

of learning from the professional development experience in order to help the teachers benefit themselves and their students. In this section, through the data sources, the study focused on the background and events in this course of three classroom teachers in order to transport the reader to the course and help the reader to visualize each of them.

## Description of Individuals--Wendy (Year 4)

Wendy did change her perceptions regarding her real teaching contexts and prior SREs perception knowledge. Initially, Wendy was confident of her SREs knowledge because she had trained before. Consequently, she was not serious during her SREs course learning. However, she changed this view because she found the textbook gave her a different view of SREs. At that moment, she felt that SREs was applicable and useful for her classroom. In

**Table 2** Methods for Analyzing Data Sources and Codes

Constant comparative analysis	Pattern matching	Triangulation of data sources	Content analysis procedures	
Background survey Code: prior SREs training			V	V
Pre- and post-SREs knowledge and use questionnaire Code: prior and current knowledge			V	V
Course documents Code: personality, confusion, complaints, implementation	V	V	V	V
Course experience surveys Code: reaction about SREs			V	V
Open-ended interviews Code: complaints, personality, confusion, support, practice	V	V	V	V
Participants' writing Code: complaints, confusion	V	V	V	V

her words from the Unit 7 Lap assignment,

*Reading the book gave me a better understanding of what and why we should use SREs in the classroom. I think that every teacher should be required to read sections of this book so that they are more sensitive to the needs of all their students-not just their ELL student.*

In Wendy's prior perception of SREs knowledge, she also changed her perception. According to comparison the pre & post-SREs Knowledge and Use questionnaire, she seemed to realize that even though she knew the basic steps of using SREs, she did not think accommodating students' needs was useful. She also understood that application of SREs was an important process for SREs understanding because she felt that SREs processing was a time consuming tool in her prior SREs perception. Therefore, she felt she learned something and had more understanding of SREs and realized that her prior SREs knowledge was not deep enough for her to deal with ELL's needs in her classrooms.

## Description of Individuals--Rena (Year 7-10)

During this course, Rena considered professional development experiences as the way that she could collect the strategy in her mind but not using them purposely rather randomly used such as, whenever she felt comfortable of using them in her classroom. Initially, she thought this course was like the other classes that she had taken. Consequently, the course confused her, such as the instructor's instruction, comments, lack of interaction and the format of the course because the course did not meet her expectation. Luckily, Rena's colleague helped her to understand the course; for example, they discussed the readings and the assignments about the course in the school district. Therefore, Rena felt that colleague's support was the big factor influencing her knowledge of the big picture of the SREs course. In a sense, Rena brought her own perception to view the course; however, she did not realize that she needed to change and be aware of her perception toward this course. From the Unit 2 LAP assignment, she expressed "I have to admit the amount of information for ME to process and

apply in one week was overwhelming.” She felt the limited time caused her to improve less on her teaching strategies in the classroom. Therefore, during the course, she judged the course and the instructor did not help her for involvement in the course. Finally, she understood the course and changed the expectation that she brought in to the course because the more work and time that she spent made her understand the format of the course.

## Description of Individuals--John (Year 10)

John did change his perception of ELLs as emergent readers. Initially, he was not able to provide appropriate teaching for his ELLs and he believed SREs could not help those emergent readers. However, the instructor’s visit gave him the impetus to change because the visit gave him a detailed explanation of how SREs operates. As he said in the interview:

*[Cindy's visit] gave me the impetus to realize I've got to teach reading. Even though my kids are emergent speakers and emergent readers, I have to prepare them to read and it gave me the rationale that this reading experience will actually boost their language capability to reading and their speaking capability. It will just accelerate their uptake of the English language ....*

Additionally, while he read the textbook, and reviewed his teaching context, this cooperation made him realize that SREs is an important tool for ELLs to scale up in their English ability and also that the outcome of using the SREs was successful. During the course, John’s colleagues’ support was another factor influencing his understanding and implementation of SREs. Through various explanation, implementation and cooperation methods, John was getting a picture of SREs and a better understanding of how to improve his teaching and assist his ELLs. During the course, even though there was a disturbing thing, e.g., an intensive course, it was not able to stop John’s eagerness to learn and to know about the SREs. Consequently, John’s positive personality was a major factor influencing his success and absorbing SREs information and implementing what he learned from the course.

As I previously explained, literacy teachers’ process of transfer from professional development experiences lacks a detailed account of the factors

that influence it. I seek to fill that void. To facilitate it, I invoked Bruner's (1971, 1977) model of transferability of learning at previous stages of this project. I again utilize its six components (i.e., attitude, compatibility, activation, practice, self-loop and information flow) which I found applicable to my findings.

## Factor One: Attitude

These three teachers brought various attitudes to this professional development project that impacted their learning and application. For example, from the beginning Wendy reported that SREs was not a useful tool for her classroom because it did not apply to her lower readers. This attitude toward SREs reduced her initial receptivity to additional knowledge and the application of it. Early on, she chose not to read the textbook and instead read the discussion postings to understand SREs. Similarly, Rena brought an attitude that also contributed to her stance toward the course content. Initially, she said that SREs was a useful tool for ELLs but not for mainstream students. Seemingly, Rena had some misunderstandings and confusion about SREs as explained and discussed in the course, and thus her learning and application of it slowed. After she implemented SREs in her classroom, she changed her mind and said that SREs could be useful for both types of students.

In part because John did not have any previous SREs professional development experiences, he brought in a receptive attitude. He wanted to learn this new knowledge in order to benefit his students. Even though he struggled with how to teach ELLs, from the beginning he exhibited a willingness to learn from this professional development opportunity and the course. This type of attitude helped him to understand SREs and resolve the problems that happened in both such as fitting course requirements and different classroom activities into an already crowded personal and professional life.

Without exception, these teachers' initial attitudes affected their subsequent learning and transfer of it to their classrooms. Wendy and Rena were distracted by their prior SREs knowledge. Since they had previous professional experiences with SREs, they believed that this professional

development opportunity would replicate rather than add to what they knew. John, on the other hand, did not express any initial hesitancy toward the SREs readings and the instructor's expectations. As evidenced by his interview and course evaluations, he felt this was the most useful course that he had ever taken.

## Factor Two: Compatibility

Issues of compatibility arose for each teacher. For Wendy and Rena, the most stark example stemmed from their belief from prior SREs training that SREs were too time-consuming and therefore inappropriate for their classrooms. For example, Wendy described rewriting the text, a proposal from Fitzgerald and Graves (2004), to be an interesting and potentially beneficial activity, but she worried that creating it would take too much time. Therefore, she did not try it. Consequently, and based on her response to one SREs option, she classified the entire SREs concept as too time-consuming. Her perceived lack of time resulted in her not applying a single SREs strategy in her classroom. Finally, at the end of the course, she confessed that the lack of application of SREs beyond the course assignments caused her to maintain an incomplete understanding about them.

Rena, too, shared the belief that pre reading and during reading activities went beyond time available to her. While she gained an additional respect for their potential, she did not know how to consistently balance her two competing understandings of promise and impossibility. She remained challenged by this competition between dividing and balancing possible SREs reading activities. Another compatibility problem arose for her when she attempted to connect SREs and her assessment of less capable readers. For example, the textbook for the course questioned the importance of testing lower readers for the purpose of grading them. This troubled Rena. She wondered how she was going to present a grade to one student that would be different from another student without formal testing. In addressing this dilemma, Rena could not find a connection between what she learned in the course and the classroom circumstances that concerned her.

John also experienced compatibility problems in learning and applying the principles of SREs. He struggled to balance his attention to the goals of

his academic subjects and his intention to make his instruction interesting for his English Language Learners (ELLs). In his mind, he tried to do his best to support his ELLs by using different strategies and considering SREs. He understood the need to connect his previous actions with these new ideas. He persisted and eventually perceived SREs as compatible with his understanding of worthwhile events for his ELLs.

In the main, the problem of compatibility that Wendy and Rena encountered stemmed from their perceived disconnection between SREs and their classroom settings. Because of their initial lack of clarity about the concept of SREs, they were afraid to try the strategies in their classroom because they regarded them too difficult and time-consuming. In contrast, John understood that a lack of compatibility might appear between his classroom context and the SREs proposals, but he willingly examined the problem in order to improve himself and offer better teaching for his students.

### Factor Three: Activation

As a reminder, activation refers to events that support a learner's push for success. Before this professional development event began, these three teachers experienced different activations regarding their involvement with it. Baldwin and Ford (1988) assert that learners who have the highest need for employment achievement and desire to learn are more likely to transfer the knowledge into the job setting. As an example of this type of activation, John's supervisor recommended that he participate fully in this project and course. He tried to do a good job, in part, to impress his supervisor. This desire to make a good impression on his supervisor made him want to learn the applicable SREs strategies for his classroom needs. Rena came to this course because it was free, and she felt that she could get free resources and credit for her professional development experiences and graduate degree. This type of monetary activation helped her to understand and apply SREs to complete the course assignments. She wanted to show the instructor that she was trying hard in this course in order to get the benefits linked to it. Consequently, this motivated her to apply SREs strategies in her classroom. In contrast, Wendy came for individual needs. She decided to enroll in

the course because of a book that she received from previous professional development. When she found out that this was a course related to her book, she thought this would be a chance to better understand SREs. However, this attitude did not help her to understand the SREs fully. She did not have a need to do a good job for anyone. Presumably, she held a weak and incomplete desire for learning from this course.

As with previous attributes, activation differently influenced these teachers' learning and application of the professional development information. For Rena and John, a push from a supervisor and monetary rewards activated their processes of transfer of learning. Wendy's activation (i.e., her own purposes and goals) did not provide the additional drive to maximize transferability.

## Factor Four: Practice

During this professional development event, these three teachers' practice of the various proposals in their classrooms depended on whether they thought SREs could benefit their classroom. While each teacher completed the course-based practice activities, they differed in practicing them in their classrooms. For example, and as previously mentioned, Wendy initially did not utilize SREs in her classroom. She did not view them as useful and beneficial for all students and she considered her available time inadequate. Contrary to Wendy, Rena practiced some SREs strategies, but declined to use those that she predetermined did not apply to her classroom. Furthermore, she, too, felt that she did not have enough time to regularly apply SREs strategies in her classroom. As for John, he was satisfied with the practice generated by the course assignments. He felt that he sufficiently learned one applicable strategy each week to apply it in his classroom the next week. He did not doubt that SREs would benefit his classroom and that he was prepared to implement them.

Overall, these teachers' stance toward an idea's applicability typically determined its practice. If a teacher did not pinpoint an advantage, he or she would not attempt to use the proposed idea beyond the course assignments. In addition to the lack of applicability that Wendy and Rena perceived for SREs in their classrooms, they continued to cite a lack of time. However, John

applied those strategies in his classroom that Wendy and Rena rejected and found that they enhanced his previous teaching and made it more beneficial for his students. He was pleased with the result of using SREs because they worked so well in his classroom. As these teachers' practice decisions note, classroom use of an idea does not occur in a straightforward line from the course to the classroom. Instead, and even when successful course-based practice occurred, these teachers' prior knowledge of SREs impacted their willingness to use them in real time.

## Factor Five: Self-Loop

For these teachers, and as provided in this professional development, support from colleagues afforded an important element for the teachers in learning and implementing SREs. For instance, Rena discussed the course assignments and the required readings with a colleague in order to pass the course. Even though Rena received support from her colleague, she did not gain a complete understanding about SREs. She continued to lament that this course was not applicable and too time-intensive for her to implement SREs. She relied on her prior knowledge to select only particular SREs strategies. In this instance, support from her colleagues did not help her to create a concrete idea about the classroom application of SREs. Instead, she simply focused on finishing the course requirements.

Like Rena, John also received support from colleagues. However, he was more likely to discuss how the strategy could be implemented in his classroom and share this reflection with them. The communication between John and his colleagues typically fostered a positive reflection about each other's implementation. Through this shared communication, John had a concrete understanding of SREs and created a fuller picture for appropriately using them in his classroom. Wendy, on the other hand, did not have a colleague in her school or district to support and talk with her during this course. In spite of the availability of on-line support, she felt that she worked entirely alone.

For each participant, communication with colleagues impacted how they perceived and understood this course. However, only positive communication with a colleague possibly enhanced the teachers' willingness



and motivation to transfer their learned knowledge into the classroom. Both Rena and John received support from their colleagues, but the end result of application of SREs turned out differently for them. Rena still used her previous pedagogical stances to select only certain strategies. John, on the other hand, was totally receptive to considering all SREs strategies and selecting from them to use in his classroom. So, while good communication and support generally helped each teacher, only positive communication with colleagues about classroom implementation supported transfer.

## Factor Six: Information Flow

When teachers organize the ideas they learn from professional development, they typically digest it and fit it into the reality of their classrooms. However, Wendy and Rena had difficulty with this progression. For example, when Wendy initially read the textbook, she felt that its information did not match her teaching context and, therefore, she balked at transferring the information into her classroom. She repeatedly commented that the SREs did not apply to her students. Rena had a similar problem. If the text presented strategies for students that differed from those she taught (e.g., a grade level difference), then Rena would not use them because the situation did not mirror the one that she faced in her classroom. Apparently, Wendy and Rena could not digest some of the SREs knowledge presented in this course if even the slightest variation from their specific situation existed.

As for John, he valued the textbook's content because it reminded him to think about his teaching context. And he did. During this course, he practiced textbook recommendations in his classroom and in his completion of course requirements. Seemingly, John learned what he needed to know without rejecting or being overly selective; he knew how to digest the information he learned from the course and apply it into his classroom. In other words, he was not burdened by what he needed to know and what he did not need to know. He considered everything in this course and adapted it to fit his teaching context.

Based on these teachers' experiences, simply collecting strategies from professional development is not enough for teachers to transfer them to their classrooms. They also must digest the information and apply it to specific

situations. This is a key step of transfer of learning. In this course, Wendy and Rena experienced a hard time conceptualizing the SREs strategy and determining whether or not it could be implemented into their classroom. They continued to hold a reticence about whether SREs coincided with their teaching experience and supported their teaching context. They took longer to learn and implement the SREs. John, on the other hand, was not selective of the material in the SREs; he accepted it all. When he successfully implemented it, he realized the inadequacies of his previous teaching experiences to adequately support his students' literacy learning. In other words, the implementation of the SREs without selection and rejection based on prior knowledge helped John to reconsider the appropriateness of his previous teaching experiences.

## Concluding Comments on these Teachers' Transfer of Learning

According to Bruner's (1971, 1977) model of transferability of learning, attitude matters in how learners view incoming information. Attitude also mattered for Rena, Wendy, and John. These three teachers initially exhibited differences about how they might incorporate this professional development proposal in their individual classrooms. However, unlike Wendy and Rena, John early on perceived benefits from the SREs and implemented it very well in the classroom. In the description of his process of transfer of learning, John embraced a need for teachers to upgrade their ability to teach because the world is changing. He vowed to keep moving forward in his profession. Consequently, this attitude led him to persist in this course even though he encountered problems and obstacles. He did not stop or change his receptive attitude toward the professional development experiences.

Wendy and Rena felt that professional development experiences should provide them with directly applicable strategies for their classrooms. They deemed the need for change or modification an unnecessary burden. Peery (2004) and Ashdown (2002) commented that some teachers become tired and frustrated when professional development experiences force them into the type of real learning that requires the use of a strategy in their

classrooms. Returning to Bruner (1971), if the learner can fix and digest the information into the specific situation, then they can achieve transferability. However, Wendy and Rena did not adjust and transform the knowledge they learned. Rena desired a professional development experience that would be fast and evidence an immediate result. Similarly, Wendy wanted to see a quick result and not devote much time to achieve it. Therefore, Wendy and Rena's attitudes toward professional development experiences coupled with their steadfast concern about time resulted in their incomplete understanding of the concept of SREs and less than hoped for use of them. As Peery laments, too many teachers, like Wendy and Rena, miss something in their professional field by seeing dead ends rather than possibilities.

In contrast, John's commitment to his students, and especially his understanding of the situation that ELLs encounter, allowed him to persevere to find a better solution for them. According to Husu (2002), teachers' commitments extend beyond the students' personal welfare to include students' academic improvement in their schoolwork. Often this commitment requires that teachers maintain "personally relevant and optimistic beliefs" (Husu, 2002: 65) about their students and teaching contexts. Throughout this study, John desired not only to teach the subject for his students, but also exhibited concern about his students' lives and the school's learning demands. He displayed empathy toward his ELLs' learning obstacles and a willingness to support them in order to achieve the standards of the school. Based on his commitment to the students, he persisted to learn how to use SREs for their benefit. As these results confirmed, when something did not work in his teaching, when a student did not learn or behave as expected, or when his interactions with students were not productive, he believed that he was the one who needed to change and provide help. He did not blame the strategy or the students. After all, he viewed himself as the professional who needed to find a way to solve the problems rather than pull the students from his classroom or set their learning aside.

Wendy and Rena reported the amount and quality of thought and energy they put into their work. Even though they cared about their students' learning and lives, based on this data, they did not take time to fully commit to the proposals from this professional learning opportunity. They considered SREs a good tool, but hamstrung by their original hesitations and fueled by

their perception of a lack of compatibility with their classroom contexts, they reneged on classroom implementation.

In summary, John, Wendy, and Rena differed in their attitudes toward the professional development experience. For example, while Wendy and Rena felt that professional development experiences were time-consuming, frustrating, and isolating, John did not. He believed that he could address all students' learning challenges. To do so, he needed to keep moving because he believed he had much left to learn. In the end, John, the teacher with a positive attitude toward the professional development experiences, transferred learning more readily (See Table 3 for a summary of the application of the six transfer factors to these teachers).

## Discussion and Implications

More and more, school districts plan and teachers attend professional development sessions. Whether offered on-line or face-to-face, the goal remains constant: change teachers' literacy practices and improve students'

**Table 3** Summary of Application of Six Factors of Transferability

Factor	Attitude	Compatibility	Activation	Practice	Self-loop	Information flow
Wendy	Confident about the SREs	Conflicting between prior and current knowledge	Previous book	Not beneficial and no time for practicing	No support from the colleagues	Difficult to digest the SREs into the classroom
Rena	Confident about the SREs	Conflicting between prior and current knowledge	Monetary	Practice partly	Negative support from the colleagues	Difficult to digest the SREs into the classroom
John	He liked to learn new knowledge	He was willing to overcome the struggles	Supervisor	Followed the required practice	Positive support from the colleagues	Understand the SREs and able to fix into his classroom

literacy achievements. For John, Wendy, and Rena, this was not a straight line occurrence. Instead, their accounts underscore that factors such as attitude, compatibility, activation, practice, self-loop and information flow either place obstacles or foster building blocks into professional development initiatives. The message learned from them becomes simple. Professional development plans might consider more than content and organizational arrangements. Based on the findings, there were attitude and perception differences among these three teachers. The attitude and perception differences seemed to be caused by the teachers' lack of a concrete SREs background, and how their attitude toward this course reflected a misunderstanding of the prior knowledge. Also, the teachers might not understand how to adjust between their prior knowledge and current SREs learning knowledge, and then how to apply to their classroom practice, because there was not enough time and attitude adjusting to enable what they learned to eventually go beyond their classroom. Therefore, the suggestion for professional development needs to provide teachers with opportunity to voice their prior attitude and perception toward workshops and courses in order to discover the misconceptions among them. In the meantime, the instructor needs to give the teachers a clear goal of this course and give them explicit instruction and assignment that will benefit their class. This type of attitude and perception interaction will clear the teachers' misunderstanding and confusion about the course.

Implementation of ideas, rather than initially learning and practicing them, becomes the benchmark for judging the success of professional development experiences. This implementation requires transfer. While I found that Bruner's (1977) six factors applicable, the experiences of these three teachers clarify that two of them matter more: (1) attitude, especially the individual differences of teachers' receptivity toward the new information, and (2) compatibility, primarily the cultural influence of the classroom context. I acknowledge that these findings stem from a specific type of professional development opportunity (an on-line course), a relatively unidimensional intention (to institute SREs), and a unique and small compilation of participants. Therefore, I do not propose infallibility to my conclusions and commitments. Like Hillocks (1995), I do think qualitative studies can imply predictions. My strong prediction is this: Without

acknowledging and accounting for the role that attitudes and context play in professional development, they hold the potential to derail professional development initiatives. While transfer of learning will never become a simple process, it is possible to strengthen it. Identifying and embracing teacher and workplace differences and planning in advance for these variations afford a richer way for considering transfer. In turn, identifying these important differences suggest guideposts for instituting a wider range of features into a professional development program and monitoring for them along the way.

Horton (1998: 100) attests that “the only reason problems seem complicated is that you don’t understand them well enough to make them simple.” My findings pinpoint a co-mingling of factors that facilitate transfer. Attending to them presents a challenging but not an impossible, perhaps even simple, goal.

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## Appendix: Interview Questions

1. What makes a professional development experience useful for you?  
Be specific.
2. How does what you learned in the Scaffolding Reading Experiences (SREs) course apply to your classroom? Please give a specific example.
3. Have you or will you use what you learned in the course? Why? Why not?
4. If so, how have you used it (the specific example)?
5. What prompted you to take this course?