the written language into small, simple components, or whole language, a meaning-based approach that emphasizes language and literature and teaches children to read in whole pieces, is the more effective method to teach students to read.

In 1996, the California Department of Education first used the term “balanced literacy” in response to low reading scores on a national reading assessment (California Department of Education, 1996; Honig, 1996). The low test scores were attributed to using whole language instruction in the classroom. The California Department of Education wrote several reports regarding implementing a balanced and comprehensive
approach to teaching reading in response to the low scores. Honig’s 1996 book, *Teaching Our Children to Read: The Role of Skills in a Comprehensive Reading Program*, stressed that a balanced literacy program included explicit skill-based instruction and language-rich literature instruction. Honig based much of his on phonemic awareness and reading studies by leading experts in the literacy field (Adams, 1990, 1991, 1997; Beck & Juel, 1995; Clay, 1991; Juel, 1994; Pearson, 1993; Share & Stanovich, 1995; Stahl, 1992; Williams, 1991). The National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000) endorsed the balanced literacy approach, stating that “systematic phonics instruction should be integrated with other reading instruction to create a balanced reading program” (p. 97). In 1996, the California Department of Education implemented a balanced literacy curriculum for kindergarten through third grade (Asselin, 1999). For the first time in my teaching career, I felt I was introduced to an approach to teaching students how to read effectively.

I am not alone when I say that I graduated from a teacher preparation training program without the skills to teach students how to teach reading. After teaching for 20 years and becoming a principal, I presented a professional development workshop to my staff regarding teaching reading. During the presentation, a second grade teacher colleague said, “This is such helpful information. I cannot believe I have taught reading for this long and did not know that!” At that time, many other teachers concurred with her statement, and I knew that more training in teacher preparation was needed to teach teachers how to teach reading.

Tortorelli et al. (2021) compiled a literature review regarding teacher preparation programs and the inadequate preparation to teach code-related reading skills. In addition,
their literature review suggests that the lack of teacher training prevents PSTs from effectively teaching these skills. Therefore, Tortorelli et al. suggest that future researchers investigating reading instruction in teacher preparation programs should employ a qualitative approach to acquire the experiences and perspectives of PSTs regarding pedagogy and practice teaching as their backgrounds and experiences in reading instruction. The suggestion made by Tortorelli et al. prompted me to conduct a hermeneutic phenomenological study regarding the experiences and perspectives of PSTs learning to teach reading.

Positionality

I have experienced being a first-generation college graduate, a former student in a reading methods course, a beginning elementary teacher who lacked the skills to teach reading, and a principal who witnessed teachers not knowing how to teach reading. Thirty years ago, I began teaching and felt frustrated by the lack of knowledge I had attained from my teacher preparation program regarding teaching students how to read. It was then that I decided to devote my attention to learning what method is best for teaching students how to read. Later in my career, I realized that many teachers complained about the lack of knowledge provided to them to teach reading in their teacher preparation programs. My journey began to find what research identifies as the best way to teach students how to read and whether teacher preparation programs were teaching their PSTs this method.

These experiences add to my positionality regarding my research question, “How do preservice teachers describe their experiences of the methodology of teaching reading in their literacy courses?” Therefore, I conducted a phenomenological study with six
preservice teachers.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of my hermeneutic phenomenological research is to study the common phenomenon and lived experiences of PSTs who have completed all three of the required literacy courses in an elementary teacher program at a university in the southwestern part of the United States (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Peoples, 2021; van Manen, 2017). By conducting semi-structured interviews with PSTs after they have completed their final literacy course, I describe the phenomenon of the PSTs’ experiences of learning to teach the specific components of reading. A second purpose is to illuminate the specific skills PSTs use during their teacher preparation program to teach children how to read. Finally, this study explores the potential of the strategies learned in their coursework to help them teach in their future positions. By interviewing PSTs before becoming immersed in the teaching profession, I can better explain how they learn to teach reading in their literacy courses.

**Research Questions**

The guiding research question for this study is “How do preservice teachers describe their experiences of the methodology of teaching reading in their literacy courses?” Based on this focus, I have developed the following subquestions:

- What specific strategies for teaching reading do preservice teachers describe as the focus of their teaching reading preparation?
- How do preservice teachers describe the potential of the strategies learned in their coursework to help them teach reading in their future positions?
Significance of the Study

An issue faced by the United States is that more than a third of American children cannot read by the fourth grade. The 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) report stated that only 35% of fourth graders in the United States could read at the proficient level, and only 34% of eighth graders could read proficiently.

Such low literacy scores are concerning. One problem addressed in this study is that many new teachers often lack the knowledge or self-efficacy to teach reading or were not effectively taught how to teach literacy in their teacher preparation programs (Copeland et al., 2011; Darling-Hammond & Oakes, 2021; Hikida et al., 2019; Tortorelli et al., 2021; Washburn et al., 2011). These studies confirm that I am not alone when I say that I graduated from a teacher preparation training program without the skills to teach students how to teach reading. Moats (1999) composed a powerful statement, “The urgent task before us is for university faculty and the teaching community to work together to develop programs that can help assure that all teachers of reading have access to this knowledge” (p. 5). Reid Lyon and Weiser (2009) state that if a student has an ineffective teacher even for one year, it can devastate the student’s learning, and the student may never catch up. Therefore, for the well-being of our students, it is crucial for teachers to be well-prepared and appropriately trained in how to teach reading. Moats’, Reid Lyon’s, and Weiser’s statements reiterate my problem, “Teaching reading is a job for an expert” (Moats, p.14). Teacher preparation programs must prepare our teachers better (Copeland et al., 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2006a; Goodman, 1989; Levine, 2006; von Hippel & Bellows, 2018).

This study adds to the literature by describing the lived experiences of how pre-
service teachers learn to teach reading using phenomenology as the research method. The significance of this research study is to influence teacher preparation programs to pay heed to the research findings and eliminate the gap between what the research shows and what is actually taught to PSTs when teaching how to teach reading. As I will discuss in more depth in the next chapter, the National Reading Panel and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD, 2000) identified phonemic awareness, systematic phonics instruction, fluency, vocabulary, and strategies for teaching comprehension as necessary components for teaching reading instruction. However, PSTs must first be trained to teach these strategies before they can teach them to students.

**Limitations**

A limitation of this study is that some of my participants may have volunteered because they have a strong negative or strong positive position regarding how reading should be taught to PSTs. Also, some may have volunteered because they have a strong negative or positive position regarding how they were taught to teach reading at the university.

**Delimitations**

For this study, I interviewed PSTs instead of beginning teachers because it is important for me to discover what the PSTs have learned in their literacy methods courses before they enter the classroom full-time. Because I conducted a phenomenological study to understand the lived experiences of PSTs learning to teach reading, I did not interview literacy instructors from the university.

**Definition of Terms**

As noted by Hoffman et al. (2020), a challenge in writing this was determining
the word choice between **reading** and **literacy**. Over the past 20 years, the field of reading has incorporated the term “literacy.” For example, in addition to the term balanced literacy introduced in 1996, the *Journal of Reading Research* became the *Journal of Literacy Research*, the International Reading Association became the International Literacy Association (ILA), and the National Reading Council (NRC) became the Literacy Research Association (LRA). For this study, I use the word literacy, except in cases of historical and current use by the science of reading (SOR) advocates who place emphasis on reading. In addition, the following terms are defined for the context of this research.

**Comprehension:** The ability to read text, process what was read, and understand and interpret its meaning.

**Fluency:** The ability to read with speed, accuracy, and proper expression.

**Fundations:** Fundations (Wilson, 2002), also known as Wilson Language Training, is a structured literacy approach grounded in the science of reading and is used to teach children Pre-K to Grade 3 reading, spelling, and handwriting skills.

**Literacy:** The ability to read and write and use language to read, write, listen, and speak.

**Orton-Gillingham Approach:** A direct, explicit, multisensory, and prescriptive way to teach literacy to students with difficulty with reading, writing, and spelling skills or those with dyslexia.

**Phoneme:** The smallest unit of sound.

**Praxis Test:** A national examination that measures the knowledge and skills teachers need to prepare for the classroom and is required for credentialed educators K-12 in most states.
**Preservice teachers (PSTs):** Student teachers or teacher candidates enrolled in a teacher education program and working toward teacher certification.

**Reading:** Reading is a multifaceted process involving word recognition, comprehension, and fluency.

**Science of reading (SOR):** Evidence of the research that reading experts have conducted on how children learn to read.

**Shared reading:** An instructional strategy in which the teacher involves a group of learners in the reading of text to help them learn aspects of beginning literacy, such as fluency, expression, print conventions, print tracking, the concept of a word, and beginning reading strategies.

**Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP):** An instructional model initially proven effective in addressing the academic needs of English learners; however, it has been proven effective for all learners.

**Simple View of Reading (SVR):** A formula defining the skills contributing to reading comprehension: word recognition × language comprehension = reading comprehension (Gough & Tunmer, 1986).

**Tier 1:** A strategy that provides the instructional foundation for the whole class.

**Tier 2:** A strategy that provides targeted, preventive intervention offered to small groups of students.

**Tier 3:** An intensive intervention offered to students for whom support in Tiers 1 and 2 was insufficient.

**Organization of the Dissertation Document**

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the study. Chapter 2 of this dissertation
presents a review of the literature that is relevant to this study. It also describes literature regarding how reading has been taught to students throughout the decades. Chapter 2 also discusses debates regarding each reading method that have persisted throughout the years among scholars regarding the best approaches to teaching reading to young children. Literature regarding state and federal policy initiatives regarding teaching reading is also included. Chapter 2 concludes with information regarding teacher education programs and literacy instruction in teacher education programs. Chapter 3 presents the research procedures and methodology used to design and conduct my study, including how I selected my participants, and Chapter 3 discusses my semi-structured interview method for collecting data and my processes for analyzing data. Chapter 4 presents the study’s results and the analysis of the qualitative data. Finally, Chapter 5 presents a summary and discussions, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

The purpose of this literature review is to synthesize the research that is relevant to my study. The chapter begins by addressing whether a skills-based or meaning-based approach is better for teaching children to read. The chapter is then set up by reading trends throughout the decades: 1960s-1970s, 1980s-1990s, and finally concludes with 2000-present. This chapter also includes a brief history of how teachers have taught reading for the past 40-plus years and describes the methods of phonics, whole language, and balanced literacy. Next, I highlight some of the first studies conducted in teacher preparation programs. In addition, the literature review provides information regarding state and federal policy initiatives implemented to improve reading instruction in the United States. The literature review discusses how one report criticizes some teacher education programs and how teacher education programs have responded. The literature review examines studies of teacher education programs and how teacher preparation programs teach literacy. Finally, this review includes how the SOR movement is the current trend and discusses how the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRA) training has become a practical approach to teaching teachers how to use the SOR.

Teaching Reading as a Modern Educational Controversy

For years, there have been debates over whether a skills-based approach that breaks down the written language into small, simple components or a meaning-based approach that emphasizes language and literature and teaches children to read in whole pieces is more effective for teaching students how to read (Barry, 2008; Beck & Beck,

Look, Spot, look.

Look and see.

Stop, stop.

Go, Spot.

Go, Spot, go

Look, look.

See Spot.

Come, Spot, come.

Flesch (1955) believed the only way to develop early reading skills was through systematic phonics instruction. In addition, Flesch also condemned the guessing of words and said that poor readers would continue to guess at words throughout their lives without really learning to read.

1960s-1970s

The release of Flesch’s (1955) book sparked a debate surrounding reading methods and which method should be used to teach children to read. In the 1960s, the first scientific studies were carried out in teacher preparation. In the late 1960s, educational theorists, researchers, and behavioral scientists introduced whole language
instruction (Hempenstall, 1997). This section describes the Torch Lighters, The First Grade Studies, The Great Debate, and The Torch Lighters Revisited.

The First Preservice Study—The Torch Lighters

Many studies have questioned if PSTs are effectively prepared to teach reading. In 1961, Austin and Morrison (1961) published the book The Torch Lighters: Tomorrow’s Teachers of Reading, which gathered data from 74 teacher preparation programs around the country. Their systematic study aimed to understand how teacher preparation programs prepared PSTs to teach reading and to make recommendations for improving reading instruction. This revolutionary study focused primarily on content knowledge versus instructional methods in teacher preparation programs. The data collected through interviews and surveys determined that the teacher preparation programs were not spending enough time focused on the teaching of reading. The researchers made 22 recommendations for improvement, including the organization and content of the reading courses. They also made recommendations regarding administration and instruction, which were integral to the PST’s preparatory reading program (Austin & Morrison, 1961; Hoffman et al., 2020; Morrison & Austin, 1977).

First Grade Studies

The First Grade Studies (Bond & Dykstra, 1967) are a group of 27 independent studies that took place from 1964 to 1967. They were some of the first studies conducted by the United States Office of Education to determine the best method for teaching reading. Included in the research were the following questions:

1. To what extent are various pupil, teacher, class, school, and community characteristics related to pupil achievement in first-grade reading and spelling?
2. Which of the many approaches to initial reading instruction produces superior reading spelling achievement at the end of the first grade?

3. Is any program uniquely effective or ineffective for pupils with high or low readiness for reading? (Bond & Dykstra, 1967, p. 33).

The researchers collected data from first grade classrooms in the United States. They evaluated Basal, Basal plus Phonics, Initial Teaching Alphabet, Linguistic, Language Experience, and Phonic/Linguistic approaches. Although there were 27 individual projects, one coordinating center analyzed the studies. Their results revealed that the best predictor of reading achievement in first grade was the ability to recognize the letters of the alphabet prior to reading instruction. After one year of reading instruction, the non-basal instructional programs proved superior when measuring word recognition. The basals used at the time focused on reading for meaning and lacked systematic phonics components. However, the findings were less consistent in the areas of comprehension, spelling, and rate of accuracy of reading and word study skills. Although the study found that learning the alphabetic code was essential for beginning readers, other factors were necessary, such as language, teaching, appropriate reading difficulty, and instructional materials (Bond & Dykstra, 1967).

**Learning to Read: The Great Debate**

Jeanne Chall continued research regarding best practices for beginning reading instruction. In 1967, Chall introduced her book *Learning to Read: The Great Debate*. This study examined which type of reading instruction was best for teaching children how to read. In addition, she researched commercial reading materials and separated them into meaning-emphasis and code-emphasis approaches. Meaning-emphasis
approaches included the “whole word” or “look-say” methods of teaching reading. This method included recognizing the entire word in contrast with the code-emphasis method, which included phonics. The phonetic approach taught children to sound out words by matching letters with sounds. After intensive research, Chall agreed with the First Grade Studies that a decoding emphasis approach was more important than a meaning emphasis approach. Decoding produced better word recognition and spelling, making it easier for children to read for comprehension. In addition, she recommended that the reading program content be re-examined.

**Torch Lighters Revisited**

In 1974, Morrison and Austin began a follow-up study to their original *The Torch Lighters* study (1961) to determine what changes had occurred in teacher preparation programs and if the programs had adopted any of their suggestions. Their 1961 original study made 22 recommendations for teacher preparation programs. In their new study, in addition to the 161 returned completed questionnaires, they selected 50 teacher preparation schools to provide more information about their programs. In 1977, the release of *The Torch Lighters Revisited* (Morrison & Austin) revealed that 14 of the 22 recommendations were in effect to a substantial extent. Notable examples of improvement were that many schools began requiring a second and a third reading course, and more emphasis was placed on content and competency-based performances. However, they noted that student teaching programs had made little progress. One problem is that teacher preparation programs made little effort to attract quality cooperating teachers. In addition, teacher preparation programs did not recognize cooperating teachers for their professionalism and importance in preparing student
teachers. Additionally, cooperating teachers were not being financially compensated. Finally, respondents made recommendations for the future. The recommendations included an increase in the number of required reading courses in teacher preparation programs, an earlier introduction to realistic reading settings, and the need for federal funding to subsidize teacher preparation programs. They also expressed concern regarding the quality of faculty responsible for teaching reading courses (Morrison & Austin, 1977).

During the 1960s, the first scientific studies on teacher preparation were conducted. In the 1960s, educational theorists, researchers, and behavioral scientists introduced whole language instruction to the classroom (Hempenstall, 1997). In this section, I described The Torch Lighters, the First Grade Studies, the Great Debate, and The Torch Lighters Revisited. These studies played a significant role in the development of modern educational practices. They highlighted the importance of teacher preparation, the need for educational research, and the potential of whole language instruction.

1980s-1990s

During the next decades, researchers began to question the decoding method for teaching children to read. Theorists of whole language conducted research to challenge Bond and Dykstra’s (1967) and Chall’s (1967) findings (Goodman, 1989; Smith, 1992). Their whole-language research stated that using context clues was more effective in helping a child to read rather than using phonics (Kim, 2008). Chall’s term, the “Great Debate,” stirred up controversy, and the “reading wars” began. Researchers in the 1980s and 1990s debated phonics instruction and the whole language philosophy.

Reading Wars
The reading wars began as a debate between two methods of teaching children how to read—phonics or whole language. Many people believe that phonics is the best way to teach children to read, while others believe that whole language is the best way. Phonics teaches children how to read by decoding or combining sounds (phonemes) and letters, while whole language teaches children how to read by learning the meaning of words (Chall, 1967; Goodman, 1989; Gough & Tunmer, 1986). I describe more detailed explanations for each method below.

**Phonics Instruction**

Austin and Morrison (1967), Chall (1967), and Morrison and Austin (1977) agreed that a stronger decoding or phonics program produced higher reading achievement. Phonics instruction refers to the sound-letter relationship used in reading and writing. Phonics instruction also includes teaching the awareness that the letters or the letter combinations in written language and the individual sounds in spoken language can be used in relationship to spell words (Strickland, 1998). This is also known as the science-based approach (Moats, 1999; Stouffer, 2021).

Phonics instruction is also known as the bottom-up approach. A bottom-up approach means children start at the bottom and work their way up. They do this by first learning the names and shapes of the letters. Next, students learn the sounds that are represented by each letter. Finally, students will combine letter sounds into words (Gunning, 2020).

One part of phonics instruction is phonemic awareness. Phonemes are the distinct unit of sound that makes a difference in a word’s meaning. Phonemic awareness is essential for children because, unlike writing, the speech used for oral communication
does not contain separate sounds in words. The brain, not the ear, performs the function of separating the phonemes into individual sounds. For this reason, researchers believe in explicit, systematic phonics instruction (Ehri, 2020; Honig et al., 2018; Moats & Foorman, 2003).

**Approaches to Teaching Phonics**

There are two main approaches to teaching phonics: synthetic and analytic. Synthetic phonics is an explicit approach, and analytic phonics is an implicit approach. Below are descriptions of each approach.

*Synthetic Approach*

Synthetic phonics is the explicit approach of teaching the alphabetic code that consists of approximately 44 phonemes (sounds) and graphemes (letters and letter combinations) that are pronounced in isolation and blended together (Beck & Juel, 1999; Gunning, 2020; Honig et al., 2018; Strickland, 1998). Research by the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) shows that a synthetic approach to teaching phonics is more successful in teaching children how to read than an analytic approach. Examples of synthetic phonics programs are Orton Gillingham (Orton-Gillingham Academy, 1995) and *Fundations: Wilson Language Basics* (Wilson, 2002).

*Analytic Approach*

Analytic phonics is the implicit teaching approach in which the sounds associated with letters are not pronounced in isolation. This teaching approach starts from the whole word, and after identifying a word, students analyze its letter sounds. After establishing an initial sight vocabulary, this approach allows students to guess and make inferences based on context. Many commercial reading programs often include implicit phonics

**The Simple View of Reading (SVR)**

The Simple View of Reading (SVR) is a formula demonstrating that reading has two key components: word recognition (decoding) and language comprehension. Reading comprehension is the result of these two factors.

In response to Goodman and Goodman’s (1979) proposal that learning to read is a natural act, Gough and Hillinger (1980) wrote a paper titled “Learning to Read: An Unnatural Act.” Gough and Hillinger wrote this paper to dispute Goodman and Goodman’s claim that learning to read is natural and that you can immerse children in print, and they will learn naturally to read just as they learned to speak.

Six years later, in 1986, Gough and Tunmer posited that the key to becoming a skilled reader is for teachers to teach decoding skills or efficient word recognition when teaching children to read. Gough and Tunmer state that decoding should be a focus of instruction. In addition, students must have language comprehension. Gough and Tunmer describe language comprehension as “… linguistic comprehension, that is, the process by which, given lexical (i.e., word) information, sentences, and discourses are interpreted” (p. 7).

Gough and Tunmer (1986) created a formula to show that reading comprehension equals decoding (D), or word recognition (WR), times (×) language comprehension (LC) equals (=) Reading Comprehension (RC). The original formula was written as “R = D × C” (p. 7). In this article, the authors state that when they say “comprehension,” they are not referring to reading comprehension but rather “linguistic comprehension.” Therefore, you will most often see the formula shown in Figure 1.
Figure 1

*The Simple View of Reading*

Note. This figure demonstrates Gough and Tunmer’s (1986) Simple View of Reading.

Gough and Tunmer (1986) wanted to point out that this is a multiplication formula and not an addition formula. For example, if a person has word recognition but lacks language comprehension, reading comprehension is not possible (i.e., \( 1 \times 0 = 0 \)). In contrast, if a person lacking word recognition has language comprehension, then reading comprehension is impossible (i.e., \( 0 \times 1 = 0 \)). Finally, a person with both word recognition and language comprehension will also have reading comprehension (i.e., \( 1 \times 1 = 1 \)).

**Whole Language Philosophy**

Whole language was a grass-roots movement considered a philosophy rather than a set of specified activities for teaching reading. The whole language classroom teacher provides activities based on their knowledge of the philosophy of whole language. Because whole language views differ considerably, it is difficult to describe how a whole language classroom actually operates (Goodman, 1989; Hempenstall, 1997). Goodman (1989) states that whole language is based on the psychological research of Piaget and Vygotsky.

In 1967, Goodman (1981) coined the name whole language for his interactive model of reading instruction.
My model is a reading model. It assumes the goal of reading is constructing meaning in response to text. That does not require ‘recognizing’ words, letters, or anything else. Constructing meaning requires interactive use of grapho-phonic, syntactic, and semantic cues. (p. 477)

Goodman’s model was a top-down approach, meaning his theory believes learning to read is similar to learning a language. It progresses naturally through immersion and does not require subskill instruction (Goodman, 1989; Gunning, 2020). Goodman stated that whole language practice is based on scientific research and theory. He noted that the whole language classroom is child-centered and integrates language processes, including learning cognitive development, and the teacher makes practical decisions based on their own understanding.

_A Nation at Risk—The Beginning of Modern Education Reform_

The concern regarding the quality of education in the United States was addressed in 1983 with the publication of _A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform_. This report described how the American education system was failing compared to other industrial nations. Included in the report were indicators of risk for the nation. The risk indicators included reports that stated that 23 million American adults were functionally illiterate, and 13% of all 17-year-olds in the United States were considered functionally illiterate. Finally, business and military leaders complained that they spent millions of dollars on remedial training for basic reading skills for new employees. Although these statistics refer to adolescent and adult reading statistics, they directly relate to how they were taught (or not taught) to read in their early experiences from kindergarten to third grade (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).
The Introduction of Balanced Literacy

The California Department of Education expressed concern in 1996 regarding the low reading scores that California students received on a national reading test (California Department of Education, 1996; Honig, 1996). The low scores were blamed on using whole language instruction in the classroom. In response to the low scores, the California Department of Education wrote several reports regarding implementing a balanced and comprehensive approach to teaching reading. The National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) endorsed the balanced literacy approach, stating that “systematic phonics instruction should be integrated with other reading instruction to create a balanced reading program” (p. 93). This balanced literacy curriculum was implemented in kindergarten through third grade. A balanced literacy program in its original form focused on teaching the phonics cueing system and shared, guided, and independent reading approaches of the whole language approach within separate literacy blocks (Asselin, 1999).

Balanced Literacy Defined by Reading Scholars

Honig (1996) lists leading literacy scholars that “have persuasively argued that, in fact, we should not be having this destructive controversy about skills-based versus whole language philosophies of reading at all, that this is not an ‘either/or question’” (p. 2). With their approach, along with a growing number of other experts and leading practitioners in the field of reading education, they advocated a balanced approach that combined whole language activities aimed at fostering meaning, understanding, and a love of language with explicit instruction on developing fluency with print, including automatic recognition of new words and the ability to decode them. The literacy scholars
that Honig mentions and a few other scholars who advocate for a balanced literacy program all seem to have different ways of defining balanced literacy. In the following section, I provide some of the scholars’ definitions of balanced literacy.

Honig (1996) defined a balanced reading program as providing separate, explicit skill instruction and language-rich literature instruction. Honig described daily instruction that provides one hour of direct teaching letter-sound correspondences, practicing previously taught material in texts with familiar word patterns, and working with words and spelling. An additional one-hour period is to be set aside for instruction in shared reading, reading children’s literature, reader-response interactions, and the teaching of writing.

McIntyre and Pressley, editors and contributors to their 1996 book, described how strategies and skills instruction could be learned and practiced during meaningful reading and writing instruction. They expressed little confidence that decontextualized skills instruction would automatically transfer to children naturally learning to read. However, they recognized that some students did not develop essential skills for reading and writing. Their version of balanced literacy was to interweave implicit, planned instruction in skills combined with whole language principles.

Freppon and Dahl (1998) interviewed both McIntyre and Pressley. McIntyre explained, “Balanced instruction is a useful term for what good teaching is, viz., thoughtful, planned instruction based on children’s background, interests, strengths, and needs” (p. 244). Pressley described balanced literacy “as a program with more systematic instruction of skills than would be present in classroom versions of whole language with their emphasis on teaching only when there is a demonstrated need” (p. 244).
Strickland (1998) called attention to the idea that no specific balanced literacy teaching method exists. However, she believed that skills should be balanced with meaningful literacy activities. There should be a balance between direct and indirect instruction and content and process. In addition, there should be a balance of trade books and textbooks, informal classroom assessments, and norm-referenced standardized tests.

In 1998, Pressley published *Reading Instruction That Works* to clarify misconceptions about the balanced literacy approach to teaching reading. This book offered a slightly different definition of balanced instruction than his previous edited work with McIntrye (McIntyre & Pressley, 1996). While this text still promoted holistic teaching, Pressley placed more emphasis on skills. Pressley posited that good teachers teach a curriculum with a balance of skills development and authentic reading and writing. In 2002, Pressley wrote the second edition of his book, which included new information from three important national reports regarding reading; one of these was *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow et al., 1998). Other reports that inspired his revisions included the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) and the first draft of *Reading for Understanding: Towards an R&D Program in Reading Comprehension* (RAND Reading Study Group, 2001). Pressley’s second edition also included information from two essential handbooks that had influenced him since his first edition: *Handbook of Early Literacy Research* (Neuman & Dickinson, 2001) and *Handbook of Reading Research, Volume 3* (Kamil et al., 2016). In addition, he was influenced by the journal titled *Scientific Studies of Reading*, which included new developments in reading, and the *Journal of Educational Psychology*. Pressley stated that there was much to reflect upon since his 1998 version.
Williams (1999) had a seemingly different opinion of balanced literacy. She emphasized, “Balance is not a method of blending approaches. It is not adding phonics instruction to a whole language classroom or adding real books to a basal classroom. Instead, it is about understanding your students and ‘the reality of their differences’” (p. 12).

Moats wrote, “Unfortunately, many who pledge allegiance to balanced reading continue to misunderstand reading development and to deliver poorly conceived, ineffective instruction” (2000, p. 11). She stated that the division between teaching the SOR and whole language instruction had not been bridged. In her view, “A marriage of these perspectives is neither possible nor desirable” (p. 11). Moats was worried that while trying to incorporate a balanced approach in their classroom, teachers still did not understand what science tells us about effective literacy instruction. All children need explicit instruction in phonics in early reading development. In addition, attention to meaning, comprehension strategies, language development, and writing are essential. Moats added that children need exposure to both fiction and nonfiction books to develop an interest and the pleasure of reading.

**What Makes Literacy Instruction Balanced?**

After reviewing the literature and realizing the numerous definitions of balanced literacy understanding from literacy scholars, it is no wonder teacher educators might misunderstand what a balanced literacy program is or how to teach it. The International Literacy Association (2021) defined balanced literacy instruction as:

A balanced literacy program includes both foundational and language comprehension instructional features, such as phonemic awareness and phonics...
(understanding the relationships between sounds and their written representations), fluency, guided oral reading, vocabulary development, and comprehension. An alternative interpretation of balanced literacy is that it mixes features of whole language and basic skills instruction (Literacy Glossary, Balanced Literacy).

Most recently, balanced literacy has been targeted by literacy professionals who affiliate themselves with the SOR. Pearson et al. (2023) stated that “Balanced literacy was not a middle ground for the 1990’s phonics versus whole-language debate but instead was merely a new label to mask business as usual among whole-language enthusiasts” (p. 4). Moats (1999) believed that PSTs should be taught the SOR to teach children how to read. Moats also stated that, unlike spoken language, which is learned in contextual exposure, reading is an acquired skill that is a complex linguistic achievement. Therefore, expert reading teachers should know the language structure, such as phonetics, language and reading development, and oral language proficiency (Moats & Foorman, 2003).

In the 1980s–1990s, the decoding method for teaching children to read began to be questioned. Whole language researchers challenged Bond and Dykstra’s (1967) and Chall’s (1967) findings (Goodman, 1989; Smith, 1992). According to their whole-language research, context clues were more effective than phonics in helping a child to read (Kim, 2008). Finally, Chall’s term, the “Great Debate,” sparked controversy, resulting in the “reading wars” (Chall, 1967). Phonics instruction and the whole language philosophy were controversial topics in the 1980s and 1990s. The debate continues as educators argue which approach is the most effective for teaching children to read.
2000-Present

By the 2000s, it was clear that the reading wars still existed. During the 2000s, state and federal governments introduced several initiatives to help improve reading instruction in the United States. In addition, the pendulum began to swing again, and cognitive scientists advocated for the SOR.

Implementation of National Reading Panel into Preservice Reading Preparation

In 1997, Congress created the National Reading Panel (NRP) to address parents’, teachers’, and administrators’ concerns regarding the problem with teaching reading in the United States and the controversy of approaches used to teach reading. In addition, the panel was interested in what the science of teaching reading had discovered. The goal was to identify the most effective reading instruction and make that information available to educators and parents. The panel completed the NRP report in 2000 and identified five pillars that guide effective early literacy instruction in America’s classrooms: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (NICHD, 2000). The report also stated that systematic phonics programs are significantly more effective than nonphonics programs. In addition, the report noted that although it is possible to “train” teachers to use a specific teaching method, it is more appropriate if teachers are educated in a professional context, which would provide them with proper decision-making tools.

Critics of the National Reading Panel (NRP)

However, critics of the NRP (NICHD, 2000), such as Cunningham (2001) and Allington (2006), criticized the research design of the NRP and their claim that it was not “scientific” research. Cunningham added that the NRP lacked much of the science to inform beginning reading instruction. There was criticism that the panel excluded
rigorous studies that might have altered some findings due to its selective exclusions. Allington also indicated that the actual NRP report was lengthy and not as widely read as the shorter summary document released. In addition, Allington pointed out that there were contradictions in their findings between the NRP full report and the summary document. Another criticism was that the emphasis on phonetics presented a narrower literacy program, which they believed was minimal (Cunningham, 2001; Pressley et al., 2004). Allington argued that the summary document could lead to misinterpretation of the results. Consequently, Allington concluded that the summary document should not be used as the sole source of information.

**No Child Left Behind (NCLB)**

On the heels of the NRP, in 2001, Congress enacted the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001). The passage of the No Child Left Behind Act marked the first sort of federal policymaking. After decades of academic debate, federal legislation addressed effective reading instruction. This legislation required states to develop and adhere to reading instruction standards. It was also the first to require states to report on students’ reading progress and intervene if necessary to ensure improved outcomes. Another goal of NCLB was to ensure that all teachers were highly qualified, meaning that they were certified in the subjects they teach. Other goals were created to close achievement gaps to ensure that all students make adequate yearly progress (AYP). In addition, students were required to complete standardized testing in grades three through eight and once in high school. Schools were required to report the performance of these tests to the state. School grades were assigned, and failing school students could attend another public or charter
school. Finally, NCLB required kindergarten through grade three teachers to use scientifically based instructional strategies (H.R.1 – 107th Congress, 2001-2002).

**Reading First**

As part of the NCLB (NCLB, 2001), the U. S. Department of Education introduced the “Reading First Program.” The Reading First Program’s goal was to help schools improve literacy skills by providing a 90-minute uninterrupted block of reading instruction per day using research-based reading materials. The Reading First initiative awarded grants to states to provide resources to improve reading instruction by providing professional development to prepare teachers to teach the five essential elements for teaching reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. In addition, the Reading First Program also provided funding to states to address procedures to monitor reading progress, provide reading interventions, identify, diagnose, and prevent early reading difficulties, and work with struggling readers (U. S. Department of Education, 2008-09).

**Reading First Impact Study**

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) and the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE) conducted a study to determine the effectiveness of the implementation of Reading First. The Reading First Impact Study: Interim Report (Gamse et al., 2008) addressed Reading First’s impact on student reading achievement. It also addressed classroom instruction and the relationship between the degree of implementation of scientifically-based reading instruction and student reading achievement. The study included data from three school years: 2004-05, 2005-06, and 2006-07.
According to the findings, the Reading First program had a significant positive influence on various reading practices it promoted, such as the duration of instruction dedicated to the five essential components of reading education and the professional development in scientifically-based reading education. While the program did not have a statistically significant effect on the reading comprehension test scores of students in grades one, two, or three, it did have a positive and statistically significant effect on the decoding abilities of first-grade students in the spring of 2007 (Gamse et al., 2008).

**Scarborough’s Reading Rope**

Hollis Scarborough, a developmental psychologist, created the infographic (Figure 2) entitled “Scarborough’s Reading Rope” (2001) to help teachers and parents understand the complexities involved in learning how to read. Scarborough originally created the rope using pipe cleaners to demonstrate the interconnectedness and interdependence of each reading component. The rope parallels the SVR, and Scarborough includes details of the two major components: language comprehension and word recognition. Skilled readers must have both language comprehension and word recognition. The rope consists of upper and lower strands. When these strands are twisted or braided together, they work concurrently and become the rope representing complete skilled reading. The upper twisted strands represent language comprehension, including background knowledge, vocabulary, language structures, verbal reasoning, and literacy knowledge. The lower braided strands represent word recognition, including phonological awareness, decoding, and sight recognition. If any strands are frayed or not woven together, then there is no complete reading comprehension (Hennessy, 2021).
Figure 2

Scarborough’s Reading Rope-The Many Strands That Are Woven Into Skilled Reading

Note: Scarborough created the Reading Rope to illustrate the complexities involved in learning to read.


National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ)

When the National Council on Teacher Quality [NCTQ] (2020) stated that a third of American children could not read by the fourth grade, the National Institute of Health expressed that this was an unacceptable failure rate. This rate could be reduced to less than one in ten if teachers utilize the five essential components of effective reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. In addition, a report by NCTQ stated, “In 2020, only 3% of traditional
teacher education programs earned an ‘A’ when it comes to ensuring clinical practice quality” (p. 6). However, in a survey conducted by *Education Week*, out of 530 professors who taught early-reading courses, 57% ascribed to the balanced literacy philosophy. Only 22% of the professors said they taught an explicit, systematic phonics approach. Professors who taught early reading courses introduced various research findings and theories that are often contradictory, even if they do not align with the larger research (Will, 2019). This survey shows that most professors do not adhere to explicit, systematic phonics, instead opting for the balanced literacy approach. This could be because balanced literacy is easier to teach and requires less expertise. As a result, there is a gap in the education system in terms of teaching proper phonics to students.

**Opposition to the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ)**

Several researchers have criticized the NCTQ reports. Strauss (2013), reporting for Darling-Hammond and Fuller (2014), critiqued the NCTQ report in depth by stating that some of the many flaws with this report include that only 10% of more than 1,100 teacher education programs participated. The reports presented little evidence supporting their claims and the methodology that NCTQ reported using, which included the course syllabi as the primary data source.

Although many state and federal policy initiatives have been implemented, along with the SOR, there is evidence of a disconnect in how our teacher education programs prepare PSTs to teach reading (Hikida et al., 2019; Hindman et al., 2020; Tortorelli et al., 2021). As reflected in the next section, teacher education programs continue to differ across the United States. In addition, the literature suggests that PSTs are still not adequately prepared to teach reading (Bos et al., 2001; Clark et al., 2017; Fielding-
Barnsley & Purdle, 2005; Kosnik & Beck, 2008; Mather et al., 2001; Moats, 1994, 1999; Moats & Foorman, 2003). Furthermore, PSTs often lack the skills and knowledge to identify and provide instruction for students with reading difficulties (Bos et al., 2001). Thus, more attention needs to be given to the preparation of PSTs to ensure that they are adequately prepared to teach reading.

Throughout the 2000s, it was evident that the reading wars continued to exist. The state and federal governments introduced several initiatives to improve reading instruction in the United States during the 2000s. As cognitive scientists began to advocate for the SOR, there was also a change in the pendulum swinging in favor of phonics-based reading. This shift led to increased emphasis on phonics-based instruction and the need for teachers to be trained in evidence-based reading instruction. As a result, many schools and districts implemented SOR-based programs.

**Teacher Education Programs**

Because there is a dire need to prepare future reading teachers to teach reading successfully, teacher preparation programs in the United States are under scrutiny (Adams, 1997; Chall, 1967; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Darling-Hammond & Oakes, 2021; Fraser, 2007; Hoffman et al., 2020; Marks, 2002; von Hippel & Bellows, 2018). As a result, many colleges of education are making efforts at reform. For example, some universities are adding one or even two years to the previous four-year course of study (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Hirsch et al., 1998). In addition, teacher preparation programs differ across the United States. Some teacher preparation programs are two-year programs, while others are four-year programs. Some programs only accept 10% of applicants; others accept all applicants. There are also differences in the number of
reading methods courses that preservice teachers are required to take and the amount of field experience each student receives (von Hippel & Bellows, 2018).

In addition to the discrepancies in teacher preparation programs regarding the number of years and the percentage of applicants accepted, teacher education programs also differ in their standards for hiring quality teachers. The matter of effective teaching has been a source of national concern for quite some time (Worrell et al., 2014). However, what is quality teaching? Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005) state that quality teaching is more than whether something is taught. It is also about how it is taught. The content must be appropriate, proper, and aimed at some worthy purpose, and the methods employed have to be morally defensible and grounded in shared conceptions of reasonableness. Good teaching meets high standards for subject matter and practice methods. Effective teaching aligns with ethically justifiable and logically sound methods of teaching. The measure of successful teaching is the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Teaching a child to read with comprehension in a considerate and age-appropriate manner may not always lead to success. However, it can still be considered good teaching. Teaching that focuses on completing tasks is good, but teaching that focuses on achieving goals is more successful.

States have a crucial role in providing competent teachers by certifying and licensing them and approving teacher preparation programs. Several states have collaborated with significant accreditation bodies for teacher education during the approval process. There are variations in how states carry out their responsibilities regarding program accreditation. Some states mandate program accreditation for state approval, while others do not. Additionally, some states require only state approval, while
others require both program accreditation and state approval (Worrell et al., 2014). To date, neither the state teacher approval nor the accreditation process has required data showing the effectiveness of candidates or programs in preparing teachers to teach all children to high levels. In my experience teaching university classes, aside from student surveys, I have never been observed or evaluated.

**Literacy Instruction in Teacher Education Programs**

Hikida et al. (2019) emphasize that the world today requires attention to all aspects of literacy teachers’ initial preparation, including how and what PSTs learn about the component processes of reading, such as phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. However, the characteristics of teacher preparation programs vary from one teacher preparation program to another, making it difficult to reach a consensus on the main elements required to prepare effective reading teachers (Copeland et al., 2011).

**Study of Teacher Preparation in Early Reading Instruction**

The NCEE and the United States Department of Education (USDE) commissioned the Study of Teacher Preparation in Early Reading Instruction to examine how well PSTs are prepared to teach the essential components of reading (Salinger et al., 2010). They collected data from PSTs from 99 teacher preparation programs in the United States. The *Preservice Preparation Program and Knowledge Survey* was administered to 2,237 PSTs. The PSTs rated their program’s degree of emphasis on the strategies listed in the survey. The rating scale included “none,” “little,” “moderate,” and “considerable.” The findings reflected that in response to the first research question, “To what extent does the content of teacher education programs focus on the essential
components of early reading instruction?" (p. 22), the PSTs rated the overall focus as above “little” but below “moderate” or 1.76 on a zero-to-three scale. Sixty-nine percent of the PSTs reported moderate overall programmatic focus. The PSTs reported a strong programmatic focus on alphabetics (phonemic awareness and phonics) at 40% and fluency at 34%. However, only 18% reported a strong focus on meaning (vocabulary and comprehension). Similarly, for coursework emphasis, 33% reported a strong focus on alphabetics (phonemic awareness and phonics), 29% for fluency, and only 14% for meaning (vocabulary and comprehension).

The second research question asked, “To what extent are graduating preservice teachers knowledgeable about the essential components of early reading instruction?” (Salinger et al., 2010, p. 22). In responding to the second question, the PSTs responded to their knowledge of the five essential components of early reading instruction. Fifty-three percent of the PSTs were able to answer questions regarding alphabetics (phonemic awareness and phonics) correctly, 61% of the fluency questions, and 58% of the meaning (vocabulary and comprehension) subscale (Salinger et al., 2010).

In conclusion, the study found that the PSTs rated their field experience higher (1.86 on the zero-to-three scale) than their coursework (1.66). There was a stronger emphasis in their coursework on alphabetics (1.84) and fluency (1.85) compared to meaning (1.70). Moreover, these programs focused more on all three essential elements of early reading instruction (i.e., alphabetics, fluency, and meaning) through field experience than through coursework.

We Taught Them Literacy, but What Did They Learn?
Kosnik and Beck (2008) wrote a research article asking, “We taught them about literacy, but what did they learn?” The researchers completed a longitudinal research study to find an answer to that question. In their research, they included ten literacy instructors and 22 new teachers. The study occurred in an urban university with a post-baccalaureate preservice two-year program. Over three years, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with the literacy instructors. The beginning teachers were interviewed and observed twice annually. The questions changed during each interview as they analyzed the data.

Kosnik and Beck’s (2008) findings reflect three major themes from the data: “teacher educators’ areas of expertise, course organization, and preparation for the realities of teaching” (p. 119). One instructor identified teaching writing as her strength, while another identified her knowledge of multiliteracies as her strength in teaching. Another instructor was a long-time researcher in reading and identified teaching reading as her area of expertise. In contrast, three instructors identified their strengths as something that was not affiliated with literacy even though they were teaching the literacy course. Another instructor claimed that he was literature-based, so he instructs through literature. Additionally, an instructor claimed that his strength was building community among students. Finally, one instructor felt that her strengths included her experience as a classroom teacher and her extensive research in teacher education (Kosnik & Beck, 2008).

Many of the teachers in the Kosnik and Beck (2008) study were appreciative of their instructor’s expertise. However, some new teachers felt that their instructors focused too much on their particular interests. For example, one new teacher felt that “his
instructor’s interest in literature deprived him of opportunities to acquire essential knowledge” (p. 120).

The second theme identified was course organization. Most of the instructors felt that they worked systematically through the major topics of literacy education. One instructor said he focused on 10 topics throughout the semester and covered a different topic during each class. However, the instructors found it challenging to find a balance between theory and practice. Another instructor questioned the place of theory in the teacher education program. Although, many instructors believed that they had provided a balanced literacy program (Kosnik & Beck, 2008).

However, the new teachers’ perspective was that “few felt ready to develop a comprehensive working plan for their teaching that was structured, balanced integrated, and complete with a schedule and routines” (Kosnik & Beck, 2008, p. 121). One new teacher stated, “I had no idea how to set up a literacy program” (p. 121). Other new teachers made statements such as, “I wish specifically [I had learned] what guided reading was, how to do guided reading groups, how to assess reading, different assessment tools, or different ways of making anecdotal notes when you’re listening to a child read, what kinds of things to look for. I would have liked to learn more about particular reading strategies” (p.122).

The final theme was “Preparation for the Realities of Teaching.” The teacher educators’ perspectives reflected that all instructors thought it was essential for students to know about the realities of teaching. Some instructors felt it important to make the students aware of the politics surrounding literacy instruction, such as The Reading Wars (Kosnik & Beck, 2008).
The new teachers felt shell-shocked when they began their first year of teaching. They felt that the demands and time constraints were overwhelming. They all claimed they had no idea how to set up a reading program and declared they needed more instructor guidance. In addition, the new teachers explained that they did not understand the theory presented in their teacher preparation courses and how it translated into practice (Kosnik & Beck, 2008).

Kosnik and Beck (2008) state that the data reveals that “what was taught was not always learned” (p. 124). The instructors indicated they thought they had taught a balanced literacy approach; however, the new teachers said they learned disjointed information. The researchers state that the approach used by all of the instructors to teach was to cover breadth rather than depth. They claim that this resulted in a disconnect with terms or approaches. Other research confirms the disparity between the knowledge taught in preservice teacher programs and the realities of teaching (Allen & Wright, 2014; Cochran-Smith, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2006(a); Levine, 2006).

**Reading Methods Courses Influence on PSTs**

Clark et al. (2017) reviewed eight studies on how reading methods courses influenced PSTs’ knowledge of teaching reading. Clark et al. state that the researchers reported “less than positive findings” (p. 221). The authors concluded that while the courses had some positive effects, they lacked some components necessary for effective teacher instruction. Reading methods courses had little impact on the PSTs’ knowledge and attitudes about teaching reading. They suggested that more research was needed to determine ways to improve the design and implementation of such courses.

**Phonological Awareness**
In three of the studies that Clark et al. (2017) reviewed, the researchers noted that PSTs had a limited understanding of phonological awareness and were not adequately prepared to teach systematic instruction in phonological awareness (Al Otaiba & Lake, 2007; Bos et al., 2001; Mahar & Richdale, 2008). In addition, Al Otaiba and Lake’s study found that PSTs (N=18) could answer only 44% of the phonological awareness and phonics questions correctly. In the same study, only 50% correctly answered phonics-related items, and 58% of PSTs answered correctly items that measured content knowledge about phonemic awareness. Similarly, other researchers found that PSTs demonstrated a lack of understanding of phonics and phonemic awareness (Al Otaiba & Lake, 2007; Bos et al., 2001; Fielding-Barnsley, 2010; Spear-Swerling & Brucker, 2003; Washburn et al., 2011).

**English Language Structure**

Another common finding in the studies that Clark et al. (2017) reviewed was that PSTs displayed inadequate knowledge of word structure (Al Otaiba & Lake, 2007; Spear-Swerling & Brucker, 2003). Bos et al. (2001) report that only 53% of PSTs answered questions related to the English language structure in their study. Finally, according to Mahar and Richdale (2008), PSTs (N=69) reported that PSTs had limited and inconsistent reading teacher knowledge at the end of their coursework.

Clark et al. (2017) state, “Clearly, these studies illuminate the idea that simply demonstrating high levels of personal literacy (the ability to read) does not automatically suggest that one has the kind of knowledge that is necessary to teach children to read” (p. 222). The researchers noted that these studies did not compare teacher preparation programs and the number of literacy courses PSTs were required to take. Based on these
findings, their research focused on determining how PSTs perform on teacher knowledge assessments, including all five components for teaching reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. They also focused on how PSTs perform on knowledge assessments based on the number of methods courses completed.

Based on their findings, Clark et al. (2017) determined that little to no research is available to inform teacher education programs about how methods courses influence teacher knowledge or how they should evaluate the number of methods courses needed. The following descriptive study was conducted to determine whether there were any differences between teacher candidates (they had to take varying amounts of reading methods courses) regarding their reading instructional knowledge at the conclusion of a teacher education program.

**Comparing Teacher Education Programs and the Number of Reading Methods Courses**

Based on their research of the previous eight studies, Clark et al. (2017) recruited two teacher education programs from the Western and Midwestern parts of the United States to participate in their research to compare. They chose these two programs because each required a very different number of reading methods courses. Program A required five reading method courses, and Program B only required two reading methods courses. Program A’s courses included Phonics and the Structure of Language, Children’s Literature and Storytelling in the Early Childhood Classroom, Emergent Literacy and Reading, Methods of Teaching Grades 1-3, and Observing Young Children for Reading Strategies and Skills. Program B’s courses included Classroom Reading Instruction (Tier 1 instruction) and Assessment and Instruction for the Struggling Reader (Tier 2
instruction). The researchers used the *Literacy Information Knowledge Scale-Written Survey (LIK-WS)* created by Reutzel et al. (2007) because it measured both content knowledge (subject matter knowledge) and pedagogical knowledge (knowledge of how to teach the content).

Clark et al.’s (2017) results from the *LIK-S-WS* survey for their first question regarding teacher knowledge assessment indicate that PSTs correctly answered 62% of the phonological and phonemic awareness items. PSTs correctly answered 70% of the items related to phonics, and 44% of the fluency items were answered correctly. They answered 63% of the comprehensive items correctly, and PSTs answered 53% of the vocabulary items correctly. In Clark et al.’s study, the reading component scores ranged from 44% to 70%. When they compared their results to the results of the eight studies they had previously reviewed, they found that the performance was generally consistent with the results of the previous studies.

Regarding their second research question, which questioned how PSTs performed on a knowledge assessment based on the number of methods courses completed, the researchers were surprised about the findings. Clark et al. (2017) found that the PSTs who completed five literacy courses (Program A) in their teacher preparation program scored considerably lower than those who had completed only two literacy courses (Program B). Upon further review, they posit that Program A dedicated one course on children’s literature, which would have had little effect on how PSTs scored on the *LIK-S-WS*. Although Program A also included a course that was devoted to phonics instruction. This course may have strengthened their knowledge of phonics; however, the course might have spent less time on the comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency components.
In conclusion, Clark et al. (2017) found that overall, in the two programs, PSTS presented relatively strong knowledge in the areas of phonological awareness, phonics, comprehension, and vocabulary. Furthermore, statistically significant differences in knowledge were found based on the teacher preparation program students attended and the number of courses they completed.

**Code-Related Instruction in Teacher Preparation Programs**

In a more recent study, Tortorelli et al. (2021) analyzed 27 previous studies to determine findings regarding code-related instruction in teacher preparation programs. Similar to the Clark et al. (2017) study, they also focused on content and pedagogical knowledge. Pedagogical knowledge is how to teach code-related skills and instructional practices. In addition, they addressed technical knowledge, which is considered linguistic content needed to teach code-related instruction. They also addressed situated knowledge. Situated knowledge are opportunities to put technical and pedagogical knowledge into practice.

After reviewing the 27 studies, Tortorelli et al. (2021) provided the next steps for both teacher preparation programs and research on PSTs’ code-related knowledge. Overall, the patterns in the studies showed that there needs to be an increase in code-related instruction for PSTs. However, their final recommendation is that they “strongly encourage researchers exploring code-related instruction in teacher preparation programs to employ qualitative methods that are equipped to capture PSTs’ experiences with pedagogy and practice teaching, as well as students’ backgrounds and voices in code-related instruction” (p. S334).

There is an abundance of research on how to teach children how to read using...
systematic instruction in phonological awareness (Adams, 1990; Al Otaiba et al., 2012; Bos et al., 2001; Clark et al., 2017; Mahar & Richdale, 2008; NICHD, 2000; Snow et al., 1998). However, there is a divide between the research and teachers’ knowledge and beginning reading instructional practices (Al Otaiba & Lake, 2007; Al Otaiba et al., 2012; Bos et al., 2001; Moats, 2009; Moats & Foorman, 2003; Reid Lyon & Weiser, 2009). Thus, the question remains: Why are teacher education programs not teaching PSTs how to teach the SOR?

**Content Knowledge Movement and Preparation for Reading Instruction**

Teachers’ lack of reading content knowledge, including the structure of the English language, is detrimental when trying to teach children to read, especially struggling readers (Moats, 1994; Spear-Swerling et al., 2005). Scientific investigators, scholarly panels, and professional organizations have widely recognized the importance of effective teacher preparation in reading (Adams, 1997; Chall, 1967; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Darling-Hammond & Oakes, 2021; NICHD, 2000). Many teachers have a weak understanding of the structure of spoken and written language and would be unable to teach reading explicitly to children (Moats, 1994). Moreover, McCutchen et al. (2002) express that although the importance of phonological awareness has been discussed widely in the research literature, many classroom teachers do not understand the concept well. Moats states that children must understand that speech is composed of phonemes (the individual sound segments of speech) and realize that the alphabet represents those phonemes.

**Preservice Teachers’ Opinion of Their Preparedness to Teach Reading**

Meeks et al. (2016) reviewed studies of PST’s views on their preparation for teaching early reading skills to all students. Their review included 13 studies from the United States and
Australia (Al Otaiba, 2013; Al Otaiba et al., 2012; Bos et al., 2001; Fielding-Barnsley, 2010; Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013; Lee, 2009; Mahar & Richdale, 2008; Mather et al., 2001; Meehan & Hammond, 2005; Schrader et al., 2003; Squires et al., 2009; Tetley & Jones, 2014; Washburn et al., 2011).

**How Do PSTs Rate Their Preparedness to Teach Early Literacy Skills?**

When examining the studies regarding the preparedness of PSTs to teach early reading skills, only two of the studies reported reliability of their instruments (Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013; Washburn et al., 2011). PSTs’ responses, when rating their preparedness to teach early reading skills, ranged from “not prepared/not confident” to “somewhat or moderately prepared.”

**Do PSTs Feel Confident in Their Ability to Teach Early Literacy Skills to Struggling Readers?**

Four of the 13 studies questioned the confidence level of PST’s ability to teach struggling readers (Bos et al., 2001; Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013; Mahar & Richdale, 2008; Washburn et al., 2011). The PSTs responded that they were “less confident” in teaching students who struggle to read. All of the studies examined knowledge about the specific components of early literacy instruction, such as phonics and phonemic awareness (Al Otaiba et al., 2013; Bos et al., 2001; Fielding-Barnsley, 2010; Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013; Mather et al., 2001; Meehan & Hammond, 2005; Schrader et al., 2003; Squires et al., 2009; Tetley & Jones, 2014; Washburn et al., 2011). Researchers reported that few PSTs were knowledgeable of phonics terminology, phonics instructions, and English language structure. However, PSTs were reasonably optimistic about teaching children from low socio-economic families.
Do PSTs Understand Phonics and Phonemic Awareness Components of Early Literacy Instruction?

All 13 studies looked at PST’s knowledge of the components of early literacy (Al Otaiba, 2013; Bos et al., 2001; Fielding-Barnsley, 2010; Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013; Lee, 2009; Mahar & Richdale, 2008; Mather et al., 2001; Meehan & Hammond, 2005; Schrader et al., 2003; Squires et al., 2009; Tetley & Jones, 2014; Washburn et al., 2011). Knowledge of early literacy constructs was assessed in three areas: phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and phonics. In response to this, Meeks et al. (2016) state:

Considering that for more than four decades, research has repeatedly demonstrated that phonological awareness and the alphabetic principle are the keys to early reading success, it was surprising to find that many PSTs demonstrated limited knowledge of literacy terminology and limited skill in applying that knowledge in practice. (p. 92)

The findings suggest that a limited number of PSTs comprehensively understand phonetic terms, phonics teaching techniques, and the English language’s structure.

How Do PSTs’ Knowledge and Preparedness of Early Literacy Skills Relate?

Eight studies assessed PSTs’ content knowledge and perceptions of preparedness to teach early literacy skills (Al Otaiba et al., 2012; Bos et al., 2001; Fielding-Barnsley, 2010; Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013; Mahar & Richdale, 2008; Meehan & Hammond, 2005; Tetley & Jones, 2014; Washburn et al., 2011). One paper (Mahar & Richdale) investigated PST knowledge and preparedness to teach early literacy to diverse learners. The mean score was low (5.41/10). Two studies reported increased
knowledge and self-efficacy of PSTs following intervention programs; however, only the experimental group reported higher self-ratings of preparedness (Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson). Tetley and Jones’ study reported high PST confidence levels and knowledge scores.

**Do PSTs Demonstrate a Preference for a Code-Based or Meaning-Based Approach?**

When reviewing seven studies that asked PSTs if they preferred a code-based or meaning-based approach, the researchers found that PSTs preferred code-based approaches. However, they also found that the PSTs lacked the knowledge to implement a code-based approach (Al Otaiba et al., 2012; Bos et al., 2001; Fielding-Barnsley, 2010; Lee, 2009; Mahar & Richdale, 2008; Mather et al., 2001; Meehan & Hammond, 2005).

The studies above indicate that preservice teachers must have the content knowledge to teach reading adequately. In addition, many PSTs recognize that they are not adequately prepared to teach reading.

**Science of Literacy Movement and Preparation for Reading Instruction**

As mentioned in previous sections, teacher preparation programs continue to be blamed for failing to prepare PSTs to teach the SOR (Greenberg et al., 2013; Hanford, 2018; Hikida et al., 2019; Hindman et al., 2020; Hoffman et al., 2020; Washburn et al., 2011). Children need a good understanding of metalinguistic knowledge to develop successful reading and spelling skills (Greenberg et al., 2013). Teaching the SOR emphasizes cognitive skills and strategies, but metalinguistic knowledge is also important (Purvis et al., 2015). Purvis et al. state, “Low metalinguistic knowledge of pre-service teachers and in-service teachers is likely to restrict the provision of evidence-based literacy instruction in the classroom” (p. 55). The NPR (NICHD, 2000) also supported
the extensive research espoused regarding the effectiveness of teaching metalinguistic knowledge to PSTs. Despite these recommendations, both PSTs and in-service teachers possess low personal metalinguistic knowledge (Fielding-Barnsley, 2010; Mather et al., 2001; Moats & Foorman, 2003; Spear-Swerling & Brucker, 2003; Washburn et al., 2011).

**Metalinguistic Knowledge of PSTs**

Carroll et al. (2012) conducted a study at a teacher preparation program in New Zealand to assess the metalinguistic knowledge of PSTs. They compared first-semester PSTs’ \( (N=153) \) phonological awareness scores with PSTs in their third and final year. Phoneme awareness scores obtained by third-year students demonstrated a 12% increase in knowledge over the two years. Despite this increase, PSTs only scored 32% correctly by the third year. Therefore, the researchers claim that these gains are inadequate to improve the PSTs’ phonological awareness knowledge abilities enough for them to provide explicit instruction within the classroom.

Emily Hanford is a senior education correspondent for American Public Media, reporting on early reading instruction since 2017 (Hanford, 2018). In 2018, Hanford published a radio documentary titled “Hard Words: Why Aren’t Kids Being Taught to Read?” (Hanford, 2018). This documentary prompted a nationwide discussion. Hanford begins her report with discouraging figures, “More than 60% of American fourth-graders are not proficient readers” (para. 3). She continues to explain that the problem can be blamed on how children are taught to read and how teachers are trained to teach them.

Hanford has continued reporting on education issues, and her most recent podcast, “Sold a Story: How Teaching Kids to Read Went So Wrong” (2022), has again sparked a
nationwide conversation regarding how literacy is taught. Moreover, this podcast addresses personal struggles among people of all ages in their effort to learn to read. She focuses on how the SOR should be used to teach children to read and how other approaches are flawed. In addition, Hanford discusses the fallout hitting struggling students using the flawed curriculum.

**Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS)**

This review of literature presents decades of research that states that the most effective way to teach young children to read is for teachers to explicitly and systematically teach children how sounds represent letters. Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) was developed by Moats in the early 1990s as a prototype when she realized that many PSTs lacked the background knowledge to teach reading, such as phoneme awareness, phonics, spelling, vocabulary, syntax, comprehension, and writing (Lexia LETRS, 2022). LETRS is professional learning for educators that teaches them skills needed to master the fundamentals of reading instruction. Those skills include phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, writing, and language. Teachers also learn how to differentiate instruction to meet the literacy needs of all learners. The LETRS course provides educators with a deeper understanding of the SOR with evidence-based strategies to support all students. Although the course is 160 hours and takes two years to complete, 23 states have contracted with the program to prepare their teachers better. Moats, founder of the program, states that LETRS is not a curriculum; instead, LETRS aims to give teachers a knowledge base for doing the job. “I want the teacher in front of a group of kids to feel like she or he understands what is going on in the minds of the kids as they
are trying to learn” (Schwartz, 2022a, p. 3). Moats (2023) pointed out that “LETRS professional development is designed to be implemented over two years so that teachers have time to absorb, integrate, and apply the concepts” (para. 36).

The Mississippi Department of Education launched a statewide early literacy professional development program using LETRS in January 2014 (Folsom et al., 2017). The researchers used the Teacher Knowledge of Early Literacy Skills survey in their study. The average teacher’s knowledge of early literacy skills increased from the 48th percentile to the 59th between spring 2014 and fall 2015. At the end of the study, educators who were not involved in the LETRS program were in the 54th percentile on the Teacher Knowledge of Early Literacy Skills survey compared to educators who had completed it and were in the 65th percentile.

The literature review regarding LETRS training suggests that the LETRS program positively affected the knowledge of early literacy skills of educators who completed the training, as they had a higher score than those who did not. The teachers who completed the program had an 11-point percentile increase, while those not involved in the program only had a six percentile point increase.

**Summary of the Review of Literature**

This review of literature illuminated important information regarding methodologies and concerns regarding the teaching of reading and synthesized the research relevant to my study. This chapter began by describing the debate of the best approach for teaching children how to read. Included is a brief history of reading instruction in the United States. In addition, the literature describes the “Reading Wars” that continue in the United States. The literature further describes phonics, whole
language, and balanced reading approaches to teaching reading. Also included are state and federal policy initiatives and reviews of teacher education programs and how literacy is taught in teacher preparation programs. Finally, included is literature regarding the content knowledge movement and the SOR movement.

Previous studies suggest that more research is needed to capture PSTs’ experiences in reading instruction (Tortorelli et al., 2021). My research question aims to study these experiences: How do preservice teachers describe their experiences of the methodology of teaching reading in their literacy courses? In order to answer my research question, this phenomenological study takes on a unique angle and explores the lived experiences of how preservice teachers learn to teach reading versus other research that studies how new teachers who are already in the classroom have learned to teach reading.
CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Chapter 3 presents the research methods. I also discuss the selection of the participants and the instrumentation, along with the research procedures. In addition, I explain the methods I used for data collection and the methods I used for data analysis.

There is a gap in how the research suggests preparing teachers to teach reading compared to how educational programs teach PSTs. I used a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to study this phenomenon. This approach allowed me to illuminate the personal meanings of lived experiences related to PSTs learning to teach reading while still in their teacher preparation program.

van Manen (1990) identifies the experience of “learning” as a phenomenon. The research questions for this study were geared toward PSTs who had all experienced “learning how to teach reading” in the three literacy courses at the southwestern university. (Because I am including participants who attended all three literacy courses in their teacher preparation program, I will use the word literacy, except in cases of historical and current use by the science of reading (SOR) advocates who place emphasis on reading.) Peoples (2021) recommends using qualitative terms such as “describe” in the research question in a phenomenological study. I devised the research questions based on Peoples’ advice. The guiding research question for this study is, “How do preservice teachers describe their experiences of the methodology of teaching reading in their literacy courses?” Based on this focus, I developed the following subquestions:

- What specific strategies for teaching reading do preservice teachers describe as the focus of their teaching reading preparation?
• How do preservice teachers describe the potential of the strategies learned in their coursework to help them teach reading in their future positions?

**Understanding Hermeneutic Phenomenology as a Research Design**

I conducted a hermeneutic phenomenological research study. Phenomenological research is best used when a researcher wants to understand several individuals’ common or shared experiences to develop practices or policies or develop a deeper understanding of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Peoples, 2021; van Manen, 2014). Philosophy underpins phenomenological research, which includes psychology and education. Phenomenological research aims to understand the essence of participants’ lived experiences in a common phenomenon. Creswell (2013) describes two theoretical frameworks of phenomenology: Husserl’s empirical transcendental phenomenology and Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology. Kafle (2013) defined phenomenology as a “term encompassing both a philosophical and a range of research approaches” (p. 181).

Edmund Husserl is known as the father of phenomenology. He introduced the phenomenological movement with his insightful new way of studying philosophy. Husserl’s philosophical, transcendental phenomenology approach uses phenomenological reduction, which is the intentional consciousness of bracketing, or “epoché,” which is the process of suspending judgments to focus on the analysis of the phenomenon. Husserl believed that by suspending judgments, one could understand the phenomenon’s essence and come to the “horizon” or understanding (Creswell, 2013; Gadamer, 1975; Heidegger, 1996; Kafle, 2013; Peoples, 2021).

I used Martin Heidegger’s approach for research. Heidegger was a student of Husserl. He branched off from Husserl and created his own philosophy, which he called
“hermeneutics.” Hermeneutics is the ability to interpret or understand lived experiences (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021). Heidegger believed that we are always in the world with others and cannot separate ourselves. The state of being unable to separate ourselves from being in the world is called “Dasein” (Heidegger, 1996, p. 335; Peoples, 2021, p. 32). Heidegger’s theory was that the researcher could not take away their pre-understandings or lived experience. Bracketing is impossible when one cannot put aside pre-understandings (Laverty, 2003). Another researcher who shared Heidegger’s stance, Hans-Georg Gadamer, calls these pre-understandings “fore-sights” or “fore-conceptions” (Gadamer, 1975). In order to solve the issue when the researcher cannot suspend biases and preconceived knowledge about a phenomenon when analyzing the data to get the essence without bracketing, Heidegger introduced the philosophy of the “hermeneutic circle” (Gadamer, 1975; Heidegger, 1996; Peoples, 2021). I will discuss the hermeneutic circle in more detail in the data analysis section of this chapter.

**Pilot Study**

I completed a pilot test of my interview questions before the study to refine any questions that I found necessary (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2005; Seidman, 2013). I interviewed three former students who attended the same teacher education preparation program and are now teaching. I asked them to attempt to answer the questions from the point of view of a final-semester teacher candidate. I also asked them to try to put aside the knowledge regarding teaching reading that they gained during their first year of teaching.

I used the same interview questions during the pilot study, except that in Part 4 of the pilot study, I did not include the short definition of the reading term. For example, in
the pilot study, I asked, “Tell me about your university coursework related to learning how to teach phonics.” Similarly, I asked about what they learned to teach, phonemic awareness, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. The pilot study group quickly answered the question regarding comprehension and vocabulary. However, they were hesitant about phonics, phonemic awareness, and fluency and made statements such as, “I can’t remember the difference between phonics and phonemic awareness.” For this reason, I decided to change the format of these questions in my research study to include a simple definition. For example, “Tell me about your university coursework related to learning to teach how the sound of letters are connected to the written form (phonics).” I did not change any other questions.

**Data Collection Plan**

I used a combination of Creswell’s (2013) *Data Collection Circle* and Creswell and Guetterman’s (2019) *Five Process Steps in Collecting Data* to organize and prepare my data collection. Figure 3 shows a visualization of the interrelated activities I used for my data collection.

**Figure 3**

*Data Collection Plan*
Identifying and Inviting Participants

Creswell (2013) and King et al. (2019) suggest using *purposive sampling* for a hermeneutic study. Peoples (2021) suggests that in addition to using purposive sampling, criterion or snowball sampling is also suitable for hermeneutic studies. The targeted population for this study was PSTs who have completed the three required literacy courses in their teacher preparation program at the southwestern university. Because I chose participants from a specific site, and all cases had to meet the criterion of sharing the lived experiences of completing the three literacy courses, I implemented purposive and criterion sampling for this study. Creswell describes criterion sampling as “All cases that meet some criterion; useful for quality assurance” (p.158). Creswell and Guetterman (2019) describe purposeful sampling as when the researcher chooses specific sites and individuals to recognize the central phenomenon.

After I obtained IRB approval for this study (Appendix A), I began the data collection process in the fall of 2022 by emailing the Seminar instructors requesting that...
they email their teacher candidates to request their participation in an interview.

Unfortunately, the timing of this request was poor because the students did not have any more Seminar class meetings; it was at the end of the semester, and the students were finishing their student teaching and preparing to graduate. Therefore, I did not receive any willing participants at that time.

I waited for the spring semester of 2023, and then I asked the seminar instructors of the Education Seminar Course: Using Assessment: Creating Effective K-8 Learning Environment III courses at the southwestern university to allow me to take approximately 15 minutes of their class time for me to talk to their teacher candidates to recruit participants for the study. I spent approximately 10-15 minutes in each of the two Seminar meetings. I introduced myself to the students in each class and read an IRB-approved recruitment script, as shown in Appendix B. During this time, I also provided the participants with the IRB-approved informed consent form, as shown in Appendix C. To keep anonymity, I provided the students with a website link to sign up for an interview; however, I also provided information regarding the study to contact me if they chose to contact me by phone or email (Appendix D). In addition, I offered an Amazon gift card for each participant.

After recruiting participants in their seminar course, eight teacher candidates signed up for interviews using the scheduling website that I provided. Two of those teacher candidates were unable to keep their appointments. Therefore, I interviewed six participants for my research. All participants completed the three literacy courses the university required for PSTs and were in their final semester of the teacher preparation program. To maintain a comprehensive depth analysis, I kept the number of participants
Conducting Interviews

I collected data during the spring 2023 semester at a southwestern university in the United States. I chose interviewing as the data collection technique for my hermeneutic phenomenological research. Interviewing is often used as a data collection strategy in qualitative research (Bevan, 2014; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Gubrium & Holstein, 2001; King et al., 2019; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; & Leavy, 2017). Creswell and Guetterman (2019) use the following definition for interviews, “Interviews occur when researchers ask one or more participants general, open-ended questions and record their answers” (p. 624). One advantage of using interviews as a data collection strategy is that almost everyone will know what is expected of them without providing this definition (King et al., 2019). However, there is a skill to conducting a quality interview. Below, I describe some best practices when interviewing to collect qualitative data.

Interviewing as a data collection strategy is time-consuming for both the researcher and the participant. As a result, to collect rich data, I followed best practices to learn more about the participants’ experiences and explain the phenomenon. Developing an “appropriate” rapport with the participants is essential (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; King et al., 2019; Seidman, 2013). I hoped that by developing a rapport, the participants would feel more comfortable with the interview, open up, and be honest. I began developing this rapport during my initial recruiting visit to the seminar classroom by introducing myself, using positive body language, sharing commonalities, and practicing active listening.

Appendix E shows that my Interview Protocol included an introduction and
scripted, open-ended interview questions asking the students about their experiences learning to teach reading. I based my interview questions on the five pillars identified to guide effective literacy instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (NICHD, 2000). In addition, I established my interview questions on findings from other studies that identified PSTs’ challenges with teaching reading (Clark et al., 2017; Malatesha Joshi et al., 2009; Tortorelli et al., 2021).

I interviewed six participants for this study. Participants included undergraduate students who began their program of study immediately after graduating from high school, undergraduate students attending the teacher preparation program after taking some time off after graduating from high school, and undergraduate students entering the teacher preparation program as a second career choice. I chose this group of participants because they have already completed the three literacy courses the university requires for PSTs. Those courses included the following as described in the XXX University Course Catalog, 2023:

1. Teaching of Reading to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students I (which from this point of the document on will be called simply Reading I):

Study of reading process for emergent process for emergent and intermediate readers focusing on curing systems, assessment, family and community contexts, language, culture and instruction in individual and small group setting. Lab includes supervised tutoring and discussion group.
2. Teaching Language Arts K-8 (which from this point of the document on will be called simply Teaching Language Arts): Study of oral and written forms of language. Background theory in language development and use in teacher-child interactions is present and followed by carefully designed experiences with children. Three lectures, 1 hr. lab.

3. Teaching of Reading to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students II (which from this point of the document on will be called simply Reading II): Establishing a theoretical framework for exploring various approaches to reading/language development, instruction and evaluation in multicultural classroom setting. Three lectures, 1 hr. lab.

The interviews were conducted via Zoom, lasted 45 minutes to one hour, and were audio-recorded on Zoom so I could transcribe them later. I became familiar with the literature to develop interview questions to create meaningful data (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). I used a semi-structured interview format to ensure that the key aspects of the research were included. Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) describe semi-structured interviews as a verbal questionnaire composed of questions designed to elicit specific responses.

I recorded all the interviews (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; King et al., 2019; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Peoples, 2021) and kept a backup recording device as safe practice in case there were any problems. In order to analyze the data at a later time, I transcribed the interviews within one week after the interview took place. In addition, I kept memos during the interview to record personal reactions regarding responses (Peoples, 2021). However, Jacob and Furgerson
(2012) and Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) recommend taking notes during the interview but suggest keeping them brief to maintain eye contact. In addition to keeping eye contact, King et al. (2019) remind researchers that failing to listen can be problematic because not listening to responses could lead to inappropriate questioning and leave the participant frustrated.

I aimed to word my questions as they are lived (King et al., 2019; van Manen, 2017). I asked open-ended questions that focused on understanding the phenomenon in the study when interviewing (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; King et al., 2019; Seidman, 2013). I also used probing and prompting as fundamental strategies to add depth to the interview data (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; King et al., 2019). In addition, I practiced good listening skills to ask appropriate probing questions. When I asked Makaya, “Tell me about your experience of what you remember learning how to read,” she provided a detailed explanation. However, I gave her the opportunity to add more by asking the probing question, “Do you think any of the strategies that they [her teachers] used helped you to read better? And if so, can you give me an example?” Makayla proceeded to provide more information, including her connection to learning to read using *Fundations* (Wilson, 2002) and how that background knowledge helps her use *Fundations* to teach in her field experience.

Parts 1 and 2 of my interview questions consisted of gaining more information about the participants, such as their current student teaching placement, grade level, and the number of students in the class. In hopes of putting my participants at ease and gaining credibility, I began by asking them about their lived experiences of what methods were used to teach them how to read. Part 3 of the interview included questions about
their lived experiences and how they were taught to teach reading. Upon concluding each interview, I allowed each participant to choose a pseudonym.

**Member Checking and Follow-up Interviews**

After transcribing each interview, I allowed each participant the opportunity to “member check” for accuracy. (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2005; Peoples, 2021). Maxwell states that this step is essential for ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the participants’ meaning. After transcribing the interview and checking with the participant, I determined if a follow-up interview was necessary. I decided that some follow-up interviews were required because I was unsure about their initial answers. I conducted three follow-up interviews to clarify preliminary information not understood during the initial interview (King et al., 2019; Peoples, 2021).

The number one reason follow-up interviews were necessary was that I realized I had preconceptions regarding the participants’ responses of those who said they mostly created lesson plans in the course. My bias and initial understanding were that if they were just creating lesson plans, they were not taught to teach reading methods. However, it occurred to me that maybe the instructor had presented guided examples of a reading component, and then the PSTs were tasked with creating a lesson plan incorporating that component. During the follow-up interviews, I asked, “When you were creating lesson plans, was the lesson plan based on a reading component that the instructor had demonstrated or explained?” In two of the three follow-up interviews, the participants suggested that there was some lead-in to the lesson. For example, one participant explained that the instructor showed them a sample lesson plan based on retelling the information from a story and then asked the PSTs to create a lesson plan with the
objective being comprehension. Another participant explained that they would read a children’s book and then create a lesson plan to accompany it. According to the last participant, the instructor failed to connect the lesson plan assignment with a previously taught reading component.

**Analyzing the Data**

The hermeneutic circle incorporates a method for the researcher to reflect on their own biases and then establish a method to move beyond their previous interpretations and transcend their horizons to deepen their understanding of the phenomenon. To incorporate this strategy, I began with my preunderstandings of the phenomenon as I read the interview transcripts. I revised my biases as I began understanding the participants’ experiences (Peoples, 2021). Koch (1995) stated, “Understanding occurs through a fusion of horizons, which is an interaction between the pre-understandings of the research process, the interpretive framework, and the sources of information” (p. 835). The goal was to analyze the PSTs’ experiences to reach a place of understanding.

The philosophy of the hermeneutic circle in data analysis is to begin with the whole or the entire interview transcript (refer to Figure 4). I recognized codes and themes as I read the transcripts, analyzed the whole, and began understanding parts (Peoples, 2021). In other words, I broke down the information into parts while analyzing the data. These parts are themes. I made notes about items that were reoccurring themes and familiarized myself with the data in the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; King et al., 2019; Peoples, 2021). As I synthesized the parts, I looked at the entire transcript again, the whole, and gained a new understanding (Peoples, 2021).
Figure 4

*Hermeneutic Circle*

*Note.* This figure demonstrates how the hermeneutic circle works as an interpretation and a revisionary process.

According to van Manen (2016), the hermeneutic phenomenological approach is not governed by any particular methodology but rather by a body of knowledge and understanding derived from philosophers and authors that present both a methodological and a theoretical basis for studying lived experiences. While Gadamer (1975) offered valuable insights into how one might acquire a deep knowledge of the text, he did not propose a methodology. Instead, he emphasized that hermeneutics is not simply about endorsing a method. My phenomenological data analysis aimed to transform lived experiences into a textual expression of its essence (van Manen, 2016). For this reason, I used a thematic content analysis technique to analyze data. Thematic content analysis is a
method for determining the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Creswell, 2013; King et al., 2019; Peoples, 2021).

During data analysis, I combined the methods of Creswell’s (2013) Data Analysis Spiral, Creswell and Guetterman’s (2019) The Qualitative Process and Data Analysis, and Peoples’ (2021) Data Analysis Flow Chart. Using these methods, researchers can effectively develop triangulation, a crucial aspect of any research project. With triangulation, researchers can ensure that their findings are reliable, accurate, and trustworthy. Therefore, using these methods to enhance the quality of your research outcomes is imperative. Triangulation is essential for achieving a more accurate representation of the truth. This involves using multiple sources, methods, investigators, and theories to minimize bias and gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject. (Creswell, 2013). Figure 5 illustrates my data analysis process.

**Figure 5**

*Data Analysis Process*

![Data Analysis Process Diagram]

*Note.* Adapted from Peoples, 2021, p. 58

I began reflecting on my biases using the hermeneutic circle (Gadamer, 1975;
Heidegger, 1996; Peoples, 2021) as an interpretive process. Acknowledging my pre-understandings or ontological view, I could relate to the participants and understand their experiences. I started my data analysis by reading through each transcript in its entirety to understand the participant’s complete story to comprehend the whole before breaking it into parts. (See Figure 2) Multiple readings of the transcripts were required to understand the participants’ lived experiences clearly. As I became familiar with the interview transcripts, I wrote notes or memos in the margins of key concepts that occurred to me (Creswell, 2013; Giorgi, 1985; Peoples, 2021). I then color-coded the phrases by highlighting each with different colors. I also placed matching colored sticky flags on the transcripts to help me locate a particular theme quickly.

Hermeneutic phenomenology places emphasis on the interaction between a researcher and the data (Creswell, 2013; Peoples, 2021). For this reason, I hand-coded instead of using software to avoid separating the data from the researcher (Goble et al., 2012). In the second step, I focused on the research topic while I created preliminary manageable “meaning units” (Giorgi, 1985; King et al., 2019; Peoples, 2021). In the third step, I broke down all the preliminary meaning units into final meaning units or themes for each interview. I derived themes from my deepened understanding of each participant’s description. I began this process by first recording common meaning units from each interview. Next, I color-coded each meaning unit by highlighting the phrases or quotes from each interview.

Next, I broke down all the preliminary meaning units into final meaning units or themes, which were informed by my deepened understanding of each participant’s description. In my next step, I organized experiences thematically and wrote situated
narratives, which recited each participant’s story. The meanings of each participant’s experience were highlighted thematically using direct interview quotes. Finally, I created general narratives from the situated narratives, unifying participants’ accounts into a general description of all the participants’ narratives.

Finally, I synthesized the themes into a summary of the phenomenon. In Chapter 4, I have included quotes from the data to demonstrate these themes. I repeated this step for each participant. I continued to organize the data from the situated narratives and then created general narratives integrating all themes of the participants. During this step, I used Peoples’s (2021) organization using the word “most” for saturated themes, “many” for 50% of a saturated theme, and “some” for a theme that was unsaturated. Next, I created a general description or summary of the phenomenon. I also analyzed how my participants’ experiences compared to the literature (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019) and attempted to determine an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Follow-up interviews were necessary to fill gaps of incomplete or misunderstood data or unclear information (Peoples, 2021). Finally, as part of the general description, I summarized the significant phenomenological themes that were implicit in all or most of the participants’ descriptions and provided an essence of their experiences (Creswell, 2013; Giorgi, 1985; Peoples, 2021).

**Demonstrating Analysis Procedures**

A detailed explanation of my analysis process using participants’ interview transcripts follows. For example, after reading Jessica’s transcript multiple times in its entirety, I found the first meaning unit describes Jessica’s view of how the literacy course instructors divided the component parts of reading versus the meaning-making parts.
Jessica said, “The way that was broken up, we would read chapters at home and were expected to take notes.” The second meaning unit was her experience writing lesson plans during each class. She stated, “During class, it was almost entirely like we would read a children’s book and create a lesson plan based off it.”

I continued analyzing the other participants’ interview transcriptions. I realized that both Makayla and Ally spoke about the make-up of the class, which was to “read and take notes” to learn the material. In addition, Cassandra and Lynn also referenced a focus on creating lesson plans during their methods course. These commonalities became feature traits of the phenomenon or meaning units. Finally, I could develop themes after color-coding the meaning units and gaining a better understanding of the participant’s description.

Ensuring Validity and Reliability

Creswell and Guetterman (2019, p. 261) state that a popular approach among qualitative researchers to validate their findings is to use Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) approach. Their system is to link validity to qualitative standards. They have recognized four components that should be identifiable in the research process to demonstrate validity and reliability. Credibility can be established through engagement during the interviews and by using direct quotes from the transcripts when analyzing the data. I used direct quotes from my participants when I reported my findings to establish credibility. Transferability can be established by providing evidence that the research findings could apply to other populations with similar experiences. Figure 3 provides a detailed flowchart for other researchers to replicate the study (Peoples, 2021). The researcher should provide sufficient detail of the data collection process and analysis to prove
dependability. I included details and direct quotes from the participants to help readers understand each step of the data analysis process. Finally, conformability can be achieved by journaling personal biases while concentrating on the participants’ lived experiences and revising these biases throughout the process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Peoples, 2021). I used the hermeneutic circle philosophy to revise my biases during the research process (Gadamer, 1975; Heidegger, 1996; Peoples, 2021).

In addition to using Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) four criteria, I also used member checking to determine if the transcriptions were complete and accurate. I asked participants from the study if the interpretations were fair and represented correctly (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Finally, I used detailed descriptions of the participants’ experiences, including patterns and themes, to communicate the shared common understandings of experiences (Creswell, 2013; Peoples, 2021).

**Making Ethical Considerations**

Prior to the study, I created secure files on my computer to store data for each interview (Creswell, 2013). I also received approval from the university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). “The primary role of the XXX Institutional Review Board (IRB) is to ensure that the safety, rights, and welfare of research participants are protected” (XXX Office of the Institutional Review Board, 2022, p. 4).

The IRB approved a waiver of participants’ signatures. The informed consent advised the research participants about the study’s overall purpose, informed them of any risks or benefits of participating in the study, and informed them of their right to withdraw from the study at any time (Creswell, 2013; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). As part of the informed consent process, participants were apprised that I would keep their data
confidential and that I would keep it in a secure location.

After interviewing the participants, I attempted to be unbiased about the phenomena. I have protected participants’ privacy and concealed their identities (Creswell, 2013; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In addition, I have omitted identifying information and assigned pseudonyms for each interview. Also, interviews are stored on a password-protected computer.

I acknowledge that my experience of how I was taught to teach reading affects my positionality. In addition, I analyzed this research through the lens of a former elementary teacher, reading interventionist, principal, and most recently, an instructor of preservice teacher of literacy courses. Additionally, I have been trained in several reading approaches, such as LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling), SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol), and Orton-Gillingham (LETRS/Lexia Learning, 2022; Orton-Gillingham, 1995; SIOP, 2022). Considering my social identities, I realize that these experiences will afford me unique insights that I bring to the research process.

**Summary of Chapter**

This chapter outlined the methodology used for this hermeneutic phenomenological study. Also included is an explanation of hermeneutic phenomenology. In addition, included are steps for identifying and inviting participants and participant demographic data. I described the data collection plan and how I organized the data. This chapter provides information about the pilot test, how interviews were conducted, and how interviews were transcribed. I reviewed the data
analysis process and demonstrated the analysis procedures, ensuring validity and reliability.

In the next chapter, I will explain the findings of my hermeneutic phenomenological study. Findings will include how PSTs described their lived experiences learning to teach reading at one teacher preparation program in the southwestern United States. Also, in this chapter is information regarding the participants. This chapter includes the development of themes and narratives regarding the themes.
CHAPTER 4

Findings

The purpose of this research was to explore the common phenomenon and lived experiences of PSTs who have completed all three of the required literacy courses in an elementary teacher program at a university in the southwestern part of the United States. The guiding research for this study was “How do preservice teachers describe their experiences of the methodology of teaching reading in their literacy courses?” Based on this focus, I developed the following subquestions:

- What specific strategies for teaching reading do preservice teachers describe as the focus of their teaching reading preparation?
- How do preservice teachers describe the potential of the strategies learned in their coursework to help them teach reading in their future positions?

In Chapter 4, I present the research findings and connect the findings of the study with my hermeneutic phenomenological study. I interviewed six preservice student teachers to discover their lived experiences of how they were taught to teach reading during their literacy methods courses. The chapter begins with a description of the participants and includes the themes that emerged in my data analysis process. I also discuss the process of data collection and analysis.

Methods of Data Collection

Hermeneutic phenomenology addresses understanding and analyzing the whole (the entire interview transcript). After studying the whole, I was able to recognize the parts. Once I understood the parts, I developed these parts into codes or themes (Peoples, 2021). As shown in Figure 4 in Chapter 3, The Hermeneutic Circle shows how I began
understanding the data and broke it into parts and then the whole again. In my study, my data collection and analysis focused on gathering PSTs’ lived experiences with learning how to teach reading.

**Description of Participants**

I conducted semi-structured interviews with six preservice teachers in their final semester of their teacher preparation program. Table 1 provides demographic information for the participants. In addition to basic demographic information, I also wanted to know if the participants had begun their coursework immediately after graduating high school, whether they had a previous career before starting their coursework, and what type of setting the PSTs predicted they would teach after graduation.

**Table 1**

*Participants’ Demographic Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African-American</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American or Alaskan Native</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Races</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Below are descriptive narratives of each participant using pseudonyms. These narrative descriptions provide an overall narrative of each participant’s demographic information and experiences with learning how to read. In addition, the descriptions include quotations from the participants to help give the reader more information about who these participants are and their unique lived experiences of learning how to teach reading. Additionally, I have included quotations from the participants to demonstrate the emergence of themes, support the findings, and form a composite summary of the phenomenon.

**Makayla**

My first interview was with Makayla, a very confident student. At the beginning of the interview, I asked Makayla to tell me about herself. She told me that she began her college degree as a high school sophomore and obtained her child development licensure by the time she graduated high school. She added that she graduated high school with a 4.25 GPA and was on track to attend an Ivy League school; however, with a turn of
events, that did not happen. She will graduate from the teacher education program at age 21 and just got a job as a registered behavior technician. She is a therapist working with children with extremely aggressive behavior and children with comorbid conditions related to autism.

Makayla also ran a nonprofit where she taught reading remediation from age 14 to age 18. She worked with other mentor teachers to use spoken word poetry to help replace the traditional online reading remediation programs for middle and high schools. She taught the curriculum to teachers and how to teach the curriculum. Makayla also taught her own class at her high school for two years.

Although she won an award from Yale for the work she did, she stated, “I was like, I’m never teaching again; that was so much hard work.” She added that as a therapist, she goes into teachers’ classrooms and tells them what to do. Therefore, she is completing the teacher education program to get a teacher’s perspective.

Ally

Ally began her interview by telling me how excited she is to graduate in May. She said that she loves to work with kids and that it makes her day whenever she enters the classroom. She described her niece and nephew and said she was excited that some of her classmates might be their teachers one day.

When I asked Ally how her teachers taught reading, she paused, saying she was trying to think back that far. She began explaining how she loved reading and credited her teachers and her mom, also a teacher, for her love of reading. Ally added that she did not like reading while in kindergarten and attributes that to her kindergarten teacher being less encouraging.
When I asked Ally the first question in Part 3 regarding how the instruction time was divided between the component parts of reading versus the meaning-making parts, she responded, “In all honesty, it felt like it was mushed together.” Ally also said she thought her instructions on teaching reading were better suited to upper grades. She stated, “I would get a little frustrated with it because of the lack of touching on kindergarten and the younger grades. I felt like it was completely overlooked.” However, Ally was excited when I asked her about learning to teach vocabulary. She said:

I felt like we talked about the importance of vocabulary, the importance of making sure students are understanding what the word is [and] what the meaning is. I’m with kindergartners; they don’t know much outside of the smaller basic words, and I need to make sure they’re getting it.

However, when I asked Ally about specific strategies that were taught to teach vocabulary, she commented, “Again, that was something that was more tailored towards the upper grades. It was like vocabulary using the dictionary and things that upper grades will be using.”

Lyssa

Lyssa was the only participant with a previous career before entering the program to earn her teaching degree. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she was furloughed, so she took a part-time position at the southwestern university. She said it was awesome because she decided to return to school, and her university job helped pay her tuition.

Lyssa expressed that when I (the researcher) attended her seminar course to recruit interview participants, she thought, “I don’t remember being taught how to teach reading.” Therefore, she was reluctant to participate in the interview because she thought
she might be the only one who had not learned how to teach reading in her teacher preparation courses. She added that she had wanted to look through her notes from the literacy courses before the interview; however, she did not have time.

When I asked Lyssa about reading as a child, she said, “I remember loving books because my mom would take me to the library. And it was like the best time ever. I loved it when she would read to me.” She continued, “[This] sounds weird, but like the smell of books made me want to read.” Despite her love for reading, she also explained that she remembers being a nervous reader in school and hated being called on to read. “It has stuck with me my whole life. So, I always feel nervous about reading in front of people.”

When I asked Lyssa about her university course experiences in learning how to help students with reading difficulties, she said that she did not learn strategies in the program, but she informed me that she has a son, who is now 14, with dyslexia, so she has retained most of her teaching reading strategies from her experience helping him.

Jessica

Jessica revealed early in the interview that she was diagnosed with dyslexia in third grade. Jessica told me that her school, located north of the state where this study was conducted, had reading interventions in place for her since she was in first grade and had an Individual Education Plan (IEP) by the time she was in third grade. She added that her teachers used a well-known, scientifically-based approach to teach her how to read. She remembers that she learned how to use phonetics to help learn the sounds of letters instead of “just memorizing words.” In addition, she said that she did not enjoy reading until high school.

Jessica added that she was recently taking the Praxis exam and struggled with
much of the reading portion; however, she said:

I have a little bit of benefits, and my background experiences with that [having dyslexia and being taught using the Orton Gillingham program as a student], but I feel like it hasn’t really prepared us a whole lot for actually teaching, and had I not had that background, I would have been struggling far more with the basics.

**Lynn**

Lynn began by telling me that she learned to read in Spanish, and it was not until she was in second grade and moved to an English-only class that she had to learn to read from “square one.” She added, “I mostly learned how to read at church because they would make us do Bible readings.” Lynn also said that she did a lot of reading at home. “I remember my dad would make us sit down and read with him for like four hours every night (giggles). It probably wasn’t four hours, but it felt like hours to me because I didn’t know how to read.”

Lynn explained that this is her third semester as a teacher candidate in a third grade dual language classroom. She said she entered the third grade classroom assuming they all knew how to read. However, the special education teacher quit this semester, so they had all the special education students in their class full-time. She stated this was difficult because, “So it was always me assuming like, ‘What do you mean you don’t know how to read CVC words? What do you mean you don’t know the sounds of the letters?’” She added that it has been a challenge for her to teach these students because she does not know where to begin.

**Cassandra**

When I asked Cassandra how she was taught to read, she explained that she did
not remember any strategies her teachers used to teach reading because she learned to read from her mother and grandmother before she began school. “I just read all the time. As a kid, I loved reading. It was my favorite. She added that she was reading at a seventh-grade level by first grade. Cassandra added, “I went to a Catholic school, and they really had no idea what to do with me. And so they would send me to the middle school hall and have me go pick out books from them.” She continued, “Eventually, I got pretty burnt out on reading and ended up not really liking it.”

Cassandra described the literacy courses as being more focused on the diversity aspect and less on the actual teaching aspect. She claimed, “I definitely have learned a lot more in my student teaching than I have at XXX [university].” She added, “I wouldn’t feel confident, like going into, for example, kindergarten or first grade class where it’s so heavily centered on teaching reading.”

**Preliminary Meaning Units**

After reading through each interview transcript multiple times, I began creating preliminary meaning units. Giorgi (1985) describes a “meaning unit” as the allocation piece of data revealing a feature or trait of the investigated phenomenon (p. 10). I started by recording common phrases in my field notes. After reviewing the notes, the following meaning units are listed.

- phonemic awareness
- phonics
- fluency
- comprehension
- vocabulary
• “I Don’t Remember”
• “Read and Take Notes”
• lack of preparedness to teach
• learned more during student teaching or from CT
• spent most of my time creating lesson plans

I developed Table 2 to summarize the meaning units and organize ideas about the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; King et al., 2019; Peoples, 2021). The first five meaning units are based on the elements of reading instruction. The final five meaning units consist of the participant’s other experiences of the phenomenon.

**Table 2**

*Table of Meaning Units*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning Unit</th>
<th>Jessica</th>
<th>Ally</th>
<th>Lynn</th>
<th>Makayla</th>
<th>Lyssa</th>
<th>Cassandra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elements of reading instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not learn how to teach phonemic awareness</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not learn how to teach phonics</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not learn how to teach fluency</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not learn how to teach comprehension</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not learn how to teach vocabulary</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences of the phenomenon</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read and take notes</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 summarizes the meaning units and categorizes the ideas surrounding the phenomenon. The first five meaning units are related to the components of reading instruction, while the last five meaning units reflect the participants’ additional experiences of the phenomenon.

**Summary of Themes**

The meaning units emerged from each participant’s lived experiences, which generated two themes. The two themes derived were “Lack of Understanding the Five Elements of Reading” and “Additional Experiences in Literacy Courses.”

**Table 3**

*Themes Developed from Interviews (N = 6)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1— Lack of Understanding the Five Elements of Reading</th>
<th>Example Quote</th>
<th>Frequency, n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Did not learn how to teach phonemic awareness</td>
<td>“Honestly, I did not learn a whole lot about that [teaching phonemic awareness].”</td>
<td>6 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Did not learn how to teach phonics</td>
<td>“I don’t remember learning anything about that [phonics].”</td>
<td>6 (100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Did not learn how to teach fluency</td>
<td>“I did not learn anything about how to teach fluency.”</td>
<td>4 (67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1—Lack of Understanding the Five Elements of Reading</td>
<td>Example Quote</td>
<td>Frequency, n (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Did not learn how to teach comprehension</td>
<td>“It [comprehension] was talked about, but I don’t remember any strategies.”</td>
<td>3 (50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) Did not learn how to teach vocabulary</td>
<td>“I don’t believe so [taught to teach vocabulary]. I feel horrible if I’m wrong, but I just don’t remember off the top of my head.”</td>
<td>3 (50)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 2—Additional Experiences in Literacy Courses</th>
<th>Example Quote</th>
<th>Frequency, n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Expected to learn by reading and taking notes</td>
<td>“We would read a chapter of our textbook; we would take notes,…That was the reading instruction that I received. It was read this chapter, take notes, and there you go. Now you know how to teach phonics.”</td>
<td>3 (50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Mentioned, “I don’t remember” during the interview</td>
<td>“Not that I remember.” “No, I don’t remember.”</td>
<td>5 (83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Feel a lack of preparedness to teach reading</td>
<td>“I feel like it hasn’t really prepared us a whole lot for actually teaching.”</td>
<td>5 (83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I would be very, very concerned if I had to teach K through second right now because I don’t feel like I have the tools to, like, teach kids how to read….”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Learned more during student teaching or from CT</td>
<td>“I definitely have learned a lot more in my student teaching than I have at XXX University, like, across the board, not just in literacy, but especially in literacy….”</td>
<td>4 (67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) Spent most time creating lesson plans</td>
<td>“We did a lot of, like, practice, like creating lesson plans in those classes, but not a whole lot of actually learning how to teach reading.”</td>
<td>4 (67)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theme 1: Lack of Understanding the Five Elements of Reading**

Based on the preliminary meaning units, I divided them into two themes. The first theme consists of the first five meaning units in Table 1. Each of these are components of the five elements of reading. I have also included situated narratives for each meaning
unit in this section. As stated by Peoples (2021), a situated narrative is a reiteration of the story told by each participant. Situated narratives also provide specific details of the participant’s experience for each theme. In the following section, I have organized experiences thematically based on the interview questions. I organized themes into situated narratives using direct interview quotes (Peoples, 2021).

**Phonemic Awareness and Phonics**

All six participants reported that they did not learn how to teach phonemic awareness or phonics in their literacy methods courses. When asked the question about her university coursework on teaching the sounds of the letters in languages, students will read in phonemic awareness; Ally said, “We weren’t really being taught the different components [of teaching reading].” Jessica stated, “We didn’t really go over it.” While Cassandra said she does not remember learning about phonics or phonemic awareness in her methods courses, she has learned much in her field experience. She added, “I like watching my CT (cooperating teacher) teach literacy block. I’m still learning things that I didn’t know yet.”

Lynn said that although she did not learn phonics or phonemic awareness in her methods courses, she did have experience with metalinguistic awareness from her linguistics class, but she recalled, “They didn’t sit us down and say like, this is how you teach the letter sounds.” Lynn added that she struggles teaching vowel teams and general spelling rules in her field placement classroom. She attributes this issue to learning to read in Spanish before learning to read in English.

Lyssa and Jessica mentioned that the school district where they are student teaching is currently training teachers in LETRS. Jessica stated:
I’ve also just been using resources that people have been giving me who are taking the course right now. And I feel that honest to God [LETRS training] would have made us more prepared [to teach reading if we were able] to take that course. I feel that [LETRS training] would have been more beneficial than these three courses combined.

Jessica added, “I needed [LETRS] just so that I can actually learn how to actually do this [teach reading].” LETRS training instructs teachers on what literacy skills teachers should teach and is based on the SVR and the SOR (Hanford, 2018; Moats, 2020; Schwartz, 2022) “Most teachers nationwide are not being taught reading science in their teacher preparation programs because many deans and faculty in colleges of education either don’t know the science or dismiss it” (Hanford, 2018, para. 9). This is tragic considering teaching students how to read is a fundamental responsibility of teachers.

When I asked Makayla to tell me about her university coursework related to teaching the sounds of the letters in the languages students will read in phonemic awareness, she responded, “I did not learn how to teach that at all.” Although Makayla also reported not learning phonics or phonemic awareness in her methods courses, she remembered using Fundations (Wilson, 2002) to learn to read in kindergarten and first grade. She added that she later discovered that her cohort was the first in her school district to implement Fundations. Additionally, Makayla said that she remembers learning from Fundations when to use the letter “c” versus the letter “k” and learned about controlled vowels.

**Fluency**

Fluency is one of the five indicators that the NRP report (NICHD, 2000) included
as one of the five essential reading components. In addition, many other researchers have discussed the importance of teaching fluency as part of an instructional reading program (Clark et al., 2017; Salinger et al., 2010; Tororelli et al., 2021).

I asked the participants to tell me about their university coursework related to teaching accuracy, rate, and prosody or fluency in reading. Four out of the six participants said they did not learn how to teach fluency. Makayla stated, “I didn’t learn anything about how to teach fluency.” Both Jessica and Lynn said, “Not that I remember.” Ally’s response was, “Really, no.” Finally, Lyssa said, “I don’t believe so.”

Cassandra said that she did learn about fluency in her Teaching Language Arts course; however, she could not provide me with any strategies. She added that she is sure that if she dug through her notes, she would be able to give me examples. I asked each participant to let me know if they thought of anything; however, none of the participants contacted me with more information.

Comprehension

Comprehension is another essential component of reading (NICHD, 2000). In addition, Gough and Tunmer (1986) presented their formula, the SVR, indicating that “Reading equals the product of decoding and comprehension, or $R = D \times C$” (p. 7). They continue by stating that there is no reading taking place without comprehension.

When I asked the participants about their university methods’ coursework related to learning to teach comprehension or the meaning of text, three out of the six participants voiced that they did not learn how to teach comprehension in their methods courses. Lyssa stated, “I don’t believe so. And I feel horrible if I’m wrong, but I just don’t remember.” Cassandra said, “I definitely learned more in my student teaching about
comprehension.”

Ally, Makayla, and Jessica said they did learn about comprehension in their preservice courses. Jessica explained that in one of her literacy method courses, the instructor provided strategies to identify student comprehension and had the students create rubrics to assess comprehension. Ally remarked that the instructor did teach strategies for teaching comprehension; however, she could not remember any of the strategies, which she felt were geared for upper grades. Ally stated:

That was one thing that she taught a lot more. She definitely had a lot more strategies for that. I don’t remember them. I would definitely have to look at the things that she passed out. But I do know that she talked about that way more, which was why I got more frustrated in the methods courses because I was on the very bottom of grade levels [student teaching in kindergarten]. And, of course, we do comprehension in kindergarten. But what she was doing was more tailored towards, like I said, those upper grades that were reading the longer texts more in-depth.

Makayla said there was a heavy emphasis on reading comprehension. She said, “This is one thing that I did learn about and take away from that methods course.” She added that she had made some reading comprehension sheets that guide students through the reading comprehension process for her reading intervention groups in her field placement classroom.

**Vocabulary**

When I asked the participants about their experiences learning to teach vocabulary, Jessica and Lynn stated that they were taught strategies to teach vocabulary.
Lynn said that she had “a little bit” of coursework related to teaching vocabulary. She added:

I think we had a section where we talked about the different ways that students can access vocabulary words or the different ways that we can bring up vocabulary words. So, for instance, asking them to tell us which words they were struggling with instead of us saying, ‘Oh, here are your vocabulary words.’ And that has to do with spelling words, too, where it’s words that are relevant to them and words in context. So it’s not just random words they never see or going to use in their coursework. So mainly, the thing with vocabulary was making it relevant and personal to the students.

Although Lynn had said she had “a little bit” of coursework in vocabulary, she provided quite a bit of detail regarding how she was taught to teach vocabulary. However, she said that she had not had the opportunity to use any of her vocabulary strategies in her student teaching.

Jessica spoke about learning how to identify vocabulary words that kids might not understand in the book and how to teach the word. She added, “[We learned] how you would go about teaching them that word and scaffolding that for them.”

Cassandra said, “I do remember learning about vocabulary. I remember that through all three courses, we did a little focus on vocabulary.” She added that they had to make a lesson plan teaching vocabulary. However, when I asked her about facts or strategies she had learned to teach vocabulary, she could not recall any.

On the other hand, Makayla and Lyssa stated that learning how to teach vocabulary was not covered in any of their literacy methods courses. Makayla said, “I
didn’t learn anything about how to teach vocabulary.”

Finally, Ally expressed that vocabulary was “touched on a lot.” However, she continued by stating how her instructor emphasized the importance of teaching vocabulary and ensuring students understand what the word is and the meaning of the word. However, she concluded by stating that the strategies taught to teach vocabulary were geared toward the upper grades. She said, “Again, that was something that was more tailored towards the upper grades. It was like vocabulary using a dictionary, using word charts and things that upper grades will be using.” Cassandra mentioned, “I would say that those [literacy courses] were focused more so on the diversity aspect and less on the actual teaching reading aspect.”

I am not surprised that Makayla, Lyssa, and Ally were unfamiliar with strategies for teaching vocabulary because, as Ehri (2014) points out, vocabulary learning is facilitated by phonological awareness. Each had mentioned earlier in the interview that they were unfamiliar with phonological awareness.

**Lack of Preparedness to Teach Reading**

Based on my literature review, there is an abundance of research that states that teachers do not feel prepared to teach reading when they graduate from their teacher preparation program (Bos et al., 2001; Clark et al., 2017; Fielding-Barnsley & Purdle, 2005; Kosnik & Beck, 2008; Mather et al., 2001; Moats, 1994, 1999; Moats & Foorman, 2003). Therefore, it was unsurprising to learn that five out of six participants said they did not feel prepared to teach reading when they graduate in three months. Lyssa stated:

In terms of teaching reading, I don’t know that I am very confident, especially with students who are [reading] lower than grade level and anything below third
grade. I feel a little bit lost as to how to guide them to be fluent readers and encourage them.

Lyssa added, “I definitely feel like I could use some more help with that [teaching reading].” She continued, “I felt a little bit blindsided when I was in the kinder/first class, cuz I was like, I don’t know how to do that [teach reading].” Lynn stated, “[I] don’t even know the rules [for teaching reading]. So it’s hard to teach them that when I’m unsure about them as well.” Ally said, “I feel like I just don’t have the strategies to help me [teach] from my methods courses.” Jessica declared:

I would be very, very concerned if I had to teach K [kindergarten] through second right now because I don’t feel like I have the tools to, like, teach kids how to read fully, or, like, even develop, like, an assessment as to where they’re at.

Finally, Cassandra said, “I wouldn’t feel confident like going into, for example, kindergarten or first grade class, where it’s so heavily centered on teaching reading. I mean, I know all grade levels you have to teach reading, but those are, I feel like, really like the building blocks of their future and reading, and I do not feel comfortable with that.”

On the other hand, Makayla stated that she was quite confident as a reading teacher with differentiating instruction. She said, “Knowing how to really challenge my students and make accommodations for them where necessary, that was the hardest thing for me to learn.” Makayla said she would ask herself whether she was challenging her students enough or ask,

Am I doing what I need to be doing? Is the support that I’m giving enough because I felt like that was a big gap? How do I know whether what I’m doing is
Makayla’s comments were refreshing for me to hear. Her confidence was incredibly revitalizing, considering all the other participants expressed their lack of confidence in teaching reading.

**Theme 2: Additional Experiences in Literacy Courses**

The second theme comprises the five final meaning units listed in Table 1, reflecting participants’ additional responses regarding their experiences in the literacy methods courses. Following are the situated narratives for each meaning unit in Theme 2.

**“I Don’t Remember”**

One common phrase repeated during my interviews was, “I don’t remember.” Five out of six participants replied, “I don’t remember,” to one or more questions. Five participants answered, “I don’t remember” to the question, “How did your methods teachers divide their instructional time between the component parts of reading (sounds of letters) versus the meaning-making parts of reading (comprehension and/or reader identities). At least two participants responded, “I don’t remember” to each of the questions regarding phonics, phonemic awareness, comprehension, fluency, and the question regarding theories/theorists. Lynn mentioned several times that she “didn’t remember” learning to teach many of the components of reading. She added, “I don’t even know the rules [for phonics]. So, it’s hard to teach them [the students] when I’m unsure about them as well.”

As the researcher, this theme presented itself in several ways. The first was that the participants truly did not remember if their instructor presented the material in their literacy methods courses. However, it is possible that the instructor taught the material
but did not present it in a memorable way. Kosnik and Beck (2008) state that many teacher educators attempt to cover so much content that it is impossible to cover everything; therefore, instructors might introduce content in breadth rather than depth. This method for presenting information may result in the PSTs not retaining the vast amount of knowledge presented in their literacy method courses.

Kosnik and Beck (2008) also report that when reviewing the data from their research, the instructors stated that they taught a balanced literacy approach; however, the new teachers “reported they learned disconnected bits of information” (p. 124). This statement connects with my theory that the instructors may have taught the preservice teachers one or more of the approaches; however, they did not remember or did not learn the approach.

It is important to note that some of the “no” responses regarding what participants were taught in the literacy courses might have occurred because the participants simply did not remember. On the other hand, the participants might not remember because the instruction did not impact their knowledge retention. As an illustration, Cassandra expressed her concern by stating, “If it gives you any clue as to how much of this I remember, I took all of my Praxis exams, and teaching reading is the only one I failed.”

I found it difficult as the interviewer to ask more probing questions if a participant simply responded to an interview question with “No.” In some instances, if they had no memory of an event, I was not able to probe further.

“Read and Take Notes”

When I asked how their methods’ instructors divided their instructional time between the component parts of reading versus the meaning-making parts of reading,
three out of six of the participants stated that they did not know how to answer that question because the way the instructor set up the course was to read the text and take notes. Those who did answer the question stated phrases such as, “It was just read and take notes.” Makayla added, “It felt like they were, we were touching on some things, but a lot of it [the course information] stemmed from us going back to our notes that we took on our own [after reading the text].”

I asked Makayla to tell me about her experiences learning how to teach reading in her university literacy courses; she quickly told me that all three literacy methods courses were set up to “just read and take notes.” She continued by asserting, “I remember when I first started teaching literacy in my [student teaching] classroom being like, what the [hell], like what is this? This [teaching reading] is not like the textbook.”

Ally said there were times when she wanted to know more about key factors, and when she would try to ask about it, the instructor responded, “Just read the book.” Jessica added:

I would have loved to read the chapters and then go apply something that I learned from that chapter in their classroom, and be getting some sort of feedback. I think there was a big gap that was missing from what we were doing.

**Student Teaching and Cooperating Teacher**

During my interviews, four out of six participants stated that they learned more about teaching reading while student teaching or from their cooperating teacher (CT) than in their literacy methods courses. Makayla said, “The practical feedback and experience was so much more valuable to me than sitting in a one-hour class twice a week.” When I asked Cassandra if there was anything that she would like to add about her university
experience and learning to teach young children, she explained that she did not want to
“knock” the literacy professors and added, “I feel like I definitely could have learned
more. But I am also very grateful for my experience student teaching because that has
built my competence so much.”

When I asked Ally about strategies to teach phonemic awareness, she responded,
“That was one area that I was really scared to take over [in my student teaching
classroom].” She stated, “I was so nervous for that part [teaching phonemic awareness]
that I sat down with my CT to talk about it.” She continued by informing me that her CT
taught her about onset and rime [the part of a word including the vowel and the letters
that follow], deletion, and substitution. Ally said her cooperating teacher gave her more
confidence to teach phonemic awareness.

Creating Lesson Plans

Three out of six participants also stated that they spent most of their time creating
lesson plans in the methods courses. Jessica, Lynn, and Cassandra articulated that they
felt like their instructors from their methods courses did not teach strategies to teach
reading in their methods courses; instead, the focus was on creating lesson plans. Jessica
stated:

And during class, it was almost entirely like we would like read a children’s book
or do like a similar activity to reading, like a book or an article, then we would
create, like, a lesson plan based off of it. Which was very repetitive, but it felt like
the same question. Um, it felt like a lot of our time was spent on that.

Cassandra added, “And we also did a lot of, like, practice, like creating lesson
plans in those classes, but not a whole lot of actually learning how to teach reading.”
Lynn said that she learned to teach vocabulary by creating a lesson plan focused on defining vocabulary words, and Jessica said that she had a similar experience of learning how to teach comprehension by creating lesson plans.

**General Narratives**

I derived general narratives from the situated narratives, which incorporate all participants’ accounts into a general description (King et al., 2019; Peoples, 2021). My goal was to organize the data from the situated narratives and highlight the meanings of each participant’s experiences.

I examined the two themes that emerged based on my interview questions. For Theme 1: Lack of Understanding the Five Elements of Reading, all participants said they did not learn how to teach phonemic awareness or phonics in their literacy methods courses. Most participants stated that they did not learn how to teach fluency. Finally, many participants mentioned that they did not learn how to teach comprehension or vocabulary. Also, most participants stated that they were not taught how to teach fluency in the methods courses.

In Theme 2: Additional Experiences in Literacy Courses, many participants mentioned they were expected to learn teaching strategies by reading the text and taking notes. Also, most participants said, “I don’t remember,” at least once when responding to the interview questions. Most PSTs articulated that they did not feel prepared to teach reading upon graduation. In addition, most participants declared that they had learned more from their cooperating teacher during their field experience than from their university methods courses.

Cassandra claimed, “I definitely have learned a lot more in my student teaching
than I have at XXX [university].” She added, “I wouldn’t feel confident, like going into, for example, kindergarten or first grade class where it’s so heavily centered on teaching reading.” Cassandra mentioned, “I would say that those [literacy courses] were focused more so on the diversity aspect and less on the actual teaching reading aspect.”

Many studies from my literature review reveal that PSTs receive more knowledge during their field experience rather than their coursework (Al Otaiba, 2013; Levine, 2006; Malatesha Joshi et al., 2009; National Reading Panel, 2000; Salinger et al., 2010). On the contrary, the American Education Research Association Panel on Research and Teacher Education (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2009) “cautioned that there is very little empirical evidence pertaining to effective methods of teacher preparation, including field experiences” (Al Otaiba et al., 2012, p. 110).

**Significant Findings of the Study**

The overall findings are described below. The guiding research question for this study was, “How do preservice teachers describe their experiences of the methodology of teaching reading in their literacy courses?” The hermeneutic phenomenology approach for this study focused on lived experiences in which themes emerged that describe the phenomena of how PSTs are taught to teach reading. The most common meaning unit was that all participants said they did not learn how to teach phonics or phonemic awareness in their literacy methods courses.

**Experiences of the Methodology of Teaching Reading**

The participants described their experiences of the methodology of teaching reading as reading the textbook to learn about theoretical principles and gaining knowledge about setting up a reading curriculum. However, they also expressed the need
to enhance their understanding of implementing the curriculum to effectively educate students on how to read. Many of the PSTs stated that just reading the textbook and only being taught theoretical principles was not enough to learn how to teach reading.

**Specific Strategies for Teaching Reading as Focus of Teacher Preparation**

The participants explained that the literacy methods courses focused on creating lesson plans and did not include teaching how to teach reading. During my interviews, I discovered that PSTs only reported having experiences with a few techniques for teaching reading. While they were prepared to use a basal reader, participants did not report experiences with learning to teach reading in any of the following domains: (a) phonetic, (b) whole language, or (c) balanced literacy approach. Based on my literature review, I did not find any literature suggesting that teacher preparation literacy classes were not using at least one of these methods to teach reading (Hoffman et al., 2020; Walsh et al., 2006).

**Potential of the Strategies Learned to Teach Reading in Future Teaching Positions**

PSTs did not report learning any specific strategies for teaching reading in their literacy courses. Moreover, the interviews revealed that most participants lack the confidence to teach reading when they begin their teaching careers. This finding correlates to many of the studies in my literature review that indicate that PSTs are not prepared to teach reading (Al Otaiba et al., 2012; Bos et al., 2001; Fielding-Barnsley, 2010; Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013; Mather et al., 2001; Meehan & Hammond, 2005; Salinger et al., 2010; Schrader et al., 2003; Squires et al., 2009; Tetley & Jones, 2014; Washburn et al., 2011).
In addition, despite many state and federal policy initiatives and knowing what we now know about the SOR, none of the participants mentioned learning about the SOR. Our teacher education programs still do not prepare PSTs to teach reading (Hikida et al., 2019; Hindman et al., 2020; Mather et al., 2001; Tortorelli et al., 2021).

**Summary of Chapter Four**

This study examined how PSTs were taught to teach reading during their reading methods courses. Researchers have determined that there is irrefutable evidence that supports that teacher preparation programs should provide instruction in the SOR; however, many teacher preparation programs are not teaching the SOR (Clark et al., 2017; Copeland et al., 2011; Darling-Hammond, 1996, 2006b; Ehri, 2020; Hoffman et al., 2020; Moats, 1999, 2014; Moats & Foorman, 2003; Tortorelli et al., 2021).

During interviews, PSTs described their lived experiences in their literacy methods coursework by describing the lack of teaching of the five essential elements for teaching reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Although I repeatedly assured the participants that their identities would be pseudonyms, several were reluctant with some of their responses because they did not want to defame their instructors.

Chapter 4 included the findings from my semi-structured interviews with six PSTs from a teacher preparation program in the southwestern part of the United States. These findings provided insights into the lived experiences of how PSTs describe their experiences of the methodology of teaching reading in their literacy courses. Included were themes and narratives with personal quotes. In the final chapter, Chapter 5, I summarize the research study with implications for practice and recommendations for
future research. The findings related to the literature review and the theoretical framework are also discussed.
CHAPTER 5

Summary and Discussion

This qualitative hermeneutic research aimed to explore the common phenomenon and lived experiences of six PSTs who have completed all three required literacy courses in an elementary teacher program at a university in the southwestern part of the United States. Hermeneutic phenomenology describes an individual's lived experiences or the essence of an individual's shared understanding of an experience or concept (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The previous chapter outlined the study’s findings and included direct quotes from participants. This chapter discusses the findings related to the literature review and the theoretical framework. Finally, this chapter includes implications for practice and recommendations for future research.

One problem addressed in this study is that many new teachers often need more knowledge or self-efficacy to teach reading or did not learn how to teach reading effectively in their teacher preparation programs (Copeland et al., 2011; Darling-Hammond & Oakes, 2021; Hikida et al., 2019; Tortorelli et al., 2021; Washburn et al., 2011). This qualitative phenomenological research study aimed to understand the lived experiences of PSTs’ understanding of the methodology of teaching reading. In addition, my research aimed to determine the specific strategies PSTs describe as the focus of their teaching reading preparations and how they describe the potential of the strategies learned in their coursework to help them teach reading in their future positions.

Significance of Study

The significance of this research study was to call attention to the fact that many PSTs are not learning how to teach reading in their teacher education programs. It is
critical that teachers graduate from their teacher preparation program knowing how to teach our children how to read. I hope that presenting these results will influence teacher preparation programs to pay attention to the research findings and eliminate the gap between the research results and how PSTs are actually taught to read.

**Interpretation of Findings**

The following section will describe how my findings extend knowledge in my field of study. It will also connect my results with the review of the literature. Peoples (2021) refers to this step as “creating a dialogue with the literature reviewed” (p. 90). Also included are my interpretations of how PSTs describe their experiences of the methodology of teaching reading in their literacy courses.

**Methodology of Teaching Reading**

My research question asked, How do preservice teachers describe their experiences of the methodology of teaching reading in their literacy courses? The preservice teachers that I interviewed describe their experiences of the methodology of teaching reading in their literacy courses as reading the textbook to learn about theoretical principles for setting up a reading classroom. However, they explain that they did not learn how to teach reading (phonics).

**Strategies Used to Teach Preservice Teachers to Teach Reading**

My first research subquestion was, What specific strategies for teaching reading do preservice teachers describe as the focus of their teaching reading preparation? The participants explained that the focus of the literacy methods courses was learning how to create lesson plans, which did not necessarily include reading instruction. Another focus
the participants discussed was that they learned to use a basal reader in their future classrooms.

Previous researchers have studied the effects of implementing different methods for teaching reading using a phonetic approach, a whole language approach, or a balanced literacy approach (Clark et al., 2017; Hoffman et al., 2020; Maloch et al., 2003). My findings from this study revealed that the methods instructors did not use a single approach to teach PSTs to teach reading. Instead, the participants indicated that their instructors used a combination of different approaches to teaching reading. These included incorporating textbooks and literature to support student learning and using children’s literature to create lesson plans. I was surprised by this finding. I went into this study with the fore-conception that the PSTs would have learned to teach reading using at least one of the abovementioned approaches. I want to point out that this is a perfect example of The Hermeneutic Circle (Gadamer, 1975; Peoples, 2021) in action. I recognized my preconceived idea and revised my understanding of the phenomenon.

**Potential of Learned Strategies**

The second subquestion was, How do preservice teachers describe the potential of the strategies learned in their coursework to help them teach reading in their future positions? As indicated in the previous chapter, a common theme was the lack of understanding of the five elements of reading. None of the participants reported learning the SOR in their literacy methods courses. According to the SOR, teachers should include phonemic awareness and phonics in teaching students how to read (Clark et al., 2017; Copeland et al., 2011; Darling-Hammond, 1996, 2006b; Ehri, 2020; Hoffman et al., 2020; Moats, 1999, 2004, 2005, 2020; Seidenberg, 2013; Tortorelli et al., 2021).
In addition, five out of the six participants revealed that they do not feel comfortable teaching reading after graduating. This finding supports the literature review, which shows that teachers often lack preparation to teach reading after graduating from their program (Bos et al., 2001; Clark et al., 2017; Fielding-Barnsley & Purdle, 2005; Kosnik & Beck, 2008; Mather et al., 2001; Moats, 1994, 1999; Moats & Foorman, 2003). The participant quote that stands out to me more than others is Cassandra’s quote, “I would be very, very concerned if I had to teach K through second right now because I don’t feel like I have the tools to, like, teach kids how to read….” Teachers' initial preparation must encompass all aspects of literacy, particularly how and what PSTs learn about reading processes (Adams, 1990; Al Otaiba et al., 2012; Bos et al., 2001; Clark et al., 2017; Hikida et al., 2019; Snow et al., 1998; Tortorelli et al., 2021).

Implications for Practice

This study has implications for stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, administrators, and teacher preparation programs. Below, I list those implications based on my interviews and literature review.

Students and Parents

Every student deserves to have a quality teacher of reading. Therefore, students need teachers who understand how to teach SOR content and present it in a meaningful way (Tortorelli et al., 2021). The lack of teaching SOR skills in elementary classrooms has been a concern of scholars (Moats, 2014; Seidenberg, 2017). Parents and journalists have amplified this concern over the past few years (Hanford, 2018, 2019, 2022), creating a movement advocating for the SOR. Advocates of the SOR have directly attributed the perceived lack of instruction on code-related skills in teacher preparation programs, stating that higher education does not adequately prepare teachers to instruct
Parents nationwide send their children to school expecting the teachers to teach them how to read. When teachers cannot teach students how to read, many parents worry that something is wrong with their child because they struggle to read. However, in Hanford’s 2022 podcast *Sold a Story*, she describes several families who learned that their child did not have a disability. Instead, teachers were not teaching the SOR.

**Teachers**

All six participants shared that they were unprepared to teach reading with SOR skills. This could have a negative impact on student learning. According to Reynolds et al. (2010), if classroom teachers lack the knowledge and skills necessary to teach early reading using research-informed practice, Tier 1 (foundational reading instruction for the whole class) may be unable to accommodate most students, resulting in ripple effects to Tiers 2 and 3. Tier 2 refers to supplementary small-group instruction for students identified as at risk. Tier 3 involves individualized, intensive instruction for students who do not respond to multiple research-based interventions (Goss & Brown-Chidsey, 2012).

The research by Tortorelli et al. (2021) emphasizes that solidifying the SOR should take priority in teacher preparation programs. School districts should provide mandated LETRS training to current teachers who have yet to have training in the SOR. It is imperative that local institutions and higher policymakers ensure that teachers remain current in their knowledge base of the SOR (Malatesha Joshi et al., 2009). This is essential to create a foundation that allows teachers to address the needs of their students. Teacher training programs must incorporate the SOR to ensure teachers are adequately equipped to meet classroom demands.
Administrators

Although school administrators need teachers who effectively teach struggling and non-struggling readers, it is the responsibility of school administrators to support both preservice and in-service teachers in teaching reading (Hindman et al., 2020). Additionally, administrators could rethink the use of time, school schedules, and funding for the SOR professional development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Administrators should provide greater access to resources and training to support teachers in delivering effective instruction for all students. They should also allocate adequate time and funding for professional development. In addition, they should ensure that school schedules provide teachers with the time to implement effective instruction.

Potential of Strategies Learned to Teach Reading

Most of the PSTs in this study expressed concern about not being prepared to teach upon graduating. The participants referenced that they did not know how to teach beginning readers to read. They also said that they did not know how to teach struggling readers. This finding correlates with many other studies that report that PST graduates feel unprepared to teach reading. This lack of preparedness is due to various reasons, such as inadequate field experience, limited opportunities to practice teaching, and a lack of a comprehensive curriculum for teaching reading. As a result, PSTs often feel they do not have strategies to teach reading confidently (Levine, 2006; Malatesha Joshi et al., 2009; Salinger et al., 2010).

Regardless of the many recent studies regarding the importance of teaching the SOR (Clark et al., 2017; Copeland et al., 2011; Darling-Hammond, 1996, 2006b; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Ehri, 2020; Hoffman et al., 2020; Moats, 1999, 2004,
2005, 2014, 2020; Seidenberg, 2013, 2017; Tortorelli et al., 2021), none of the participants mentioned learning anything about the SOR. In addition, despite the research regarding the SVR (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) and Scarborough’s Reading Rope (Scarborough, 2001), none of the participants mentioned learning about them when asked if they remembered any specific theories or theorists of reading that appeared in their literacy methods courses.

**Policymakers, Licensing Agencies, and State Departments of Education**

Ensuring teacher educators remain competent and current in their knowledge base must be addressed at local institutions and higher policy levels (Malatesha Joshi et al., 2009). Twenty-nine states and the District of Columbia have passed or implemented laws or policies related to evidence-based reading instruction since 2013. The state in which this study takes place is one of 34 states that do not require the SOR in teacher preparation programs and one of 36 states that do not require the SOR for teacher certification or license renewal (Schwartz, 2022b). Policymakers should agree that PSTs should be taught the SOR. In addition, departments of education should ensure that faculty at teacher preparation programs know the most up-to-date methods for teaching reading, such as the SOR.

**Teacher Education Preparation Programs**

There is much scrutiny of teacher preparation programs in the United States (Adams, 1997; Chall, 1967; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Darling-Hammond & Oakes, 2021; Fraser, 2007; Hoffman et al., 2020; Marks, 2002; von Hippel & Bellows, 2018). Yet, how are teacher preparation programs responding? Although teacher education programs may not be able to prepare candidates with all prerequisites and extensively
develop every literacy skill necessary to meet the needs of all students, elementary PSTs must progress toward being competent and confident teachers of reading as they approach graduation (Hoy & Spero, 2005). Instructors must design curricula to frame the process of developing the learning and application of reading theory.

Compared to the complexity of teaching students to read, teacher education has been viewed as a low-status endeavor in universities (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Goodlad, 1990; Zeichner, 2002). Teacher education programs must thoroughly analyze research findings and assess their literacy courses. The literacy courses should update the course content across the classes. Below is an example of how one teacher preparation literacy department attempted to align their literacy courses. I also provide information about what the Literacy Team could do to make it work.

Malatesha Joshi et al. (2009) state that as long as millions of American children cannot read at grade level, teacher preparation programs should continually re-evaluate how best to prepare teachers to teach reading. Through my experience as an instructor at this same university where I recruited participants, there was an attempt approximately three years ago to create a Literacy Team that would meet with all literacy instructors to agree to adhere to using an approved text for each course. In addition, key objectives, assessments, and specific assignments were approved for each literacy course to avoid repeating course assignments. For example, the team learned that instructors in all three literacy courses assigned the same project regarding Literacy Circles. Therefore, they delegated the Literacy Circle assignment to the second literacy course, allowing the other two methods classes to focus on different topics. The Literacy Team also planned to integrate evidence-based research teaching strategies into the syllabi and courses.
Included in the team were three full-time faculty members, two adjunct faculty members, and three graduate assistants. However, shortly after the development of the Literacy Team, the associate professor who led these meetings went on sabbatical, and no one was appointed to continue the Literacy Team meetings. In addition, part-time instructors and graduate assistants moved on, leaving the university to hire new part-time instructors and graduate students/teacher assistants who needed to be made aware of the earlier initiatives. This is problematic because, in my experience, new part-time instructors or graduate students/teacher assistants have no idea about the previous endeavors of the Literacy Team. Furthermore, it is important to mention that at the time of this study, there was not a full-time professor overseeing the literacy department at the university.

Future Literacy Teams should appoint someone to continue managing meetings if a leader leaves. In addition, the leader should inform new part-time, adjunct, and graduate students/teacher assistants about the Literacy Team Plan. In addition, the Literacy Team should continue developing the literacy methods courses, which could include making extensive changes to the program. The program’s structure should include the SOR, Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 instruction. In addition, each methods course should create and use assessments to determine mastery of code-related knowledge.

Furthermore, teacher preparation programs should ensure that when hiring new instructors, they have the knowledge base to teach PSTs how to teach reading. Additionally, if the program insists on hiring teacher and graduate assistants, it is imperative that teacher education programs conduct a rigorous screening process for both teacher and graduate assistants to guarantee their proficiency with the SOR. In addition,
the Literacy Team should monitor the courses to confirm that the instructor is teaching the agreed-upon material.

Teacher preparation programs should also include LETRS training. LETRS is not a teaching program to teach children. Instead, it is a professional development course for educators. (Moats, 2023). As mentioned in Chapter 2, Moats describes how she pieced together the LETRS prototype in the 1990s when she was teaching PSTs and realized that many PSTs did not have the background knowledge to teach reading, such as phoneme awareness, phonics, spelling, vocabulary, syntax, comprehension, and writing. LETRS for Early Childhood Educators offers graduate credit through the American College of Education (Lexia/LETRS, 2022).

Another suggestion for teacher education programs would be to include a specific course that would teach the PSTs to create lesson plans. Adding a system to teach the lesson plan would provide more time for teaching the subject material, not only for literacy classes but also for math, science, and social studies methods classes.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on the data collected, analyzed, and interpreted from my semistructured interviews, I make several recommendations for future research. One suggestion for future researchers would be to begin the interview by asking the teacher candidates to describe the methods they were taught to teach reading. I believe that by asking this question before jumping in and asking them what they know about each of the components of reading, they might likely remember some methods instead of me suggesting techniques for teaching reading. If they say they do not remember any methods, ask them about their assignments and what they do remember about their
courses. They could have participated in experiences, but they may not directly connect those experiences to actual reading strategies.

Another suggestion would be to include a focus group when studying the impact and content of literacy courses. A focus group discussion might help the participants remember more about their literacy courses and eliminate some of the “I don’t remember” responses. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) state that focus group interviews can be used to collect shared understanding from several individuals and obtain views from specific individuals.

A further suggestion for future research is to include a survey or questionnaire. Creswell (2013) states that researchers can use surveys to describe trends and determine individual opinions about policy issues. If the participants had the survey or questionnaire in front of them to complete, it would provide more time to process the questions and might provide more accurate responses. A survey or questionnaire might also increase the number of participants.

An additional suggestion for future research would be to interview the methods instructors to determine how well they were prepared to teach reading to the PSTs. This would allow for a better understanding of the effectiveness of the methods they used, as well as their confidence in teaching the PSTs. It could also give insight into how to improve the teaching methods used in the future. Additionally, it would be helpful to review the course syllabi to determine if they include strategies for teaching reading.

Another suggestion would be to study programs with successful passing rates on the Praxis exam. This could help identify which methods are more effective and which should be improved. It could also provide an indication of what strategies and materials
should be used to inform the development of PSTs in the future.

**Summary of Results**

This study aimed to uncover the essence of teacher candidates learning to teach reading using Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology. I conducted in-depth interviews to discover the participants’ experiences of learning how to teach reading in their teacher preparation programs. My findings were astonishing. Five of my six interview participants stated they do not feel comfortable teaching reading when they graduate in just a couple of months.

It is extremely concerning that PSTs will be graduating and have yet to learn a method for teaching students how to read. Despite many state and federal policy initiatives and knowing what we now know about the SOR, many of our teacher education programs still do not prepare PSTs to teach reading (Hikida et al., 2019; Hindman et al., 2020; Tortorelli et al., 2021).

Currently, my state is in the lowest percentile for reading test scores (NAEP, 2022). Recently, the state legislature approved extending the school day to provide extra time to teach reading to address the problem of students not learning to read. (H.R. Rep. No. HB 130, 2023). The approved extra hours will be equivalent to 27 days for elementary students. However, will providing “more time” to the school day be worthwhile if the teachers do not know how to teach reading? Based on my findings from this research, adding extra time to the school day will not benefit the students unless the teachers have the skills and strategies to teach reading. Failure to prepare future teachers on how to teach reading is unacceptable. Consequently, children are not being taught to read. In addition to the legislature adding more time to the school day, I would hope they
would add policy implementation for requiring the SOR in teacher preparation programs and teacher certification and license renewal.

Based on my findings, teacher education programs should improve how they prepare PSTs to teach reading and include teaching the SOR. It was clear from this research that even if the university methods instructors may have thought they were teaching reading methods to the PSTs, many of their students stated otherwise or did not remember the instructor teaching reading methods. The state where this research took place needs to follow the lead of other states and increase policies to include the SOR in teacher preparation courses (Schwartz, 2022b).

Based on the research and the findings regarding the SOR, I conclude this section with what I consider a very thought-provoking statement:

Our findings were somewhat surprising, suggesting that some college professors may not be teaching the science of reading because they are ideologically opposed to the science but, because they may be reluctant to teach what they themselves do not know (Walsh et al., 2006, p. 27).

I find this statement thought-provoking because I find it concerning that we have so much information regarding the SOR; however, there are still teacher preparation programs across the nation that do not teach this when preparing PSTs.

As a former elementary school teacher who graduated from a teacher preparation program 30 years ago, I still remember how helpless I felt when I went into my classroom for the first time and did not know how to teach third-graders struggling with reading. My ultimate hope is that our future teachers will learn how to teach the SOR and never have to experience that frustration. Teachers cannot teach what they do not know.
Teacher preparation programs must ensure their PSTs understand how children learn to read. Thus, our students will also not feel the frustration of not knowing how to read because they have teachers who KNOW how to teach them how to read.
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Appendix A

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The Institutional Review Board has granted approval for the above referenced protocol. This approval is based on an acceptable risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks to participants have been minimized. This project is not covered by Federalwide Assurance (FWA) and will not receive federal funding.

This approval includes the following:

- Recruitment Materials - Recruitment Statement.docx
- Letter - recruitment-email.docx
- CV/Resume - Marjori Krebs Vita 10-2022.docx
- Scientific Review Form - MK_scientific-validity-review-form.pdf
- Advertisement - Recruitment Flyer.docx
- Questionnaire/Survey - Interview Questions 11-26-22.docx
- Letter - Letter to IRB.docx
- Protocol - K. Williams-Page Protocol.docx
- Informed Consent Document - Consent Form 3-1-2023.docx
The IRE made the following determinations:

Informed consent is required; documentation of consent is waived.

This determination applies only to the activities described in the submission and does not apply should any changes be made to this research. If changes are being considered, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to submit an amendment to this project and receive IRB approval prior to implementing the changes. A change in the research may disqualify this research from the current review category. If federal funding will be sought for this project, an amendment must be submitted so that it can be reviewed under relevant federal regulations.

All reportable events must be promptly reported to the UNM IRB, including: unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others, serious or unexpected adverse events, and noncompliance issues. All sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

If an expiration date is noted above, a continuing review or closure submission is due no later than 30 days before the expiration date. It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to apply for continuing review or closure and receive approval for the duration of this protocol. If the IRB approval for this protocol expires, all research related activities must stop and further action will be required by the IRB.

Please use the appropriate reporting forms and procedures to request amendments, continuing review, closure, and reporting of events for this protocol. Refer to the OIRB website for forms and guidance on submissions.

Note that all IRB records must be retained for a minimum of three years after closure.
Appendix B

Recruitment Statement

My name is Kelli Williams-Page. I am a doctoral candidate at the University of New Mexico in the College of Education and Human Sciences. I am conducting a dissertation research study about preservice teachers’ experiences learning to teach reading.

You are invited to participate in this study because you have completed all three literacy courses at XXX. (Teaching of Reading to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students I, Teaching Language Arts K-8, and Teaching of Reading to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students II) I am talking to you today to see if you would like to participate in one interview that will take approximately one hour and possibly a follow-up interview that will last approximately 45 minutes to one hour. The interviews will be recorded.

There is minimal risk involved in participation in this study. Risks involved with the interviews are that they may elicit emotional discomfort. The interactions, artifacts, and interviews may contain personal information. You may choose to skip any interview question or end the interview. You may choose to participate in the interviews in person or via XXX’s Zoom videoconferencing system. You may choose to end or cancel any recording. I will make a great effort to protect your data. However, limited Internet access protections cannot guarantee the absolute confidentiality of data provided through the Internet.

I hope the information gained from this study will help improve the teacher preparation program at XXX. You do not have to be in this study, your decision to be in
any study is voluntary. Do you have any questions? (Answer any questions)

Provide the consent form. (Answer any questions about the consent form.)
Appendix C

Research Study: The Lived Experiences of UNM Students in Learning to Teach Reading

Informed Consent for Interview

March 1, 2023 (Revised)

Kelli Williams-Page and Dr. Marjori Krebs, from the Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education, are conducting a research project. The research aims to investigate the lived experiences of UNM students in learning to teach reading. You are being asked to participate because you are a teacher candidate and have taken the three literacy courses at UNM. (Teaching of Reading to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students I, Teaching Language Arts K-8, and Teaching of Reading to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students II) Participants must also be at least 18 years of age.

Your participation will involve participating in recorded interviews either in person or via UNM’s Zoom videoconferencing system. The initial interview should take approximately 45 minutes to one hour; if a follow-up interview is needed, it should take approximately thirty minutes to complete. The interviews will ask about your experiences learning how to teach reading in your previous UNM literacy courses. Your involvement in the research is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate. You can skip any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. You can stop the interview at any time. No identifying information will be associated with your responses. Only pseudonyms will be used. This research has no known risks, but some individuals may experience discomfort or loss of privacy when answering questions. Protecting your confidentiality throughout the study is important. Interview data, records of your participation, your teaching and
learning artifacts, and recordings will not be made available to anyone outside my research. All data will be stored securely using password protection.

Participants will receive a $20 Amazon gift card for participating in an interview. The findings from this project will provide information on the experiences of how preservice teachers learn how to teach reading. If published, results will be presented in summary form only.

All identifiable information (e.g., your name, email) will be removed from the information collected in this project. After we remove all identifiers, the information may be used for future research or shared with other researchers without your additional informed consent.

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research, please call Kelli Williams-Page at (505) 453-1810. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, or about what you should do in case of any harm to you, or if you want to obtain information or offer input, please contact the UNM Office of the IRB (OIRB) at (505) 277-2644 or irb.unm.edu.

Participating in the interview acknowledges your agreement to participate in the research described above.

Kelli Williams-Page
Ph. D. Candidate
505-453-1810
kwilliamspage@unm.edu
IRB #: 2209019750

Principal Investigator: Marjori Krebs

Study Title: The Lived Experiences of UNM Students in Learning to Teach Reading
Appendix D

The Lived Experience of XXX Students in Learning to Teach Reading

Volunteers Wanted for a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study investigating the lived experience of preservice teachers who have taken all three literacy courses at XXX. My research aims to determine your experiences learning to teach reading in your education coursework. You will be asked to participate in one interview that will take approximately 45 minutes and possibly a follow-up interview that will take approximately 30 minutes. The interviews will be recorded.

In order to participate, you must meet the following criteria:

1) Must be at least 18 years of age.

2) Must have attended all three of the literacy methodology courses at XXX.
   (Teaching of Reading to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students I, Teaching Language Arts K-8, and Teaching of Reading to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students II)

Your Confidentiality

No one will know that you are participating other than the researcher. Reporting results will not include any identifiers. The researcher will remove all personal identifiers. Information will be stored in a password-protected computer. All audio will be destroyed after the study.

Please contact me if you are interested in participating in this study or would like more information.
Kelli Williams-Page
Ph. D. Candidate
505-453-1810
kwilliams-page@unm.edu

All communication is confidential.
Appendix E

Semi-structured Interview 1

Timing: During the Fall 2022 Semester

Introduction: Thank you for signing the consent form and agreeing to participate in the interview. Again, my name is Kelli.

Script 1: I introduced myself in your EDUC 403 class and told you a little about me. So, before we begin the official interview, I would like to ask you to please tell me about yourself.

Script 2: Introduce self and ask for participants to tell me about them.

(Listen to Participant’s information.)

During the interview, I will ask you to reflect on your lived experiences in your previous literacy courses at XXX:

Teaching of Reading to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students I

Teaching Language Arts K-8.

Teaching of Reading to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students II

You are welcome to ask me to repeat any questions. You are also welcome to choose not to respond to any question. You can say “pass” to pass on any questions. You may also pause or end the interview at any time. You can say, “I would like to stop the interview now.”

Part 1: Tell me about your field placement.

1. Grade Level

2. Number of students

3. How much time have you spent teaching reading in your field placement classroom?
(Minutes weekly?)

Part 2: Please tell me about your experiences of what you remember learning how to read.

4. What do you remember about how your teachers taught reading?

5. Do you think any of the strategies that they used helped you learn to read better? Can you give an example?

6. What else can you tell me about learning to read? For example, maybe you remember out-of-school experiences (e.g., a parent read to you or pointed out letters while you drove places).

Part 3: Tell me about your experiences and how you were taught to teach reading in your literacy courses.

7. How did your methods teachers divide their instructional time between the component parts of reading (sounds and letters) versus the meaning-making parts of reading (comprehension and/or reader identities)?

8. Do you remember any specific theories or theorists of reading that appeared in your methods courses? (Some people might be Scarborough or Newman. Some theories might be metacognition or the Simple View.)

9. What activities or strategies have you used in your placement experience that you specifically remember learning about in your methods courses? Can you give me an example with details about the students and the context?

Part 4: Here is a list of components that usually appear in coursework on teaching reading. I am going to ask you about each one.

A. Phonemic Awareness (sound)
B. Phonics (sounds and letters)

C. Fluency (rate, accuracy, prosody)

D. Comprehension (meaning-making, often with strategies like inferring or predicting)

E. Vocabulary (meanings of words)

I am going to ask you about each one.

A. Phonemic Awareness:

10. Tell me about your university coursework related to learning to teach the sounds of the letters in the languages students will read in phonemic awareness.

11. What did you learn about how to teach phonemic awareness? What are some facts about it or strategies you learned to teach it?

12. Tell me about your student teaching experiences related to feeling prepared to teach phonemic awareness. Can you give an example of a time when you taught something related to phonemic awareness? Why did you give the lesson? What did you do? How did it go?

B. Phonics:

13. Tell me about your university coursework related to learning to teach how the sounds of letters are connected to the written form (phonics).

14. What did you learn about how to teach phonics? What are some facts about it or strategies you learned to teach it?

15. Tell me about your student teaching experiences related to feeling prepared to teach phonics. Can you give an example of a time when you taught something related to phonics? Why did you give the lesson? What did you do? How did it go?
C. Fluency:

16. Tell me about your university coursework related to learning to teach accuracy, rate, and prosody in reading (fluency).

17. What did you learn about how to teach fluency? What are some facts about it or strategies you learned to teach it?

18. Tell me about your student teaching experiences related to feeling prepared to teach fluency. Can you give an example of a time when you taught something related to fluency? Why did you give the lesson? What did you do? How did it go?

D. Comprehension

19. Tell me about your university coursework related to learning to teach comprehension or constructing meaning from written text.

20. What did you learn about teaching comprehension? What are some facts about it or strategies you learned to teach it?

21. Tell me about your student teaching experiences related to feeling prepared to teach comprehension. Can you give an example of a time when you taught something related to comprehension? Why did you give the lesson? What did you do? How did it go?

E. Vocabulary

22. Tell me about your university coursework related to learning to teach vocabulary (meaning of words).

23. What did you learn about teaching vocabulary? What are some facts about it or strategies you learned to teach it?

24. Tell me about your student teaching experiences related to feeling prepared to teach vocabulary. Can you give an example of a time when you taught something related to
vocabulary? Why did you give the lesson? What did you do? How did it go?

Part 5: Students with Reading Difficulties

25. Tell me what you know about helping students who have reading difficulties.

26. Tell me about your student teaching experiences related to feeling prepared to teach students with reading difficulties.

Part 6: English as a Second Language (ESL)

27. Tell me about your university coursework related to the Structure of Spanish.

28. Tell me about your university coursework related to indigenous languages.

Part 7: Concluding Questions

29. What do you feel most confident about doing well as a reading teacher?

30. What are you most apprehensive about as a reading teacher?

31. What else would you like to tell me about your experience in learning how to teach children how to read?

Thank you for your time and for participating in this interview. I will transcribe the interview and send it to you to check for accuracy. Would you like to choose a pseudonym, or can I choose one for you?