STORIES OF ADULT ELLS IN A PUBLIC SETTING

A Dissertation Presented to the
Faculty of the College of Education
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Susannah Westlake

May 2017

STORIES OF ADULT ELLS IN A PUBLIC SETTING

A Dissertation for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by

Susannah Westlake

Approved by Dissertation Committee:

_____
Dr. Cameron White, Chairperson

_____
Dr. Laveria Hutchison, Committee Member

_____
Dr. Liping Wei, Committee Member

_____
Dr. Leslie Gauna, Committee Member

_____
Dr. Robert H. McPherson, Dean
College of Education

May 2017

Dedication

To my Dad, Bill Westlake. If I could fill these pages with words to say how much we

miss you, it still would not be enough.

To my Mom, Joyce Westlake. Thank you for all of your love and support. You put up

with a lot these past few years.

Acknowledgement

Thank you to my advisor and wonderful committee. This feat would not be possible

without your dedication and encouragement.

Thank you to each of you who participated, your insights are invaluable.

Thank you, "Mrs. Smith" for sharing your students with me.

Thank you to the amazing coaches at the writing center. You helped me to clarify my

thinking and make this a worthy manuscript.

STORIES OF ADULT ELLS IN A PUBLIC SETTING

An Abstract
of a Dissertation Presented to the
Faculty of the College of Education
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Susannah Westlake

May 2017

Westlake, Susannah. "Stories of Adult ELLs in a Public Setting." Unpublished Doctor of Education Dissertation, University of Houston, May 2017.

Abstract

There are a number of factors that have been examined in relation to the acquisition of English by non-native speakers. Adult learners also continue to seek ESL classes in large numbers (The National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs, 2009). This world is becoming more globalized all of the time (Syrett & Canton, 2015; Friedman, 2007; Fairclough, 2006). There are a variety of reasons why people need to learn to communicate with those from other linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Edmunson, 2009).

It has been shown that the background knowledge of participants, such as previous achievement and literacy skills, are a part of success. First language skills are known to be possible contributors to the successful learning of English and content knowledge (Cummins 1979,1981, 2007). It would help instructors to gain a clearer understanding of the needs of this population of students in order to better serve them. Without instructor empathy and support, English Language Learners may suffer (Bifuh-Ambe, 2009; Song, 2008; H. D. Brown, 2000). Such studies have shown that there may at times be a disconcerting disconnect between instructor expectations and student needs. Support and advice from peers is also crucial (Bifuh-Ambe, 2009)

This dissertation will look at the following research questions:

- What can instructors and students learn from the stories of individual ELLs?

- What are some of the learning strategies adult English Language Learners use to achieve their learning goals?

The introduction will define ELLs and the various subgroups which are a part of this category. This paper will also attempt to discuss how a person really gains proficiency in a new language. One prominent theory is that language skills are gained intuitively (Krashen, 2009). Other researchers postulate that this is coupled with an innate capacity for language learning Andrews (2011).

Four main themes will be discussed in the literature review. The first is prior knowledge and the impact of foundational skills in the first language (Cummins 1979, 1981, 2007). Though his research deals primarily with young children, Brown (2007) affirms the idea that theories which are applicable to young children could apply to adult ELLs as well. A solid background in grammar and reading skills could potentially transfer from the first language (L1) to the second language (L2) as shown by August (2006), in a study of adult ELL abilities in these areas. Song (2006) also demonstrated in interviews with ESL learners in college that solid literacy skills in the L1 play a role in successfully completing coursework. Huerta-Macias and Kephart (2009) discussed how an instructor helped native Spanish speakers use their language background to make sense of content in a civics class.

The second theme is that the L2 can also impact the L1. Gürel (2004) shows the importance of maintaining L1 skills by using the language regularly. These skills could suffer if too much time is given to the L2 instead. H.D. Brown (2007) calls this

"systematic forgetting" (pg. 64) and indicates that if students have a sense of major themes and deeper meaning in their studies, they are more likely to retain the knowledge they have.

The third theme addresses a number of affective factors, including encouragement and motivation, which play a role in an ELL's learning. H. D. Brown (2000) talks about how instructors can create a supportive atmosphere in the classroom and how this will encourage students to participate. Daraghmeh-Alqattawi (2009) mentions how demonstrating respect for diversity in the classroom is one way that instructors can show support. (Schalge and Soga, 2008) discuss how students who feel they are supported in their studies are more likely to stick with them.

A fourth theme discusses the concept of identity and how it is connected to ESL learning (Norton, 2010). She discusses the impact of how students see themselves, their communities and their relationship to society.

Chapter 3 will discuss the methodology. Narrative inquiry will be used to review the experiences of two adult ELLs in a public-library based free ESL program. This type of research looks at the lives people live, their stories, and how they are intertwined (Clandinin and Connelly, 1989; Craig, 2009). According to Lopez Pedrana (2009), the relationship between student and teacher is well suited for narrative description.

The fourth chapter will discuss the data from individual interviews and a group interview. Lastly, the final chapter will discuss the implications of the study for the future.

Table of Contents

Chapter I

Introduction

"Soon, we will also have versions of the universal translator, which can rapidly translate between languages as you speak…," (Kaku, 2011, p. 8).

Need For The Study

With the rapid changes in technology today, Dr. Kaku's prediction may be right. For now, however, it is necessary to go on teaching and learning languages the old fashioned way. However, we should not be discouraged. Learning a new language is a fascinating experience. It can introduce a student to a whole new world of people, places and literature they had not been acquainted with before. This is especially the case when the student is in an area where native speakers of the language and some of their cultures are represented, such as studying English in the United States.

My interest in English as a second language is rooted in my experience as a second language learner of Spanish. My studies of the language and the associated cultures and literature continued into my undergraduate years, at my home university and in Mexico. The following excerpt from a 2007 journal entry shows understanding of the need for skills in a second language deepened in graduate school:

> This past week in class, we were discussing the prominence of the English language on the world stage. It is true that English has long been an important language in education, business and many other fields. However, this does not mean that native English speakers can simply sit by and expect the trend to continue. We need to recognize the opportunities presented to us by leaning a second language.

Spanish is becoming increasingly important in the United States. Due to immigration, there are many native Spanish speakers living, working and going to school here. We need to know Spanish to better communicate with students and their families. This becomes increasingly important as diplomatic and commercial relations with Mexico increase.

It can be daunting to work with ESLs because some students seem to struggle while others seem to grasp English vocabulary and grammar with ease. There are numerous theories as to why this might be the case, and they concern everything from motivation to academic ability. If these ideas are examined, it could have future applications for academic endeavors as well as the lives of students and instructors alike.

Knowledge of other languages, cultures and customs is becoming increasingly more of an asset as technology allows for fast and relatively inexpensive communication around the world (Edmunson, 2009). Bradenburg and Binder (1999) discuss how in today's workforce, it is necessary for adults to be more adaptable and have a wider range of skills than ever. In particular, abilities having to do with language and technology are in demand. This is true of all levels of teaching as well as almost any field adult students may go into during or after finishing school.

Knowledge of the home language and culture may make for a better rapport with students, as well as help generate ideas about how best to teach them a particular concept. It is helpful to learn about students first hand, and not just from books and articles (Daraghmeh-Alqattawl, 2009).

One of the reasons to pursue the narrative inquiry in this dissertation is that that examining the stories of adult ELLs will lead to a deeper understanding of how to help

these kinds of students. No doubt it will also provide me with insights on my own experiences as a second language learner of Spanish.

Growth of adult ESL. We live in an increasingly globalized and diverse world (Syrett & Canton, 2015; Friedman, 2007; Fairclough, 2006). This necessarily has an impact on teaching and learning. For the purposes of this dissertation, globalization will be defined as the unfettered exchange of goods, services and knowledge across international boundaries. The concept of globalization is highly controversial, and there is much debate as to whether it is helpful or hurtful. However, there is much agreement that this phenomenon exists (Cavanagh & Mander, 2004). This dissertation will discuss possible implications of globalization on teaching and learning, such as the applications discussed by McKay (2004) without getting unnecessarily bogged down in political arguments as to globalizations' merits or lack thereof. However, I consider globalization in light of the need for students to have a concept of the interconnectedness of their native countries, their new country, and other countries to enhance their involvement in society.

In part because of the communication demands of today's world, many people are choosing to learn English as a second language. Often, they make this choice as adults. The National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs (2009) reported that:

Nearly one million two hundred thousand (1,172,569) adults were enrolled in state-administered English as a second language (ESL or English Literacy) programs during 2003-2004, according to the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy (2005a).

The paragraph goes on to say that interest in such programs is expanding. This trend will likely continue. Language instructors at all levels must be prepared for more students from more varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Age and Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

It is appropriate here to address the idea some researchers hold that adults are somehow less capable than children when it comes to learning a second language. It has been suggested that there is a critical period for language acquisition, beyond which a learner cannot achieve optimal proficiency in the second language, or L2 (Birdsong & Molis, 2000). In particular, this refers to the idea that if people do not learn a second language by a certain age, they will not become as adept at speaking in the second language as those who learned as children.

In their study of adults who spoke Spanish as a first language, Birdsong and Molis (2000) discovered an age effect. However, there were exceptions. Some participants who were late arrivals (defined as arriving in the U.S. at or after the age of 17) did perform better than expected on English grammar items. The researchers state that this unusual result may be due to the testing instrument itself, to the sampling procedure, or what (if any) practice participants had had with the English language prior to their arrival.

Birdsong (1989) previously argued that such a critical period existed and that age did have an impact on second language acquisition. He maintained that certain neurological factors hamper language learning skills beyond a certain point. Rather than postulate that there is a particular cut-off age at which new languages become difficult to learn, he suggests that this critical period is different for different people. Birdsong's (1989) contention was that the cut-off age was variable, and depended on the rate at

which the person in question matures. He did concede that some adults are able to learn a second language more effectively than others.

Hakuta and Bialystok (2003) found no evidence that the proficiency of older learners was adversely affected by the age of acquisition of English. This is based on a regression analysis that tested both age 15 and age 20 as a possible critical period, beyond which learning a new language was expected to become more difficult. However, earlier research by Oyama (1982) as well as Asher and Price (1982) shows that the adult second language learner can be successful when it comes to acquiring the necessary linguistic and cultural knowledge to meet their needs in the society to which they belong. Oyama (1982) indicates that it is possible for adults to acquire new languages, and certain areas such as vocabulary continue to develop over time (p. 33). Asher and Price (1982) show that college students out-performed children on listening comprehension tasks in Russian, when all were taught using the Total Physical Response strategy. Total Physical Response, or TPR, is an approach that emphasizes action and movement in the language acquisition process (Asher & Price, 1982; H. D. Brown, 2000).

Therefore, there is evidence that the age of acquisition of a language may not be such a relevant factor in successfully learning and using the second language. Hakuta and Bialystok (2003) addressed the idea of a critical period for language acquisition in a study of second language learners and age. They used census data to find their sample, which included native speakers of Chinese and native speakers of Spanish. Both of those groups were learning English and had immigrated to the United States. The results showed that a number of factors relate to language proficiency, including an apparent advantage to

those learners who immigrated sooner. They did not find anything conclusively showing a critical period with a sharp drop after a certain age.

Culture and Diversity

Ariza (2006) discusses some of the fundamental differences between cultures that may become an issue in the grade school classroom. She is against stereotyping, but believes that awareness of widely held ideas and cultural norms can go a long way toward preventing a misunderstanding. This applies to learners of English as a second language regardless of age, as Daraghmeh-Alqattawi (2009) indicates when discussing adults. Rubenstein (2006) explains how beliefs about politics, education and religion can impact teaching and learning in the context of a classroom populated with multicultural adults. She also mentions that knowing certain issues are controversial to discuss can be helpful. In addition, she argues that being sensitive to the cultural norms of others can make students feel more comfortable in class.

To be prepared to teach in a diverse classroom means not just knowing how to teach the students effectively, ensuring that they are being exposed to the information they need. It is also necessary for instructors to know how to relate to them as individuals. Establishing this rapport involves understanding something about the culture with which they identify and a little about the student's home language (H. D. Brown, 2000). At the least, it is helpful if the instructor demonstrates that he or she values the student's first language. One way they can do this is by giving students the opportunity to use it when they need that language to communicate effectively.

This increased interest in ESL makes it all the more vital that instructors be recruited who are equipped to teach such a population. It is recommended by Bifuh-

Ambe (2009) that universities actively seek out faculty members from other countries because they would possibly be able to better understand the struggles of international students in the United States.

Bifuh-Ambe's (2009) study revealed the need for adult ESL students to have support from others in the academic community. In particular, the principal participant she interviewed struggled when transitioning from ESL classes in her university's English Language Institute to graduate level classes in her major department. Fortunately, she had a "peer coach" with whom she could discuss various issues, go over papers, and ask for information about the area. She was also known to take advantage of her instructors' office hours and she participated in a study group. Bifuh-Ambe's (2009) research shows that support and encouragement from both classmates and instructors can be a motivating factor for English Language Learners.

At the same time as the population of English Language Learners continues to grow, our nation faces some difficult decisions ahead. The current state of the economy means that there is less funding for technology, books, hiring instructors/recruiting volunteers and other necessities. This is true both at the K-12 and higher education levels (Deviney, 2012). Part of what the following sections will show is that it is worthwhile to allocate time, effort, funding and personnel to students who are seeking to learn English.

Reasons for increased interest in ESL. There are many and varied reasons why adults would be interested in learning English as a second language. In many cases, they may be motivated to learn the language because of educational and employment opportunities. There are of course, family and social reasons for this phenomenon as well (I. Guadarrama, personal communication, Summer 2005; Oxford 1990). In the case of

English, academic and vocational goals seem to be a trend as well as personal and family reasons.

The Center for Adult English Language Acquisition, (2011, Adult Non-Native English Speakers in the United States, p.3) found several reasons why adult students would be interested in learning English, such as: performing everyday tasks, finding a job, self-improvement or obtaining citizenship. Generally speaking, all of these stated reasons amount to a desire on the part of the second language learner to improve his or her life in some way.

Academic interests may include getting into a degree program at a university in another country. A student might also want to learn an ancient language for the purpose of doing research on the culture. Or, some adult students may take courses online in their home country from a university on the other side of the world (Friedman, 2007).

As for vocational interests, adult students would seek out ESL courses because learning English is a way to broaden their opportunities or increase their "cultural capital" (Norton, 2010). Many jobs require strong communication skills, and much of this is done using English. Students may need English skills to converse with colleagues, read reports, and other crucial tasks.

While many of these reasons will be developed further, I have specifically chosen adult ELLs who are not seeking further academic credentials:

> However, the learning of English as a second language among adult immigrants is an important area of research because this group of people, whose voice is seldom heard by the mainstream society, deserves an outlet to tell us what they can offer to the teaching and learning processes, (Lee, 2013, p. 24).

Students in programs such as library-based tutoring classes deserve the chance to share their own struggles and triumphs, as well as their reasons for wanting to improve their English.

Given the number of adult English Language Learners and their needs, it is all the more critical that instructors learn about their students so that they can better teach and advise them. The purpose of the literature review to follow is to gain insight with regard to the experiences and goals of adult English Language Learners. The following chapter will examine how the various achievements of ELLs are addressed in both quantitative, or statistics-based studies as well as qualitative literature, which relies on interviews, observations and reflections.

Definition of Terms

In order to ease the flow of the following discussion, we are now going to look at some terms that are often used to talk about English Language Learners.

A good place to start is with the rather broad term "English Language Learner", as it describes the population that this paper is concerned about. "English Language Learners (ELLs) are students whose first language is other than English and who are in the process of learning English as a second language," (Dam & Cowart, 2008, p. 9). This is a fitting definition for the purposes of this dissertation. It encompasses both the newly arrived student who is just beginning to study English, as well as those who have been studying the language for some time and are nearly fluent. Students all along this continuum will be discussed in this paper.

Dictionary.com (2017) defines bilingual as "able to speak two languages with the facility of a native speaker." Students who are highly proficient in English as a second

language may also be considered bilingual. The possibility of multilingual English Language Learners will be discussed briefly (L. Wei, personal communication, Spring 2011) but this paper will primarily focus on those students who speak only two languages: English and their native language. Acquiring a language can be a lifelong process. This is true even for a native speaker. His or her knowledge becomes more refined over time. For example, vocabulary often changes as we need words to describe new technologies.

Some terms are considered interchangeable with "English Language Learner", or are used to discuss the characteristics of various subsets of ELLs. English Language Learner is sometimes used synonymously with "Limited English Proficient". However, this is used more in the context of a specific academic placement. Limited English Proficient (LEP) students are those who have not attained the test scores to qualify as fluent in English for instructional purposes. (TEA, 2010).

Finally, students may also be known as "ESOL", English to Speakers of Other Languages. According to Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages this term "refers to learners who are identified as still in the process of acquiring English as an additional language; students who may not speak English at all…" (TESOL, 2010). Like English language learner, "ESOL" could describe a wide range of students.

This dissertation will have a particular focus on adult learners of English as a Second Language (ESL). This is to say, that these are adults learning English while in an English-speaking country. These learners are distinguished from learners of English as a Foreign Language, or EFL, which comprises programs in which the learner studies English in his or her home country where English is not a primary language (Gass, 2000;

Oxford, 1990). One of the biggest distinctions between ESL and EFL is that EFL students have more limited exposure to English media and fewer opportunities to practice the language with native speakers in an authentic setting (Oxford, 1990). ESL students are surrounded by English media and have more chances to interact with native speakers should they choose to take advantage of the possibility.

Theoretical Basis for Consideration

The theories to be applied in the understanding of adult ELLs include Cummins' (1981) idea of linguistic interdependence. Linguistic interdependence assumes that skills learned in one language, such as reading, can be transferred to another. Cummins (1981) discussed his Common Underlying Proficiency model, which is based on the idea that the native language (L1) and the second language (L2) are interdependent and that both languages draw upon a single underlying skill set. The designations "L1" and "L2" refer to the languages these learners speak. L1 is used to mean a student's native language. In the case of adults, this would be the language the student grew up speaking and is probably the most familiar with. L2 would be the language the student is studying, for the purposes of this dissertation, English.

Cummins (1981) advocated the use of the first language as a basis for helping a student to gain mastery in the second. Also, he asserted that the background in the first language would not only be useful in terms of the language acquisition itself, but also that it would be beneficial in other academic areas. He continues to advocate the importance of fostering native language development in English Language Learners, and laments that it seems all too often that a hidden curriculum in educational institutions pushes students away from their native language and culture (Cummins, 2007).

A second theory of second language acquisition that this dissertation will consider is the threshold hypothesis (Cummins, 1979) which is related to linguistic interdependence because both involve equating the literacy skills and proficiency levels in the first language with the literacy skills and proficiency in the second. The threshold hypothesis proposes that when someone begins to learn a new language it can actually be detrimental to his or her learning. In other words, it could negatively impact both overall academic achievement and growth in terms of language skills.

However, over time as his or her abilities in the new language catch up to where they are in the first language (i.e., the learner becomes more fluent in the new language) having the second language then becomes advantageous to the learner. It must be mentioned that being proficient in the new language can mean different things. Cummins (1982) distinguishes the ability to carry on a conversation in a new language from the ability to do academic work. For the purposes of this dissertation, complete proficiency in English will be defined as having both the conversational and academic skills necessary to function in school and in an English-speaking society (Bifuh-Ambe, 2009). While it is true that Cummins' work often deals with younger children, his theories are applicable to other age groups. This includes adults, as the literature review will later show.

Another theory, which has been applied to both education generally and second language acquisition in particular is behaviorism. "Among psychologists, a behavioristic paradigm also focused on publicly observable responses- those that can be objectively perceived, recorded and measured," (H.D. Brown, 2000, p. 9). This lends itself toward a structural linguistics approach to second language acquisition. H.D. Brown (2000) explains:

The structural linguist examined only the overtly observable data. Such attitudes

prevail in B.F. Skinner's thought, particularly in *Verbal Behavior* (1957), in

which he said that any notion of "idea" or "meaning" is explanatory fiction, and

that the speaker is merely the locus of verbal behavior, not the cause, (p. 9).

While observation will certainly be part of the methodology for my study, it will not stop

there. An important part of narrative theory is to find meaning in the lived experiences of

individuals. Part of this is an intense analysis of what people say and what they *mean*

when they say it.

Another concern will be motivation. Instructors must learn how to motivate

students. Students must find the subject interesting. They must also see how their

learning will benefit them in the real world (Bifuh-Ambe, 2009). Brown (2000) had this

to say about motivating English Language Learners:

Dornyei and Csizér (1998), for example, in a survey of Hungarian teachers of

English, proposed a taxonomy of factors by which teachers could motivate their

learners. They cited factors such as developing a relationship with the learners,

building learners self-confidence and autonomy, personalizing the learning

process, and increasing learners goal-orientation, (p. 165).

This is crucial. While adult students may come to class with their own motivation for

being there, others may need encouragement to persevere with the coursework and their

learning of English.

According to Bandura, et al (1996) one cannot overestimate the power of self-

efficacy, or belief in one's own abilities, when it comes to learning. Self-efficacy and

motivation, in this case willingness and drive to study, go hand in hand. "Unless people

believe that they can produce desired effects from their actions, they have little incentive to act." (Bandura, et al, 1996, p.1206). This is true of learning anything, a language included. If students believe that they can do the work they are given, they are more likely to try. And if supportive teachers can convince them that they are capable, they are more likely to see themselves that way. Oxford (1990) mentions that students can also encourage themselves, and that this positive attitude toward their own learning can have benefits when it comes to achieving their goals. The next section will deal with maintaining a positive attitude and other ways through which students can improve in their studies and achieve their goals.

Strategies Used By ELLs

Oxford (1990) discusses various types of strategies adult ELLs often use which she considers to be effective. One is metacognitive. She explains that strategies of a metacognitive nature involve students reflecting on the learning process itself. This is opposed to cognitive strategies, which involve specific study habits. There are also social strategies, which involve a number of ways of seeking information from others about the language. Affective strategies have to do with an ELL keeping in the right frame of mind while pursuing his or her studies. Memory strategies involve how a student organizes information, such as vocabulary, during study. Compensation strategies are ways that students can get through a conversation without knowing every word that they hear or that they wish to express.

Research Questions

This dissertation will attempt to answer the following two research questions: What can instructors and students learn from the stories of individual ELLs? What are

some of the learning strategies adult English Language Learners use to achieve their learning goals? One goal could be the ability to get along and converse with others in a variety of settings, thereby fitting in to the community of people who speak English. Valenzuela (1999) describes one of the goals of education as helping the learner to become an engaged and caring member of society. Certainly learners can use their native language and English for the benefit of others, as some of her participants wished to do.

Kaku (2014) discusses two other possible learning outcomes: "divergent thinking" (pg. 138) and the capacity to take a scenario and extrapolate it into the future. In the case of adult ELLs this might mean that they can clearly see how they will be using their new skills in daily life now and for years to come. Extrapolating into the future could also involve the creation of what Norton (2010) calls an "imagined identity" as adult ELLs think about how their relationships and roles in society might change as they learn and grow.

My study will look at interviews of adult English Language Learners to shed some light on these topics. First, however, we will look at the background of English language acquisition in the literature.

Conclusions

This chapter began by addressing the need for a study concerning adult ELLs in today's world. The first section also discussed the start of my journey from a high school Spanish student to an ESL tutor. Adult ESL is growing into a major area of adult education, as shown by the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction educational programs (2009). Section three covered various theories about second language acquisition and age, while section four discussed cultural

issues at play. The reasons for adults to be interested in ESL classes were outlined, and terms associated with English Language Learners were defined. I mentioned a number of strategies used by adult ELLs in their studies, as shown by Oxford (1990). Lastly, research questions were posed concerning what adult ELLs can teach through stories of their lives and studies.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

…in the future, if you are a tourist in a foreign country and talk to the locals, you

will see subtitles in your contact lens, as if you were watching a foreign-language

movie. You can also have a computer create an audio translation that is fed into

your ears. This means that it may be possible to have two people carry on a

conversation, with each speaking their own language, while hearing the

translation in their ears…,(Kaku, 2011, p.47).

Having the benefit of a universal translation device, as the quote describes, would change

society. Such a device would streamline tourism, immigration, higher education, and any

project requiring cross-cultural communication, as Kaku (2011) indicates.

Even though this technology is not quite yet to the level Kaku (2011) describes in

the opening quote, many adult learners are able to successfully acquire English as a

second language and thrive in an English speaking environment today. They do not

require this kind of translator, or even the mythical babel fish discussed in *The

Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (Jennings, 2005). Because such fanciful shortcut

methods are not available at this time, learners must rely on conventional ways to

develop their language skills. The next section will discuss theories about how people

attain such abilities.

What Enables People To Attain Language Skills?

In order to teach ESL learners, it is important to consider how an individual learns

a language. Is there an innate capacity for language, or does one need to achieve the

ability to learn it through focused effort? Is the process of learning any language

essentially the same (Krashen, 2009), or do variables such as order of language learned or the type(s) of languages spoken (Beaton, et al, 2007) play a role? These questions and their variants are an important component of philosophy and in education in general. For example Ericsson, Nandagopal and Roring (2005) discuss the topic of whether certain capacities are innate or developed in a student over time.

Acquisition vs. learning. There are various theories about how learners develop language skills. Universal grammar contains the idea that certain aspects of language acquisition and use are innate rather than something learned through a language course or some other means (Crain, 2008). Chomsky (1978) spoke of "instituted language" as "a cultural product subject to laws and principles partially unique to it and partially reflections of general properties of the mind" (p.6). This definition sounds more like innately imparted skills.

Chomsky (1978) differentiated between what he called the "creative aspect of language use" and "instituted language" (p.6). He defined the creative aspect as "the distinctively human ability to express new thoughts and to understand entirely new expressions of thought" (p.6). This definition would apply more to the learned portion of linguistic capabilities, something that becomes more and more refined with time and effort.

Krashen might agree, given his propensity to advocate that learners best acquire language intuitively (Krashen, 2009). He discusses how children seem to naturally grow in their language abilities, whether they are learning their first language or placed in an environment where they need to learn a second. He marvels at how they seem to pick up new vocabulary almost effortlessly, and believes that adults have that same capacity if

they are shown how to access it. Children gain knowledge of the language even though they may not understand the logic behind the grammar and syntax used (2009).

Krashen (1982, 2009) would call this phenomenon the "acquisition" aspect of attaining knowledge of a language. To Krashen, acquisition of language explains why people are able to use language to communicate every day without deliberate consideration of how the language works each time they write or speak (1982). In contrast, Skinner (1974) offers the explanation that language skills simply evolve over time as particular uses for language are reinforced by the reactions of other people.

According to Cummins (2014), a focus on skills used particularly in an academic context can be beneficial to students. Like Krashen, he asserts that students need a framework for using language. He mentions that when students use academic language to read and write that it should be part of a subject matter that they are studying as opposed to something that is practiced by itself.

Is there room for both theories? This is a nature vs. nurture argument that could go on indefinitely, as Freeman and Freeman (2004) concur. H. D. Brown (2000) discusses this debate as well. How does the literature address both sides? Andrews (2011) discusses many important developments in the area of neurolinguistics, such as how the brain functions to enable speech and how memory and language may be connected. Even now, neural science has yet to provide conclusive data one way or the other as to how language skills are acquired. Andrews believes that both innate skills and specific efforts at teaching and learning are a part of making sure an English as a second language learner successfully acquires the language and meets his or her academic and personal goals. It seems to me that much of language development comes naturally, but learners can build

on their natural abilities with practice. Learners must identify and use the skills that they have so that they can achieve their full potential.

Second language acquisition by learning, might be beneficial to at least some adult English as a Second Language learners. Such a theory could benefit such students because H.D. Brown (2000) does suggest that prior knowledge of grammar and vocabulary are an advantage adults have over younger students. The tendency of instructors with a learning approach tends to be to focus on one discrete grammar skill, such as a particular verb tense, and then move on to the next (Grascarus, 2010, Freeman and Freeman, 2009). One clue as to whether such language skills are learned, innate, or both might be to look at how individuals who speak more than one language may compartmentalize such skills and how they use them to complete certain tasks. (A later section will take a look at the thought processes of bilingual adults.) Again, this idea of compartmentalization applies to adult English as a Second Language learners specifically because they are working to become bilingual. As adult English as a Second language learners move along the proficiency continuum, they are likely to think and behave more as bilinguals.

Researchers struggle with trying to explain how it is that people have or gain knowledge of various aspects of language. The study conducted by Sharmini, Leng, Singaram and Jusoff (2009) begs the question of how the researcher can account for an English language learner grasping a feature of the language that his or her L1 does not have. This skill may be representative of innate language ability.

Using task-based questionnaires having to do with English grammar, it was determined that the participants had an understanding of regular past-tense verbs. They

happened to be native speakers of Mandarin Chinese from Malaysia. There are no verb tenses in Mandarin Chinese, as the researchers mention. Therefore there could be no direct transfer of skills regarding that particular grammatical structure. The researchers wonder if there might be more general principals at play here, bringing up the theory of universal grammar. Perhaps the concept of time that exists in Mandarin influenced the way the participants conceptualized the unfamiliar tense.

In a similar vein, Crain (2009) discussed how children and adults interpret statements using "or" He indicates that there are differences and similarities between how children and adults conceptualize language. According to him, in addition to its accepted use children are apt to use "or" in much the same way as adults use "and". Adults, however, use "or" to mean that only one possibility is true. Thus, there is agreement to a point but children see "or" as possibly encompassing both possibilities instead of just one. It is possible that the way learners think about and use language on a daily basis could hold a key to what helps them become proficient in English and accomplish their related goals. He strongly suggests that children are born with certain knowledge about language even though the way they use it changes over time. According to Skinner (1974) this is due to the fact that children continue to use verbal constructs that are reinforced.

This section has showcased the various ideas about how learners can successfully become proficient in a new language. Grades (Winter, 2000), literacy skills (Wurr, 2008; August, 2006) language background (Beaton, et al, 2007), and previous academic achievement (Grayson, 2008) are all ways that the learner can demonstrate his or her proficiency. Researchers have studied second language acquisition among students of all

ages, to a cornucopia of results. Four main themes have emerged from the literature available on second language acquisition. They will be outlined in the next section.

Themes In The Literature

The first theme which will be considered here is prior knowledge. Foundational skills such as literacy in the native language (L1) can possibly be beneficial to people learning a second language (L2), which for purposes of this paper will in most cases be English. The theory has a prominent place in the history of second language acquisition and continues to provide a basis for a good deal of work in the field today, as will be evidenced by several of the studies outlined later in this chapter.

The second theme is a corollary to the theory of linguistic interdependence (Cummins, 1979, 2007). There is a relationship between the two languages, in that the skills used in them can be mutually reinforcing. Guadarrama (1995) showed how this theory could be applied in a kindergarten classroom by using Spanish to facilitate the learning of new words in English. However, there can also be a separation between these skill sets under certain circumstances (Kovelman et al., 2008 and Bialystock, et al, 2006).

A third theme is theme that emerged from the literature is how affective factors like self-confidence and family support impact language acquisition and general academic achievement. These affective parameters are a part of success, because we need encouragement to reach our potential. If students feel they have support and are valued, they are probably more likely to continue in their studies, attend their classes and complete their assignments (Schalge and Soga, 2008). The next section will provide a more detailed account of the first theme, the relationship between the L1 and L2 and its subtopics.

Lastly, the fourth theme has to do with identity. Relocating, learning a new language, and/or adapting to a new culture can change the way individuals see themselves and those around them (Norton, 2010; Crowley-Henry 2011). Identity formation also takes place as individuals have discussions and relate to each other, as Freeman (2011) points out.

Linguistic interdependence and other theories of second language acquisition. One aspect of second language acquisition to be examined is how English and the native language might work together. The use of the first language to inform the second was discussed by Cummins (1979). The theory of linguistic interdependence has many applications when it comes to how ESL is taught. Much of Cummins' research focuses on young children. This is the group to whom he first applied his theory. Because of this, one might question how his work could have a bearing on the population to be considered in this paper.

However more recent studies have shown how this theory could be applied to adult learners (August, 2006; Harrison and Kroll, 2007). Huerta-Macias and Kephart (2009) discuss how use of the native language in adult ESL classes can benefit students. They gave an example of a guest instructor switching from English to Spanish in order to ensure comprehension of the material. They discuss how use of the native language can also help learners feel more comfortable and more prepared when they are called to use the second language. In their literature review, the authors use the following argument to show a parallel between Cummins' work and research with adult learners:

Cook (1992), for example, reminds us that a bilingual is not the equivalent of two

monolinguals, and that the two languages of the bilingual are always "on tap."

Learners cannot simply shut down their knowledge of one language

when using the other; instead, expression is more a matter of activating the

language that one wishes to use at the moment. This idea is congruent with the

work of Cummins (1980) who has long argued that bilinguals

have a common underlying proficiency, a common core of linguistic knowledge

in both languages. (Huerta-Macias and Kephart, 2009).

This indicates that languages work in tandem when it comes to bilinguals of all ages.

According to Brown (2007) it is perfectly legitimate to draw comparisons of

second language acquisition across age groups. Children and adults who are learning a

second language can be compared because their status as second language learners is a

commonality.

As the previously discussed research shows, a learner's first language can be

beneficial when it comes to gaining proficiency in the second. This is because certain

foundational skills already exist (Cummins, 1979). It has also been shown by Gürel

(2004) and H.D. Brown (2000) that a learner's second language can have an impact on

how he or she uses the home language. For example, Gürel (2004) indicates that adults

who use their second language heavily throughout the day may not be as likely to keep up

their heritage language skills.

Cummins (1979, 2007) indicated that those students with a solid foundation in

their first language would be better equipped to acquire the second. H. D. Brown (2000)

concurred and discussed how this applied to adult second language learners. He discussed

the way in which a person's knowledge of one language could impact his or her understanding of another. He stated that knowledge of the first language can impact interpretation of the second. "Adults, more cognitively secure, appear to operate from the solid foundation of the first language and thus manifest more interference (p. 68)."

The previous statement may indicate that the prior experience of the adult with the first language is a potential liability, because adults might try to apply what they know about the first language to the new one in a way that does not fit. However, he goes on to explain that "The first language, however, may be more readily used to bridge gaps that the adult learner cannot fill by generalization within the second language" (p. 68).

The idea that adult learners would be more confident in their first language makes sense, as adults have probably spent considerable time using their first language. That language may be highly developed once they begin to learn the second. This experience using their native language to communicate and learn is good preparation for them.

The Age Factor

Despite this confidence in the first language and their relative experience, adults may struggle to learn ESL more than children. H. D. Brown (2000) characterizes children as being less inhibited and more willing to practice a new language in front of others while older learners may have difficulty because they are used to and comfortable with the L1. Adult learners who are able to let go of their inhibitions and become more willing to practice will continue to see progress in their language development. Willingness to practice allows these learners further opportunities to use what they already know about language in general. When they see such improvement, this will

make them feel even more motivated to continue in their studies because they are reaching a goal (Bandura, et al, 1996).

Though adult learners may struggle in some areas, there is still hope. H. D. Brown (2000) discusses how adult learners are capable of becoming just as proficient as those who learned English or another second language at an earlier age. It is beneficial for readers to understand this ability, since the research deals in many cases with adults who are learning or have learned English later in life. Andrews (2011) states that studies of brain function do not give credence to the theory that there is a critical period beyond which learners have more difficulty acquiring a second language. This critical period hypothesis has been discussed by scholars such as Birdsong (1989). H. D. Brown (2000) does go on to say that having more highly developed L1 skills before studying the L2 in some ways helps adult learners. In particular, adult learners have an advantage because they have a considerable knowledge of L1 grammar which can help them understand the concepts behind the grammar of the L2.

It is possible that students who have a first language that has a similar structure to English might have an easier time learning the language than students who speak a first language which is quite dissimilar in nature (Beaton, et al, 2007). Meanwhile, Hakuta, Bialystok and Wiley (2003) examined the possible differences between adult English Language Learners of different age ranges, based on census data and the self-report of participants about their English proficiency. Their results did not support the critical period hypothesis, which indicates a point of no return beyond which the learner will have extreme difficulty acquiring a second language. However, they did point to a diminishing ability to acquire a language over time.

Brown (2007) also notes that some of the differences between child L2 acquisition and adult L2 acquisition may have more to do with context than the age of the learner. He postulates that many young children learn their second language outside the classroom, while adults learn via formal instruction. In many cases this may be true, but there are exceptions. For example, children learning English or another tongue as a foreign language without much opportunity to practice with native speakers outside the classroom would by definition have to rely more heavily on formal instruction. Another is adults who relocate to a foreign country for work, and learn the new language through work or social settings. Because of other responsibilities, they may not have the time to dedicate to formal classes (Tse, 2000).

The research discussed previously in this chapter shows that linguistic interdependence introduced by Cummins (1979) may be applicable to adult learners and not only small children. However, August (2006) postulates that such transfer of skills might operate differently in learners of different ages. The idea of applying this theory differently depending on age is consistent with Yue-hai (2008) who cautions against making the assumption that ELLs of different ages necessarily acquire the language in the same way.

The idea that everyone learns language by the same means brings Yue-hai into conflict with Krashen (2009) as well as Freeman and Freeman (2004) who advocate the idea that language acquisition follows the same pattern for all ages. Although there are some fundamentals that can be applied to various ages and situations it may be best not to over-generalize. By definition, if L1 truly does have an impact on L2, then it would likely make a difference if the person learning a language is an adult with an L1 to draw on or a

child who is beginning to learn his or her native language at virtually the same time that the L2 is introduced.

Implications of Language Acquisition Theories In Adult ESL Classrooms

The purpose of this review is to provide an overview of different theories and what a curriculum might look like if it were designed with a particular theory in mind. Mullin and Oliver (2010) provide an example of how this can be done in practice. They discuss the Australian program called Accelerated Literacy and how it is used with students who are learning ESL or learning standard Australian English as a second dialect. In their analysis, they determined that the program's curriculum draws from many different theories at different times during the instructional process. What we glean from this is that instructors must determine what works best for their students at a given point in their learning. Theories are a good place to start, but they are only a basis for making practical day-to-day curriculum decisions.

One way in which theories can be helpful is that they enable instructors to form ideas about the order in which language skills should be taught. Krashen (2003) discusses how he believes language skills are learned at a different rate by each individual. For him, this goes against the popular method in language courses to emphasize particular concepts, such as past tense, on particular days. He believes that focusing on specific grammar topics in every class rather than looking at the target language holistically holds back students who already understand the material, and can be stressful for students do not yet have the necessary background to understand it.

Krashen (1982, 2009) compares "acquisition" with "learning". He describes the learning paradigm as tending to emphasize the analysis of grammar and

intentional memorization of vocabulary. Instructors who subscribe to this theory favor considerable drill and practice activities. Such methods are not always interesting to the student, and do not necessarily translate well to real world situations (Brown, 2007). That said, they can still help prepare students who are interested in language for purely academic reasons. For example, by preparing students to recite grammar rules and talk about the mechanics of the language (Krashen, 2009).

Also, instructors who believe that linguistic interdependence (Cummins;1979, 1980, 2007) do not subscribe to this theory may feel that an intense focus on the second language is more appropriate and may actively discourage the use of any other during instructional time. The next section will discuss how a student's success can be furthered by using what he or she has already learned.

Prior knowledge and transfer of skills. "I learned that language is both a means of and an obstacle to communication – foreign languages, obviously, but one's own language if one's not careful," (Van Doren, 2008. p. 6).

The following two sections will discuss the relationship between an individual's native language and his or her second language. Researchers have studied English language proficiency in relation to the first language background of the learner, including both language and content knowledge. Adult ESL learners in a public setting can benefit by using such strengths as they practice their English. They have a wealth of knowledge about everyday activities which can be brought to bear as they learn new vocabulary, for example.

August (2006) found that a factor in the achievement of adult ESL learners may be their literacy skills in their first language. Literacy skills should be seen as distinct

from conversational abilities, which will be discussed later. A study of adult ESL

students speaking Spanish as a first language showed that there could be some transfer of

skills from the L1, Spanish, to the L2, English. As Fung (2009) put it, the background

knowledge or skills students bring with them into the classroom must be taken from their

long term memory. From there, this prior knowledge is brought into their short term

memory, making inaccessible for them to draw on as they seek to understand what is

being presented to them. This ability to use what they already know is beneficial to ESL

learners in an academic setting, because they are often asked to recall both linguistic

information and content details on assessments.

August (2006) discusses how a transfer of skills between languages might look

among adult ELLs reading in the second language. The results of the study showed that

reading abilities in the first language may help students in the second. As the researcher

mentions, this use of reading skills in both languages would seem to support the

hypothesis of linguistic interdependence, as proposed by Cummins (1979,1980) for

adults. August (2006) indicates that that grammar skills have the largest effect on general

reading skills in the same language, but supports the idea that there is a relationship

between L1 and L2 skills. Instructors and students may be in a good position to capitalize

on such heritage language abilities, particularly in a setting where small groups of

students share the same L1.

The structure of a language can impact how theories are applied (Beaton, et al,

2007). However, the knowledge of one's native language is beneficial even in cases

where the native and second languages are very different. Harrison and Kroll (2007)

examined the relationships between various measures of Chinese language ability and English language ability.

The researchers did find, upon comparing the rhyme detection measure with English phoneme deletion, that there was a correlation. This connection between the two tasks led the scholars to suspect that some sort of skills transfer may have taken place (Harrison and Kroll, 2007). It could be that the participants were applying what they knew in their native language of Chinese to English. If so, this circumstance could further evidence in support of Cummins' (1979) theory. Harrison and Kroll, (2007) acknowledge that the sample size for the study was small, and that the connection between the Chinese and English skills may have been demonstrated more strongly with a larger number of participants.

This correlation between scores obtained on Chinese rhyme exercises and measures of the ability of the ELLs to manipulate phonemes is unexpected given the lack of similarity between the L1 and L2 in this case. Also intriguing is "For the Chinese measures, students identified as at risk of English reading difficulties achieved significantly lower scores only on the Chinese rhyme detection measure," (Harrison and Kroll, 2007). This connection between Chinese rhyme detection and reading in English is further evidence that the students' reading abilities in each language may impact one another, even though in this instance the impact was not demonstrated to the extent found in the aforementioned August (2006) study.

While this connection between reading abilities in the languages exists, that does not mean that it is apparent all of the time. Li and Kirby (2014) found that it is also true that English language learners may have difficulty reading in English even if their

abilities in the L1 do not indicate that they would. They discussed a study of 8th grade students in China who were part of an English immersion program there. The authors postulate that there are instances where difficulties with reading comprehension occur even with solid skills in the L1 simply because they are not yet very proficient in the L2.

Jiang and Kuehn (2001) also looked at the impact of native language background on adult English language acquisition. Their study inquired into this phenomenon of success by interviewing ESL students at a community college and administering a language use survey.

Responses to interview questions revealed that a higher percentage of the late immigrant group, or participants with at least ten years of school in their home country, used strategies such as context clues when deciphering the meaning of an unfamiliar word in either language. Use of such strategies goes along with McKay and Tom (1999), who discuss how if learners are given the opportunity they can make great strides by drawing on previous experience from their home cultures.

Jiang and Kuehn (2001) also discovered that the late immigrant group members were also more likely than other participants to draw upon their knowledge of L1 grammar. These responses are interpreted by the researcher to mean that these concepts are actively applied when studying the second language, hence providing evidence for the possible transfer of skills learned in the L1 to the L2. While 85% of these students also believed their L1 background aided them in their study of English, fully 100% of the early immigrant participants agreed this prior knowledge was helpful. McKay and Tom (1999) also assert that a great strength adult second language learners have is their first language background. The participants' response is noteworthy because these beliefs may

greatly impact how these learners study, both in their acquisition of the English language itself and any English language content material they come across.

The late immigrant group out-performed the early immigrant group when it came to the home language tasks. The researchers give this as support for Cummins' threshold hypothesis (1979), given that the late immigrant group had more experience with L1 academic language before leaving their homeland. The earlier immigrant group would have spent more of their time studying in English. To review, Cummins (1979) theorized that as learners grew to be more proficient in both the L1 and L2, the more advantageous having two languages would become.

What does this mean for adult students, who in many cases are already highly proficient in at least some aspects of their L1? Adult ESL learners would naturally be expected to improve in their English language proficiency and their content studies in time. The more proficient they become in English, the faster they are likely to continue improving. Because of their previous experience and education, adults are also likely to have more background knowledge to draw on. Cummins (1979) indicates in his thresholds hypothesis that learners draw on native language skills when acquiring a second language. The knowledge adults, such as those participating in my study have in terms of highly developed native language skills and understanding of content are likely to be very beneficial as they study English. Learners who already know how to read, understand math and have a variety of daily experiences to draw on have a good foundation for learning a second language.

There was some disagreement indicated in the literature about whether the supposed interdependence of the two languages indicated by August (2006) and Harrison

and Kroll (2007) is always beneficial to the learner. Research showed that this potential for one language to impact another works both ways, and it may not always be helpful. Though most research today rejects what Baker (2006) calls "subtractive bilingualism" it has been shown by Görel (2004) that too much emphasis on one language over the other has the potential to be harmful.

A note of caution, Görel (2004) states that if the two languages a bilingual adult speaks work together in the brain and draw upon the same skill set, as August (2006), H. D. Brown (2000) and Baker (2006) suggest, it is also possible for one language to impact another in a negative way. Rather than to criticize bilingualism, this merely shows that there are many ways in which the two languages might interact. The next section will further discuss the impact that learning a second language may have on the first.

L2 influence on L1. Görel's (2004) study of Turkish-English speaking adults identified some areas of Turkish grammar where participants seem to be influenced by their L2. Results indicated that if an individual spends too much time in an L2 speaking environment, it is possible that he or she may forget certain aspects of L1 grammar. For example, if they use the second language constantly both at home and at work. Tse (2000) mentions the extensive amount of English used by younger students in their studies. Depending on the lifestyle of adult learners they may be surrounded by even more English at home, work, or in the community. Much as Wei (2010) discusses the need for ELLs to give themselves opportunities to use English, they also must give themselves opportunities to us their native language on a regular basis. As with any skill, if a language is not practiced a person is likely to forget something. It is not too surprising that the participants in the aforementioned study would have had some difficulties with

their native Turkish. However, it is also necessary to reiterate that adults are likely to have a stronger foundation in their heritage language than children, and thus would likely be less susceptible to the phenomenon Tse (2000) refers to as "heritage language loss".

Brown (2000) argues that while what he calls "systematic forgetting" can occur, this is minimized when the material is taught in a way that is meaningful for students. He also argues that people tend to retain big-picture concepts better than finer details (p. 94). Huerta-Macias and Kephart (2009) argue that "The same principles that inform bilingual instruction for younger students also inform adult ESL: students learn best in their stronger language, and content learned in their native language transfers to English," (pg. 89). The researchers indicate that the strategy of L1 use works especially well if students share an L1, as was the case in most of the classes they observed for their study.

Conversly Hui (2010) takes a somewhat controversial stand regarding the impact that the L1 and L2 may have on one another. Hui (2010) is of the opinion that the research is entirely too contradictory. There are reasons to support an influence of the L1 on the L2, for good or bad. This research shows that there are also reasons to suggest that the connection, in either case, is not as strong as some would advocate. It is not possible to say that any current theory would hold for every individual ELL, or even every adult ESL learner. Brown (2011) discusses that much as a physicist may search for a string theory to explain how the universe works, scholars of second language acquisition seek their own theory to explain the fundamental learning processes of linguistics. He puts it best when he describes this process as a "quest" that is "eclectic" (p.4).

The next section will discuss literacy, and how literacy skills in the first language might be applicable to the second. This transfer of literacy skills is a factor for

consideration because many adult ESL learners are likely to have some developed

reading and writing skills in their first language. These learners and their instructors need

to know how to effectively draw on those first language literacy skills so that the learners

might grow in their knowledge of English. The next section will discuss the influence L1

skills can have on literacy in the L2.

      Impact of L1 on literacy. This section is going to examine specifically how the

L1 might impact the L2 reading and writing abilities. It seemed from the research of

August (2006) that a foundation in first language literacy skills may help make the

second language material more accessible to learners. The literature indicated that

drawing on pre-existing literacy skills can be of benefit to those studying a new language.

Song (2006) also affirmed the idea of a foundation in reading and writing skills in a

language as a prerequisite for adult second language learners to be successful

academically. Her interviews with students and instructors showed that a very strong

background in the first language and solid literacy skills in one or both languages were

needed for successful completion of coursework by ESL learners in college. This

foundation benefits students because they do not have to then go back and develop

literacy skills in the midst of many other demands on their time.

      This theme of using established skills can be expanded beyond languages. Merril

(2002) postulated that drawing on the prior knowledge of the students generally was an

integral part of instruction. By having students recall what they already knew about a

particular topic, it enabled them to establish a point of reference so that they would be

better prepared to learn new material when it was presented. Bringing in background

knowledge also allows students to see how the new content builds on previous lessons.

As J.S. Brown et al (1989) suggest, this practice helps provide some context for the new skills, especially when learners are able to apply their new knowledge in authentic ways.

Yu-hui, et al (2010) discuss the history of this concept of drawing upon established knowledge and skills, known as schema theory. Schema theory, they explain, is based on the concept that people have schemata composed of what they know of a particular subject. Applying new knowledge to what is already known helps them to organize the information and to access the schemata. The authors add something to the discourse about schema theory that is particularly applicable to adult ESL learners in college or graduate school. "Schema can help people to not only understand things and experience, but also the language describing these things and experience, including written and spoken form," (Yu-hui, et al 2010, p.61). And again, they confirm how crucial it is for the learner to have a grasp of the language used before he or she can understand the content being presented.

They discuss various strategies for use with college level students, in this case native Chinese speakers learning EFL. The strategies discussed could easily be applied in an ESL setting, perhaps even more effectively given that students would have their learning reinforced in the environment outside the classroom. One of the suggestions they give is to spend some time on pre-reading activities, making sure the students get a sense of what the text is about and that they are given an explanation of unfamiliar terms. After reading, they can discuss the text in small groups. This discussion would be useful for clarifying understanding. The authors mention that different students might have insights on different parts of the text, which they could share with one another. This discussion would probably take place mostly in English, the language of instruction. It is possible

that the students might also occasionally share in Chinese. Whether or not the L1 is used

is not stated specifically in the article.

Yu-hui, et al (2010) also point out that this type of informal discussion reduces

stress. While understanding the specific language used is beneficial, there are also certain

concepts that may be applicable to speakers of various languages. Another theory, about

to be discussed, suggests that there may be a sort of general language schema. This as

opposed to the more specific schema applying to one language in particular, which Yu-

hui et al (2010) proposed.

Research has explored whether certain principles can be applied regardless of the

language used. Athanasopoulos (2007) also looked at the way that certain skills can

transcend language, in a study of Japanese-English bilinguals attending university. One

of two bilingual groups was given the instructions in English, the other in Japanese, and it

was determined that the language in which they were prepared did not make a significant

difference. The irrelevance of the language of instruction is a surprise, because one could

expect the participants to be stronger speakers of Japanese. Although, it is possible that as

they were identified as bilingual the participants truly had equivalent foundational skills

in both languages. Athanasopoulos (2007) suggested that the ability to distinguish

between quantifiable phenomena and non-quantifiable phenomena may in fact extend

across languages and cultures. In other words, participants were able to identify the

shapes of individual, distinct, countable objects as opposed to the shape of a substance

that was not a solid object. In its own way, this experiment shows the importance of

background knowledge in learning, while also making a possible case for universal

grammar. The following section will specifically discuss how literacy skills in the L1 can prepare students for the task of reading in the L2.

  First language skills and reading. This theme of first language knowledge is also addressed by Wurr, et al (2008) in a series of four case studies of adult ESL students. The study, which involved miscue analysis and discussions with the participants about their reading, was informative. The results indicated that the participants may have had an easier time comprehending the passages they read if they relied more on what they knew from experience. As it was, they were too busy focusing on grammar and pronunciation details.

  The qualitative research performed in this study was also useful because the interview process led to information about how ELLs think about reading. One participant stated that he was very concerned with grammar, mechanics and correct pronunciation. The researcher helped him see that this was sometimes getting in the way of deriving meaning from the text. Students can benefit if they are equipped to derive meaning from what they read, because reading comprehension is an essential study skill and students will not progress far at the college level without it.

  Krashen (1999) discusses how learners of all ages can benefit by having access to applicable reading materials and engaging in some kind of free reading on a regular basis. Regular reading has been shown to improve skills such as vocabulary and affective variables such as confidence. He discusses that reading is good both for students acquiring a first language and for those acquiring a second. He advocates that English Language Learners read both in their home languages, for a foundation, and also seek out

reading materials to enjoy in English. Furthermore, he mentions how reading skills are connected to writing improvement.

The following section will discuss what goes into making ELLs successful English language writers.

Writing in the L2. Further insight into writing improvement is provided by Lee and Krashen (2002), who discussed how to help struggling college writers be more successful. Their participants were Chinese L1 college students in Taiwan taking an English composition course. The students were interviewed about their English reading and writing habits, and their grades in the course were examined as well. As the students in the Wurr (2008) study, these students also seemed to run into difficulties when they focused too much on mechanics. They lost sight of the meaning they wanted to get across in their compositions. Even though the students were studying EFL, a similar situation could occur with ESL students. Given the fact that ESL students are surrounded by native English speakers, they might be even more self-conscious when it comes to grammar and mechanics. Part of the university experience is for students to learn to communicate effectively in their writing, be it in final exams at the undergraduate level or a candidacy paper at the graduate level. Not only is it important that students learn how to write clearly, but graduate students in particular must also learn to interpret information they read and consider it with a critical eye (Melles, 2009).

The researchers suggested that writing apprehension might be partly responsible for this phenomenon, but a regression analysis did not determine writing apprehension to be a statistically significant factor. Nonetheless, they assert that helping students to be more comfortable with writing is important. One of the suggestions for helping students

feel better about writing was to encourage students to read more, basing this on the idea that avid readers make better writers. This idea that good reading habits reinforce good writing habits is confirmed by Yu-hui, Li-rong and Yue (2010). It may be that reading can improve writing because it gives the learners a chance to absorb the language.

In reading, students have the opportunity to see how other authors use written language to communicate their ideas. This is much like Krashen's (2009) theory that there is often a "silent period" involved in second language acquisition. He notes that this is particularly the case for young children who are learning the language in a less structured social context. The learner simply listens quietly and begins to make sense of the new language being spoken around him or her. Once he or she feels reasonably comfortable, the learner will then attempt to share something. It could be that a similar mechanism is involved in learning the written word. As students become more avid readers and are increasingly conversant in the language in its written form, they may be more apt to attempt to communicate in English that way themselves.

It is also good for instructors to encourage students in their writing. Fernsten (2008) discusses how instructors may at times be overly critical of ESL learners when it comes to their writing attempts. Students can blossom when they realize that they are capable, intelligent writers. Learners' potential may not always be obvious to instructors simply because they are unfamiliar with the format that the instructor is looking for, or they may feel that it does not fit them as individuals. Part of the "writing apprehension" Lee and Krashen (2009) discuss may be due to social and cultural issues that the students face (Fernsten, 2008). Carspecken (2009) discusses the impact of power-relations in ethnographic study, and Fernseten (2008) applies this concept specifically to college

students learning ESL. Cummins (1997) describes what power looks like in in an educational setting with ELLs. He asserts that it is possible to use power in a positive way that benefits ELLs and that they, together with teachers and communities, can accomplish much.

Yue-hai (2008) discusses his experiences teaching graduate and undergraduate ELLs. He believes strongly in an L1 background and in using the skills in L1 to inform L2. He mentions how his students would suddenly understand an English language lecture better after being given certain key words in their native Chinese. He also discusses how it can be beneficial for students to have a text in both the L2 and the L1, for reference. One would surmise that the more developed the learner's knowledge of L1 academic language, the more beneficial having access to the text would be. The reader would be able to derive more meaning from it, and therefore understand the L2 text more as well. Another strategy that may help students better comprehend their textbooks is writing a summary of the chapters for themselves as a study guide (Demaree, Allie, Low and Taylor, 2008). The next section will begin our discussion of the second theme, which is the flipside to the first. We have already explored ways in which the two languages appear to work together in the learning processes of second language learners. We will now discuss ways in which the two languages could possibly work against one another.

Working Together, Yet Distinct

While studies show an apparent connection between first and second languages, there is also data to suggest that the nature of this connection can change with time. More experienced learners may be more adept at making a distinction between the two

languages when it becomes necessary. Laskshumanan and Teranishi (1994), in their

study, looked at how Japanese L1 undergraduates interpreted reflexive verbs. They noted

that when tested in Japanese, the participants responded according to the conventions of

Japanese grammar, indicating a more ambiguous interpretation. When tested in English,

however, participants responded accordingly. What this means is that they responded to

the items as a native English speaker would. Differences in grammar between Japanese

and English did not cause any disparity. They did not respond differently than the native

English speaking control group. This study provides an example of how though L1

knowledge may influence L2, a person can still keep them separate when the situation

calls for it. The participants ability to maintain the distinction between their two

languages when necessary supports the idea that the L1 is a positive, not a negative or

null influence, on an ELL's L2 acquisition as Hui (2010) states research has shown at

times.

Laskshumanan and Teranishi (1994) also found that participant responses differed

based on English language proficiency "…the ESL learners at Levels 1 and 2, considered

as one group, gave a higher percentage of incorrect responses than did the learners at the

higher levels…" In keeping with Cummins' threshold hypothesis (1979) it would seem

that the beginning ESL learners were more likely to base their choice on knowledge of

Japanese grammar, a solution which in this case was not helpful to them in the English

test.

It would seem that while successful L2 learners may know how to generalize

certain literacy skills from one language to another, as indicated by Cummins (1980).

However, they are also aware of certain fundamental differences between their L1 and L2

grammar (Kovelman, et al, 2008; Cummins, 1979). The ability to generalize linguistic input is also mentioned by H. D. Brown (2000) who discusses how Second Language Learners draw on what they already know, which at the beginning is often the grammar and vocabulary of their first language.

One limitation of the August (2006) study may have been the similarities between Spanish and English. Beaton, et al (2007) discuss how learners may have more difficulty making connections between languages with very different structures.

Bilingual persons may have a unique way of thinking about and using language. Kovelman, et al (2008) have examined this possibility by testing the language abilities of Spanish-English bilingual adults and monolingual English-speaking adults under MRI.

The researchers found that bilingual participants function as monolingual English speakers when they focus on English tasks, in that both groups experienced an increase in Blood Oxygen Level Dependent signals when presented with more difficult language tasks. This increase occurred to a greater extent in bilinguals, however.

It could be that this apparent compartmentalization of linguistic information might extend to other types of ideas or categories of subject matter as well. More research is needed to see if bilinguals have this kind of organizational structure for other subject areas. It is unclear exactly how this research would influence practice, but this knowledge may be beneficial in the future.

What this research shows is that in some instances there does not seem to be an indication of connectedness between the languages. However, this result may be in part because the activities were grouped together based on language and the researchers took special care to prepare the bilingual participants before switching. Zadina (2006) did

similar research with dyslexic participants and a non-dyslexic control group. The college-age participants were tested on reading as well as related measures and then underwent an MRI. The experimental-dyslexic group was further subdivided based on the type of dyslexia. The study showed a possible link between the ability to identify words and the size of the three occipital regions of the brain.

What this connection between word identification and brain region might mean for learners for whom English is not their first language remains to be seen, although it may tell us something about how vocabulary knowledge is acquired and stored. Knowing how the brain deals with vocabulary could be useful because as Bifuh-Ambe (2009) mentions, learning a specialized English language vocabulary in a chosen content area is a part of university studies. Andrews (2011) cautions that further study is needed to determine how useful such technologies are, the most appropriate methodology when incorporating them, and how results are best interpreted. The next section will discuss how this apparent rift between languages could be applied to writing.

Distinctions between written L1 and written L2. Research looking at written, as opposed to spoken language among bilinguals and monolinguals has led to similar findings to those found by Kovelman, et al (2008). Beaton, et al (2007) examined the laterality (visual field preference) of participants with respect to language used. The participants consisted of a control group of monolingual English speakers and an experimental group of bilingual speakers of English and Welsh. The relevant variables were stimulus language and first language learned. There were no significant differences between the participants who learned English first and those who learned Welsh first.

Additionally, an ANOVA using the same independent variable of language environment showed that the lateralization index was significantly higher when the language used was Welsh and the participants were from a predominantly Welsh speaking environment. When placed in front of a laptop showing common words in English or Welsh, bilingual participants identified English words with about equal accuracy from either side of the screen. Their lateralization index measures did not differ significantly from the monolingual English controls when the relevant language was English.

This study is further evidence of bilinguals behaving like monolinguals when both groups are tested in the same language, as was the case with Kovelman, et al (2008). Once again, this may show an ability to concentrate on the relevant language exclusively. This ability to hone in on the required language has applications for ESL adults studying at a college or university, because it could have an impact on their study strategies. What the above study tells us is that the successful students are likely to be those who make the effort to immerse themselves in L2 language and culture, and who are able to stay in that mindset when completing their work. It is possible that due to living and studying in an English speaking environment, ESL learners would have a distinct advantage over EFL learners. Perhaps future studies will shed light on this by focusing on a comparison between the progress made by ESL and EFL learners over time. Next, we will look at what studies have found concerning bilingualism and hearing.

Language and hearing. Persinger et al (2002) conducted a similar study to that of Beaton, et al (2007) but with a focus on hearing. What is unexpected about this study involving psychology students is that language and gender both played a role in the results. The bilingual men in the group seemed to have the fewest correct responses to

stimuli presented to the left ear but responded as accurately as anyone else when stimuli was presented to the right. This phenomenon was particularly true for bilingual men who had learned English after five years of age. Twice as many errors were reported for left ear stimuli in that group than for the bilingual women or monolinguals of either gender.

Truly there is more to learn about the interplay of the L1 and L2 in the mind of the adult ELL. The research just outlined in the previous two sections of this paper indicates that the two languages impact one another in various ways, but more research is needed on exactly how this give and take occurs. It is necessary to learn more about whether the relationship between languages can be impacted by the situation, as the studies by Beaton, et al (2007), Kovelman (2008), Laskshumanan and Teranishi (1994) and Görel (2004) would imply. Also, it requires further investigation to determine if the relationship between languages differs depending on the proficiency level of the learner in the L1 and the L2 as Cummins (1979) suggests. While on the subject of proficiency in L2, the next section will examine English language proficiency in connection with academic achievement.

Knowledge of English

English language proficiency can be helpful with both higher education and employment-related goals such as those previously stated (Friedman 2007). He gives an example of young college students in India putting themselves through school by working as customer service representatives at a phone bank in Bangalore. He also includes an anecdote about how he was asked to model an authentic mid-western accent for them, as the customers tended to be either American or British speakers of English. Tse (2001) discusses how many ELLs seek to learn not only the technical aspects of the

language, but to be able to sound like native speakers as well. H.D. Brown (2000, 2007) indicates that while attaining a native-like accent can be difficult for adult learners, they do not necessarily have to do so to communicate effectively. Johnson (personal communication, October 23, 2015) emphasizes that students should seek to be understood, which is not the same as accent reduction. The next section will discuss how to define various aspects of student English language proficiency.

      Determining student English language proficiency. This brings us to the complicated question of what proficiency in a language really means, a question which will be addressed here because proficiency in English is the central goal of the adult ESL learner. It plays a part in their success in other areas, and can make the difference in their achieving subsequent goals such as a job and/or a degree. Here is an appropriate place to make a distinction between what Cummins (1981) refers to as BICS, or basic interpersonal communicative skills and CALP, or cognitive academic language proficiency. The former refers to everyday language used in social settings. The latter refers to the more specialized vocabulary required for studying and discussing academic subjects. According to his theory, the BICS vocabulary is typically picked up by the learner first. This is logical because it is the easiest to understand and it is also the type of vocabulary that is the most common.

      In fact, he believes it is often the case that because learners who have mastered BICS sound so proficient in everyday conversation that it can lead to the mistaken belief that they are fluent in the second language for all purposes. Students may not only sound convincingly proficient to their instructors, but to themselves as well (Goldschmidt, Notzold and Miller, 2003; Teemant, 2010).

Cummins (1979) explains this phenomenon by making a comparison to an iceberg. BICS represent the top of the iceberg, the part of a learner's linguistic repertoire that is visible to everyone. Reppy and Adames (2000) refer to such learners as "close to native speakers". They are described as "Students whose oral English proficiency may exceed their ability to use academic texts" (pg.74).

Cummins (1981) explains that unlike BICS, CALP is beneath the surface. These skills are not as obvious simply by speaking with the student, but require hearing an academic presentation or reading one of his or her papers. In actuality, he believes that it can actually take much longer to master the more challenging, context-reduced CALP terminology. He believes that fostering both sets of skills in the L1 can help the learner acquire them in L2. To put this in context, it is his argument for bilingual education at the elementary level. Nonetheless it is logical and that it holds for learners at the tertiary level as well. Just like their counterparts at the primary and secondary school levels, instructors of adults must also refrain from making the assumption that because a student can function well in everyday conversation that he or she is prepared to engage in intense content-area discussions in the classroom in English. The next section will specifically address the possibilities for adult ESL learners to achieve in content area coursework.

Study skills and commitment of adult ESL learners. Winter (2000) showed that while knowledge of English is helpful, being monolingual in English may not be. Specifically, this study involved looking at the academic gain, attendance and study habits of ESL and non-ESL students in an introductory psychology course. There were two studies done, comparing test grades and attendance of both groups. ESL students in the course were shown to have fewer absences, study more [according to self-report

measures], and make higher test scores overall than their peers. While self-report measures are not always the most reliable, they hold up well in this study because they are supported by the other data. It is highly probable that students who are in class more and make better grades also spend more time studying on their own. Class attendance shows a certain amount of commitment to schoolwork, particularly at the college level. Also, students are likely to learn more if they are in class, in addition to the extra study time. In this case, it is safe to say that the self-report measures of the participants would be pretty accurate.

Valenzuela (1999) also found this kind of "diligence" or "empeño" to be true of recent immigrants in high school ESL programs. They were likely to be more focused on their studies and achieve higher grades than their peers who were born in the U.S. and were more acculturated.

The second study broke the participants down into three groups for comparison: ESL students, native English speakers, and non-native English speakers outside of the ESL program. The findings were very much the same as the first. Further study is needed to view the relationship between study habits and language proficiency. (R. Olenchak, personal communication, Spring 2009).

The discipline practiced by adult ESL students in their coursework is further confirmed by Smith (2010). In her study, ESL participants indicated spending a great deal of time in their studies. In some cases they would review alone, in others with someone else. They tended to spend more time on their coursework than native English-speaking peers. In part this may be because adult ESL learners feel pressured to study harder, in order to keep up their language skills and content knowledge (Teemant, 2010).

It could also be argued that adult ESL learners would need to spend more time studying to attain the same results as native speakers, due to the language barrier that must be dealt with before the content can be learned.

What can be gleaned from these studies is that it might be beneficial for instructors to emphasize good study habits. Not only would ELLs benefit from learning study skills, native English speaking students and students who are already fluent could improve with such instruction as well. Even students who already spend considerable time studying could learn to study more effectively (Olney, 2001). That said, gaining proficiency in the language of instruction, in this case English, would play a key part in helping adult ESL learners use their study time more efficiently as well. The next section will discuss how English language proficiency can impact student achievement in terms of grades.

English language proficiency, content knowledge and grades. A quantitative study by Goldstien and Perin (2008) looks more specifically at the relationship between English language knowledge and achievement in a content course. This study also involved college students in a psychology class. The study looked at the relationship between English literacy and achievement.

It was shown that the higher the level of English course the student had taken, the greater the likelihood they would have success in a psychology course. They defined success as achieving a grade of C or above and full course credit. The relationship between the variables of English course level and successful completion of the introductory psychology course showed a statistically significant correlation. This relationship is to be expected, as the better the students knew English the better able they

would be to comprehend the content of the psychology course. College courses, particularly those in the humanities, require extensive amounts of reading. Students with more developed L2 literacy skills would understandably be better prepared. They would not only have better comprehension of the material, but most likely they would be able to complete the reading at a faster pace. This L2 knowledge would allow them to accomplish more studying with less effort and time.

One of the findings of this study was that the level of English literacy skills upon arriving at the community college did not prove to greatly impact the students' success in the content course, despite the relevance of the level reached by the time of the study. They found no disparity between the achievement of students who required developmental English courses and those who went directly into college English when they enrolled.

These findings indicated that that if students with difficulties in English continued to learn and practice the language skills necessary for content coursework, then the need for remediation at the beginning of their studies would not necessarily be a barrier to academic achievement later on in their academic careers. The ability of students struggling with English early on to achieve good grades later is a noteworthy finding that can be encouraging to both struggling students and their instructors. It is also an encouragement to recent arrivals to an English speaking country. They need not worry if they feel behind in their learning at first. This confirms what Graham (1989) indicated before, that what students may lack in language skills at first can potentially be made up for with other traits. Even in a public setting, where students are not graded on

coursework, it is encouraging for instructors and students to know that learners can achieve much if they persevere.

While this study shows that previous struggles in school can be overcome, the next study also shows that previous achievement may be an applicable factor to consider when discussing current and future student success.

The impact of previous achievement in school. It was however mentioned by Grayson (2008), in a study from Canada, that achievement in high school plays a role in the success of English as a second language students at the university level. That previous achievement has a part here is not surprising. It would be expected that high school achievement would correlate with university achievement, even among the general student population. The sample in this study consisted of four groups. The control group consisted of native English speakers from Canada. There were also three comparison groups: Foreign English speakers, Foreign ESL students and Canadian born ESL students. It was determined that the four groups of participants differed little with respect to their prior achievement in high school.

Another variable considered by the researchers was the area of study in which the participants were enrolled. The largest area of study represented among Canadian students (English and Canadian ESL alike) was the Faculty of Arts. Foreign English and Foreign ESL students were more likely to be found in the faculty of Science and Engineering. Under further consideration, this distribution of talent makes sense. The humanities are much more language driven, while the sciences depend considerably on mathematics. Theoretically, someone in the faculty of Science and Engineering would probably have to be more proficient with numbers, and perhaps not need to be as

proficient with words. That said, students in those areas can also benefit by improving their writing skills, as evidenced by Melles (2009) in his description of the English for Academic Purposes approach taken with ESL graduate students studying Engineering in Australia.

The greater emphasis on mathematics, and the current demand for scientific minds in the western world might explain why students who are not native speakers of English would be drawn to those fields (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010). Recruitment of scientifically inclined individuals would also be a draw for native English speakers coming from outside of Canada. When analyzing the gains in written English from one year to the next, it was determined that that the only statistically significant gains were made by the foreign ESL group. This is likely because the foreign ESL group had the most room for improvement in the first place. Two of the groups were native English speaking, Canadian born or otherwise. The Canadian English group was said by the researchers to have the greatest amount of what they call written linguistic capital.

Understandably, the native English speakers from Canada would be the most skilled with the English language in general and the Canadian vernacular in particular. The Canadian ESL students would have spent more time in Canada and probably had more opportunities to work on their English skills before entering university. Not surprisingly, the foreign born native English speakers would already have proficiency in one form of English. The researchers believed that area of study and previous academic achievement had more of an impact on achievement in college than association with a particular language group. A caveat here is that the aforementioned language groups seemed to gravitate toward particular areas of study, so those variables may be related.

Also, it seems reasonable that the students would specifically choose areas of study in which they felt they had the ability to excel. No doubt many students focus on an area of study where they have a particular aptitude, regardless of first language background.

What the research discussed in this section shows is that those English language learners who are already fairly proficient in the English language have an apparent advantage when it comes to academic achievement. The aforementioned study also demonstrates that those students who are already high achievers have an advantage later in their studies. Both of these ideas seem somewhat intuitive, but they are none the less worth mentioning.

Valenzuela (1999) supports the idea of previous schooling as a foundation for later learning. Her study showed that high school ELLs who had a positive early schooling experience in Mexico seemed more prepared for the rigors of school in the U.S. It is likely that a solid education in the home country is good preparation for adult students entering a public setting as well.

The next section will discuss how affective conditions may play a role in second language acquisition and academic achievement. The previous research has revealed much about the academic backgrounds of ELLs and ways in which they excel. Now we get into describing the kind of environment that encourages them to be receptive to that knowledge. The practical implication here is this: We have discussed what needs to be taught, but we must also discuss the mindset with which it is to be taught. If students and instructors are in the right frame of mind students will have the best chance at succeeding in their language acquisition and related goals.

Affective Factors, Need for Support

Meanwhile, there has also been investigation into the affective nature of second language acquisition, showing that a positive influence from instructors and classmates can be an integral part of the learning process (Bifuh-Ambe, 2009; Daraghmeh-Alqattawi, 2009; Lynch, Klee and Tedick, 2001; Schalge and Soga 2008).

Studies, such as Bifuh-Ambe (2009) and Engin (2009) have focused on more of the affective factors behind adult second language acquisition. The social and emotional components of the English language acquisition process are not to be ignored if we are to see the big picture of what contributes to a learner's achievements in school and in life. Success cannot be thought of as a matter of cognition alone. In fact, Oxford (1990) says that "The affective side of the learner is probably one of the very biggest influences on language learning success or failure." There are social aspects to success as well as academic ones. The more proficient an ELL becomes, the more fully he or she can take part in the conversations and activities of native English speaking peers (Nowak-Fabrykowski & Shjandrij, 2004). It has been shown that support from peers and instructors can be encouraging to a second language learner, and that high motivation is a factor in his or her success as well.

Motivation as a key to learning. A study by Bifuh-Ambe (2009) showed the importance of motivation. A student must be willing to dedicate much time and effort to studying, and make careful choices about social activities as well. In her qualitative study, she interviewed a doctoral student in the U.S. and ELI, or English language institute, administrators and instructors. Motivation is often best seen in student goals and the actions they take to achieve them. (Kim, Newton, Downey and Benton, 2010).

Adult learners must often have high internal motivation and drive to achieve, perhaps more than younger students (McKay and Tom, 1999). Engin (2009) likewise agrees, discussing a survey of university students studying English in Turkey. The participants responded to survey items in a way that indicated a high level "integrative" or internal motivation. They came into their program of study with their own agenda for learning English.

Johnson (personal communication, October 23, 2015) discusses how an instructor must learn what students find compelling. Then, they must plan activities accordingly so that students will remain engaged with the material. For example, she described using English language songs that ESL students enjoy and asking them to listen for key words.

Bandura, et al, (1996) describe how students can be motivated by external forces. Engin discusses "instrumental motivation" (p. 1035), such as a need for students to compete with their classmates and feel that they are performing at a higher level. However, he indicates that it is internal factors that have the greater role in successful second language acquisition. Bifuh-Ambe also showed how students need support from family, friends and instructors. This need for support and encouragement from others is especially beneficial when the student is having a difficult time, such as transitioning from language oriented classes to content oriented ones, as the participant in her study did. She speaks of the role of a peer coach, a native English-speaking American friend who would help her proofread her papers. Smith (2010) also mentions the benefits of students studying with a classmate or a tutor. This discussion of assistance from peers again shows how affect can play a role in successful English language acquisition and

content area achievement. Lynch, et al (2001) likewise showed the need for adult learners to have peer support when learning a new language.

Communities of learning as a motivating force. The study by Lynch, et al (2001), which involved adult Spanish as a foreign language learners, showed that there is a tendency for social stratification to occur among students of different language proficiency levels. It is likely that the same sort of situation occurs among adult ELLs, with students spending most of their time communicating with peers who have roughly the same English language abilities. Likewise, beginning students with little knowledge of English might tend to associate more with other students in the same situation and who shared the same first language. It would make sense that this situation would generalize to many adult students learning a second language, regardless of the L1 or L2.

On the one hand, the formation of such language cliques makes things convenient for the learners because they are associating with the peers they can most easily practice and communicate with. On the other hand, the study showed that such a situation is not really the most effective way for learners to improve their language skills. This kind of de-facto ability grouping can be detrimental to the progress of all learners if left unchecked. Lynch, et al (2001) discuss how less proficient learners need instruction and modeling from their more advanced peers, and the more proficient learners can also benefit by having the opportunity to share their knowledge with someone else. They arrive at this conclusion with a firm foundation in theory, crediting Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development. This is the idea that learners are to be challenged by working with someone whose skills are just a little farther along. Krashen (2003) concurs that students improve when they are challenged specifically in their linguistic endeavors

with concepts that are just above their current proficiency. He uses the term i+1, which indicates that for input to be comprehensible, but also introduce something new, it should be one level above where the student currently is.

While he acknowledges that with a diverse group of students it is not possible to reach i+1 for each student all of the time, he believes it is possible to give a lesson that will hit that note for each student at least for part of the time. Richard-Amato (2003) also discusses Krashen's theory, adding that it is extremely valuable for students to receive the necessary input in the classroom, because they are not as likely to gain i+1 from outside sources. Freeman and Freeman (2009) as well as McKay and Tom (1999) point out that it is helpful to take the variety of input available into consideration when pairing or grouping students on an assignment. Access to such input is beneficial in any class, including content or language classes taken by adult ESL learners. Especially in larger classes, it is good for students to have a chance to learn from one another and not just the instructor of record (Smith, 2010). She discusses how ESL students, as well as many other students, feel better about their learning when a sense of community is fostered on campus. This is an expansion on previously discussed ideas, because she is discussing the school-wide culture in addition to that of the individual classroom. Providing opportunities for students to work together and teach one another is also a good use of time and resources, especially in large classes where the instructor is unable to devote a great deal of individual attention to students.

Another example of a school culture that fosters community is presented by Goldschmidt, et al (2003). They discuss a program created by students with assistance from campus personnel. The objective of the program is to identify entering freshmen

who are likely to struggle in the first semester so that they can enroll in the program the summer before and improve their math, English and study skills. These students may be ESL or native speaking students in need of further preparation for college. The researchers point out that having an integrated group of students is good for the self-esteem of the ESL learners. They do not have to feel singled out, and they have the chance to meet other incoming freshmen. Students who participate in the program are likely to achieve higher grades in their beginning semesters and to stay in school. The following section will discuss the impact of an individual classroom environment on students.

  A supportive atmosphere in the classroom. It is clear that the social situation in a class can be an aspect of student success as well. H. D. Brown (2000) discussed how students are more likely to want to participate in class and practice the new language if they feel encouraged to do so. McKay and Tom (1999) discuss how pairing students or allowing them to work in small groups gives students more opportunities to share, causes less stress than sharing in front of the whole class, and also helps to foster a sense of community. Students may be encouraged by peers, or as other research shows, by their instructors. Schalage and Soga (2008) demonstrate how spending time helping students and showing that their skills are valued could be a good way to inspire them to work and to achieve in their studies. Interviews conducted in their study showed that students are discouraged when they do not feel they are receiving such attention and they become less likely to come to class and to put forth effort in their language learning. The adult ESL learners wanted to feel that their instructors believed in them and in their ability to learn and use English.

Another aspect of creating a supportive atmosphere is to allow for the creation of what Cummins (2011, 2015) calls "identity texts". He explains how students use their writing skills or other creative means to highlight different aspects of their cultural background and discuss their significance. This allows students not only to share something they know about, but also serves as a reminder that what they value is meaningful. He explains that being able to express themselves in this way is empowering (Cummins, 2015).

Huerta-Macias and Kephart (2009) discuss how in addition to drawing on background knowledge, use of a student's L1 in the classroom can show respect for students and encourage them as well. The next section will further discuss how instructors can encourage students.

Encouragement from instructors. Schwartz (2006) discussed how this need for encouragement can be applied to students in many situations. As a math instructor, he found that students were more engaged if he would take the time to work with them and to explain difficult concepts when they needed further clarification. These efforts to ensure that his students understood the material demonstrated that he really cared if his students succeeded. This kind of encouragement is useful regardless of content area, because if students are convinced that they can learn English it may help them to achieve their goals. They are less likely to be successful if they are not convinced they can learn the language (Rui and Liang, 2008).

There can sometimes be a rift created between instructors and students, due to instructors talking down to students or the perception by the students that they are doing so. If students feel that instructors think they are incapable of certain tasks, they will not

be inclined to try them. In many cases it may be that the instructors are well meaning and are simply adjusting their speech to ensure that students understand as Gass (2000) implies. These instructors do not mean to come off as patronizing, but some students could see their tactics that way.

Neuda (2010) mentions that it is beneficial for instructors to treat adult students as adults, and equals. McKay and Tom (1999) concur that mutual respect between instructor and students is a part of creating and maintaining the supportive atmosphere so vital to learning. Part of creating a supportive atmosphere is to avoid behaviors such as scolding students or being too quick to correct them if they make an honest attempt to use English but there is an error (Neuda, 2010). Reiterating H. D. Brown's (2000, 2007) comments about adults being inhibited already, if an instructor embarrasses a student who tries to share something it could have a decidedly chilling effect. An instructor must judge when there is an appropriate teachable moment for correction and when there is not (Richard-Amato, 2003). This idea of allowing students room to experiment with language is in keeping with a strategy known as the silent way, explained by Reppy and Adames (2000) as a method in which students are allowed to make mistakes and it is seen as a natural part of the language acquisition process. The teacher allows students to work out difficulties among themselves rather than giving specific direction.

Neuda (2010) also states that students should be the focus of the class and be given a chance to shine by demonstrating what they have learned to one another. Like Bifuh-Ambe (2009), McKay and Tom(1999) and Lynch, et al (2001) she shows that it is beneficial for students from a variety of proficiency levels to have the opportunity to

collaborate. The next section will discuss diversity in the classroom and how instructor

attitudes toward diversity can help students feel more comfortable in class.

Respect for diversity. Diversity is a major part of the ESL learner and instructor

experience, as pupils come from all walks of life and many different nations. Daraghmeh-

Alqattawi (2009) also discussed the need for support of adult ELLs specifically. She

mentions the importance of understanding the linguistic and cultural background from

which students come. Part of this is open communication with students about

backgrounds, preferences and views. She advocates honest discussion with students about

helpful background information which might impact how students view the curriculum.

Such pertinent information may be something about the political situation in a student's

homeland, or it might be some aspect of his or her L1 grammar. She discusses how

learning this background can help the instructor to communicate effectively and

demonstrate to students that he or she cares. It is likely that students come from a very

diverse background, with different experiences and different ideas of what an ESL course

should entail (McKay and Tom, 1999). Some of these experiences and ideas will differ

on an individual basis, while others may involve culturally produced expectations

(Daraghmeh-Alqattawi, 2009; Ariza, 2006).

Just as their students do, ESL and EFL instructors also come from a variety of

different backgrounds. Chang, Rodgers and Wang (2008) interviewed a small number of

these instructors from Canada, Hong Kong and China about assessment practices. The

study took into consideration various descriptive statistics such as gender, age, education,

years spent teaching and whether or not English was the instructor's native language. In

spite of their differences, it was determined that these instructors had similar views about

effective assessment strategies and their preferences for test questions. Of course, students also have lives outside the classroom. The next section will address the way that other aspects of a learner's daily existence can influence his or her studies as well.

The impact of life outside of school. English language acquisition is not just about the context of a particular class however, be it face to face or virtual. Student success can also be influenced by what is happening outside of schoolwork. Genco (2007) conducted interviews with current students and recent graduates, and discusses how financial issues and responsibilities at work and home impacted students' drive to continue their studies. Her participants were all over the age of twenty-five and had been away from school for five years before enrolling again. It is not mentioned if all were native English speakers or if they had a variety of linguistic backgrounds.

Genco (2007) discusses the challenges students have balancing work, school and home life, students also discussed how they were motivated to continue their studies. Some felt school was an opportunity for a more successful life and better job prospects. Others had decided it was something they simply wanted to do to better themselves as people through learning. Having these professional and personal goals in mind gave the students reason to persevere in their studies even when things got difficult. Another issue for consideration is the support that was available to students prior to beginning their courses of study, such as GED or college preparatory ESL programs (Zafft, 2008). The last part of this chapter will examine exactly what all of this research means for continuing and beginning adult ESL students, and how higher education might change in the coming years.

English Language Learners and The Future of ESL Instruction

The preceding studies have shed some light on the thinking processes of adult ELLs, including cognitive factors like language proficiency and previous achievement and affective factors such as motivation. There are many variables that may contribute to the learning of adult Ells. Attempting to understand all of them is a highly complex process. However, there is a note of encouragement for both ELLs and instructors. Winter (2000) showed that ESL learners in college can actually achieve more in content courses than their monolingual peers.

From the research on executive function by Bialystock, et al (2006) and the research on the English reading and grammar skills of L1 Spanish adults by August (2006) we can surmise that high-achieving adult second language learners have good literacy skills and an ability to multitask which impact their success in the L2. The success of adults in acquiring and using the L2, in turn, seems to impact their achievement at the content level, as indicated by Winter (2000). Goldstien and Perin (2008) confirmed this finding in a similar study.

Wu (2010) theorizes that materials used in class are an important part of maintaining student engagement. If students have course materials that they can understand and that they find interesting, they will be more motivated to practice (Rui and Liang, 2008). Then, as they practice by reading, speaking, listening and writing in the L2 more they will continue to improve. Likewise, greater proficiency in the English language would also be likely to increase understanding of the content, as Winter (2000) indicated. And, research has shown that the more learners increase their knowledge of the language and the content, the more successful they will be in their studies (Yu-hui, et al,

2010). What can be taken from this is that instructors may benefit from reflecting on what materials and methods are most appropriate for them and for their students. In so doing, they will be able to focus on the common goal of seeing that all of their students achieve whatever they have set out to achieve.   The next section will discuss how instructors can work together to come up with innovative methods of instruction.

Need for instructor collaboration. A connection between skills in each language and achievement would mean that it is extremely beneficial for both language instructors and instructors of other content areas to work together. Collaboration would be necessary because a clearer presentation of content might help the students to process the language, as Krashen suggested in Grascarus (2010).

One of the ways in which educators can work together is to make sure that students who are language learners understand as much of the presented material as possible when the second language is used. This goes back to including as much comprehensible input as possible in lessons (Krashen, 1991). Facilitating this understanding not only requires working on second language development, but providing a rich context for students to draw upon in the content areas. This practice is not only beneficial to ESL learners, it is sound andragogy anyway. That is to say "the methods or techniques used to teach adults," (Dictionary.com, 2017) Instructors can also collaborate to come up with ideas that will be educational for students and yet make students feel at ease at the same time, as Lin (2008) suggested in her study of university students studying English in Taiwan. She found that students respotnded very well to games, songs and films in English. It is a shame that these tend to be thought of as activities for younger learners, as the university students clearly had fun participating in them. Not

only that, one student actually mentioned gaining an interest in Shakespeare from watching film adaptations of his plays. Lin (2008) also discusses how the films were able to provide context for her students, better enabling them to understand the dialogue. The results also indicated that students were better able to follow the plot of *Romeo and Juliet* after seeing it acted out. Student grades even went up. These same techniques could be used in ESL courses.

There is evidence that other techniques popular for use with younger learners can be adapted as well. Zhang (2008) discusses the applications of children's literature for teaching adult ESL learners, saying that the repeated vocabulary and illustrations are helpful in aiding learner understanding. In addition, they are rich in discussion of cultural issues. He does caution that instructors should exercise care in selecting materials. Depending on their background, students will relate to some stories better than others. If instructors shared their knowledge about what works for certain groups of learners, it could potentially benefit many other classes.

Providing a meaningful context in the ESL classroom. J.S. Brown, et al. (1989) discussed the importance of context as part of the learning process. Students need to see skills being applied in authentic ways, and understand how to use new knowledge on a day to day basis. Krashen (1991) made the point that context can help students bridge the gap between what they do know and what they are trying to learn. From contextual elements they could derive considerable information about the new language and culture, especially in the beginning when most of the vocabulary is unfamiliar. He advocated the idea of comprehensible input, meaning that people can learn a new

language more intuitively if they have as many non-linguistic cues as possible. For example: gestures, visuals and so forth.

These visuals help the learner to make meaning of what he or she is hearing, even though every individual word may not be clear. He discusses how designing curriculum based on activities for the students to participate in is more effective than focusing on particular rules for them to master. With an activities focus, each student can get something out of the lesson because a number of vocabulary words and verb forms may be used. Students do not have to focus on one particular rule that they may or may not be ready to acquire. McKay and Tom (2009) also discuss the importance of planning lessons that are beneficial to students with a wide range of proficiency levels.

The idea behind comprehensible input really has its roots with Merril (2002) as well, given that it involves the use of recognizable visuals to make new vocabulary more concrete. A classic example of this is Grascarus (2010) showing Dr. Krashen lecturing in German to an English speaking audience. Once he began to use gestures to indicate what he was talking about, the audience was able to pick up more German words and assign meaning to them.

Krashen (1991) also mentions how first language knowledge can be useful in providing context. For example, he discusses a scenario of someone taking a job in a new country with limited knowledge of the new language. He explains that that if that person were to study about his new home in his first language, his new surroundings would make much more sense. Then, he would be in a position to learn the second language. He theorizes that background knowledge such as literacy skills or information about a subject pave the way for acquiring a second language and becoming bilingual.

Further research will continue to shed light on how the two languages operate in the mind of a bilingual person, and what factors are necessary to turn an adult ESL learner into a flourishing bilingual person. Many factors come into play, including background knowledge (Cummins, 1979), motivation (Bandura, et al, 1996) and life circumstances of the student (Genco, 2007). The knowledge and understanding of the instructor also play a role (Daraghmeh-Alqattawi, 2009; Schwartz, 2006). In particular more studies are needed in the areas of adult ESL reading skills. More needs to be learned on how ELLs read and how they think about reading, both in their native language and in English. The more that is learned about the thinking processes used by adult ESL learners and bilinguals, the more information instructors will have to help students develop the necessary schema for comprehension of language and content. (Yu-hui, et al, 2010).

The question is: do skills transfer as researchers like Krashen (1999) and Cummins (1979, 1981, 2007) suggest? Examining the reading strategies of ELLs and measuring their level of comprehension is the only way to gather more evidence as to whether they really are using some of the same skills in both languages, or different ones entirely. More studies in the area of adult bilingual executive processing would be beneficial as well. Further research can help explain how bilinguals perform tasks differently, and how knowing a second language might be helpful to them in their daily lives as they try to do several things at once.

This understanding about reading strategies and also brain function with regard to language can be used to further the accomplishments of second language learners of all varieties in their future endeavors. If the first and second language work together in the

learner's brain, and the associated skills do as well, this can be used to create more meaningful instruction. If it can be applied successfully to improve the linguistic and content area achievement of second language learners, it would be a gift to both the learners themselves and to society in general.

      Instructor and student viewpoints. Scholars, researchers and instructors have provided much insight as to what contributes to the success of an adult ELL. Further studies must be conducted on college campuses as well as public settings in order to determine the viewpoints of the learners themselves on the subject. Each learner has specific goals in mind, and it is likely that they will define success in different ways. There must be a way to bridge the gap between learner and instructor perceptions that the studies of Song (2006), Schalge and Soga (2008) demonstrate. Students must know what is expected of them and how to get there.

> Accordingly, teachers cannot rely completely on their perceptions of their students' needs, which means that they must become more aware of their students' perceptions, expectations and needs if they are to change their classroom behaviors in ways that will benefit their students, (Shono, 2004, pg. 16).

Lopez Pedrana (2009) believes that the stories of students and teachers are intertwined in a metanarrative. If this is the case, for the story to make sense students and teachers must be in agreement about the purpose of the educational process. If not, they will be at odds (Valenzuela, 1999). Further research in the vein of Song (2006), Lambert (2008) and Bifuh-Ambe (2009) will be necessary to determine just what student opinions about success are and how their views about being successful in second language acquisition line up with those of ESL and content area instructors.

Further research in this arena of student and instructor disconnect and other aspects of second language acquisition may also lead to the discovery of other factors related to the accomplishments of adult ESL learners. Other variables may emerge that contribute to a learner's ability to acquire a second language. The field of second language acquisition is a dynamic one. Student and instructor lifestyles change over time, as do teaching and learning styles.

The technology available for instruction changes with time as well. It is even possible that in the near future, technology will exist that will allow people speaking two different languages to receive instantaneous translation in the L1 (Noory and Kaku, 2011). If such accessible translation technology becomes the norm, it would revolutionize the role of ESL instructors. It may even redefine what it means to be an ESL learner.

Though society may be changing rapidly, there are some fundamental elements likely to remain a crucial part of preparing ELLs to realize their goals. For example, what H. D. Brown (2000) and Lynch, et al, (2001) talk about the importance of creating a learning environment in which students feel comfortable, as did Reppy and Adames (2000). The latter explain that this is part of a method known as suggestopedia in which learners are to be kept comfortable so that they can better focus on language use. What that ideal learning environment looks like may differ over the years. For example, a comfortable learning environment is likely to become ever more virtual, as demand for online courses expands (Tan, et al. 2010). Whatever environment the teacher and students are dealing with, it is necessary for students to know that they are free to test their new knowledge and not feel threatened (McKay and Tom, 1999).

Preparing students for a changing world. The goals of an ESL learner in an academic setting are twofold. Such students have the goal of attaining fluency in the English language. However, fluency is not an end unto itself. ESL learners also tend to have something in mind they wish to accomplish with their knowledge of English, as was discussed in the previous chapter. Again, the rationale behind this paper is to provide instructors with information that will better enable students to achieve these and other goals.

As online courses and research become even more ubiquitous, student and instructors alike will begin to adapt and they will feel more comfortable with the idea of online learning. Instructors will continue to develop strategies that can more readily make their presence felt by their online students (Kim, 2005). Even now, preferences may differ depending on the background of the students and the instructor, or the location. What is a comfortable environment for some may be intimidating for others if they are unfamiliar with the language and customs used (Ariza, 2006). But there is still the psychological need for students of all ages to feel accepted and valued if they are to make the most of their learning experience. For adult ELLs to attain as much as possible, it is fundamental that the student be both cognitively and socially prepared for learning. Learners must understand that making progress requires a certain amount of risk (McKay and Tom, 1999).

Part of this preparation involves acknowledgement of the trend toward globalization spoken of by Friedman (2007). Adult students must be prepared to work with a diversity of colleagues. Likewise, instructors must realize that international political and economic issues can have an impact on what is happening in schools. The

curriculum they choose must be one that presents students with an international outlook, while still holding on to the values that his or her particular nation holds dear (McKay, 2004). She believes that individual cultures can be celebrated, so long as no one is being denied freedom in the process.

An instructor should have an understanding of the cultures of his or her students (Daraghmeh-Alqattawi, 2009). At the same time, one of the goals of ESL education should be to help students gain a respect for both their native culture and that of the culture they are studying (McKay, 2004). As mentioned by Friedman (2004) students have to be prepared to study and work with people of many different backgrounds. He also discusses how they must keep up with societal trends in order to as he calls it "create a niche" in which to showcase their abilities and become socially and economically successful.

Ravitch (2011) discusses how all K-12 students must continue their education beyond foundational skills such as reading, writing and arithmetic. They must have the opportunity to become creative, independent thinkers in order to succeed in life and contribute to society. She voices her belief that any school reform should better serve the needs of all students, which includes special needs students and those who are ELLs. All of these students begin as students in grades K-12 and their early education can pave the way for their success before they even begin to consider higher education. As Grayson (2008) found, a student's performance at the high school level correlates well with performance measures in college. I would argue that this background continues to be relevant when these students become adult learners later in life.

Identity

Another aspect of the stories of adult ELLs which will be considered is that of identity. Adult learners of English are choosing to make changes in their lives, in terms of gaining knowledge of a second language and culture. These changes will undoubtedly impact their lives, possibly their relationships with other individuals and with the community in which they reside or work, (Norton, 2010).

A study by Crowley-Henry (2011) showed that it can be difficult to find one's way in a new country, especially if this is compounded by other momentous life events. Her participants, professional women who had relocated to France, had to acclimate to local customs and attitudes which they did not always agree with. The people they met abroad saw them in ways they were not accustomed to.

In my study, the participants will describe their learning experiences, and this should reveal aspects of how they perceive themselves as English language learners.

If identity formation is positioned as a discursive process, whereby identities are formed through language and the stories people tell about themselves, than narrative analysis would allow me to analyze this process. As such, narratives do not await discovery by researchers, but are co-created among participants and researchers out of oral renditions when people tell stories about their experiences…(Özkazanc-Pan, 2011, p.38).

My study will apply much of the knowledge from the literature that has been discussed in this chapter and the preceding one. In particular, the study will look at the experiences of individual adult ELLs in the real world.

Chapter III

Methodology

In the previous chapter, we reviewed a sampling of the available literature in the field of second language acquisition. In particular, we reviewed literature having to do with the cognitive and affective aspects of how people learn a second language. More specifically, the literature was either directly dealing with or applied to the group being studied: adult ESL learners in a public setting. The literature discussed in the last chapter dealt with a variety of English Language Learners. Related literature included that which discussed younger students, foreign language learners and bilinguals. To review: younger learners are defined as those who have not yet reached college age. EFL learners are those studying English in a country where it is not predominantly spoken (Gass, English as a second language., 2000).

Dictionary.com (2017) defines bilingual as "able to speak two languages with the facility of a native speaker." This is a good starting point, but there are many facets to bilingualism as Baker (2004) indicates, depending on the situation in which the learner is found. Brown (2000) differentiates between "coordinate bilinguals" and "compound bilinguals". He states:

> It is clear that children learning two languages simultaneously acquire them by the use of similar strategies. They are, in essence, learning two first languages, and the key to success is in distinguishing separate contexts for the two languages. People who learn a second language in such separate contexts can often be described as coordinate bilinguals; they have two meaning systems, as opposed to

compound bilinguals who have one meaning system from which both languages

operate. (Brown, 2000, pg. 67).

One could argue that adults, because of their more developed first language skills would

generally be learning English as a Second language in a very different situation from that

in which they learned the L1.

Four main themes from the literature were addressed in the previous chapter:

Prior knowledge, knowledge of English, affective parameters and identity. Each of these

plays a role in how effectively an adult student will be able to learn and use the English

language to meet his or her goals. This chapter will expand on the themes presented. It

will discuss a research design dealing with how adult ESL students practice with the

English language in everyday situations, as well as their perceptions of instructors and the

atmosphere of their ESL classes. We will begin with a discussion of the setting and

participants. Then, we will discuss the interview protocols and the rationale behind the

present study. Finally, we will conclude with the limitations of the present study and a

preview of what will be covered in the analysis chapter.

Basis for Choosing the Original Study

What follows will be the outline of the present study. The methodology will be

based loosely on the work of Shono (2004), who interviewed ten adult ESL students who

were enrolled in three different academic programs. I chose Shono's (2004) study as a

partial model because of the commonalities with her participants and the applicability of

the subject matter. Shono's (2004) participants are also adults learning English, and her

focus is discussing what they believe makes their English instructors effective. Another

similarity is that her study was part of her dissertation research as well. There is also a connection to other literature because Valenzuela (2009) was on her committee.

Rationale of Narrative Inquiry

This chapter will discuss the methodology which will be used to research the relevant variables of adult English language acquisition. The theories and literature outlined in the previous chapter will provide a scaffold for this next step in our inquiry into the factors that contribute to adult ELLs acquiring English.

This present study will also complement other studies which were previously discussed. For example, it might provide more insight into the results of Winter's (2000) study, which indicated that college students classified as ESL in a psychology course outperformed mainstream classmates. Use of qualitative data might help to explain what gave these students an advantage beyond simply studying for longer hours and attending more classes. The present study might also elaborate on the characteristics that enable students to progress in the language later on even if they have trouble at first (Goldstien and Perin, 2008).

The basis for my methodology will be narrative inquiry. I will attempt to weave together the stories of the participants as learners and myself as an instructor/learner. As prior knowledge is an important foundation for learning English as a Second Language, it makes sense to address the skills the participants bring to the table and how their studies and work in their home countries contribute to where they are as learners now. Clandinin (2013) mentions how knowing the life stories of participants and what they have been through can shed light on a research topic.

Narrative inquiry and other forms of qualitative research can be used share what students have to say about their learning and this is very informative. It is also an opportunity for instructors to share what they have learned with one another. Larrotta (2006) states that.

> As a teacher and a researcher, I strongly believe that it is of paramount importance for us, as teachers, to make use of the power we have by sharing our voices and our students' voices through publishing, presenting in conferences, and openly discussing with our colleagues the topics with which we are concerned because teachers possess valuable practical knowledge worth sharing and using. (p. 80)

This exchange of information can lead to more positive outcomes for students and enable teachers to learn more about skills they wish to develop in themselves.

Participants and Setting

Before moving on to a description of the participants, I will explain the sampling procedure. The rationale for choosing a convenience sample as opposed to a random one is that I am familiar with the library and neighborhood culture already and have access to key personnel. Because of this knowledge, recruitment and data collection should be a more efficient process. Prior knowledge of the setting for the study will also allow for more in-depth analysis. Carspecken (1998) notes that when beginning research one of the first steps is to obtain a sense of the environment in which the participants are involved.

This environment in and of itself may be a limiting factor in some ways. The neighborhood in question is a nice, though not upscale, area. It has felt the effects of recent economic downturns, but in a lot of ways it remains strong. A supportive

community is a topic that comes up in the analysis chapter as the interviews are broken down. It is possible that existing educational and financial resources in the neighborhood, students may have more advantages than those in other areas. For example, lower SES areas might offer less opportunities for child care or continued study. Likewise, there are more affluent areas where more advantages might exist still.

In this case, participants will be from the same library program where I tutor, but from a different class. In this way, the teacher/student relationship is removed from the equation and no one will feel pressured to participate because of it. This library is located in a suburban area and is near several schools. There are many programs for both children and adults, and a large number of volunteers participate in them.

The group of participants from this class includes six women. Three are Korean, two are Japanese and one is Colombian. All are married and raising children, so it is understandable why such a setting would appeal to them. All have previous experience studying English as a foreign language before coming to the U.S. and have been studying the language for a minimum of three years. Their families speak English. They have mentioned this in class and their instructor has said as much. Further information about each of the individual participants will be covered in the next chapter.

As a tutor, I seek to identify as a helper of my students. Specifically, being someone who enables them to become more comfortable with the English language and with U.S. culture, (Shono, 2004). This is part of my identity as a researcher as well as an instructor. Clandinin states that:

> Narrative inquirers also negotiate ways they can be helpful to participant(s) both
>
> in and following the research. In the moments of negotiating ways to be helpful,

narrative inquirers often call on, and are called, to live out professional

responsibilities and to express personal, practical knowledge (Connelly and

Clandinin, 1988) and social positioning, (Clandinin, 2013, p.51).

Living out professional responsibilities can be done by activities such as attending

professional development seminars to learn about new teaching materials and techniques.

One such responsibility is preparing for class. Shono (2004) discusses how students value

the preparation of their instructors, as it shows respect for their investment of time and

possibly money. She mentions that the instructors she interviewed considered this an

important part of what they do as well.

While I will not be interviewing other tutors to discuss how they prepare and

advance their learning, I will draw on my own experience to further explain what

professional development might look like. My opinions can be compared with any that

the learners participating have to offer.

Basis for Choosing the Interview Protocol

Now that the reader has been introduced to where participants come from, a

discussion of the interview protocol itself follows. The interview protocol used by Shono

(2004) caught my attention because of the following: It was also for a dissertation and

deals with adult ELLs. Also, students were enrolled in a variety of programs. [1]Even

though narrative inquiry prioritizes the uniqueness of each individual's story, using

Shono's (2004) interview protocol will enable comparisons between my study and hers,

according to Gauna (personal communication, April 21, 2017). This provides a broad

---

As mentioned previously, her participants came from three academic programs. I note this to differentiate programs affiliated with an academic institution from those which are not, such as the library program. [1]

spectrum for analysis, in that it is possible to compare the responses of students who are similar demographically with the participants in my study and those who differ. It is also possible to look at academic goals as compared to other types of goals for language learning.

Furthermore, the protocol is meant to encourage students to share about their experiences. Students are able to reflect on the differences between English classes and instructors in their countries of birth as opposed to those here. From this, they can see how they as students have changed over time, and instructors both in the U.S. and abroad my gain insight as to what their students need to know before and after relocating.

I am interested in the stories of my students as ESL learners. In addition to the questions posed by Shono (2004), I have added others to the written protocol I will present to participants in order to gain further insight into student lives (as far as using English) outside of class. Appendix A includes these additional questions. Any additional questions or changes to the original questions are highlighted. This is to differentiate them from Shono's original questions so that the reader will quickly be able to tell how they have been applied to this study. In some cases, it was a matter of slightly different terminology. For example, referring to the student's previous experience in English class or with an English teacher. This is to encompass both ESL and EFL contexts, while Shono's study used "ESL." In other cases, it was the addition of entire questions in order to gain further insight into areas of interest. For example, how students are adjusting to a new culture.

What I learn may help me to improve as a tutor. Students may benefit because I learn more about how they struggle and how to help them. Also, they can tell me how

best to encourage them and the areas they feel they need to work on. Shono (2004) also mentioned how qualitative research can enable teachers to think about their practices and gain new insights.

Explanation of the Qualitative Procedures

Upon visiting a friend's ESL class, I discussed my project with her students and requested volunteers. She provided me with a thoughtful introduction and helped to explain what they were being asked to do if they volunteered. Everyone was enthusiastic about the project, and I encouraged them to take the paperwork home and give it much consideration.

Five students volunteered. Then, we scheduled individual interviews. I met with two students on one day, the next two on another day, and the fifth student on a separate occasion. We met one-on-one during regular class time while the instructor was out of town. This way the participants already had clear schedules and would have the opportunity to practice their English in between classes. Before we began, I clarified with the participants that they agreed to have their responses recorded. A separate microcassette was used to record individual interviews for each participant and for the focus group interview. We signed the necessary paperwork, I started the recording and we went through the questions.

After completing the first set of questions (see Appendix A for details) participants were given the option of arranging another time for the second individual interview. All chose to complete this interview protocol right after the first.

About a week after the individual interviews concluded, there was a focus group interview with three participants. Two of those participants were part of the original five.

The original plans called for three participants in the focus interview. The remaining participants were not available, so a sixth participant agreed to join them. For this I remain extremely grateful. She had not been present when we arranged for the individual interviews but had expressed interest later in becoming involved in the study.

In this way, the two participants who had completed individual interviews were able to expand on or confirm ideas they had mentioned earlier. Ideally this would have been the case for every member of the focus group. Real world scheduling constraints for everyone involved intervened. At the same time, a new participant added a fresh perspective which would not have been present otherwise. I am honored that she was willing to contribute and brought up ideas that the other participants had not. While not the norm, her participation shakes things up and provides valuable information that would not have been gained by holding a focus group with the two students already participating and not one else. Not only did she provide unique opinions, her responses also confirmed what another participant had to say about her experiences learning English in Japan. In the interest of time I did not chose to go back and complete the individual interviews for her. Their instructor stepped away early to allow us to speak amongst ourselves. Again, please see Appendix A for the questions discussed. Each of the three participants shared her views on each of the questions. The focus group interview was also recorded. In addition to the recording, brief notes were taken during the individual and the focus group interviews. Later, usually the afternoon after the interviews, I would begin reviewing the notes and recordings. The recordings would then be transcribed for subsequent analysis. This would help me to confirm what was said and to pick out relevant quotes from the participants in support of the various themes. For

example, I would look for key words such as "conversation" or synonyms like "talk" or "speak." As with Shono(2004) I used Microsoft Word for the transcripts. In my case, I created a file for each participant. and one for the focus group. While reviewing the transcripts I would use different colors where key words and phrases occurred.

Theoretical Foundations for Data Analysis

Bryman (1984) discusses the premise of qualitative methods which is for the researcher to put him or herself in the position of the participants. He discusses how some scholars view qualitative research as laying the groundwork for quantitative research.

From an affective standpoint, part of the study will be to investigate how comfortable students are interacting with others in the target language. Lynch, et al, (2001) discuss the necessity that learners of different levels work together to practice a target language. This type of collaboration does not occur often enough (Lynch et. al, 2001). In a given group of adult learners, there is a distinct possibility that language cliques will form, in which the more advanced learners tend to spend most of their time together. Meanwhile, the beginners are essentially left to fend for themselves. Learners need to be able to interact with others not just with similar ability, but with a wide range of proficiency levels. This interaction can be facilitated by creating a supportive atmosphere in the classroom (H. D. Brown, 2000; Daraghmeh-Alqattawi, 2009).

Because the atmosphere for interviews is a relevant factor, it makes sense that the data collection should take place somewhere familiar. In this case, it will be at tables set up in the middle of the library near the children's section. This is where the class meets regularly, starting before library hours on Wednesday and Friday mornings.

The setting for the interviews will provide important context to the research. Trying to adhere as closely as possible to the class culture the students are accustomed to should help them to be more relaxed and to provide more reflective responses. It is likely that the more comfortable participants are, the more authentic their responses will be. It also follows that the information the participants provide would be more applicable and beneficial to other learners as well as instructors.

Like Shono (2004) I provided participants with questions in advance so that they have time to consider them. This is especially important as the questions will be in English, as opposed to Shono (2004) making an exception for one participant because they were both native speakers of Arabic. For my study, I have chosen to conduct all interviews in English. The purpose is twofold. First, of the native languages represented by the participants I speak only Spanish and that is not at a fluent level. Secondly, it is an additional opportunity for the participants to practice their English skills. As they are used to practicing with each other and with their instructor in class, this giave them the chance to converse with another native speaker.

Also, I am adapting Shono's (2004) methodology by completing the first and second one-on-one interviews before the focus group. She held the focus group in between. Like Shono (2004), I have obtained approval for the participation of human subjects. Participants signed consent forms, and I recorded the interviews. My study will contain no teacher interviews.

Conclusion

The data may hold some clues as to how to help students maintain or develop positive attitudes. Fostering these attitudes may, in turn, help maintain or increase

motivation to learn. Increased motivation, as previously discussed, is also an important factor in the general success of an ELL (Bifuh-Ambe, 2009). In fact, motivation is important for college students in general (Kim, Newton, Downey, & Benton, 2010). While Shono (2004) discussed the motivation of ESL students in academic programs, my study will show that it is possible for students to be motivated in a public setting, where classes are optional and non-credit (not to mention free). By public setting, I mean to say simply that instruction and learning are occurring outside of the umbrella of an official school program. Goals that participants expressed (such as securing employment) can be achieved along with academic credentials or as a result of non-academic programs.

It may be worth noting that a language lesson itself can be used to make a distinction between these settings. In a podcast called Coffee Break German, offered by the Radio Lingua Network (2017) the host and the instructor get into a conversation about the German verb meaning "to study" as opposed to the verb meaning "to learn." She explains that the study refers specifically to something like a degree program at a university, while a person can "learn" about a topic informally. I would argue that sometimes is possible to pursue knowledge of a subject in both ways. For example, I have had formal classes about the Spanish language including grammar, literature and other subtopics. I have also listened to CDs, podcasts, and made other efforts to study on my own or to practice with others.

L. Wei (personal communication, March 23, 2017) pointed out that this discussion of "study" vs. "learn" relates to Krashen (1982, 2009) and his way of distinguishing "aquire" from "learn". To reiterate, he uses the term "acquisition" to refer to the phenomenon where people seem to naturally pick up new vocabulary or other

aspects of a second language. "Learn," as used in the podcast, goes along with the more informal, intuitive approach Krashen indicates is part of "acquiring."

"Learning" Krashen (1982, 2009) uses to talk about when someone puts an intentional effort into reading about, practicing or other ways of gaining knowledge about a language. For example, this could be intentionally trying to memorize a vocabulary list as opposed to watching a message and seeing what you understand given the context. This could be akin to studying and what was meant by this term in the podcast.

The distinction between these terms also calls to mind Chomsky's (1978) discussion of the "creative aspect of language use" vs. "institutionalized language" (p. 6) These are both defined in more detail in Chapter Two.

This chapter outlined the reasons why the Shono (2004) study was chosen, in particular the reasons for adapting her interview protocol and how my study will differ. It also provided a description of the location and the context for the interviews. The next chapter will provide an analysis of the interview results and the themes that the participants and I discuss. It will also go into further detail about the background of the participants. Lastly it will comment on whether participant opinions agree with or differ from those expressed by the participants in Shono (2004).

Chapter IV

Analysis

The following chapter will discuss the stories of the participants, as they emerged during the interview process. I will discuss the prominent themes of each of the individual interviews and that of the focus group. While examining the responses to the various interview items, I will bear in mind what the responses tell about the two major research questions of this study:

- What can instructors and students learn from the stories of individual ELLs?
- What are some of the learning strategies adult English Language Learners use to achieve their learning goals?

Most of the data will have more to do with the first, more general research question. There will be some light shed on the second, as well as a look at what exactly those learning goals might be for the individuals participating.

Analysis will begin by first getting into the individual interviews and the participant responses during that time. Then it will zero in on the three participants who were involved in the focus group and what they had to say to those questions, many of which expand on what was asked earlier. The individual interviews were held during regular class time, while the instructor was out of town. That way students could practice their English and they would not have the inconvenience of scheduling interviews outside of their normal class hours.

The interview data was broken down into different themes. The themes were based on what the participants discussed. Shono (2004) was used as a guide to organize the data as her participants touched on similar ideas. A possible limitation here may be

that a participant would be self-conscious when discussing his or her opinions verbally.

Another method, such as writing in a journal, might allow participants to express their

ideas more freely. On the other hand, the opposite may be true in some cases. Going back

to Cummins (1981), depending on where students are in their studies they may actually

be more comfortable with making conversation than they would writing their thoughts.

Background of the Participants

In the following discussion, participants are given an English pseudonym in order

to keep their identities confidential.

The first two participants have much in common. Both women are Korean. They

are each married, and are mothers. They are young. Family life is important to them.

Also, they are enthusiastic learners. They look for opportunities to practice their English,

though time constraints do not always permit it. Also, there are not always people to

practice with.

Beth. Beth's early studies included an emphasis on grammar and very little

opportunity to speak, "In Korea, when I learned it was just listening, so I didn't have that

much time to talk." She was not exposed to English that much outside the classroom.

This seems to have changed somewhat since she moved to the United States because, "in

the U.S.A. they use English a lot and everywhere."

Sara. Sara mentions that she wishes to have more native-speaking friends. Both

indicated that they wished they had had more practice listening and speaking before

coming to the U.S. Sara is seeking native-speaking friends to practice with: "I don't have

American friends. I have only Korean friends. So I don't have experience speaking

English with American friends." There is a sort of paradox here. As she continues

learning English, she will likely be more comfortable communicating with English

speakers. Yet, communicating with English speakers will help her to learn more English. When asked about her future plan Sara mentions changing this and making more English-speaking, American friends as well as finding employment.

One strategy she does use to practice listening to English is watching English-speaking television. Like movies (Lin, 2008), television could be a learning tool for ELLs as well providing them with content of interest to them. I found that this can be useful in the study of other languages as well. When seeking to practice my Spanish listening, I tend to listen to Spanish recordings but also at times watch video in Spanish.

One of the themes that emerged from the interviews is the importance of being supported by and being there to support family. Sara discussed how her husband encourages her and suggests materials for her to study. She also indicated that she uses her English in her children's school. This implies that one of the reasons she is learning English is to prepare herself to take an active role in their education. Larrotta (2006) indicates that involvement with their children's studies is important to her participants as well. Beth mentioned the encouragement she receives from her husband as well. Their experiences give credence to the idea Schalge and Soga (2008) presented that this type of encouragement is a factor in class involvement and motivation.

Jessica. Jessica is also a Korean mother. She strikes me as a strong woman who speaks her mind. When we first spoke, she was looking for a job. She recently found employment at a Montessori school in her church. One of the major themes of her interviews was wanting to learn to speak English. She seeks to develop conversational skills that will be useful in everyday life. This theme is one that emerged from the interviews done by Shono (2004) as well.

She mentions that while students in her home country spent a lot of time on their studies "but you can't use it in the life." Her reading skills grew, but not her verbal skills "I can read the English book, but I can't talk. I cannot talk." She mentioned that she still does not get many opportunities to practice conversing with native speakers. Discussing how she would conduct her own ESL class, she states that it would be "mostly about talking, conversation." Like Sara, it is the verbal skills she most wishes to improve. These are daily communication skills that many people take for granted when speaking with someone of the same linguistic and cultural background. As Cummins (1981) would put it, these are the BICS. In an ESL program such as the one profiled here, it tends to this part of learning English that students are most concerned with. In a university-based program, academic goals might lead students to focus on specialized terms for their field, and other knowledge germane to whatever their degree path might be.

Chloe. Chloe is from Japan. She moved to the United States with her husband because of his work. She thinks it is a possibility that they may have to move again in the future. However, she is confident that because of the widespread use of the English language internationally, her studies will benefit her wherever they go. Like Sara, Chloe discusses the need to communicate with people at the schools their children attend. She mentions opportunities to speak with other parents as well while they wait at the bus stop to pick up their children. She had this to say when asked about how often she speaks English with native speakers outside of class:

> Once a day. From Monday to Friday I pick up my daughter at the bus stop. Some parents come to pick up. I communicate in English. They understand my English is not so good, so they try to understand my English. Sometimes I have to talk with my daughter's teacher, about my daughter, but not so much.

It is likely that Chloe's English skills are allowing her access to important information involving her child's life and school activities that she might not have if she were not able to communicate directly with the other parents and the teacher. This quote also shows that the other parents value what Chole has to say and want her to feel included in their conversations.

Chloe also discussed the practice of emphasizing dictation and English grammar skills in EFL classrooms in Japan, which will come up again later:

In Japan, grammar is too, too strict. Because English in Japan is for tests for university. Uh, everybody has to study the, the structure of English sentence and the grammar of English and have to understand the comprehension of English sentence for test for university, and, uh, it's just one subject…

Her EFL experience prepared her because she became a good reader of English, but it would seem that now she is having more chance to practice conversational skills that she did before.

As indicated by Norton (2010), these courageous women are making a way for themselves in an unfamiliar land. As they learn, it impacts the way they interact with those around them. Sara, speaking of when she first came to the United States and did not know English like she does now, said "I couldn't say anything for myself. I felt powerless." This is how I felt when I was in Guadalajara attempting to buy stamps without the right vocabulary. There I was, attempting a transaction that people do all of the time, and getting nowhere until a more advanced speaker stepped in to help. Sara has since had more opportunities and has made the most of them. Larrota (2006) also compares her experience as and EFL learner in Colombia with those of her participants

learning ESL in the U.S. While the context of studying a language can differ, there are also commonalities.

As with Sara, things have changed with Chloe over time and she now seems more confident using her English with others. "And now, using what I learned in English I can talk, I can speak, I can have a chance to use English with people…" When women like Chloe and Sara are able to accomplish things like having discussions with school officials on behalf of their children, it is empowering. They are on their way to establishing a new identity as English speakers (Norton 2010) and finding a niche in their new communities.

Jane. Jane is originally from Colombia, and is the mother of an eleven-year-old son. She is warm and friendly. I enjoyed the opportunity to practice my Spanish with her as we parted ways after the interview. She is enthusiastic about her studies and her life in the United States. She speaks in glowing terms about her life here, "Now I know why the people come to here. The culture, the people and everything I love." As Norton (2010) discusses, she sees the big picture. She is confident in her role as a vital part of the community and in turn, credits the community with providing her much needed support. She has found local schools, her church, and the library program which is the focus of this dissertation to be wonderful resources for herself and her family.

She also discussed, with gratitude, a program provided by local schools for parents learning English. The much-needed child care provided enabled her to take advantage of this offering. Shono (2004) mentions that ELLs appreciate a caring instructor. It would follow that they would appreciate caring on the part of others involved in their ESL program as well as the community at large. Part of this is the recognition that students have families, jobs, and lives outside of class. It benefits students to streamline things when possible so that they can do whatever else they need to

do and focus on their studies at the same time. Otherwise, it might be detrimental to their learning (Tse, 2000). Naturally, they cannot neglect their home lives and will sacrifice their study time unless someone else can step in and help them meet the needs of the family.

Jane's experience is also an example of the role of affective parameters in student learning. Her progress in her English studies has been enhanced by the support that she has received from those around her. The literature has shown that this is a vital part of student learning (Bifuh-Ambe, 2009; Song, 2006; Lych, Klee and Tedick, 2001). When asked about how she would teach her own ESL class, the ideas that she has would pass these same values to her students.

As Shono (2004) found with some of the students she interviewed, Jane brings up the importance of the ESL teacher as a cultural mediator. Jane mentioned that if she taught ESL, she would want her students to be able to come to her with any issues. Also, she would want to give them opportunities to interact in real-life situations. Like Jessica, she mentions an emphasis on speaking skills if she taught her own class, saying it would be taught with "conversation and understanding." Jane gives the example of ESL students needing to know how to proceed if they or a loved one need medical attention. As an ESL student, she believes that because she lives here now it is important for her to speak English. Chloe also mentions the need to practice dialogue to prepare for real-life situations. Like Sara and Jessica, Jane also wished to secure employment in the United States. To my knowledge, she now has and is no longer enrolled in the class.

Connections

It is worth noting that Jane, Beth and Sara all seem to indicate that they wish for more opportunities to work with native English speakers. From their stories, those of us

who are native English speakers learn that taking the time to speak with ELLs in English is beneficial. While Sara indicated that her studies in Korea were good preparation for skills like reading and writing and she had useful grammar practice, she would have liked more opportunities for improving her speaking and listening, as did Jessica. This, she felt, could be best accomplished with a native speaker who was more familiar with English pronunciation. Beth would seem to concur. She mentioned that a difficulty she had with her EFL teacher was that she was a native Korean speaker and not familiar with the pronunciation:

> Well, I liked the other students in the class. For example, there was one teacher and forty students. Two, Korean English teacher is not good at pronounc-pronouncing in English, because the teacher is a Korean, not native speaker. Three, students speak a lot of the Korean in the English in the classroom because the students are all Korean.

Naturally, students are not actively practicing their English if they are speaking Korean. However, Beth points out the possible advantages of the shared language. One reason she may have believed it was easier to understand the material was that she and her classmates may have been able to explain grammar concepts and other aspects of English to each other in their native language. This is certainly understandable, and probably the newer a student is to the English language the more helpful it might be.

When asked how she felt about the way English was taught in her home country, she commented, "The teacher is not good for non-native speaker pronunciation and English listening time is too short." Her response here is the second time in the interview that the issue of pronunciation came up. This makes me think she feels that learning from a native speaker helps a student to sound more like one. This is different from the

participants in Shono (2004) who did not place as much emphasis on having a native speaker instead of a non-native speaker for an English teacher. This does not mean, of course, that a non-native speaker could not take steps to reduce an accent if he or she felt it important. Perhaps a later study might get into perceptions of non-native speakers who have native-like pronunciation skills.

When I think back to my Spanish studies in college, there was much emphasis on reading and writing in that program as well. In one course, we read Don Quixote in the original Spanish and wrote essays on it. That said, we did have to do a presentation which gave us opportunity to speak. Also, we would discuss each chapter as a class. As a student of Spanish, I feel blessed to live around quite a few native speakers. While practice opportunities here do not equal what I had in Guadalajara or in Monterrey, they do allow me to use my skills in a realistic context.

When it comes to pronunciation, exposure to a number of native accents can add depth to one's understanding of a new language. I felt that it helped me to listen to different native accents in Spanish, so that I could recognize common words even if they sounded different. Probably the better the foundation a learner has in the L2, the better. For example, it might be difficult for ELLs to listen to speakers from the southern U.S., Canada, Australia, etc. Even people from various places in the U.S. can sound very different from one another (I. Guadarrama, personal communication, Summer 2008). This was brought up at one point in Ms. Smith's ESL class as well.

Something else that the participants seemed to agree upon is that students should be able to freely discuss an issue with their teacher if they disagree. One of the questions they are asked touches on what they would do if they were ESL teachers and one of their own students disagreed with them on something. This is an open ended question and the

subject of disagreement could be about instructional activities, cultural norms, or any number of issues arising in a diverse class. They all mention, with some variation, that this is what they would want for their own students if they were teaching ESL. Beth, for example, pointed out the need for discussion of such matters. She replied "I would talk to them a lot."

This is an important lesson for ESL instructors, and a solid response to the question of what we can learn from the stories of ELLs. Their ideas teach us, or at least provide a reminder, that we are to be open-minded with students. Their backgrounds and values may be different from our own, and when we take the time to listen to and learn about them it can greatly enhance our instruction. For example, listening to student opinions about class activities or how they view a discussion topic can show that the instructor is supporting the students in their endeavors. He or she wants these learners to get as much out of the classroom experience as possible. The students should feel that they are cared for as individuals and that the knowledge and ideas they bring to the table are valuable (Shono, 2004; Ariza, 2006).

In summary, a number of key topics came up in the interviews which were mentioned by more than one participant. Like Shono (2004) I listened to the interview tapes in whole or in part on more than one occasion for verification. I found that different words and phrases would jump out at me each time, and that I would gain further understanding of what the participants were saying. I agree with her opinion about the advantages of the researcher transcribing the interviews for him or herself.

These include: speaking/conversation practice, the need for real life applications, support of the family/community, and practical goals such as employment. The first two show what the participants want out of class and what they feel instructors should

concentrate on. The second two have more to do with life outside of class, what will foster their new skills and what they will be able to do with them.

The Narratives

The women who chose to participate, and those in similar circumstances, are living a story in three parts. The first is in the past, what they experienced in their studies in their home countries. This is where they were introduced to the English language in an EFL context and began learning foundational skills. This section will look primarily at that time in the participants' lives.

Chloe discusses the emphasis on dictation, memorization and grammar in her early classes. Dictation took the form of her teacher speaking a sentence in Japanese aloud, which she would have to then write in English. She believes that these methods have their uses, though some students may benefit more than others. Outside of class, she studied independently with her text and workbook early on as well. Sara also mentions considerable attention to grammar.

Connections: Myself as a Spanish language learner. As a student of Spanish, I had the opportunity to learn from many native speaking instructors from around the Spanish-speaking world. While this introduced me to the culture in general, it was certainly different to travel to Mexico and learn more about the local customs and vocabulary. For example, a word I was used to using for postage stamps in Spanish class was not common in Guadalajara. Remembering this instance helps me to sympathize with the frustration that ELLs must feel when they do not have the necessary vocabulary to communicate something and the other person does not understand what they mean.

Fortunately, I was with another native English speaker who was able to help me overcome this barrier. Also, like the participants mentioned in their interviews, the native

Spanish speakers I met in Mexico were kind and quite patient with my attempts to speak their language. I found this to be true both in the school I attended, which was geared toward Spanish learners, and of the population in general. This thoughtfulness and understanding made me feel more encouraged to practice with them.

Unlike the participants, I was in this new environment for only a limited time. This was a visit, not relocating indefinitely. Also, I did not have anyone depending on me to function in Spanish to meet their needs as well as my own. I attempted to help my fellow students when I could, especially new arrivals, but that is worlds apart from trying to help a child function in a school where teachers did not speak my native language.

My experience was much the same in this regard when I made a second trip to Mexico a year or so later, for a Spring Break mission trip in Monterrey. In this instance, I was able to practice my Spanish with those I met, and also to help them practice their English. We visited English classes there and a young woman from the family I stayed with was studying to be an English teacher. It was clear that she valued prior knowledge. She would ask me particular questions, such as the symbolism in an English pop song. Today, she probably often draws on the previous experiences of her own students. There are certainly ways to prepare, but nothing compares to the education of actually being in a specific target-language environment. Another advantage that I had as student of Spanish in Mexico is that a number of people I met in Guadalajara spoke English. This allowed us to code-switch which made for more effective communication. ELLs in the United States might not come across too many individuals who speak their native language.

That said, it is enlightening that Beth pointed out the advantage of being in a class with a shared first language and background, as did Sara. Beth states, "South Korea

English lessons are easy to understand, because when I hear in Korean it is easier for me to understand. And two, um, in Korea English class is easy for me, because we are all the same culture,"

The material can be more readily understood that way. In part, this is probably because it draws on knowledge and experience that students already have while at the same time introducing new material. What Beth and Sara have to say indicates that while learning EFL from a non-native speaker may present some challenges, there are also ways in which it can be valuable preparation. There are certain foundational skills, writing and grammar especially, that learners have the opportunity to develop before adding a layer of cultural knowledge. Much like Cummins BICS/CALP dichotomy (1981), learners are gaining basic skills which they can later put into context.

Krashen (1991) discusses the need for "comprehensible input" when a student is learning a new language. His theory is that contextual clues, gestures and other non-verbal cues can be valuable learning tools. He does not address drawing on a shared cultural or linguistic background. In ESL, students may come from a variety of countries and speak various first languages. It is worth noting that this could be an advantage in the sense that students may find they have to use English to communicate with each other because it is the only common denominator. In an EFL classroom, however, the more homogenous background could be a valuable way to reach students, exactly as Beth described.

Age as a Factor….for Teachers?

When discussing their EFL teachers, both Sara and Jane mentioned age as a factor in their instruction. Jane described her EFL teacher as a "younger teacher" and "new at the school". She probably did not have a great deal of experience at the time. Sara's was

an older man who seemed set in his ways, as she mentioned that he had his students spend considerable time copying from the board. Shono (2004) does mention that age can play a role in how a learner sees a teacher.

To be fair, younger teachers can be very knowledgeable about certain things, even though they have not had a lot of time in the classroom. They can also bring innovative, new ideas to the table. Older teachers can bring ideas of their own, from years of experience working with all kinds of learners. They may know better than anyone how to best help particular learners. Beth mentions how "a good teacher" must attend to the needs of the "individual learner." As previously mentioned, there will be differences among students in any class, but there is something special in the way that an ESL class brings people together from around the world.

Now, after living in the United States, the women seek practical application. They mention various ways they wish to use English in daily life and that they seek opportunities to practice with native speakers. ESL instructors may wish to keep this in mind while planning. Of course, as Sara pointed out is essential to keep in mind the needs of the individual students. Some students may need to concentrate further on foundational skills before being ready to communicate in the way they desire.

Returning to Shono's (2004) idea of the ESL instructor as a cultural mediator, instructors must realize that they may have a key role in introducing students to life in the United States (or, possibly, any native-English speaking country in which they teach). Chloe points out that her first real experience with American culture was after she had already moved here. Of course, it is worth noting that the participants in this study did not have American teachers in their home countries. If they had, they may have had practice with some of the customs of the U.S.

The third part of the participants' narratives will be defined by the goals they have set for their studies and their future: to gain employment, to prepare for a possible move, to continue through their daily lives in the United States caring for their families and growing in knowledge of their adopted language and culture around them.

Focus Group Interview

The focus group interview was conducted near the end of a regular class session. The instructor had returned from her trip, but excused herself so that the participants and I could speak privately. It is often the case that participants can be intimidated by the presence of an authority figure, and it was hoped that this would enable them to speak more freely. It is noteworthy that participants were reluctant to be critical of their English teachers in the earlier individual interviews, though some did give constructive comments about their teachers in their home countries. Interestingly, Tara commented that students might be more vocal about areas in which they disagreed with an instructor if they had the vocabulary necessary to express such opinions. Sometimes, students may not yet have the background necessary to question what is happening in class. For example in an earlier interview Chloe states that "I didn't know English very well, so I thought what the teacher did was correct," in relation to her experience studying English in Japan.

All participants felt free to be critical of themselves and their own progress. Going back to one of the individual interview questions, participants were asked about what their own response would be if they were teaching an English class and a student disagreed with them over some matter. Participants tended to indicate that they, as hypothetical instructors, would give the students the benefit of the doubt in such an event. For example, Jessica mentions that she would seek the students' advice about what she

could do to remedy the situation. She states, "I would ask what the students wanted me to do and try to fix my problem."

The focus group consisted of Sara and Chloe from the individual interviews, as well as a newcomer to the study, Tara. She is a student from Japan, and was thoughtful enough to fill in that day as Jessica, Beth and Jane had other commitments. She also happens to be the mother of a high-school aged daughter. Again, real world scheduling conflicts can come up in research. It is my view that Tara's insights are helpful. While two participants were not available to extrapolate on their earlier comments, she was there to bring a fresh perspective which should not be ignored.

I asked the panel each of the focus group questions (please see the appendix). Each of the women took turns responding to each question until they had answered them all. They spoke freely and the occasional laughing and easy manner seemed to indicate that they were in good spirits and enjoying the discussion.

One of the themes that continued was that the three women wanted to learn vocabulary that would be useful to them in everyday life. As was evident from individual interviews, participants seek opportunities for speaking practice. Tara proposed that one of the reasons Asian students do not get as much practice speaking in English class is that they are shy, as compared with Hispanic students. It would have been interesting to have Jane's perspective on that subject. Certainly, I can identify with being shy and sometimes reluctant to speak up in class. As an undergraduate student, I was told by at least one professor that I was too quiet and needed to participate more. It was not that I wasn't keeping up with the material, I just wasn't always comfortable talking. Or, another student would make a particular point first and then I would have nothing to add by the time I felt ready to speak.

Chole discussed how communication can be difficult without having the right words. Sara brought up an interesting point about how words can be used differently in different cultures and that instructors need to address certain distinction. Even where the same language is spoken natively in two different countries, terminology and pronunciation can vary. Over time, words in a language change. Some fall out of use, some attain a new meaning, and new words are added. Many of the latter are colloquialisms and technical jargon, used to describe technology that did not exist a few years ago. Even an adult, native English speaker continues to learn new words. Some may be uncommon words and others may be newly coined words. George (2015) discusses in her novel the enjoyment that one of her characters, himself a novelist, derives from the invention of new words. Access to popular culture might be a good means for ELLs to gain knowledge of this category.

Sara talked about a phenomenon that occurred in one of her English classes in the United States. It consisted primarily of Hispanic students and they had a Hispanic instructor, and everyone tended to speak in Spanish during break time. It is also noteworthy that while Tara and Sara mentioned a strong focus on testing in both Japan and South Korea, Jane had not previously mentioned this to be the case in Colombia. Tara had this to say on the subject of testing:

> I also think different, many differences between Japanese and Korean. Because Japanese students have to study English for the test. So, we have to study grammar or reading, writing in English, so not focused on speaking English. But now in Japan native English speakers have, have to study English in school, at school.

This test focus would explain why ESL lessons in Japan might be grammar driven and students might see so many translation exercises.

It is possible that Asian students are given more test preparation, which may also be why some students feel they have less experience in conversation and that Hispanic students have more. It could also be that, as Tara suggested, some Spanish speaking ELLs are more outgoing anyway. This is uncertain, but it would make sense to say that those students with more outgoing personalities, no matter their background, would be more likely to speak up in class and feel more comfortable around new people and in new situations.

This example goes back to the earlier theme from the literature review about how students need a comfortable, supportive atmosphere in the classroom and showing respect for diversity (Daraghmeh-Alqattawi, 2009). While it is absolutely natural to gather with individuals who have a shared language and culture, those of a different background may feel excluded. Also, students may be missing out on a valuable opportunity for learning and practice. Lynch, et al, (2001) remind us of how students in the foreign language classroom have a tendency to gather based on their proficiency.

Tara echoed Jessica's earlier sentiment that English studies should be germane to their daily experiences. As she put it in the focus group interview, part of good ESL teaching is to "…teach us not only the English skills but also knowledge that we need to live here…" This ties in with the topic of vocabulary, which came up elsewhere in the discussion. Sara discussed how complicated vocabulary is due to different meanings of words across languages and cultures, "You don't know what word is reasonable to American people." The women agreed that it is important for them to know everyday words so that they can converse with those around them and accomplish what they need

to do. This assertion also ties in with a more general need for cultural knowledge. Chloe commented that as a recent arrival "I misunderstood some English words, so I want to know the correct English."

It is worth noting that while the participants appreciate the opportunity to give their opinions about activities in the classroom and what they need to learn, there is a limit. Chloe pointed out that there are times when an instructor can rely too much on student input. "What do you want to learn in English? The teacher asks the students. Students have to think what to do and sometimes, sometimes that's good, but sometimes it's bad." Students know what they need to learn but, as she indicates, it is the instructor who must learn the best practices for teaching those topics. This also goes back to what Shono (2004) and her participants had to say about the importance of an instructor being prepared for class. It is important for students to have a say in their learning, but some also need a certain amount of structure. How much might vary according to the needs of the learners. One way to balance this might be to give students a choice among topics to cover and then plan activities that would best emphasize the chosen topic.

Conclusions

Much is learned from what participants shared in both the individual and focus group interviews. Their desire to practice, learn, and communicate in English comes through. Herein lies the value of communicative competence. Knowing the structure of the language is important, but so is being able to get a point across (Kogon, England and Schmidt, 2015). The participants seek practical, everyday use of English. Petkuté (2010) asserts that "…the student should gain sociolinguistic knowledge. This involves knowing how to use language for certain purposes is different social contexts." She also brings up the need for teachers to have these same skills, even as their students seek to gain them.

Calderon and Cummins (1982) indicate that students should know not only the grammar and mechanics of the English language but also be prepared to use English in a social situation.

Also, much of what the participants had to say reinforces what is in the literature about affect and the support that the learning process requires. Participants bring up the support they receive at home, from the community, or in the classroom itself. This is true from my own experience as well. I would not be writing this if my own parents had not been so supportive of higher education.

Another takeaway from the interviews is that words and the ability to wield them correctly are important. Proverbs 18:21 states that "Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof" (The Holy Bible, 1990, p.846). We should all be diligent about what we say, because it does impact how others feel and how effectively we communicate with one another. One is reminded of the question Polonius poses to Hamlet: "What do you read, my lord?" and his response, "Words, words, words," (Shakespeare, 2012, p. 95). It is a shared understanding of words used and the meaning behind them that makes communication flow. Li and Kirby (2015) explain how vocabulary knowledge grows:

> When language development begins, a small number of words can be recognized and known in terms of basic meanings. Knowledge of more and more words accumulates, constituting breadth of vocabulary. With increased experience, these words can be defined in greater detail and are associated with other words in different contexts, supporting the learning of these new words. (p. 613)

It also stands to reason that the more an individual expands his or her vocabulary, the more prepared he or she will be to express ideas and understand them. Hence, learning

the necessary vocabulary for their daily needs is incredibly important to the participants in this study.

The information provided by these participants is very valuable. That said, the knowledge base in the field of second language acquisition generally, and adult ESL specifically, is constantly growing. The literature shows how ideas about the workings of the learner's brain and ideas about best practices have changed over the years. There are many directions that future research might take in order to fill in any current gaps or to strengthen previous findings.

One limitation that was not considered previously is the fact that all of the participants are women. Would men enrolled in an ESL class have different opinions? Most likely they would. Like the participants, men would be interested in learning English for job opportunities. However, would they talk as much about the need to communicate on behalf of their children? Possibly not. It would also be interesting to find out if men studying English in a similar program would be as interested in conversation skills as women, or more focused on reading and writing. Perhaps a researcher in the future will have an opportunity to speak with men studying English in a similar way

It is also possible if the participants were older and had grown children and/or were retired that they may not have the same attitudes. Shono (2004) addresses the issue of an instructor's age as a factor in student participants, and this theme turned out to be relevant here as well. It is possible, for example, that older learners might be more likely to see a younger teacher as being less knowledgeable. Or, for younger learners to see an older teacher as being less flexible or more tied to traditional methods. Further study in this area would be interesting. This leads us into the next, and final, chapter which will discuss the future implications of this study.

As Sara discussed, it is also possible that the cultural and language background of participants may play a role in their opinions as well. People may have different experiences learning EFL in different countries, or in adapting to the culture when they move to the United States or another country with many native English speakers. The background of learners may also play a role in their learning styles. It might be interesting to see if there is a correlation between a learner's country of birth and the practices he or she responds best to in the classroom. Naturally, there are individual differences to consider, but it would be interesting to see if learners from one background gravitated toward a particular learning style more than to other learning styles.

In the previous sections of this chapter, the five participants are introduced. The reader also has a chance to see what these women have in common. It also looked at differences, as they do not all have the same linguistic and cultural background. Three distinct backgrounds were represented: Korean, Japanese and Colombian. Looking at the stories together helps to highlight what experiences they share as ELLs, and how the context in which they studied EFL might influence their views now. I also looked a little bit at my own experiences as a learner of Spanish as a foreign language.

Through this reflection, I am able to more readily identify with the struggles the women face. It is difficult to adjust to a new environment, and it can feel extremely isolating to have to depend on your skills in a tongue that you do not speak as a native. At the same time, my experience differs because it is more fleeting. I was not outside my native country indefinitely. Here, I continue as a learner but I must be more intentional, as I am not always called upon to use my Spanish every day. Then I discussed their, in many ways similar, narratives in three parts: past, present and future. This chapter looked at what participants had to say about their previous studies, their lives now, and their

hopes and plans for the future. This includes ways in which these ELLs used their English in the past, how they use it now, and how they hope to be able to use it. The participants shared about how those around them have supported them in their studies, and how they have been able to use what they have learned to help their families.

This chapter has also reviewed ways in which the participants' stories exemplify information gleaned in previous research. The next chapter will look more at how the knowledge the participants shared informs future research. This will show the dynamic nature of the field and how the literature previously drawn on, as well as this study itself, are also part of an ongoing story.

Chapter five will also continue with further analysis of the study, such as the themes developed in the participant narratives. Also, should there be further limitations discovered, those will be mentioned as well. The following chapter will also explore what may be needed in terms of future research. This journey into the factors contributing to the success of adult ELLs is ongoing. Likewise, the population of adult English Language Learners is growing and changing. However the data may provide some important information that will allow instructors to meet the needs of these students and to adapt over time. Certainly it will shed further light on the themes discussed by Shono (2004). The next Chapter will discuss several of the intriguing possibilities for which her work could provide a springboard.

Chapter V

This chapter will take a look at the big picture, namely what has been learned from the narratives of the participants and where that might lead. It will start off with a broad discussion of what this means for education as a whole and for adult education generally. Later some pointed questions will be asked about how the information from this study and previous studies might apply to similar programs and populations. All of this culminates in a discussion of the language learning process and what it means. Ultimately, it is about more than learning functional vocabulary and other important skills. It is about finding a place in a new culture, sometimes a new home. It is about broadening one's view and seeing oneself in a new way because of what one has learned and experienced.

Tieso (2003) mentions the importance of curriculum revision in K-12, for two main reasons. One is that different groups of students require different strategies or emphasis on different aspects of content. The other is that practices that are effective at one time may not be as effective years later. This idea of differentiating instruction based on the students and the times also makes sense at the college and university level. Every so often it becomes necessary for instructors to re-evaluate their practices to make sure their teaching strategies are as beneficial as possible for the students. It is equally true that instructors in a public setting must know how to innovate. Stamps (2004) mentions how it is necessary to differentiate instruction so that gifted and talented students get the most out of their learning activities. Differentiated instruction also comes into play when working with adult ESL learners. There is a tendency to think of adult students as being a more homogenous group than children, but they are not always necessarily on the same

level when it comes to their cognitive processes (Tomei, 2010). It is also intuitive that

ELLs will have different levels of language skills when it comes to vocabulary,

pronunciation, grammar knowledge and many other aspects of English.

Like gifted and talented students, English Language Learners have their own

unique gifts that they bring to the classroom (Westlake and Monaco 2011).

 These gifts include the diverse experiences they bring with them and share with others. It

is amazing in this study that the women interviewed are kind enough not only to share the

benefit of their experience with each other, but with me and with everyone who reads this

dissertation.

Adult English Language Learners also bring their own specific needs. Zadina

(2009) discusses how learners respond to teaching in different ways, arguing that it

benefits learners for instructors to vary their teaching strategies. If instructors are

creative, it helps them get through to students. It is also helpful for student learning if

instructors are skillful at engaging students. She makes a point that students can only be

attentive to so much information at a time, and that being an effective instructor means

being able to specifically direct students to the particular task or idea that they are to

focus on at the moment.

Learning more about the different variables that come into play to make an adult

ELL thrive in a public setting will be a useful addition to the literature currently

available. Possibly some of the ideas touched on in the analysis will provide a good

starting point for further research. Instructors and students alike may gain knowledge

about how adults grow as learners of English. Tse (2002) discusses the various obstacles

which ELLs of various ages face, yet celebrates the fact that ELLs do learn and succeed

in spite of those challenges. As a language learner, it is heartwarming to think that learning English means so much to women like those in this study that they are willing to move forward with their studies in spite of a myriad other demands on their time and energy.

Limitations to the Methodology

The nature of any self-report measures means that there are certain limitations to consider. For one, it relies on the recollections by participants of when they began to study and how they use English. Such strategies can be implemented almost unconsciously or students may use a certain strategy but forget to report it, as Mori (2007) indicates. Also, there is the possibility that participants may say what they think they should. For example, they may claim to be more confident in a situation than they are. Conversely, they may underestimate their abilities to articulate a concept in English. In either case, the data would not reflect the most complete picture of their abilities or attitudes. This may depend on whether participants feel they can be open during the interview. Shono (2004) discusses how the dynamics of interviewing can be limiting. Her dissertation mentions the need to make an effort to connect with participants so that they will feel comfortable answering questions. When recruiting, I mentioned my own position as a person acquiring a language (in my case, Spanish as a foreign tongue). It was also my intention to communicate my admiration for the trek that they have chosen as ELLs. Hopefully this was clear. While my own experience is very different, it allows me to sympathize because I know that embracing a new language and culture is by no means an easy task. Shono (2004) was able to draw on her own experience as an English Language Learner.

Because an ESL instructor could be seen by her students as an authority figure, it is possible that the study is more authentic because the instructor was not present for the interviews. Thus, it could not be argued that participants felt pressure to express any opinion that they might not actually agree with. That said, participants did not say anything critical about her or her class. It also saddened me that she had wanted to sit in on the focus group interview but I was unsure if that would be appropriate.

On the plus side, students might be willing to participate in this kind of study more than others, given the fact that the questions are not exceptionally personal. As the research will take place in a public setting where students come for their own intellectual development and do not receive grades, it will not be possible to check participant estimations of their language skills to other data such as test scores. Students do take placement tests prior to entering the program, but I will not have access to that data.

Another limitation to the study is the sample size. Shono (2004) interviewed ten students and five ESL teachers. My study is much smaller. It includes a total of 6 student participants and no teachers. Thus, the results will not necessarily be as readily generalized. However, as mentioned before, the participants come from different language backgrounds. This means that although the sample is small, the participants exhibit a certain amount of diversity. This means that if certain themes come into play for all participants, and they do, that these concepts are not unique to learners from one particular area or with one particular L1.

The data will provide a good sense of student perceptions of their abilities and attitudes. This insight will be beneficial to instructors as it will help to show some of the characteristics of successful adult English language learners. This new knowledge

concerning affective parameters should also be helpful to the participants and other students, because it may cause ELLs to think about how they acquire the language.

One of the things that ESL teachers, especially new ESL teachers, can learn from the participants of this study is that students have definite ideas of what they wish to get out of an ESL course. Depending on their personalities and their skills, they may be more or less vocal about it, but they do have expectations. The participants in this study seemed to be in agreement about two things. One is that they seek opportunities for conversation. They are working toward verbal fluency, or BICS in the vernacular of Cummins (1981). They seek to communicate and be heard. Secondly, they want to gain command of the most urgently needed vocabulary for everyday life. They wish to improve their knowledge of English in a practical way.

The need to learn to communicate and to have opportunities to practice speaking goes along with what Shono (2004) found:

> As well, the value of being able to practice speaking a target language and the amount of time language learners actually speak using the target language has been shown to relate to better language acquisition and achievement (Oxford, 1990).Therefore, what language teachers should consider is findings ways in which to offer their students such opportunities to speak either through in-class or outside of class activities and assignments. (p. 174)

One way to do this might be to have students read from a pre-prepared dialogue related to common situations, as Chloe suggests. A pre-prepared dialogue would be something found in a textbook, or something scripted on a handout. This would allow students to not only practice pronunciation, but to use the everyday vocabulary they are seeking in

context. While such a conversation is not as spontaneous as an unscripted one, there may be an advantage as well. For students who are nervous about speaking or simply have yet to master a great deal of vocabulary, they are able to use the written material as a memory aid. In fact, she mentions that if she were an ESL teacher one of the things she would do would be to have her students repeat English words and phrases.

Again, it would seem appropriate to stress the importance of creating a comfortable, supportive atmosphere in the classroom so that student will be more likely to speak when given the chance. Allowing students the opportunity to practice and then listening to them do so might help to boost confidence. Some students may be naturally shy, and even those who are not may be hesitant about trying something new (Brown, 2000). It is important that students feel safe in sharing, and know that they are not being judged for what they have yet to learn. Chloe says of the other parents she waits at the bus stop with, "They understand my English is not so good, so they try to understand my English." This kind of understanding is beneficial to ELLs wherever it can be found: in class, at home, or outside of class in the community.

Hopefully, EFL instructors will also be able to implement some new ideas. From the comments of the participants, they may learn more about how their students wish to be prepared before moving abroad. They could introduce more opportunities for dialogue, and seek out materials that shed more light on the culture of the English-speaking country to which their students will travel. One way that EFL teachers could consider for preparing students for their transition to a new country and a new ESL lifestyle would be to implement a pen-pal program. Students need not even communicate with native speakers only. They could benefit from communicating with ESL students

abroad, who are learning what life is like in their new land and are likely to be farther along in their study of English. Students could gain the perspective of someone, perhaps from their own country of birth, who has successfully started a new life in an English-speaking country.

Something else we can learn from the participants is that ELLs are not only seeking to develop these skills for themselves. They seek to share their new knowledge to benefit others, be it family members or the community at large. Jane discussed some ideas about how to implement this into a lesson, and it would be wonderful if an instructor could be able to do something like she suggests. In fact, perhaps one day someone will follow up with research about the experiences of ELLs going on field trips and/or doing volunteer work. ELLs would be helping the community in this way, and at the same time it would be a valuable learning experience for them. Back in Chapter One, we saw that Valenzuela (2009) discussed ELLs wanting to contribute to society and Jane's ideas present conformation of that possible goal.

Comments from participants have shown that grammar-translation can be helpful and effective as part of an EFL curriculum. This method is important for developing writing skills and does help students remember the rules of the English language. However, other skills such as pronunciation and vocabulary can be added for a more well-rounded approach. This is especially necessary if communicating an important idea is the goal, without it having to be stated perfectly. In fact, a workshop I attended last year presented some good ideas for pronunciation and listening. These included the use of audio and video material (C. Johnson, Personal Communication, 2015).

In light of the popularity of online learning discussed earlier (Tan, et al. 2010), it might even be possible to expand this beyond letters or email. Students might actually have the opportunity to videoconference with a pen pal as well. This would allow for additional practice speaking, possibly with a native speaker or an ELL with more advanced speaking skills.

Opportunities for online ESL courses are growing as well. This can make things more convenient for learners who have difficulty with transportation. It also allows them to stay at home so that they can be available for responsibilities there. It would be interesting to see what future research has to say about online courses as well. Are they successful at reaching students who would not be able to attend face to face lessons? What might be some challenges associated with the format? Speaking practice might be difficult in an online course, especially if the instructor and student did not have the ability to do live voice/video chat so that the instructor could hear the student's pronunciation. An advantage might be that students could connect with English speakers from all over the world, even if they are currently living somewhere far from either native speakers or an ESL class.

In fact, one wonders if ELLs in English speaking countries outside the U.S. have a similar outlook to the participants in this study. Are they also seeking more opportunities to converse in English? Do they wish to make more native speaking friends? When students were asked about how often they are able to speak with native English speakers outside of class, participants mentioned each of these ideas. In a future study, a researcher may also with to pose these questions directly.

As previously mentioned, there are many reasons to learn English, but they all seem to involve putting the language skills to some sort of practical use. This is true whether the learner's goal is travel, employment, or gaining knowledge of English in order to pursue academic credentials in a chosen field (I. Guadarrama, personal communication, Summer 2005; Oxford 1990). The aforementioned questions could be a basis for subsequent study.

It would also be useful to look at other EFL programs around the country and around the world. How many would sound similar to the ones the participants described? How might they differ? Would the setting make a difference? For example, an urban setting might allow more access to public transportation so students could commute to class. A rural setting might require students to travel some distance by private vehicle. A middle class, suburban setting might have more resources available. For example, the program could provide books or access to technology for study.

It would be interesting to compare how students in a similar program in Canada, for example, would respond. Both this study and that of Shono (2004) are U.S. based. A Canadian study could be set up in the following way:

A scholar there could contact a local library, or maybe already has a connection to a similar program. He or she could start the necessary paperwork, and make the arrangements to interview adult English students there. This researcher could use the questions Shono had originally, or modify them as I have. He or she could then review the data, and determine if the themes that arose are similar to the ones mentioned here or if the participants bring up something entirely new.

Another way to expand on the knowledge provided by the participants in this study would be to continue to compare the results with those of different programs, such as those at universities. This was done, to some extent, by Shono (2004). However, it might prove useful to expand on. In particular, those programs which seek to prepare new students for transition into a degree program. It might be useful to compare the methods used in such programs, as well as the goals of the students. They are likely to differ, to some extent, from those of students in a library based program. A question to consider would be if such participants would consider learning English to have important social needs, or only to be useful in the classroom. A future researcher could continue to use her interview questions, and add others as I have.

Another route might be to look at various groups of university students, as Grayson (2008) did. A researcher could recruit university students from the four demographics used in that article: native Canadian English speaking, native Canadian ESL, foreign ESL and foreign English speakers. An interesting finding from that article is that both foreign and domestic ESL students gravitated toward the math and science based programs. It would be interesting to find out what exactly drew students to these fields and if language skills played a role in their decision making process.

Shono (2004) interviewed teachers as well. Perhaps soon someone will follow up on this and interview more instructors down the line, perhaps getting into how what they have learned from the research has informed their practice. It would be especially enlightening to discover if ESL or EFL teachers have made particular changes to their curricula in light of research into the opinions of English Language Learners.

Another question for a future study might be to compare the practices of ESL teacher, EFL teachers, and ELA (English Language Arts) teachers. Some practices that benefit younger native speakers might also benefit older ELLs. It is also true that some practices in the EFL classroom might provide good preparation for students before relocating to an English speaking country and might be drawn upon in the ESL classroom with new arrivals.

Another study might include more interview questions or perhaps a survey directly dealing with strategies. One of the major research questions for this study asked about strategy use, but this topic did not come up quite as often as hoped. Sara, as mentioned, said that she watched television. She also mentioned that her husband would suggest websites for her to use in her studies.

In a recent workshop where Sara's instructor was presenting, she mentioned that she advised her students to watch television in English. She also suggested they listen to the radio or music in English. It is uncertain how often the participants did so, however.

As part of their homework, the students have been asked to pick out something in English to read. Their instructor said they have found a graphic novel series they like. Presumably the drawings help them comprehend the unfolding action. Also, according to their instructor the series is about a young girl new to New York City. It might make them think about their own efforts to start a new life in the United States. Lastly, my friend indicated that these graphic novels also contain a fair amount of colloquial language. This could be very helpful to the participants as they seek to carry on everyday conversation.

One could consider real world practice in English a strategy as well. For example, when Chloe is waiting with the other parents at the bus stop. She is able to practice in a real world situation using vocabulary that presumably has to do with child rearing and education. (L. Gauna, Personal Communication, April 6, 2017). If you look upon practice with native speakers as a strategy, this strategy is employed to some extent by all participants, but it is clear that they would like more opportunities to use it. It is also true that the participants often speak English together in class, which can be considered a strategy itself (L. Gauna, Personal Communication, April 6, 2017).

Looking back at Oxford's (1990) categorization of strategies, speaking to someone at the bus stop would be considered a social strategy, while reading the graphic novels would likely be considered a cognitive strategy. This is because it has to do with how or what participants study.

Conclusion

This brings us full circle to one of the research questions. To reiterate: What can we learn from the stories of individual ELLs? A great deal. While much of what the participants have to say here confirms what we have learned from the literature, it is important to hear them voice such ideas (Valenzuela, 2009). Also, they expand on the literature by showing what the theories look like in real life. Much as the participants in this study seek to implement their knowledge of English in a practical way, ESL instructors need to be able to implement what they have learned from the literature in class.

It is impossible to generalize, as ESL classes will differ (Guadarrama, 1995). Students have different needs, different expectations, and different ideas about what

works best for them. However, the glimpse provided by the participants provides valuable information which will allow instructors to better prepare for class. It also serves as a reminder that they must listen to the opinions of their own students. If a particular method works for them, or if there is an area in which they seek further practice, this acknowledgement should be honored.

It is hoped that my own story can be of some benefit to ELLs as well. My experience as a learner of Spanish as a foreign language is quite different from that of ELLs. I grew up speaking English in an English speaking environment. Obviously, I do not have the unique insight of Gauna (2014) and her participants or Shono (2004) and hers. As ELLs themselves, their experience is more like that of EFL, ESL or bilingual students. However, one thing I can say is that studying a second language has given me an appreciation for the challenges involved. It has also given me sympathy for those students who need to speak but are fearful that what they say may not sound just right, or they may not know the exact word they are looking for. It is my sincere hope that readers of this dissertation will feel the same way. I was reminded of this first hand while taking a professional development (almost entirely in Spanish) last summer. The course involved teaching advanced Spanish students and preparing them for testing. Specifically, the focus was on the reading and interpretation of Spanish literature.

It was a struggle to stick with my Spanish all day. I too sought both correct vocabulary and the proper pronunciation. Communicating in a second language can be awkward and I often wondered if my skills enabled me to be taken seriously. At the same time, the conference forced me to focus on honing my skills. Those who attended were

mostly native speakers, and the few who were not spoke as though they were. Thus, even during lunch breaks most of the conversation took place in Spanish.

It is also hoped that ESL instructors and students will be encouraged by this study because it is a reminder that they are not alone. As mentioned in the introduction, learning a new language can be intimidating. The idea of teaching a language to someone else can be daunting as well, in some ways more so if it is your native tongue. There are many strange expressions and rules in the English language that most native speakers rarely stop to think about until someone asks. While challenging, it is also good for instructors to have to take a step back once in a while and consider the language from a different point of view.

The participants' stories, my story, and the stories of each person reading these words continue. In our lives we will all grow, learn and change. We will gain new insights and try new things. Learning a second language can open us up to new ideas, new perspectives. An extreme example of this is in the recent science fiction film Arrival (Basner and Villeneuve, 2016). In the movie, a linguist is given the opportunity to work with alien visitors. She teaches them English, and they teach her their language. Something amazing occurs as she studies the symbols the visitors use to communicate. The aliens have no concept of tense in their grammar. They are mortal beings, but they have an eternal idea of time. They view their lives the whole way through. From use of their language, the linguist also gains the ability to see future events in her life as if they have already occurred. She is able to gain a deeper understanding of her role in the world, in the country and within her family. This is part of developing a new identity as Norton (2010) discusses how the learner's view of self and others can change.

Towards A Second Language Identity

Where we are right now is but a snapshot of the journey. Strayed (2013) and Bryson (2015) each faced an arduous physical expedition as well as an existential one. In fact, in the course I took over the summer we were invited to think of the progress in our own classes in terms of natural phenomena (Y. Soliz, personal communication, 2016). We can liken our own paths as learners to a hiking trail. Like Strayed (2013) we learn to let go of what holds us back. Like Bryson (2015) we learn the importance of seeking markers to assure that we are headed in the right direction. Each day, we are in the process of becoming who we are in the context of our second language and culture. We also have the opportunity to help those around us to do the same. No matter what our first language, or our second (third, fourth, etc.) one thing that we share is that we are all learners of language, and that our lives have become the richer for it.

Again, it is wonderful to see the desire the women who participated in this study have to communicate. I am so grateful for their example of a love of learning and also to see that they are happy in the United States. Hearing from them has taught me more about what Adult ELLs are looking for in a class. As I plan lessons in the future, I will try to keep them more relevant to students' daily lives. Even starting out with a scripted scenario, for example, can be made relevant by adapting it and discussing how similar conversations might go in a real-world context. I will also look for activities lending themselves to conversation, and general topics which might be of interest. I would like for ESL lessons to be more engaging for students, and also for them to be more applicable.

References

Andragogy (2017) in *Dictionary.com.* Retrieved April 29, 2017 from Dictionary.com.

Andrews, E. (2011). Language and brain: Recasting meaning in the definition of human

language. *Semiotica: Journal of the international association for the study of*

semiotics. 184, 11-33. Retrieved April 7, 2011 from Literature Resource Center.

Apple, inc. (2011). Apple online store. Retrieved from

http://www.apple.com/search/?q=translation&section=iphone&geo=us

Ariza, E. (2006). *Not for ESOL teachers : What every classroom teacher needs to know*

about the linguistically, culturally, and ethnically diverse student.

Asher, J. J. and Price, B.S. (1982). The learning strategy of the total physical tesponse:

Some age differences. In Krashen, D. Scarcella, R.C. and Long, M.H. (1982)

Child-adult differences in second language acquisition (76-83). Rowley,

Massachusets: Newbury House Publishers, Inc.

Athanasopoulos, P. (2007). Interactions between grammatical categories and cognition

in bilinguals: The role of proficiency, cultural immersion, and language of

instruction. *Language and Cognitive Processes,* 22(5), 689-699. Retrieved April

20, 2009 from JSTOR.

August, G. (2006). So, what's behind adult second language reading? *Bilingual Research*

Journal, 30(2), 245-264.

Bandura, A., Barbaranelli, C., Caprara, G. V. & Partorelli, C. (1996). Multifaceted

impact of self-efficacy beliefs on academic functioning. *Child Devleopment,*

67, 1206-1222.

Baker, C. (2006). Languages and society. Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism. In Hornberger, N. H. and Baker, C. (Eds.), *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism* (4th ed). (pp. 68-94). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Baker, C. (2006). Cognitive theories of bilingualism and the curriculum. In Hornberger, N. H. and Baker, C. (Eds.), *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism* (4th ed). (pp. 167-186). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Basner, G. (Executive Producer) & Villeneuve, D. (Director). (2016). *Arrival* [motion picture]. USA: FilmNation Entertatinment.

Bateman, B. (2002). Promoting openness toward culture learning: Ethnographic interviews for students of Spanish [Electronic version]. *The Modern Language Journal, 86*(3), 318-331.

Beaton, A. A., Suller, S. and Workman, L.(2007). Visual laterality effects in readers of a deep and shallow orthography. *Laterality,* 12(3). Retrieved form Academic Search Complete Database.

Bialystok, E., Craik, F.I.M. and Ruocco, A. C. (2006). Dual-modality monitoring in a classification task: the effects of bilingualism and aging. *The Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 59(11), 1968-1983. Retrieved March 24, 2009 from the Academic Search Complete Database.

Bifuh-Ambe, E. (2009). Literacy skills acquisition and use: A study of an English language learner in a U.S. university context. *Adult Basic Education and Literacy Journal.* 3 (1), 24-33. Retrieved May 26, 2009 from JSTOR database.

Bilingual (2017). In *Dictionary.com.* Retrieved April 29, 2017 from Dictionary.com

Birdsong, D. (1989). Universal grammar and age effects in second language acquisition:

A response to Flynn and Manuel. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED327059).

Birdsong, D. & Molis, M. (2000). On the evidence for maturational constraints in second

language acquisition. *Journal of Memory and Language.* 44(2). 235-249. Retrieved March 2, 2010 from Web of Science Database.

Bradenburg, D. C. & Binder, C. V. (1999). Emerging trends in human performance

interventions. In H.S. Stolovitch & E. Keeps (Eds.), *Handbook of human performance technology* (2nd ed., pp. 842-864). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfieiffer.

Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (4th ed). White

Plains, NY: Pearson Education.

Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (5th ed). White

Plains, NY: Pearson Education.

Brown, J.S., Collins, A. and Duguid, P. (1989). Situated cognition and the culture of

learning. *Educational Researcher.* 18(1), 32-42. Retrieved February 16, 2009 from JSTOR database.

Bryson, B. (2015). *A walk in the woods: rediscovering America on the Appalacian trail.*

Broadway Books: New York.

Calderon, M. & Cummins, J. (1982). Communicative Competence in Bilingual

Education--Theory and Research, Packet I. Language Proficiency Acquisition,

Assessment, and Communicative Behavior, Series B. Teacher Edition. Bilingual

Education Teacher Training Packets. (ERIC Document Reproduction Services

No. ED226606.

Cavanagh, J. & Mander, J. [Eds] (2004). Alternatives to economic globalization:

Better world is possible. San Francisco, CA: Berret-Koehler Publishers, inc.

Center for Adult English Language Acquisition (2011). Adult Non-Native Speakers of

English in the U.S. Retrieved from

http://www.cal.org/caela/tools/program_development/elltoolkit/PartI-1AdultNon-

native.pdf.

Cheng, L., Rogers, W. T., & Wang, X. (2008). Assessment purposes and procedures in

ESL/EFL classrooms. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 33(1),

9-32.   doi:10.1080/02602930601122555

Chomsky, N. (1972). Language and Mind. [Enlarged Edition]. San Diego: Harcourt

Brace Jovanovich, Publishers.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2010). Canadian experience class: Temporary

foreign workers. Retrieved from

http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/multimedia/video/becoming_cana

dian/cec/cec.asp

Collier, V. (1989) The effect of age on acquisition of a second language for school.

Washington, D.C.: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education. (ERIC

Document Reproduction Service No. ED296580)

Crain, S. (2008) The interpretation of disjunction in universal grammar. *Language and Speech.* 51(1&2), 151-169. Retrieved March 30 from Academic Search Complete.

Cummins, J. (1979). Linguistic interdependence and the educational development of bilingual children. *Review of Educational Research* 49(2), 222-251. Retrieved February 15, 2010 from JSTOR Database.

Cummins, J. (1980). The cross-lingual dimensions of language proficiency: Implications for bilingual education and the optimal *age* issue. *TESOL Quarterly.*14(2), 175-187. Retrieved April 9th from Google scholar database.

Cummins, J. (1981). Empirical and Theoretical Underpinnings of Bilingual Education. *Journal of Education.* 163, 16-29. Retrieved June 1 2009 from Citation Linker database.

Cummins, J. (1982). Tests, achievement and bilingual students. *National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education*. Retrieved April 16, 2009 from ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. 238907.

Cummins, J. (1997). Cultural and linguistic diversity in education. A mainstream issue? *Educational Review,* 49(2), 105-114. ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. EJ548454.

Cummins, J. (2007). Rethinking monolingual instructional strategies in multilingual classrooms. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics.* 10(2). Retrieved August 11, 2009 from Academic Search Complete.

Cummins, J. (2011*).* Literacy Engagement. *Reading Teacher. 65(2)*, 142-146. doi: 10.1002/TRTR.01022.

Cummins, J., Hu, S., Markus, P., & Kristiina Montero, M. (2015). Identity texts and

    academic achievement: Connecting the dots in multilingual school contexts.

    TESOL Quarterly, 49(3), 555-581. doi: 10.1002/tesq.241.

Diaspora, (2004). In *The Oxford Compact English Dictionary*

    online. Retrieved July 21, 2009 from http// www.askoxford.com.

Daraghmeh-Alqattawi, A. (2009). I wish my ESL teacher knew this… *NYS TESOL*

    Idiom 39(3), 16-17.

Demaree, D., Allie, S., Low, M., & Taylor, J. (2008). Quantitative and qualitative

    analysis of student textbook summary writing. *AIP Conference Proceedings*,

    1064(1), 107-110. doi:10.1063/1.3021228

Diviney, F. (2012, February 15). Are Texas Kids Prepared to Win the Future? *The Public*

    Education Funding Crisis. University of Houston. Houston, TX.

Edmunson, A. (2009). Culturally Accessible E-Learning: An Overdue Global Business

    Imperative. Training & Development. 32(2). 41-45.

Engin, A. (2009). Second language learning success and motivation. *Social Behavior &*

    Personality: An International Journal, *37*(8), 1035-1041. Retrieved March 16,

    2012   from EBSCO Host.

Fairclough, N. (2006). *Language and globalization*. London: Routledge.

Fernsten, L. A. (2008). Writer identity and ESL learners. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult*

    Literacy, 52(1), 44-52. Retrieved June 7, 2011 from EBSCO Host.

Freeman, D.E. & Freeman, Y.S. *Essential linguistics: What you need to know to teach*

    reading, ESL, spelling, phonics, grammar. Portsmouth, NH: Heinmann.

Friedman, T.L. (2007). The world is flat: A brief history of the twenty-first century. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Gass, S. (2000). English as a second language. In J. W. Rosenthal (Ed.), *Handbook of undergraduate second language acquisition.* (pp. 29-44). Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Earlbaum Associates, Inc. Retrieved from HCPL.net.

Gauna, L. (2014). *Stories of languages and teaching: First year bilingual Spanish/English teachers' narratives.* Retrieved from UH Institutional Repository. (http://hdl.handle.net/10657/1415)

Genco, J. T. (2007). Adult re-entry students: Experiences preceding entry into a rural appalachian community college. *Inquiry.* 12(1), 47-61. Retrieved May 9, 2015. (ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. EJ833905).

Goldschmidt, M. M., Notzold, N., & Miller, C. (2003). ESL Student Transition to College: The   30-Hour Program. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 27(2), 12-17. Retrieved June 22, 2011 from Academic Search Complete.

Goldstien, M. T. & Perin, D. (2008). Predicting performance in a community college-area course from academic skill level. *Community College Review,* 36(2), 1-25. Retrieved April 27, 2009 from the Academic Search Complete database.

George, N. (2015). *The little Paris bookshop*. (S. Pare, Trans.). New York, NY: Crown Publishers.

Gudarrama, I. (1995). Reflective practices for teacher change. *Discovering our expreiences: Studies in bilingual/ESL education.* Retrieved April 10, 2017 from ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. ED384214.

Gupta, A. (2009). Deriving Mutual Benefits from Offshore

    Outsourcing. *Communications of the ACM*. 52(6) 122-126.

Görel, A. (2004). Selectivity in L2-induced L1 attrition: A psycholinguistic account.

    Journal of Neurolinguistics, 17, 53-78. Retrieved March 24, 2009.

Grascarus. (2010) stephen krashen's talk part1avi. Retrieved April 16, 2011 from

    http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IqukbEigUtk

Grayson, J.P. (2008) Linguistic capital and academic achievement of Canadian and

    foreign-born university students. *Canadian Review of Sociology.* 127-149.

    Retrieved Dec. 14, 2009 from the Academic Search Complete Database.

Graham, J. G. (1987). English language proficiency and the prediction of academic

    success. *TESOL Quarterly, 21*(3), 505-521. Retrieved June 23, 2011 from Google

    Scholar.

Hakuta, K. Bialystok, E. & Wiley, E. (2003). Critical evidence: A test of the critical-

    period hypothesis for second-language acquisition. *Psychological Science*, 14(1),

    31-38. Retrieved March 24, 2009 from the Academic Search Complete database.

    Harrison, G. L., & Krol, L. (2007). Relationship between L1

    and L2 word-level reading and phonological processing in adults learning English

    as a second language. *Journal of Research in Reading,* 30(4), 379-393. Retrieved

    March 5, 2009, from the Academic Search Complete database.

Hawker, S. (Ed.). (2003). *Color Oxford Dictionary, Thesaurus & Wordpower Guide.*

    New York: Oxford University Press.

Huerta-Macias, A. and Kephart, K. (2009). Reflections on native language use in adult

    ESL classrooms. *Adult Basic Education and Literacy Journal.* 3(2). 87-96.

    Retrieved March 20, 2012 from EBSCO Host.

Jennings, G. (Director). (2005). *The Hitchiker's Guide to The Galaxy* [motion picture]. United States: Touchstone Pictures.

Jiang, B. & Kuehn, P. (2001). Transfer in the academic language development of post-secondary ESL students. [electronic version] *Bilingual Research Journal.* 25(4), 417-436. Retrieved June 2, 2009.

Jiang, Y., Saxe, R. & Kanwisher, N. (2004). Functional magnetic resonance imaging Provides New Constraints on Theories of the Psychological Refractory Period. [electronic version] *Psychological Science.* 15(6), 390-396. Retrieved June 4, 2009.

Kaku, M. (2011). *Physics of the future.* New York: Doubleday.

Kaku, M. (2014). *The future of the mind.* New York: Doubleday.

Kim, E., Newton, F.B., Downey, R.G. and Benton, S.L. (2010). Personal factors impacting college student success: Constructing college learning effectiveness inventory (CLEI). *College Sudent Journal.* 44(1), 112-125. Retrieved June 7, 2010 from Academic Search Complete Database.

Kim, H-Y. (2005). "Can a faceless teacher be close to students?": The lived experience of online instructors in higher education. Ed.D. dissertation, University of Houston, United States -- Texas. Retrieved April 6, 2011, from Dissertations & Theses @ University of Houston. (Publication No. AAT 3164996).

Kim, K-J & Bonk, C.J. (2002). Cross-cultural comparisons of online collaboration. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication.* 8 (1). Retrieved April 5, 2011 from http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol8/issue1/kimandbonk.html.

Kogan, K., England, B. & Schmidt, J. (2015) *Presentation advantage.* Dallas, TX: BenBella Books, Inc.

Kovelman, I. , Baker, S. A., & Petitto, L. A. (2008). Bilingual and monolingual brains compared: A functional magnetic resonance imaging investigation of syntactic processing and possible "neural signature" of bilingualism. *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience,* 20(1), 153-169. Retrieved   March 24, 2009 from Academic Search Complete database.

Krashen, S. (1991). Bilingual education: A focus on current research. Focus, occasional papers in bilingual education, number 3. Focus, 3, 1-18. Washington, D.C.: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED337034).

Krashen, S.D. (1999). Eliminating print deprivation. In *Three Arguments Against Whole Language & Why They Are Wrong,* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Krashen, S.D. (2003). *Explorations in language acquisition and use.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Krashen, S. D. (2009) Second language acquisition theory. In *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. [internet edition]. Retrieved April 16, 2011 from Google Scholar.

Lakshmanan, U. & Teranishi, K. (1994). Preference versus grammaticality judgments: Some methodological issues concerning the governing category parameter in second-language acquisition. In E. E. Tarone, S. M. Gass & A. D. Cohen (Eds.), *Research methodology in second language acquisition* (pp. 185-206). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Lambert, O. D. (2008). Who are our students? Measuring learner characteristics in adult immigrants studying English. *Adult Basic Education and Literacy Journal.* 2(3), 162-173. Retrieved May 26, 2009 from JSTOR database.

Larrotta, C. (2006). Negotiating the ESL Curriculum in an Adult Literacy Program. In Shwarzer, D., Bloom, M. & Shono, S. *Reasearch as a Tool for Empowerment: Theory Informing Practice* (pp. 79-107). Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.

Lee, S-Y & Krashen, S. (2002). Predictors of success in writing in English as a foreign language: Reading, revision, behavior, apprehension and writing. 36(4), 532-544. Retrieved April 4, 2011 from MasterFILE Premiere.

Lee, Y. (2013) Telling the life stories of adult immigrants learning English as a second language in the midwest: A chronotopic approach informed by Bakhtin's forms of time and of the chronotype in the novel. *Journal of Research & Practice for Adult Literacy, Secondary & Basic Education.* 2(1), 22-34. Retrieved April 28, 2017 from Professional Development Collection.

Li, M. & Kirby, J.R. (2014) Unexpected poor comprehenders among ESL students. *Scientific Studies of Reading.* 18, 75-93, http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.lib.uh.edu/10.1080/10888438.2013.775130

Li, M. & Kirby, J.R. (2015) The effects of vocabulary breadth and depth on English Reading. *Applied Linguistics.* 36 (5): 611-634. doi: 10.1093/applin/amu007

Lin, G. H. C. (2008). Pedagogies proving Krashen's theory of affective filter. Hwa Kang *Journal of English Language and Literature.* 14, 113-131.   (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED503681).

Lindqvist, C. & Bardel, C. (2010). Approaches to third language acquisition: Introduction. *IRAL: International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching.* 48(2/3), 87-90. Retrieved April 7, 2011 from Education Research Complete.

Lynch, A., Klee, C.A. & Tedick, D.L. (2001). Social factors and language proficiency in postsecondary Spanish immersion: issues and implications. *Hispania.* (84), 510-524.

McKay, H. & Tom, A. (1999). *Teaching adult second language learners.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

McKay, H. (2004). Locating the fault line: The intersection of internationalization and competency based training. *International Education Journal* 4(4) 203-211. (ERIC Document Reproduction Services Number EJ903828).

Melles, G. (2009). Teaching and evaluation of critical appraisal skills to postgraduate ESL engineering students. *Innovations in Education & Teaching International*, 46(2), 161-170. doi:10.1080/14703290902843810

Merril, M. D. (2002). First principles of instruction. *Educational Technology, Research and Development.* 50 (3) 43-59. Retrieved November 11, 2016 from http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.uh.edu/stable/30220335.

Mokhtari, K., Reichard, C. A. & Gardner, A. The impact of internet and television use on the reading habits and practices of college students. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult literacy.* 52(7), 609-619. Retrieved June 25, 2009 from Academic Search Complete database.

Nassaji, H. (2003). Higher-level and lower-level text processing skills in advanced ESL

    reading comprehension. *The Modern Language Journal.* 87(2), 261-276.

    Retrieved April 28, 2009 from JSTOR database.

National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction

    Educational Programs (2009). Retrieved from http://www.ncela.ed.gov/.

Neuda, M.C. (2010). Adults teaching adults: The role of equality between teacher and

    student in the ESL classroom as a factor in successful learning. *Online*

    Submission. 1-13. (ERIC Document Reproduction Services Number EJ903828).

Noory, G. (Host) & Kaku, M. (Guest). (2011, March 17). Future Science. [Radio

    Program Episode]. In L. Lyon & T. Danhieser (Producers). *Coast to Coast AM.*

    USA: Premiere Radio Networks, Inc.

Norton, B. (2010). Identity, literacy and language teaching. *TESL Canada*

    Journal/Revue TESL du Canada 28(1), 1-13. Retrieved October 28, 2015 from

    Google Scholar.

Nowak, K. & Shkandrij, M. (2004). The symbolic world of the bilingual child:

    Digressions on language acquisition, culture and the process of thinking. *Journal*

    of Instructional Psychology. 31(4), 284-192. Retrieved April 7, 2011 from

    Professional Development Collection.

Olney, C. (Actor/Host). (2001). Where there's a will there's an a. [VHS] United States:

    Chesterbrook Education Publishers, Inc.

Oyama, S. (1982). A sensitive period for the acquisition of a nonnative phonological

   system. In Krashen, D. Scarcella, R.C. and Long, M.H. (1982) *Child-adult*

   differences in second language acquisition (20-38). Rowley, Massachusets:

   Newbury House Publishers, Inc.

Persinger, M. A.; Chellows-Belanger, G.; & Tiller, S. G.

   (2002). Bilingual men but not women display less left ear but not right ear

   accuracy during dichotic listening. *International Journal of Neuroscience*. 112,

   55-63. Retrieved May 4, 2009 from the Medline database.

Petkuté, R. (2010). The communicative competence of the language teacher?

   Coactivity / Santalka, *18*(2), 77-845. doi:10.3846/coactivity.2010.17

Reppy, J.M. & Adames, J. (2000). English as a second language. In Rosenthal, J.W.

   (2000) [editor]. *Handbook of undergraduate second language education*.

   Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Earlbaum Associates, Inc. (pp. 73-93).

Ravitch, D. (2011). *The death and life of the great American school system: How testing*

   and choice are undermining education. New York: Basic Books.

Radio Lingua Network. Ich bin Deutscher, sie ist Deutsche und wir sprechen Deutsch.

   (2017, 13 February) *Coffee Break German.* Podcast retrieved from itunes.

Richard-Amato, P.A. (2003) Making it happen: From introductory to participatory

   language teaching theory and practice (3rd ed.). White Plains, NY, Pearson

   Education, Inc.

Robinson-Stuart, G., & Nocon, H. (1996). Second culture acquisition: Ethnography in

   the foreign language classroom [Electronic version]. *The Modern Language*

   Journal, 8*0,* 431-439.

Rogers, C. and Freiberg, H. J. (1994). *Freedom to learn.* (3rd ed.). New York, NY:

   Macmillan College Publishing Company.

Rubenstein, I. Z. (2006). Educational expectations: How they differ around the world:

   Implications for teaching ESL college students. *Community College Journal of*

   Research and Practice, 30, 322-441. (ERIC Document Reproduction Services

   Number EJ734651)

Rui, Z. & Liang, F.U. (2008). Survey of college non-English adult learners' English

   learning motivation and its implications. *US-China Foreign Language.* 6(3), 47-

   53. Retrieved April 5, 2011 from Academic Search Complete.

Schalge, S. L. & Soga, K. (2008). "Then I stop coming to school": Understanding

   absenteeism in an adult English as a second language program. *Adult Basic*

   Education and Literacy Journal, 2(3), 151-161.

   Retrieved April 27, 2009 from Academic Search Complete database.

Schwartz, A.E. (2006). Learning math takes attitude, perseverance and courage. *The*

   Education Digest, 71(7), 50-54.

Shakespeare, W. (2012). The tragedy of Hamlet, prince of Denmark. B.A. Mowat & P.

   Werstine (Eds.). New York, NY: Simon and Shuster.

Sharmini, S., Leng, K., Singaram, N., & Jusoff, K. (2009). The second language

   acquisition of past tense marker in English by L1 Speakers of Chinese.

   Canadian Social Science, 5(3), 133-140. Retrieved June 23, 2011from

   Academic Search Complete.

Shono, S. (2004). Good ESL teachers: From the perspective of teachers and adult

   learners. 1-221. Retrieved October 26, 2016 from Google Scholar.

Sieberg, A. & Karr, M. (2003). *The adult student's guide to survival and success.* (5th
    Ed.) .   Portland, OR: Practical Psychology Press.

Smith, R.A. (2010). Feeling supported: Curricular learning communities for basic skills
    courses and students who speak English as a second language. *Community*
    College Review, 37(3), 261-284. Retrieved June 17, 2010 from Academic Search
    Complete.

Song, B. (2006). Failure in a college ESL course: Perspectives of instructors and
    students. *Community College Journal of Research   and Practice.* 30, 417-4
    31.Retrieved April 28, 2009 from the Academic Search   Complete.

Sternburg, R. J. (2005). The theory of successful intelligence. *Interamerican Journal of*
    Psychology. 39(2), 189-202.

Strayed, C. (2013). *Wild: From lost to found on the pacific crest trail.* New York:
    Vintage Books.

Syrett, R. (Host) & Canto, J. (Guest). (2015, January 7). Future Smart. [Radio
    Program Episode]. In L. Lyon & T. Danhieser (Producers). *Coast to Coast AM.*
    USA: Premiere Radio Networks, Inc.

Tan, F., Nabb, L., Aagard, S. & Kim, K. (2010). International ESL graduate student
    perceptions of online learning in the context of second language acquisition and
    culturally responsive facilitation. *Adult Learning.* 21 (1/2), 9-14. Retrieved April
    6, 2011 from Academic Search Complete.

The Holy Bible (1990). King James Version. Thomas Nelson.

Teemant, A. (2010). ESL student perspectives on university classroom testing

    Practices. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 10(3), 89-105.

    ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. EJ906471).

Turteltaub, J. (Director). (1996). *Phenomenon* [Motion picture]. United States:

    Touchstone Pictures.

Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive schooling: U.S.-Mexican youth and the politics of*

    caring. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Van Doren, C. (2008). The joy of reading: A passionate guide to 189 of the world's

    best authors and their works. Sourcebooks, Inc. Naperville, Illinois.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Interaction between learning and development. In M.

    Cole (Ed.), *Mind in society: The development of higher order Thinking*

    Processes. (pp. 79-85). Caimbridge: Harvard University Press. Retrieved

    February 16, 2009 from Citation Linker Database.

Westlake, S. & Monaco, T. (2011). Encouraging adult English language learners.

    Academic Exchange Quarterly, 15(1), 128-133.

Wiesenberg, F. (1999). Teaching on-line: One instructor's evolving 'theory-of-

    practice'. *Adult Basic Education*, 9(3), 149. Retrieved May 2, 2011 from

    Vocational and Career Collection.

Winter, W. E. (2000). The performance of ESL students in a content-linked psychology

    course. *Community Review*, 18, 76-82. Retrieved March 9, 2009 from the

    Academic Search Complete database.

Wurr, A.; Theurer, J. L. & Kim, K. J. (2008).

   Retrospective miscue analysis with proficient adult ESL readers. *Journal of*

   Adolescent and Adult Literacy. 52(4), 324-333. Retrieved April 29, 2009 from the

   Academic Search Complete database.

Yu-hui, L., Li-Rong, Z. &Yue, N. (2010). Application of schema theory in teaching

   college English reading. *Canadian Social Science.* 6(1), 59-65. Retrieved

   November 16, 2015 from Google Scholar.

Zadina, J. N. (2006). Lobar asymmetries in subtypes of dyslexic and control subjects.

   Journal of Child Neurology, 21(11), 922-931. Retrieved March 5, 2009 from the

   Academic Search Complete.

Zafft, C. (2008). Bridging the great divide: Approaches that help adults navigate

   from adult education to college. *Adult Learning*, 19(1/2), 6-11. Retrieved June

   7, 2008 from Academic Search Complete.

Zhang, H. (2008). Values and limitations of children's literature in adult language

   education. *US-China Foreign Language*, 6(3), 18-21. Retrieved June 21, 2011

   from Academic Search Complete.

Appendix A

Interview Protocol Adapted from Shono (2004)

ESL Student Interview Guide (Shono, 2004).

1st one-on-one Interview

1. Tell me three things that you liked the most about your English classes in your home country? (Why?)
2. Tell me three things that you liked the least about your English classes in your home country? (Why?)
3. How did you feel about the way English was taught in your home country?
4. Have you ever disagreed with one of your English teachers? What did you do? (Why?)
5. Who do you think was a good (or bad) English teacher (you don't have to give a name)? What do you think made this teacher good (or bad)?
6. What has been your experience adapting to U.S. culture?
7. Describe the kind of support system you have as you learn. Do you have people who encourage you or help you practice? How so?
8. What kind of progress have you made in your study of English? How have your skills improved? What are some things you can do using English now that you could not do before?
9. How much time do you spend speaking English with native speakers outside of class?
10. How do you perceive your current English proficiency compared with your prior English proficiency level?
11. How would you possibly account for such a difference?
12. What factors have influenced your current English proficiency?

2nd one-on-one Interview
1. If you could have changed anything about your English classes or teachers in your home country or in the US what would it have been?
2. How would you teach English if you were an ESL teacher?
3. What do you think your relationship with your students would be like?
4. What would you do if your students disagreed with you?
5. How do you see your future in continuing to learn English? What are your plans?

Focus Group Interview
1. What are the things that you like the most/the least about your ESL teachers in the US? (Why?)
2. What are the similarities and differences you see in your experiences learning English in your home countries and in the US?
3. What do you do when you disagree with you ESL teachers? (Why?)
4. How would you describe an ideal ESL teacher? Tell me three things that every ESL teacher should do.