FROM THE EDITORS

INTRODUCTION

The 2009 volume of the *MinneWITESOL Journal* brings a welcome addition to the editorial staff. Continuing editors Mike Anderson and Bonnie Swierzbin are very pleased to have Gail Ibele and Andrea Poulos of the University of Wisconsin at Madison join them as co-editors. Welcome, Gail and Andrea!

ARTICLES

The first section of Volume 26 includes articles that explore a variety of issues related to teaching ESL.

In the opening article, Tina Scott Edstam and Constance L. Walker explore a model of on-going collaborative professional development among ESL and other mainstream teachers. Using the example of one school district, they explain how this model may be more effective than common one-time in-service trainings, and explore the factors crucial to creating successful in-service professional development.

A weakness in the area of TESOL research seems to be that the majority of studies have been carried out on well-educated participants. One example is the research that has been done on the effectiveness of explicit instruction in request-making. In her article on metapragmatic requesting instruction, Emily Suh reviews the research that has been done in this area, and goes on to describe her pilot study done in an adult basic education/ESOL setting.

In the third article in this volume, Janelle Fischler describes a study that investigates the effectiveness of teaching English word and sentence stress patterns to high school students through the recitation of rap music. In addition to a perceptible improvement in the pronunciation of most of the study participants, she recounts how the students gained metacognitive skills regarding word and sentence stress production.

REPORTS

In the second section of this volume, Karen Lybeck reports the results of a survey of in-service ESL teachers regarding their pre-service preparation and their current teaching practices. The purpose of this article is to share insights with teacher trainers on how to strengthen the connection between pre-service training and continuing professional development.

In the second report, Jennifer Ouellette-Schramm introduces the reader to the terms and ideas of adult stage theories, that is, theories involving the notion that adults may continue to psychologically develop in identifiable stages. She reports on possible applications in the field of adult basic education/ESOL.

REVIEWS

The third section of the *Journal* includes reviews of books for mainstream teachers with ELLs in their classes, ESL textbooks, and a multimedia tool.

Based on her many years of experience in education and professional development , Ann Mabbott reviews several textbooks that our readers can recommend to their mainstream teacher colleagues with ELLs in their classrooms. Her review compares *Adding English: A Guide to Teaching in Multilingual Classrooms, Making Content Instruction*

Comprehensible for English Learners: The SIOP Model, and *Classroom Instruction That Works for English Language Learners*.

Kristine Ranweiler examines *Edge: Reading, Writing & Language Level A*, an ESL language arts textbook for high school students with an intermediate reading level; Katie Subra reviews *Present Yourself 1: Experiences*, a text designed to help low-intermediate young adult ELLs to prepare and deliver speeches in American English; and Julie Sivula Reiter reviews *Well Read 4: Skills and Strategies for Reading*, which is designed for high school or college-age students whose English reading proficiency is at a high-intermediate or low-advanced level.

The section finishes with a review by Steven Ahola of *Voice Thread*, a web-based multimedia slide show that may include text, audio, and video files.

There will not be a special topic for Volume 27 of the *Journal*, but we hope that readers will continue to submit their work on various issues related to teaching ESL, with special encouragement to submit grammar usage studies, which have appeared in the *Journal* in the past, but have been fewer in number in recent years. We welcome your explorations into the realms of American English grammar which remain uncharted.

We thank all of those involved in the process of creating this volume of the *MinneWITESOL Journal*, particularly the authors and the Editorial Advisory Board. We also thank Hamline University, the University of Minnesota, and University of Wisconsin for their support of the editorial process.

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COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ONE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: A FOCUS ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Tina Scott Edstam
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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the growing need to rethink the ways in which professional development is provided for those who teach English language learners. It documents the two-year experience of a team of seven elementary school educators (mainstream, ESL, speech clinician, paraprofessional) who participated in a newly designed professional development project to provide best practices for these learners in their school. Resulting comments by these educators reflect increased personal growth, professional success, and a renewed commitment to a more collaborative approach to professional development that is long-term, site-based, and student-focused.

INTRODUCTION

Like many teacher educators in the field of second language, we have, over the years, received numerous and often frenzied requests from school districts around the state to 'fix the problem' of their English language learners (ELLs). The proverbial 'three-hour ESL in-service' on a day devoted to staff development seemed a popular choice. Anxious to help, we would make our forays into school auditoriums, libraries, or cafeteria spaces set up for such efforts and then leave these sites wondering how effective these 'sage on the stage' workshops had really been. Though the material and resources offered were sound and our own knowledge base grounded in research, we questioned how productive for the long-term this mode of staff development really was. How likely were these teachers to continue processing what they had learned, implement a new strategy or idea, assess and reflect on the outcome of doing so, and then re-enter that professional development cycle with their colleagues? More importantly, were our efforts likely to improve student learning outcomes, the real purpose for staff development? Our own understanding of best practices for staff development ran counter to those one-shot approaches, and seeking U.S. Department of Education funds for teacher development to implement a new strategy for long-term work with teachers seemed to be an avenue worth exploring. Research on cooperative learning and effective staff development pointed to very focused and contextualized opportunities for teachers to work together to create their own settings for professional growth. We wanted to work with small, inviting within-school teams of seven to begin a process of study and conversation about their work that would last two years. Thus the team members had an opportunity to work collaboratively in addressing the needs of their ELLs; and we had an opportunity to support their efforts and observe on a micro level the challenges they faced and the rewards they reaped.

This article documents the ways that a team of educators worked within this professional development model to rethink the ways in which they offered instruction to English language learners in their elementary school. It lays out our professional development philosophy as well as the educators' thoughts regarding it. It describes the collaborative instructional efforts they made, the individual changes in practice they reported, and the bureaucratic and administrative features that either enhanced or impeded the collaborative relationships they tried to establish.

No examination of our project can begin without touching upon two important issues that not only highlight the need for a new kind of professional development but also reflect the under preparedness of many teachers to address the needs of a culturally and linguistically diverse population - the impact of the changing demographics in our schools and the implementation of No Child Left Behind education policies**.**

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

We know that the changing demographics of American schools have been a fact of life for several decades now. During the period between 1995 and 2005, the national growth rate of K-12 limited English proficient students was 61% while the overall growth rate for all students enrolled in public schools was 2.6% (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students, 2006.) Particular areas of states – urban communities, for example – can no longer claim to be the sole school districts impacted by linguistically and culturally diverse student populations. From 1999-2005, there was a 29.57% increase in the national enrollment growth of ELLs in rural districts (communities of less than 25,000) as compared to 4.45% in non-rural districts (ELL Student Enrollment, 2006). Regions of the United States that have never had to be concerned with students' language needs at school – in particular the Midwest and South - show significant gains in Latino and African student populations.

In Minnesota, during the '95-'05 period, ELL growth was 161%, *outpacing* the national growth trend significantly, while the state total K-12 enrollment *decreased* by 6.5% (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2006.) There are over 60,000 ELLs currently enrolled in Minnesota schools, representing more than 110 different language groups. While a majority of our ELLs reside in the general metropolitan area, a significant and growing number can be found in our smaller cities and rural communities around the state.

The impact of increasing numbers of second language learners (ELLs or English language learners) on teachers ill-prepared to meet their needs is substantial in many communities (Walker, Shafer, & Iiams, 2004). One key report on the preparedness of K-12 teachers to work with English language learners notes that only 27 percent of teachers are prepared to do so (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). Clearly those states with high populations of English language learners historically demonstrate a more prepared teacher force – yet even in those locales, significant numbers of teachers have yet to meet what have been identified as necessary skills for the task (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll (2005).

No Child Left Behind

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has increased pressure on schools to meet achievement goals for all subgroups of learners, requiring that individual teachers as well as schools take responsibility for the achievement demonstrated by English language learners – a direct contrast to the historical practice of leaving this work exclusively to ESL and bilingual specialists. How are schools responding to the growth of English language learners, given federal of accountability requirements for the achievement of all children? Clearly this task has fallen to in-service education. While most pre-service teacher preparation programs require some attention to the needs of English language learners, a focus on these students is generally limited within an already tight curriculum (Lucas & Grinberg, 2007). Veteran teachers, who have not had such preparation, comprise the vast majority of the teaching staff of impacted schools. Staff development then becomes the single most important component in bringing ELL students to full learner status. And sustained, long-term, collaborative models of staff development hold the best chance of supporting mainstream teachers in their efforts to meet both the content and language learning needs of their students.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A WAY OF THINKING WHOSE TIME HAS COME

There is new interest and increased support for "generating professional knowledge for teaching" (Hiebert, Gallimore, & Stigler, 2002). The consensus among researchers is that staff development yields the best results when it is long-term, school-based, involves the collaborative process, and focuses on student learning (Clark, 2001; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Lampert, 2001; Tellez & Waxman, 2006). A paradigm shift, as described by Sparks & Hirsch (1997), is clearly at work, one that has teachers constructing their own paths towards integrating new knowledge and practices into their teaching, rather than receiving new methods or programs through traditional in-service models.

As teacher educators, we drew on our sense of what might be an ideal environment for in-service professional development. Our plan focused on small teams of staff members working together in what we believe is a natural marriage between the need for teachers to be part of a learning community as they explore best practices in serving English language learners and the improvement of their teaching such that student achievement itself is enhanced. The project brought together teams of teachers (seven individuals who were mainstream, ESL, special staff, and paraprofessional), from eight schools, to spend two years addressing the needs of bilingual learners at their school site, and putting into practice the kind of instruction that might positively affect student achievement. Schools were chosen in order to obtain a balance in terms of region (urban, suburban, and rural) and population representation (ethnicities/language groups). We looked for a level of willingness, energy, and commitment from both the building principal and the school, and included those schools which had been identified as needing improvement in learner outcomes for ELL students.

The following underlying philosophy guided the process and grounded the project for the work ahead.

- **Student-focused:** Personal and team-based professional development will help educators provide effective learning experiences for English language learners in their schools.
- **Site-Based:** Small teams of seven comprised of teachers and paraprofessionals work together to solve problems that are specific to their schools.
- **Collaborative:** Team members represent a variety of instructional roles (grade-level teacher, ESL teacher, paraprofessional bilingual staff) to ensure integrative and long-term solutions.
- **Professional:** Substantial release time and financial support are provided for team members who commit their time and effort to this initiative.
- **Individually rewarding:** School-site team members identify individual goals for professional development and work toward those goals
- **Long-term:** Each team meets regularly for two years to foster a long-term approach to problem solving and community building, creating a school action plan that provides direction for change.

Teams worked together as a large group during two summer institutes and three two-day sessions during each academic year, in addition to their own monthly on-site meetings at their schools. Each team developed a school action plan that would drive their efforts at improving English language learner achievement, resulting in several long-term goals agreed upon by all participants. Action plans were designed at the start of the first year and reviewed again at the start of second year to reflect on progress and examine whether or not adaptation was necessary.

Each team member developed an individual Professional Action Plan at the beginning of the process to map a course for professional self-development. They identified their individual needs and the steps they wanted to take to meet them. Professional Action Plans included steps to connect with communities, readings around a particular theme or topic, courses in students' languages, the gathering of resources, peer observations, or a strong focus on particular areas of curriculum.

The project provided a framework through graduate coursework and professional consultation by experienced teacher educators in the fields of K-12 ESL and bilingual education. Grant funding was available for substitute teachers to cover monthly meetings, academic year meetings, and team leader work days, as well as books and other resources. A small yearly stipend was also included as professional pay for time spent outside of the normal school day.

Choosing a Focal School

For purposes of this article, we highlight one focal school team out of eight school teams in the two two-year cohorts. While we use the experiences and voices of individual members on this team, we found that their perspectives and thoughts on their work were representative of their role groups (mainstream, ESL, special staff, paraprofessional) across the eight schools. The leadership exhibited by this school

principal also offered us unique insights into the critical role of principals in school improvement (DuFour and Berkey, 1995; Porter and Soper, 2003).

We carefully examined the collaborative efforts and personal writing put forth by this one small team of teachers who worked with us over a two-year period. We watched the team members come together as a professional learning community that was directed toward improving teacher understanding of and ability to address English language learner needs. This intense focus on one elementary school provided us a window into the struggle that takes place in many schools working with second language learners.

The personal writing included a Professional Action Plan developed by each team member which recorded their goals for the two-year process, seven reader responses based on individually selected readings, and a summary reflective piece in which team members were asked to reflect on perspectives and changes that might have occurred over the course of the two years.

The following questions guided our examination of their written work, providing a framework for what we observed and noted from our conversations with team members:

1) What types of collaborative instructional efforts emerged over the course of the two year project between ESL and mainstream teachers?

2) What kinds of individual changes in practice as well as professional changes have occurred for each of the participating team members?

3. What bureaucratic or administrative features enhanced or impeded professional relationships and/or collaboration?

JAGUAR ELEMENTARY: DESCRIPTION/DEMOGRAPHICS/GOALS

Jaguar Elementary is a K-5 school in a semi-rural area of a large Midwestern state. The school has a total enrollment of 570. While the district itself reports that 14 percent of its school-age students are English language learners, Jaguar Elementary has 23 percent ELL enrollment. The proportion of poverty in the school (measured by free or reduced school lunch enrollment) is 54 percent. The team that was formed for the project consisted of two grade-level/mainstream teachers, three ESL teachers, one paraprofessional (a Somali speaker) and a speech clinician. One grade-level teacher was a veteran of over twenty-five years; the other had taught for seven years. Two ESL teachers held dual licensures in elementary education and ESL; the third had an ESL license and complete fluency in Spanish. As a team, they examined their own site, using the Minnesota Quality Indicators as a reference point, building upon their own knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of their school's ability to address the needs of its ELLs. Their resulting school Action Plan consisted of three major goals:

1) To increase ELL family involvement for student learning

2) To promote and foster the academic language proficiency of ELLs

3) To disseminate information to other staff members

The unique viewpoints of the mainstream teachers, ESL teachers, paraprofessional, and speech clinician on this team, explain many of the struggles that take place within elementary school contexts where the issues of placement, curriculum, instruction, and assessment are concerned. Results reported below reflect the thoughts and perspectives of each role group.

1. What types of collaborative instructional efforts emerged over the course of the two-year project between ESL and mainstream teachers?

Mainstream teachers

At Jaguar Elementary, collaborative efforts occurred initially within the team when two grade-level (mainstream) teachers and two ESL teachers specifically took steps to work together. The mainstream teachers set up consistent collaboration with the ESL teachers, consciously setting aside planning time to do so. They were thoughtful, careful, and raised continuous questions about what they do and why. Grade level teachers began to integrate language objectives into their teaching in a systematic way, a practice that was new to them. Doing so led to further conversations with their ESL colleagues to be sure that appropriate language objectives were being used. Collaborating with another individual brought new challenges -- as one teacher indicated, "Being the classroom teacher, I had to give up some control." One interesting outcome was viewing "their students" with another teacher, as the ESL teacher worked directly in the classroom in an instructional capacity. One mainstream teacher reported that focusing on the needs of the learners instead of thinking about "what I need to do" was a positive outcome of the collaborative process. Her comment was representative of many mainstream teachers: *"Working with an ESL teacher and planning for academic learning through language is powerful."*

ESL teachers

While the ESL teachers were working closely in classrooms with specific classroom teachers, they were responsible at the same time for remaining in contact with the classroom teachers who were part of their assigned "pull-out" instructional load within the school. At Jaguar, since the ESL teachers worked by grade-level groupings, this could mean that they had 2-3 additional classrooms they worked with as they brought children out for instruction in the ESL classroom setting. In describing specifically their collaborative efforts, the ESL teachers developed a positive stance toward co-teaching, and were enthused by the development of strong relationships with a mainstream teacher, relationships that went beyond the typical fast-paced on-the-fly consultations that typify contact between mainstream and ESL teachers. They described a delicate balance in offering their ESL expertise, respecting the prior knowledge and experience of veteran teachers while at the same time building professional relationships with them.

> *"This is the part of team teaching that gets interesting, as we negotiate between ideologies, comfort levels, and possible pressure from other*

teachers at the grade level to have some sort of uniform outcomes, whether it be real or perceived."

The ESL teachers on the team were in the unique position to be reaching ELLs through both the collaborative process as well as the traditional pull-out model – to observe their practice in two very different professional and contextual situations.

The ESL teachers reported that they began to focus more on language objectives, and that they began to specifically align their work with that of the classroom teacher. One of the benefits of such collaboration is the fact that both instructors plan and conduct instruction that reinforces, complements, and extends each other's efforts. ESL teachers reported that they were specific and direct in communicating language objectives with their students. Interestingly, working with a mainstream teacher has made them better pull-out teachers: they describe themselves as more familiar with the content, rhythm, and themes of the mainstream classroom. They recognize the challenge of building relationships with complete classrooms, rather than working with small groups of students typical of traditional ESL instructional practice. A telling comment by an ESL teacher describes the dual-edged sword of the new directions taken:

"Having once been the only ESL teacher in my building with a small little room and 40 pull-out students, I am amazed at how far we have come. Some days I miss the autonomy and solitude of closing my door, doing my own thing and letting the classroom teachers worry about content curriculum. I do not, however, miss the limited progress my students made, or the disconnect between myself and the rest of the staff. I love getting to know my students in their own classrooms, in a community setting. I really enjoy teaching academic content and sharing their excitement as they learn about the world around them. I feel that my students are making greater progress in an inclusion setting."

Paraprofessional

The paraprofessional on this team (and, as it turns out, on each of the teams) found that consistent and challenging work with a team of individuals had a profound impact on their roles as well as on their feelings about their work. The paraprofessional became a team member in a meaningful way – she moved beyond a role as a peripheral staff member in her school to a more integrated position. The paraprofessional at Jaguar became an expert in her own right, regarding culture and language, and was able to share knowledge and insight over the course of the project. She facilitated communication with families in new and creative ways, ways that served to bring communities and school personnel together.

Speech Clinician

Jaguar Elementary was fortunate to have a speech clinician on its team, one who was committed to learning about English language learners in order to improve her work with them. Through her work with TEAM UP, she focused on informing herself, then began to inform others within the school about the complexity of making decisions regarding

language learning and learning disabilities. She found ways to initiate more collaborative endeavors with mainstream teachers within her school, discussing the type of classroom material for ELLs that could help reinforce content through speech instruction focused on language needs. It is important to note that speech clinicians often have much wider contact with other district personnel in special education. For this individual, it was an opportunity to share her newfound knowledge and perspectives beyond the school setting.

2. What kinds of individual changes in practice as well as professional changes have occurred for each of the participating team members?

Mainstream Teachers

The mainstream teachers, in reflecting on their orientation toward ESL instruction prior to working with the TEAM UP project, reported being happy to have ELL students removed from the classroom for ESL pullout. Collaborative experiences changed their perspectives, resulting in their working to implement language objectives with a lesson-planning framework. Their readings and discussions about the complexity of language learning helped them to realize the implications of the distinction between social and academic language. They reported increased knowledge concerning the cultural backgrounds of students, and described themselves as using more effective instructional strategies to increase comprehension (acting, drawing, pictures, songs, movement, visuals, etc.). They recognized the value of thematic instruction and the ways in which it builds, reinforces, and sustains both language learning and academic content learning. At the same time, they became increasingly aware of the conflict between grade level material and what ELLs can do when they are still developing skills in both oral and written language. The grade-level mainstream teachers reported a more nuanced appreciation for alternative assessment, and report recognizing the value of ongoing formative as well as summative assessment. Comments in their final written reflections were illustrative of changes in both perspective and attitude, as they began to view themselves as learners as well as teachers.

> *"I've become more purposeful in looking [not only] at what I teach, but also at the language in what I teach."*

> *"I have learned to take a step back and think about what prior knowledge students need to have in order to be successful in a unit or lesson. I have learned how important it is to make lessons as visual as possible and that all students benefit from it. I have learned that all assessment doesn't have to take place at the end of each unit and doesn't have to be a paper pencil test. I have learned that strategies that benefit ELL learners benefit not only students in poverty, but also white middle class students. I have learned that honoring students' cultures and backgrounds adds to a classroom community. I have learned that having differences in race, culture, socioeconomic status and religion is beneficial to all students and that they can have meaningful discussions about those very topics."*

ESL Teachers

ESL teachers offered unique insight into this process of collaboration to better serve English language learners. They became more focused on academic language objectives, and became more confident in their role as language specialists. As a result, they were less peripheral to the instructional process, offering experience, insight, ideas to the team process. Team members came to rely on them for their experience with English Language Learners and their communities. The ESL teachers developed stronger identities as leaders and over the course of the two years were able to exert influence on administrative and structural decisions such as schedules, clustering, and instructional options.

Yet the role of the ESL teacher requires stepping delicately. They reported doing more of the adjusting, as they were the teachers going "in" to other classrooms, entering someone else's territory, separate and unique classroom cultures. They often reported on the "chameleon-like" nature of their work, having to adjust to the unique and varied personalities inherent in an elementary teaching culture. ESL staff at a school are in a position to see their learners over a long period of time witnessing both their triumphs and their struggles. ESL staff at Jaguar appreciated the added opportunity to see the richness of their students' learning experiences when they were collaborative instructors with the mainstream teacher.

As they reported in their writing, the ESL teachers developed individual areas of interest within education: writing, brain-based learning, white privilege, family literacy development, culture. They pursued these interests when choosing readings or finding a "niche" for themselves within their team. Just as the grade-level teachers began to attend to language, the ESL teachers began to be mindful of content. They used content material in their teaching and realigned their work to address content standards as well as language standards. The increased focus on content helped them to understand that non-fiction material is key in building prior knowledge with ELL students. Finally, the ESL teachers extended their professional conversations beyond their buildings to educators within and beyond their districts. They were asked to consult with other teachers in their district through district in-service, and presented their efforts at state-wide professional conferences.

Paraprofessional

The paraprofessional on the Jaguar team reported experiences very similar to the paraprofessionals on each of the other teams in the cohort. As a Somali speaker of English as a second language, she often reflected on her own language learning experience, relating it to what she saw happening with her students. The native English-speaking paraprofessionals became aware of the nuances of immigrant and refugee life as they began to read and explore with their team members the strengths and challenges of adaptation to a new land and the school experience.

The paraprofessionals acquired a professional vocabulary with respect to language learning and education, and as their experiences grew, they reported feeling an increased comfort level when speaking in both small and large groups. The bilingual paraprofessionals felt freer to use their first language in classrooms with students, and

reported being involved in classroom activities in a more systematic, purposeful way. Information that seemed directed to the classroom teachers or the ESL teachers, we found, often found its way, or "trickled down" to the paraprofessionals. They reported feeling more respected by staff, and we noted definite personal as well as professional growth throughout the term of the project.

Speech Clinician

The role of the special educator, in this case the speech clinician, in the team effort was one that we could not have predicted. As she continued to be exposed to new knowledge about ELL students, she reported that she was now realizing the fundamental differences between language difference and language disorder. Along with the paraprofessional, the speech clinician was present for each and every discussion that involved "big picture" issues such as assessment and placement, as well as the micro aspects of classroom instruction. Her knowledge of the curriculum within particular grade levels grew, and she used mainstream curriculum to inform her own "pull out" work with students. Information about and resources on specific cultures resulted, in this case, in the speech clinician integrating multicultural material and Spanish language material into her own work, generally that of diagnosis and remediation of language difficulties. She changed some referral forms to better address students' needs, and cautioned mainstream teachers to look for other interventions for ELL students. Most notably, she took it upon herself to reach beyond her team and her work at Jaguar Elementary. In conversations with other individuals through established connections in the community (family members, minister, and school board members) she tried to correct misinformation about language learners. Her strong belief in continuing to learn as a professional was reflected in the following quote:

> *"When we make our lesson plans, we should also think 'What students can I learn more about today?' Only when we continue to educate ourselves will we really continue to educate the students we work with every day."*

3. What bureaucratic or administrative features enhance or impede professional relationships and/or collaboration?

The collaborative process does not occur in a vacuum. Even when both the opportunity for and the intent of individuals to establish collaborative practice are in place, there are often several factors that are likely to affect the outcome. What can enhance opportunities for educators to development relationships around their teaching? Our work with the elementary school teams has made one thing very clear: a supportive, enthusiastic principal, with strong curricular knowledge, is at the heart of the process. It also helps, as it did in the case of Jaguar, to have a principal who possesses a competitive fire – a desire to push her staff to new efforts, and to have her school represented well within the district. The team had the ear of their principal, and she was in attendance at several of the project course workshops, wanting to inform herself of the issues and options for working with English language learners. The school district, in this case, was supportive and tolerant of grass-roots change, and the team took a proactive stance in inviting key district players to meetings. Rather than waiting to be

led, the team offered professional development to administrators within the district, and took advantage of a district-level structure in place for specialists to meet – ESL, Special Educators, for example. This opened doors for collaboration and cross-fertilization. Clearly the Jaguar team had an optimal environment in which to move in new directions – an energized, committed team, a proactive principal, district interest, and three ESL teachers who were leaders.

But where did they struggle? What were issues that they faced over the course of the two years that make their personal professional development efforts more difficult and their school action plan tough to implement? Team members noted that having the ear of the principal was indeed a double-edged sword. They reported being perceived by their colleagues as among the "chosen few" within the school. The structure and model of this professional development project, one that works with a small critical core of professionals for an intensive time period, was new to them and other staff needed to accept both the premise and the practice that resulted from such efforts.

In the egalitarian culture of elementary schools, any singling out of individuals or groups is often seen as threatening (Walker, Edstam, & Stone, 2006). The elementary school culture generally reflects the desire for an equal division of resources -- students, materials, release experiences. An in-service opportunity offered to a select group was not always met with open arms. Staff resistance to change was evident, even at a school such as Jaguar. Individual teachers resisted hearing about new efforts developed by their colleagues, and school-wide changes suggested by the team in terms of structure or instructional/assessment practice were sometimes met with resistance. Team members continued to report on a tendency for staff to focus on the English language learner as the source of the problem.

Time is always a challenge. The lack of it needs little amplification in the world of education, as teachers are unanimous is describing it as a major impediment to achieving their goals. The mainstream teachers, ESL teachers, paraprofessional, and speech clinician on this team were no different. To a person they valued the time provided by the project, which, through funding of substitute teachers on a regular basis, allowed for the teachers to have extended opportunities to work together to change practice.

The structure of the elementary school brought about several challenges for professional development and change in practice, as blocks of instructional time for different specialists (art, P/E, music) often dictated school schedules and the windows of opportunity available for collaborative practice. Difficult conversations had to take place about whose needs were really taking precedence - teachers' or students'? Answers usually came only when the staff as a whole was willing to 'think outside the box' and use creative and innovative ways to manage both time and structure.

Finally, as is so often discussed when instructional practice for ELL students is examined, the large shadow of testing is always present. It impacts planning, scheduling, instruction, curriculum, general school culture, and the theme of testing and tests was

often evident in the teachers' writing about their work. So often the Jaguar team talked about the ways in which testing drove curriculum and schedules, affected instructional time, had a negative impact on getting to the real questions of what English Language Learners knew and could accomplish at school. NCLB policies had bearing on every instructional and curricular decision.

CONCLUSION

Preparing teachers to work effectively with English language learners is part of the national teacher education agenda. Professional development for practicing teachers, "in-service education," is now believed to be most effective when it combines a wide range of continuous, collaborative experiences that provide for an exploration of issues together with opportunities for communication that address specific problems within a school. Research has shown that an inquiry-based model of staff development sets the stage for teachers being part of a learning community (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Feimer-Nemser, 2001; Hopkins, 1987; Leiberman, 1986; York-Barr, Ghere, & Sommerness, 2007). Several components characterize effective staff development (Claire, 1995; Tellez & Waxman, 2006; Walker, Edstam & Stone, 2006, 2007) when the goal is to improve learning outcomes for English language learners:

- Small group of staff from the same school;
- Systematic recognition of this group as the "go to" staff for ESL issues and including them in staff development initiatives;
- Selecting as a team leader an individual who is an integral part of the school;
- Commitment by individuals to the work;
- Inclusion of different role groups (mainstream, ESL, paraprofessionals, social workers, speech clinicians, community liaison, special education staff);
- Time to meet, discuss, reflect over the long term;
- Focus on both content and process;
- Emphasis on developing collaborative relationships and practices at many levels, across and between teachers, roles, and positions;
- Opportunities for reading, writing, and receiving feedback;
- Access to a variety of materials, resources; and
- Principal support and meaningful connection with other administrators (ESL coordinator, special education coordinator) within the district.

Educators at Jaguar Elementary reported great satisfaction at the challenge and the professional growth they experienced as a result of working toward common goals with a small group of colleagues over a period of two years. They read, wrote, discussed, and deliberated their ideas and their perspectives. Best of all, they created a learning

community of their own. They reported a sense of both personal growth and professional efficacy**.** The components noted above were all an integral part of their staff development experience, occurring within the context of their own elementary school where they practiced their craft with real learners, in actual classrooms.

Though no longer 'officially' participating in the TEAM UP teacher development project, the individuals who took part in this professional development experience are still active leaders within their school and within their district. They continue to serve as ELL advocates in their different role group capacities and are participating in other school-based professional learning communities that reflect what we know is best practice for professional development. These professionals thus pass on the wisdom of their experience and what they have learned. As teacher educators, we feel privileged to have worked with them.

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METAPRAGMATIC REQUESTING INSTRUCTION IN AN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION-ESL CLASSROOM: A PILOT STUDY

Emily Suh

ABSTRACT

Pragmatics, or the ability to communicate using language, is increasingly recognized as essential to language competence and production (Thomas, 1983; Bachman, 1990). Much research exists on pragmatic acquisition (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Cenoz, 2003; Kasper & Rose, 2001; Wildner-Basset, 1994). Researchers currently advocate metapragmatic instruction which combines explicit instruction, awareness-raising activities, and guided practice (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Kasper, 1997). Such instruction utilizes metalanguage and higher-level thinking with which students from non-academic backgrounds may struggle. Previous research on the effectiveness of metapragmatic instruction in request-making examined highly academic participants literate in their first language (L1) as well as the second language (L2). Additional research is needed to determine the effectiveness of metapragmatics for lower-level learners and those in non-university settings.

This pilot study examines the effectiveness of metapragmatic instruction to teach request-making to an intermediate Adult Basic Education (ABE)-ESL class of Somalis and Mexicans. The study also examines students' responses to the instruction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pragmatics and Request-making

Bialystok (1993) explains pragmatic acquisition of request-making as using language for different purposes, modifying requests to reflect context, and participating in interactions following usage conventions. Pragmatic requesting requires that the speaker be able to modify a request's level of politeness as appropriate to the given situation. Speakers vary their level of politeness through the use of words or phrases which are conventionally understood to convey respect, such as the word *please.* These words and phrases are referred to as *mitigators*, and speakers employ them to show the hearer respect (Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper, 1989). In the Cross Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP), Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) categorize mitigators by their position vis-à-vis the speaker's actual request (i.e., "Can I have a raise?"), referred to as the head act. Mitigation can occur pre-request, within the head act, or post-request (see Appendix A). Speakers can employ several mitigators in a single request: "Could you please walk the dog?" includes *please* and the modal *could* rather than the more direct *can*. In Western culture, politeness and directness are inversely related (Brown & Levinson, 1978); thus, speakers must consider the appropriate level of directness when making requests in English.

Not surprisingly, request-making can be especially difficult because of the complexity of the linguistic elements used to convey sociopragmatic meaning and the subtlety of mitigation devices. When speakers choose dispreferred forms, pragmatic failure can result in socially inappropriate utterances or communication breakdown. For instance, a worker who approaches the boss with the request "Can I have a raise?" may be labeled as overly direct or even insubordinate and subsequently be refused the

request. As in this example, unpragmatic requests may be grammatically correct; thus, pragmatic failure alone does not easily identify a speaker as non-native, and pragmatic failure is often seen as personal failure (Cenoz, 2003; Thomas, 1983).

L2 Pragmatics Instruction

Given the cultural specificity of politeness and the necessity of performing speech acts, pragmatics instruction must discuss socially appropriate (i.e. polite) forms. Researchers advocate a combination of explicit instruction, awareness-raising activities, and guided practice (Kasper, 2001; Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Kasper & Rose, 2001; LoCastro, 2006; Rose, 1994; Takahashi, 2001). This combination of activities and instruction involving the use of metalanguage and higher level thinking skills is referred to here as meta-pragmatic instruction.

Explicit instruction provides metalingustic explanations of target-structure forms and functions and explanations of why certain forms are culturally preferred. In their research with Japanese learners of English, Takahashi (2001) and Tateyama (as cited in Pearson, 2006) found explicit instruction successful at teaching requesting.

In awareness-raising activities, learners draw form-function connections though exposure to pragmatic aspects of language (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005). Awareness-raising equips learners with multiple strategies for completing speech acts in different contexts (Kasper, 1997; Safont-Jorda, 2003).

Guided practice is student-centered. Exercises include role plays, dramas, and simulations (Eslaim-Rasehk, 2005; Kasper, 1997; Li 2000; Rose, 1994).

Research shows positive results for metapragmatic request instruction (Cenoz, 2003; Safont-Jorda, 2003; Takahashi, 2001; Tateyama, 2001). After discussions about preferred forms, production tasks, and a written Discourse Completion Task (DCT), Safont-Jorda (2003) noted statistically significant increases in the use of request external modifiers by beginning and intermediate English language learners at a Spanish university.

Instruction must also introduce communication tools to increase student agency and avoid learner perceptions of instructor ethnocentricity (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Hanson-Huff, 2005; Ishihara, 2000, 2008, in press; Ishihara & Tarone, in press; Kasper & Rose, 2001; Li, 2000; Thomas, 1983). Ishihara (2008) and Kim (2001) found that many learners do not wish to adopt native speaker (NS) pragmatics. Ishihara discusses pragmatic resistance as a speaker's conscious decision to avoid NS norms which are common in the speech community and which the speaker is capable of producing; such resistance allows non-native speakers (NNSs) to express subjectivity and maintain distance from the target culture.

Adult Basic Education (ABE)

Overwhelmingly, research on L2 pragmatics instruction focuses on university-educated learners receiving instruction in their L1. The handful of studies involving lower-level learners occurred at universities with highly L1 literate participants (Tateyama, 2001; Tateyama et al., 1997; Wildner-Basset, 1994).[1] Bigelow and

[1] Hanson-Huff (2005) examined pragmatic differences in the request-making of Somalis and Americans in a descriptive study that did not include pragmatics instruction.

Tarone (2004) note a similar tendency in second language acquisition (SLA) research, arguing that theories based solely in research on educated language learners have "limited applicability and little value in guiding teachers who work with illiterate learners" (p. 690). The same is true for pragmatics instruction; research with highly literate learners cannot fully inform the instruction of others.

Pragmatics is already included in many ABE classes, but instruction occurs incidentally as issues arise in class. I could find no research discussing pragmatics in ABE, perhaps because of the difficulty of implementing meta-level discussions with lower-level learners.

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Research on metapragmatic instruction with non-university educated students could increase understanding of pragmatic acquisition and instruction, assist teachers in planning relevant lessons, and facilitate students' metalanguage development and higher thinking. These issues lead to the following research questions:

1) How effective is metapragmatic instruction at teaching *how to mitigate requests* for intermediate ABE English learners?
2) Do ABE-ESL students vary request-making in situations of varying social distance and level of imposition? If so, how?
3) How do intermediate ABE English learners respond to metapragmatic instruction?

METHOD

Participants

The participants attended a non-profit ABE center in a large Midwest metropolitan area. The class was considered to be pre-GED level, and all students were advanced-intermediate level as determined by their scaled scores on the Test of Adult Basic Education, M version. The students were Somali and Mexican, and many experienced interrupted schooling which was often delivered in a language other than their L1. Some claimed L1 illiteracy (see Table 1); however, all were literate in English. Thus the students' L2 language ability and past educational experiences differed substantially from those of participants mentioned in the literature review. Students were required to participate in classroom activities but testing was optional. Twelve students attended the class; the seven who completed the post-test were considered in the final analysis.

Table 1. *Students Considered in Data Analysis*

Student	Age	Ethnicity	Languages[i]	Years in US	Self-Reported English Ability	Years of English Instruction	Hours of English/ Day	English Language Use
Ibrahin	42	Somali	Somali (L), Arabic	14	Conversational	1 year or less	2	Talking work watching TV newspaper reading
Hamza	34	Somali	Somali (L), Kiswahili, Amharic	1 1/2	Literate	Since high school	4 or 5	Working, talking, and newspaper
Jafar	26	Somali	Somali, Kiswahili, Arabic (L)	4	no response	no response	no response	Everything I want
Axmed	30	Somali	Somali, Arabic, Ethiopian	2	Literate	3	10	At school
Fadumo	23	Somali	Somali	13	Speaks, reads, writes	5	all ways	at work and school, with her children
Ana	63	Mexican	Spanish (L)	17	no response	2	3	Watching TV, reading newspaper, talking at the school
Juanita	19	Mexican	Spanish (L)	4	Literate 60%	1	5	Talking at work and school

[i] No measures of students' literacy were conducted; self-reports of students' languages are included for a general understanding of their language learning experiences rather than a definitive literacy measure.

Treatment

The treatment included nine lessons occurring in the students' classroom during the regularly scheduled class. The researcher designed and piloted all materials with students of the same level the previous summer.

The unit began with awareness-raising activities about politeness and request-making in students' L1s, which they compared to American culture. Request modification was presented through explicit instruction in three categories: pre-requests, internal request modification, and post-requests. Students used metatalk to make connections between grammar and pragmatics, such as in discussions of linguistic distance, defined in class as the amount of space between the subject of the sentence and the action of the request. Lessons also included guided practice, and students viewed NS requests from the movies *Shrek II* and *A Few Good Men*. Content was informed by Brown and Levinson's (1978) work on situational variance.

According to Brown and Levinson (1978), three factors determine the appropriate level of politeness for request-making: the hearer's relative power over the speaker (*dominance*), *social distance* between the speaker and the hearer (how well they know each other), and *imposition* of the act (or the problems the hearer faces resulting from complying with the request). These factors comprise *situational*

variance, and Brown and Levinson argue that speakers consider this variance when determining the level of politeness to address their hearer.[2]

Instruments and Data Collection

Pretest A was a written DCT in which students made three requests of varying imposition as if they were speaking with someone from their culture. Items prompted requests to individuals of higher and equal status, such as below.

> 1. You want to talk to your teacher about a book you did not understand. You know your teacher is busy, but you think she can explain the story to you quickly. When you see her in the hall, you say:

The other situations involved asking for a ride and a raise.

Pretest B was a written DCT with six items of varying imposition. Students were asked to respond as if they were speaking to someone from another culture. Pretest B repeated the Pretest A scenarios, with three additional scenarios. Items prompted students to make requests to individuals of higher and equal status.

The posttest contained nine written DCT items, varying in level of imposition and speaker/hearer relationships. Situations included house sitting, a ride, time off from work, weekend babysitting, apartment information, a shift change, and asking a child and the child's mother to stop kicking a seat (see Appendix B). The tenth was a ranking item, provided below.

> 10. Rank the following sentences from Most Polite (5) to Least Polite (1). If you think that some of the sentences are equally polite, give them the same number. For example, if I thought that sentence A was the most polite, I would write 5 in the space after the sentence. If I thought that sentences A and B were both the most polite, I would write 5 in both spaces.
>
> A) Do you think it would be possible for you to please give me the day off?
> B) Give me the day off.
> C) Could you please give me the day off?
> D) Can you give me the day off?
> E) I would appreciate it if you would give me the day off.

Students completed a 15-item course evaluation with open-ended questions about which activities they preferred and found most helpful. Eleven ranking items asked students to rate the strength of their (dis)agreement with provided statements about the subject matter, activities, and quality of instruction, such as below.

> 5. Directions and tasks were clearly explained.

0	1	2	3	4	5
(I completely disagree)			(I agree)		(I completely agree)

[2] Scholars contest the universality of Brown and Levinson's model of politeness, correctly arguing that the work is too greatly influenced by Anglo-Saxon individual autonomy (Meier, 1995; Wierzbicka, 1991). However, Brown and Levinson's work is still applicable to Anglo-Saxon norms of politeness.

Three items asked students whether they would change the way they made and viewed request-making in English based on course information.

Students signed informed consent statements approved by the researcher's university before treatment. All data were collected by the researcher; participants were given unlimited time to complete assessments and were allowed to opt out of requests but were asked to explain why they would do so.

DATA ANALYSIS

The first research question examined the effectiveness of metapragmatic instruction for teaching requesting. Students' external and internal mitigator use from four pretest items was compared to four posttest items of similar situational variation.[3] Situational variation was measured by (+/-) Social Distance (SD), (+/-) Dominance (x, y), and (+/-) Imposition (IMP), as defined by Brown and Levinson (1978). An explanation of the situational variation coding for Pretest B item 1 follows.

> 1. You want to talk to your teacher about a book you did not understand. You know your teacher is busy, but you think she can explain the story to you quickly.

The hearer is the speaker's teacher so is well-known (-SD). As the teacher, the hearer has more power (x < y). Because the hearer can quickly explain the story, there is little imposition involved in complying with the request (-IMP). The item was coded as –SD, x < y, -IMP. Appendix B lists each DCT item's situational variation.

The researcher performed frequency counts (means and standard deviations) of students' use of the eight mitigator types in pre and posttest requests: Greetings (i.e., *Hello*), Concern for the Hearer (i.e., *I know you are busy*), Transition (i.e. *Before I forget…)*, Linguistic Distance (i.e., *I was wondering*, *Would you…*), Lexical Downgrader *Please*, Lexical Downgrader *Thanks*, Polite Modals (i.e. *Could*, *Would*), Grounder (i.e., *No one else can do it*). Appendix A includes a further discussion of mitigators.

Inclusion of each of the eight mitigator types (i.e. Greeting, Concern) was counted as +1. Duplications of the same mitigator type, or the use of multiple sub-types of mitigators (i.e., the request "I was wondering if you would take my shift," employs Linguistic Distance through Past tense and Continuous –ING) were counted once; students received +1 for that type. Absent types were counted as 0: "Can you work my shift?" contains no lexical downgrader *please* so receives a 0 count for that type.

The analysis examined descriptive statistics for the DCT results. There was no attempt to identify statistical significance due to the small sample size and because the data set did not meet the assumptions of parametric statistics.
The second research question considered whether intermediate ABE English learners varied request politeness, measured by mitigator use, based on situational variation. It was assumed that students would increase the politeness of requests with greater imposition. Students' mitigator use in Posttest items 5 and 7 (high-imposition

[3] The items were matched as follows: PreB2-Post3 (-SD, x = y, -IMP), PreB3-Post7 (-SD, x < y, +IMP), PreB5-Post6 (+SD, x = y, -IMP), PreB6-Post1 (-SD, x = y, -IMP). Items are marked with an asterisk (*) in Appendix B.

requests for weekend-long baby-sitting and a shift change) was compared to Posttest items 2 and 4 (low-imposition requests for house sitting and time off) to determine whether students varied their use based on imposition.

Because students did not appear to vary requests based on situational variation, Pretest A items 2 and 3 (-SD, -IMP), involving requests for an explanation of a book and house sitting, were compared to Posttest 3 and 7 (+SD, +IMP), requests for a raise and a shift change, to determine whether students' mitigation was influenced by L1 transfer.

The third research question examined students' reactions to metapragmatic instruction. Data from all eight students who filled out an evaluation were included in this analysis. Students' ranking item responses were supplemented with written comments.

RESULTS

Research Question #1

The first research question considered the effectiveness of metapragmatic instruction on intermediate level ABE-ESL learners. Students' use of mitigators in pretest and posttest items (Pretest B 2, 3, 5, and 6 and Posttest 2, 4, 5 and 7), matched for situational variation, were counted. (See Appendix A for discussion of mitigators.) Because of the small sample size, it is impossible to determine whether changes in students' mitigator use were statistically significant; however, as Table 2 shows, every student increased his/her use of mitigators in the posttest by at least four devices. Fadumo and Axmed's usage increased the most, by 12 and 10. This comparison of students' total internal and external mitigators use suggests that instruction produced a marked difference in post-treatment request-making.

Table 2. *Pre and Posttest Student Mitigation Use*

		External Mitigation					Internal Mitigation	
Student	**Total (of 32)**	Greet	Con	Trans	Ground	LexD[i]	LD	Modals
Ana	**Pre: 14**	2	1	2	4	2	0	3
	Post: 18	2	1	1	2	6	3	3
Juanita	**Pre: 13**	4	0	3	4	1	0	1
	Post: 20	4	2	2	4	0	4	4
Hamza	**Pre: 9**	3	1	0	3	2	0	0
	Post:17	3	2	2	4	4	0	2
Axmed	**Pre: 8**	3	0	2	0	3	0	0
	Post: 18	4	4	1	4	1	2	2
Fadumo	**Pre: 8**	3	0	3	2	0	0	0
	Post: 20	4	3	3	4	3	0	3
Ibrahin	**Pre: 8**	1	1	0	1	5	0	0
	Post: 17	3	1	2	3	1	3	4
Jafar	**Pre: 5**	2	2	0	1	0	0	0
	Post: 15	4	1	1	1	3	2	3

[i] x/8 (+1 for *please* and +1 for *thank you/thanks*)

Students' mean use of total mitigators further supports claims of the treatment's effectiveness. Table 3 lists mean scores and standard deviations for each mitigator and total mitigator use from Pretest B and the Posttest.

Table 3. *Pre and Post-test Total Mitigator Use*

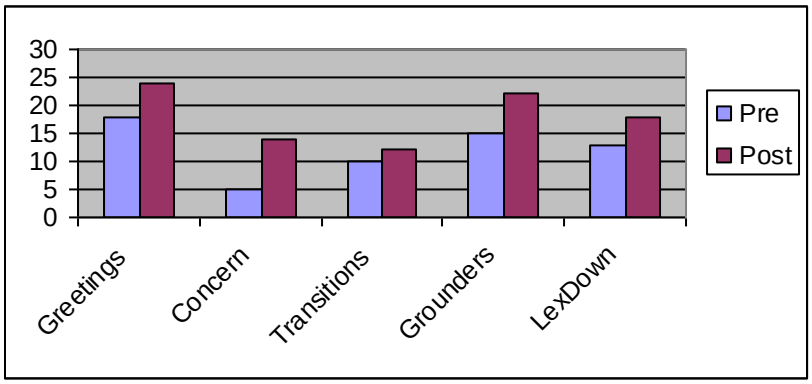
	Pretest B		Posttest		Pre-Post
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Difference
Greetings	2.57	0.97	3.42	0.78	0.85
Concern	0.71	0.75	2.00	1.15	1.29
Transitions	1.42	1.40	1.71	0.75	0.29
Grounders	2.14	1.57	3.14	1.22	1.00
Lex.Downgraders	1.85	1.77	2.57	2.06	0.72
Total Mitigators	9.28	3.14	17.71	2.42	8.43

To provide a thorough account of students' mitigation, external and internal mitigation as well as request strategy use were analyzed.

Use of External Mitigation

Overall, students' use of each type of external mitigation increased (Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Pre- and Posttest External Mitigator Use*



The greatest improvement occurred with *Shows of concern* (most commonly, "How are you?"), which nearly tripled to 14 uses in the posttest.[4] In the posttest, every student used concern at least once, suggesting that the instruction may have increased metapragmatic knowledge of concern as a mitigating device.

Instruction divided concern into three subtypes: references to the hearer's time ("I'm sorry I know busy"), pleasantry statements ("how are you"), and references to the hearer's willingness/ability to perform the request ("if you do[n't] mind," "if you can"). As a whole, the class used an even distribution of all three subtypes in the pretest; however, the posttest showed a strong preference for pleasantry statements. Every student except Jafar used pleasantry statements to mitigate at least one request in the posttest. Instead of pleasantry statements, typically occurring pre-request, Jafar used two post-request references to the hearer's time.

In the pretest Fadumo and Juanita used no concern mitigators, but in the posttest they both used several, including Juanita's use of back-to-back pleasantry devices ("How are you? I haven't seen you in a while"). Before the treatment, students were familiar with statements showing concern and pleasantry devices; however, as Juanita and Fadumo illustrate, after instruction, students seemed to better understand that such statements can mitigate requests.

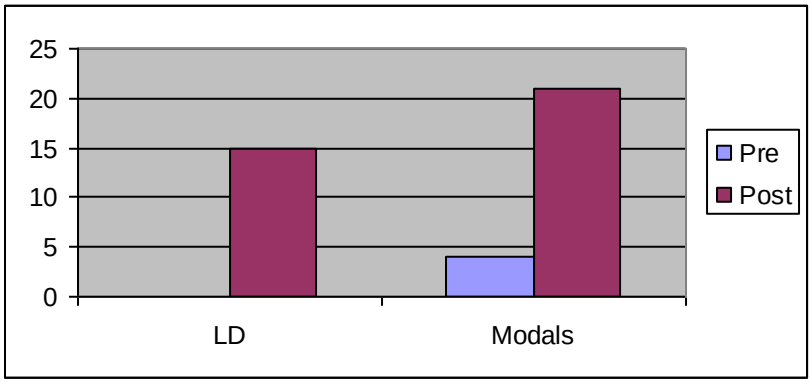
The use of *Grounders* (such as "My car is not work for some reason it is not ignite") increased by almost half in the posttest. Everyone used a grounder in at least one posttest request, and four students increased their total use of grounders. Axmed, who used no grounders in the pretest, used a grounder in all four posttest requests. Students' increase in the use of grounders suggests that instruction may have influenced their understanding of this aspect in request-making.

Use of Internal Mitigation

Posttest requests included a substantial increase in internal mitigators. Figure 2 illustrates the use of *Linguistic Distance* (LD) and *Polite modals* (Modals) to mitigate the head act of the request; use of both types increased in the posttest.

[4] Parenthetical examples were taken from students' pre and posttest responses.

Figure 2. *Pre- and Posttest Internal Mitigator Use*



No student used linguistic distance in the pretest. Class-wide posttest use of linguistic distance increased to 15 occurrences; everyone but Fadumo and Hamza used linguistic distance. Students favored two forms: hypothetical modal *would* and Past+Continuous ING. Juanita used Past+Continuous ING to mitigate all four of her posttest requests, using "I *was thinking*" and "I *was hoping*" twice each.

Ana used both types of linguistic distance. When making a low-imposition request of a hearer with equal power, she used hypothetical modal *would*. However, when making a high-imposition request and a request to a +SD hearer, she used Past+Continuous ING. Ana's choices were appropriate based on the treatment which specified that a request was considered more polite if there was greater linguistic distance between the subject of the requesting sentence and the action of the request. Instruction specified Past+Continuous ING as having the most linguistic distance and being the most polite. Because Ana was the only student to apply linguistic distance in a manner consistent with instruction, it is uncertain whether the instruction was effective at teaching the relationship between linguistic distance and situational variation.

Students' use of polite modals increased by five and half times in the posttest; each student modified at least two requests this way. In the posttest, Juanita mitigated all four requests with a modal, using *would* to mitigate a low-imposition request to a stranger. This was consistent with instruction stating that *would* was considered to be the most polite modal and that Americans tend to be most polite to strangers.

Use of Request Strategies

Request strategies, which refer to the level of directness associated with requesting, were not explicitly taught in the treatment.[5] However, students were exposed to a variety of strategies through class activities highlighting mitigators. Pre and posttest comparisons suggest that students may have altered their strategy use as a result of the instruction; however, the effect was minor. The most popular strategy in both the pre and posttest was the *preparatory* strategy, which refers to a precondition for the feasibility of the hearer's compliance with the request (i.e., "Can you give me the

[5] See the CCSARP manual by Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) for strategy explanations and examples.

day off?") (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989). The majority of students' preparatory strategies made use of what Wigglesworth and Yates (2004) refer to as the "Canonical can" statement—"Can I...?" "Can I" comprised 12 of the 18 preparatory strategies in the pretest; each student used it at least once, but the strategy went largely unmitigated.

In the posttest, almost every student increased their use of *want statements*, expressing the speaker's desire that the hearer perform the request, ("I would appreciated if you do that for me") and *hedged performatives*, modals that modify requesting verbs ("I was wondering if you could be change my schedule for the morning") (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989). Left unmitigated, want statements and hedged performatives are more direct, and less polite, than preparatory; however, in the posttest students mitigated these strategies, producing more polite requests. Only two of the 14 posttest preparatory strategies used an unmitigated form of "Can I." The majority of the posttest requests, regardless of strategy, were modified internally through the use of modals *could* or *would.* Students' posttest preference for polite modals suggests that they learned how to mitigate request head acts.

Juanita's posttest suggests that her understanding of request strategies increased. She used hedged performatives (a direct strategy) to realize low-imposition requests to hearers with equal power and want statements (less direct) to realize a high-imposition request and in a request to a +SD interlocutor. Juanita's choice may suggest that post-instruction she understood the increased need for politeness in the two situations.

Overall, the data seem to indicate that metapragmatic instruction was effective at teaching these learners how to use mitigators to increase request politeness. Although some students' strategies increased in directness, this potential movement towards impoliteness was reversed by large increases in external and internal mitigation. Students' increased use of greetings and concern (external mitigation) and their use of linguistic distance and polite modals (internal mitigation) were particularly noteworthy. In addition, students' posttest use of requests that varied in their directness suggests that students increased their ability to control the directness of their requests. Instead of relying upon a common lexical chunk ("Can I…"), students demonstrated their ability to compose requests of varying directness, modified by mitigators.

Research Question #2

Posttest requests were examined for evidence of mitigation based on level of imposition, social distance, and speaker/hearer relationship. Students did not appear to consider situational variation in their mitigation decisions. If situational variation had influenced students' mitigation, one would expect to see the total mitigators decreasing from left to right in Table 4. This is not the case. Table 4 illustrates that situational variation did not influence students' total mitigator use. Nor was it related to the decision to use individual mitigators. Some students favored the use of a single mitigator, employing it to increase the politeness of all four requests considered in this question.

Table 4. *Student's Total Posttest Mitigator Use by Situational Variation*

	Post7: x < y, +SD, +IMP	Post4: x < y, +SD, -IMP	Post5: x = y, -SD, +IMP	Post2: x = y, -SD, -IMP
Ana	2	3	3	5
Juanita	4	3	5	5
Hamza	2	3	2	3
Axmed	2	2	2	2
Fadumo	5	3	4	5
Ibrahin	3	3	3	3
Jafar	3	2	3	3

Students' mitigation decisions appeared unrelated to situational variation. To examine whether students' mitigation choices resulted from transfer, requests from two items in Pretest A were compared to the posttest. However, few mitigation devices were used in Pretest A, and there was no evidence of transfer.

Post-instruction, learners did not appear to consider situational variation in requesting.

Research Question #3

Eight students completed the *Course Assessment*. Reactions were extremely positive, and students felt they learned a considerable amount about request-making and culture. All students completely agreed with the statement "The teacher was respectful of my culture and the cultures of my classmates." Students also agreed that "The teacher made me interested in the cultures of my classmates." Responses suggest that the instruction facilitated understanding of other cultures, particularly American culture.

Students also indicated that the instruction increased their understanding of request-making and politeness. Students agreed that "Now that I have taken this course, I know how to make my requests more polite and the situations when I should make polite requests." Responses to the statement "Now that I have taken this course, I understand why American people make requests the way that they do" expressed similar sentiments. Students' favorable responses suggest that they felt instruction provided useful information about request-making and American culture and that they could apply this knowledge outside of class.

Additionally, individuals' comments suggested that they benefited from the use of meta-talk in pragmatic instruction. One student wrote:

> I am learen a lot of Things For exemple prequst, Liungts destence [linguistic distance] and How deal whit Them people or How to ask peope what ever you want How to you Ask Boss Friendd or you Family and people do you now and different request.

This specific reference to linguistic distance suggests that the student found the class' challenging language and concepts accessible and subsequently felt that he could better navigate the world around him.[6] Another wrote, "This class is very good class and I like very mach because I learn more English words and sentences….I am anderstadning [understanding] ever think easy that is why I Like This class." This student's comment suggests that he benefited from the use of meta-talk. The fact that each student increased mitigator use in the posttest suggests the accuracy of these students' assessments. Perhaps more important was how they felt this knowledge would influence their communication styles.

Seven students completely agreed with the statement "Now that I have taken this course, I will change the way I make requests to American people." The eighth completely disagreed. This response may be an example of pragmatic resistance, which occurs when speakers intentionally avoid a community norm of which they are aware and capable of producing (Ishihara, 2008). Although he rejected American request-making norms, the student indicated in previous questions that he learned a considerable amount about request-making and why Americans request the way they do. Even with this knowledge, he felt certain that he would not modify his style when speaking with an American. Personal convictions aside, the student did modify his request-making style in the posttest, as he increased his mitigator use.

Students generally responded positively to class activities, and all completely agreed with the statement "Tasks were interesting and made me think about the differences between how people from different cultures make requests." Students listed several preferences for which activities were most helpful. Overall, students preferred reading, "because like learn things when I reading," and "I practice more the words." Two other students stated that teacher explanations were the most helpful. However, another student completely disagreed with the statement "The teacher was helpful and explained things I did not understand." The student may have felt that the learning was too student-centered or that his questions were not adequately addressed.

Even though individuals had specific preferences about which activities were most helpful, the variety of activities made students feel like they were able to take something from the instruction. Students responded favorably to metapragmatic instruction and felt that they could apply this knowledge outside of class, if they so chose.

DISCUSSION

Analysis of the Results

While students increased their use of mitigators and request-making strategies, their posttests indicated that they did not yet understand the influence of situational variation on politeness in request-making. Research on pragmatic acquisition supports this assumption; learners who have acquired pragmatic knowledge also need to learn how to use and automatize it (Bialystok, 1993; Safont-Jorda, 2003).

It is also possible that students learned how and when to use mitigators in accordance with American norms, but that they chose not to do so for personal reasons. However, only one student displayed evidence of pragmatic resistance,

[6] Students' names are excluded here for purposes of confidentiality.

stating that he would not change his request-making. Other students indicated that they would use the mitigators they practiced in class. Thus, resistance to acculturation cannot fully explain why the rest of the class failed to exhibit an awareness of situational variation.

A second possible explanation for the results is that students' requesting was influenced by L1 transfer. Throughout the treatment, Fadumo repeatedly emphasized that English and Somali requesting were exactly the same—only the language differed. Fadumo's insistence could be related to her level of acculturation; at the time of the study, she had spent 13 years—over half of her life—in the United States. However, the data generally do not support the theory of L1 transfer for these students. For example, Hanson-Huff (2005) identified the Somali tendency to appeal to the relationship with the hearer in order to emphasize resulting obligations. Several of the Somali students in this study used endearment terms, but they did little else to refer to a reciprocal relationship or show concern for the hearer.

Another factor influencing students' request-making choices was attendance. Fadumo's total mitigator use increased by 12 in the posttest, and she increased her use of all mitigators except linguistic distance, introduced during the one lesson she missed. Classes began with a review, which may explain how some students produced types of mitigation introduced when they were absent. For example, Hamza missed both classes on external mitigation but increased his use of external mitigators by a total of four in the posttest.

There are two final points to consider. The first is that even without a firm understanding of situational variation, after the treatment, all of the students' requests could have successfully accomplished their goals outside of the classroom.

Second, use of each of the mitigating devices analyzed in this research would most likely not occur in a single request in the real world. Such a request would be too long and non-native like and would reduce speaker individuality.

The instruction provided students with a small way to control their world by controlling their language use. Post-instruction, students demonstrated that they knew how to vary request politeness. This knowledge contributes directly to their communicative competence, which is essential for acquiring personal and social control (Li, 2000). Even if an individual chooses not to adapt to target norms, as was the case with one student, understanding that such a choice is theirs to make is part of that control. Speaker empowerment is closely related to speaker choice, and it was encouraging to see that at least one student chose to problematize the norms presented in class and decide that they were not an accurate reflection of his identity or the messages he was trying to convey.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. The sample size was too small for a control group and made statistical analysis impossible. Students' sporadic attendance may have limited the treatment's effectiveness.

Data collection decisions further limited the analysis. No information was collected allowing students to explain their mitigation choices. It was assumed that mitigation was based on situational variation; however, this incorrect assumption may have erroneously influenced the data analysis.

The use of DCTs also limited the study. Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993) criticize written DCTs, stating that respondents may write what they feel should be said rather than what they would actually say, and Varahese and Billmeyer (as cited in Cohen, 2004) argue that traditional DCT prompts cannot provide enough meaningful information about speaker-hearer relationships. A final problem with the DCT was that it was a written assessment of oral communication. Several students indicated that they had limited L1 literacy, so they may have performed differently had they been asked to speak their requests.

Because of researcher oversight, the pre and posttests did not include identical request-making situations. Slight speaker-hearer relationship variations between corresponding pre and post-test items may have affected students' requests in unpredicted ways, decreasing the strength of claims made about changes in students' post-instruction request-making.

A final limitation involved the amount of data analysis. Additional data were collected but excluded from analysis because of time constraints. These data included surveys about students' learning styles and strategies, and pre and posttest measures in which students ranked a series of requests and modals according to politeness. A more thorough understanding of the students' request-making might have been had if these data had been included in the analysis.

Pedagogical Implications

Because of its cultural specificity, pragmatics is an important topic for NNSs and requires thorough attention in language classrooms. ABE-ESL classes offer an environment conducive for pragmatics instruction because they contain diverse student-bodies and are often the site of target-culture exploration. Guy (1999) advocates learning based on racially, ethnically, and linguistically marginalized learners' sociocultural experiences, suggesting that adult educators can minimize the potential for further exclusion of minority groups. One way to do this may be through open discussions about the beliefs behind majority values and norms and how they influence choices, such as the use of mitigators, within a language. Analysis of what certain cultural practices mean could facilitate language development and encourage further pragmatic exploration.

Students in this study successfully accessed the material and seemed to benefit from the use of metapragmatic instruction. Even though metalanguage was ineffective for explaining the importance of situational variation, its continued presence in the classroom seems warranted and perhaps even necessary to encourage pragmatic and language development. Metapragmatic instruction also exposes students to a new way of thinking about language.

Before using metapragmatic instruction, teachers must clearly identify their goals and determine the level of understanding they want their students to demonstrate. In addition, instruction must be presented as a series of choices for empowerment rather than a checklist for acculturation.

Further Research

Further research should include a larger sample size and control group. Retrospective interviews could offer valuable information about the factors affecting

participants' mitigation choices, possibly highlighting examples of pragmatic resistance or helping to identify pragmatic knowledge which has been acquired but not yet automatized.

Additional research should also examine students' oral requesting, perhaps in the performance of requests when students are unaware that they are being assessed. Such an assessment could offer insight into the treatment's impact on students' real-world requesting. It could also highlight changes not captured by the students' written assessments as a result of their limited literacy skills. This is especially important for students, like the participants in this pilot study, whose English fluency cannot be captured in written assessments.

Future studies should also examine the effectiveness of metapragmatic instruction on lower-level learners to determine what basic organizational knowledge, if any, is required in order for metapragmatic instruction to be effective.

Finally, this study examined only request-making instruction; further research is needed to develop effective metapragmatic instruction for additional speech acts.

AUTHOR

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APPENDIX A

Mitigation Devices (Modified from CCSARP)

I. Pre-requests (a part of conversation that happens before requests)

A. Greetings (a way to begin a conversation)

Hello.

Maria (instruction highlighted the American preference for use of first names to emphasize perceptions of speaker-hearer equality)

B. Concern for the Hearer (showing the hearer that the speaker cares about hearer wants and needs)

I know you're busy, but…

Do you have a minute to talk?

C. Transition (moves a conversation that has already begun into the request head act; used when the speaker makes a request in the middle of a conversation)

That reminds me, I was wondering…

Before I forget…

II. Request Head Act Internal Modification (words/phrases speakers use to increase a request's politeness)

A. Linguistic Distance (the amount of space between important words in a sentence, where increased linguistic distance makes a request more polite, because there is more space between the subject of the sentence and the action of the request)

1. Past + Continuous –ING (past tense verb+ING, used to increase the linguistic distance between the subject of a sentence and the action of the request; the following lexical chunks were included in instruction)

I was wondering if…

I was thinking that…

I was hoping that…

2. Hypothetical Modal *would* (a modal verb that increases a request's linguistic distance)

*I was wondering if you **would** be willing to…*

B. Polite Modals (modals were discussed as verbs that are used to explain the degree of certainty that something will happen. When used in a request, a modal is a helping word that shows the willingness or ability of the subject to do the action of the verb) [7]

***Would** you please be quiet?*

***Could** you please be quiet?*

III. Post-request (speaker's last chance to convince hearer to agree to the request) [8]

A. Grounder (provides background information, often including reasons why the hearer should comply with the request)

1. Recognition of request's imposition (speaker's recognition of the difficulties hearer encounters resulting from performing the request action)

I know you are busy right now, so I appreciate your help.

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[7] Modals appear both independently as internal modification and as a form under the sub-type of linguistic distance. Polite modals include *could* and *would* and occur within the statement of the request. These modals can be replaced with the less polite form *can* without sacrificing grammaticality or conventionality. The modal *would* which occurs within linguistic distance cannot be replaced with *can* and maintain its conventionality (such as in the question, "*Would* you mind if I left early," or in the statement "I *would* appreciate it if I could leave early.")

[8] If an external modifier appeared in a request it was counted in the data analysis, regardless of whether it appeared in the pre or post-request.

2. Justification of the request (describes compliance of the request as necessary for the speaker)

*I need a ride, **since my car is broken**.*

3. Promise to return the favor (explains compliance with the request as beneficial to the hearer)

*If you buy my dinner tonight, **I will pay for you next time**.*

APPENDIX B

Situational Variation of DCT Items

Request Situation	Social Distance	Dominance	Imposition
Pre-test A			
PreA1: Explain book	- SD	x < y	- IMP
PreA2: Ride to doctor	- SD	x = y	- IMP
PreA3: Raise	- SD	x < y	+ IMP
Pre-test B			
PreB1: Explain book	- SD	x < y	- IMP
PreB2: Ride to doctor*	- SD	x = y	- IMP
PreB3: Raise*	- SD	x < y	+ IMP
PreB4: Pick up kids	- SD	x = y	- IMP
PreB5: Extra shift*	+ SD	x = y	- IMP
PreB6: Babysitting*	- SD	x = y	- IMP
Post-Test			
Post1: House-sitting neighbor	- SD	x = y	- IMP
Post2: House-sitting friend*	- SD	x = y	- IMP
Post3: Ride to store	- SD	x < y	- IMP
Post4: Time off*	+ SD	x < y	- IMP
Post5: Weekend babysitting*	- SD	x = y	+ IMP
Post6: Apartment info	+ SD	x = y	- IMP
Post7: Change of shifts*	+ SD	x < y	+ IMP
Post8: Seat kicker	+ SD	x > y	- IMP
Post9: Seat kicker's mother	+ SD	x = y	- IMP

x: Speaker
y: Hearer
+ SD: Great social distance
- SD: Little social distance
* Item considered in data analysis for research question 1
(Table modified from Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989)

THE RAP ON STRESS: TEACHING STRESS PATTERNS TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS THROUGH RAP MUSIC

Janelle Fischler

ABSTRACT

Many English language learners who have attained advanced English proficiency levels are still having difficulty in communicating, due to low intelligibility. Word and sentence stress are components that contribute greatly to intelligibility. This study was designed to explore the effectiveness of teaching English word and sentence stress patterns through the recitation of rap music and related activities. Six secondary English language learners from various primary language backgrounds voluntarily participated in a four-week intensive summer pronunciation course. Appropriate allocation of word and sentence stress was measured in speech samples obtained before and after completion of the course. The results of this study indicate improvement in stress placement by the end of the four weeks. The students also reported substantial gains in their confidence levels when communicating with others. The study includes specific methodology that may be useful and easily incorporated into programs with pre-set curricula and assessments.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine you are an advanced adolescent English learner (EL). This is your senior year of high school, and you have accomplished the daunting challenges of passing all required standardized tests and earning sufficient credits to graduate from high school. Your advanced grasp of the English language has gained your acceptance at several reputable universities. Your knowledge of English grammar far exceeds that of the average graduating high school senior. You can differentiate between a gerund and an infinitive. Your use of past perfect tense is impeccable, and you can rattle off comparatives and superlatives in your sleep. You have mastered the complicated syntax, grammar, and vocabulary of English. Indeed, there seems no barrier to your social and academic success, except for one problem. Your poor pronunciation impedes your ability to communicate orally.

In the absence of reasonably intelligible speech, effective communication simply cannot take place. Morley (1999) contends that severe pronunciation difficulty puts some English language learners at considerable educational, occupational, professional, and social risk. Furthermore, ELs with poor pronunciation skills tend to avoid speaking with native speakers, which deprives them of the necessary practice they need to improve their speaking skills.

It is my observation that many ESL textbooks lack an emphasis on teaching pronunciation. As most students progress through the existing curricula, insufficient attention is directed towards pronunciation aspects of the English language. Effective communication in English is dependent upon more than an expansive vocabulary, mastery of decoding, and grammatical accuracy. Although these are imperative components of communication, they do not complete a program of effective communication in English. Explicit integrated instruction of pronunciation can greatly enhance the intelligibility of these students, as well as their confidence as they progress in their language development. It is a common misconception that pronunciation instruction needs to be "an extra deviation from the lesson." Murphy (2004) recommends that word stress be taught in conjunction with new academic vocabulary. He emphasizes the necessity of intelligible use of specialized vocabulary for successful English proficiency.

I have developed a pronunciation method geared toward, but not limited to secondary ELs that addresses two important aspects in attaining effective communication skills: word and sentence stress. In order to improve pronunciation, ELs must be open to experimenting with vocalizations and sounding differently than they have before in their lifetime.

I have chosen the channel of rap music to help ELs experiment and practice such novel vocalization of word and sentence stress. This approach is similar to Carolyn Graham's (1978) "Jazz Chants," in that students learn and repeat chorally in order to master stress patterns. However, it is different in that each rap and related activity was created to teach a specific stress pattern in English. The "rule" in each rap is stated within the lyrics and activities. These raps and related lessons have been compiled into a book, CD, and DVD called Stress Rulz! (Fischler, 2006). The publication is available through Pro Lingua Associates. Each track on the CD is followed by an instrumental-only track, so that students can practice the raps independently.

English proficiency is tied to many body movements, as well as speech organs (McNeill, 1992). This is why the raps are accompanied by various kinesthetic, auditory and visual activities that reinforce the stress patterns targeted within the raps.

Students must be explicitly taught that word and sentence stress convey meaning that can be even more informational than the actual word used. This is not necessarily the case in their native language. Since word and sentence stress are such salient factors of intelligibility, the course outlined in this study is almost entirely directed to these features of pronunciation.

IMPORTANCE OF STRESS UPON INTELLIGIBILITY

Stress is a suprasegmental property that begins at the syllable level. This property is comprised of both increased duration and volume when compared to other syllables within the word (e.g., popuLAtion, GOLDfish, MinneSOta). Stress placement often is coupled with rising intonation.

Likewise, certain words within a sentence are given prominence. For example, nouns, verbs, and adjectives are given prominence, since they carry the most information within a sentence. (The BIG BALL was THROWN by the BOY). New information is also given more prominence than old information in an utterance. Note the shift in prominence evident in the following lyrics:

i LIKE PIZza.

i LIKE my PIZza HOT.

i LIKE my PEPperoni PIZza HOT.

i LIKE my CHEEsy pepperoni pizza HOT.

These stresses shift as new information is added. *Pepperoni* and *cheesy* are both content words, adjectives in this case. However, *cheesy* receives more prominence in the final sentence because it is newer information.

A number of researchers have explored the prosodic component of stress from an English learner perspective. Since English word and sentence stress differs even from other stress-timed languages, it is imperative to explicitly teach the unique rhythm of English to all ELs (Benrabah, 1997). In this study, the ELs had either no reference point or different reference points for stress allocation, which made English patterns seem very complicated and difficult to learn. With appropriate instructional methods, however, the learners were able to understand and show improvement in their production of English word and sentence stress.

Certain features of pronunciation contribute to overall intelligibility more than others. (Gilbert, 2001) points out that, regarding the area of phonology, the elements of stress, rhythm, and intonation emerge as the highest priorities that contribute to intelligibility. Furthermore, she posits that ELs need to achieve sufficient control over these phonological features to function as intelligible speakers. Stress is essential for a number of reasons. Although it is a universal phenomenon, word stress in English reduces both vowel duration and quality in non-stressed syllables. Other languages differ greatly in the manner they allocate stress in words. English stress allocation is considerably less predictable and more complex than that of other languages. This can cause considerable confusion for ELs who are accustomed to the more simple rules governing their native tongue. These learners have no inherent idea of where to assign stress in English. In addition, stress and rhythm patterns serve as navigational guides that lead to effective listening (Gilbert, 1994).

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

In my experience, non-native speakers (NNSs) frequently express great frustration when they fail to communicate effectively. The curriculum utilized in my school district does not include a significant focus on pronunciation instruction. In response to this deficit, I began to informally experiment with teaching stress and intonation using rap beats. I continued this technique for a period of three years in my secondary school ESL classes, and noted positive results. Some raps were created by the students themselves. The observed enthusiasm of students combined with the improvement in pronunciation led me to integrate a more significant pronunciation component into my language instruction time.

Why use music at the center of this methodology? The use of music and rhythm in teaching pronunciation is highly motivating and creates an environment of lowered anxiety (Lake, 2000). Additional studies indicate a strong correlation between successful pronunciation and musical methodology (Martinec, 2000; Voigt, 2003). English is a very musical language—both music and speech can be described as organized sound. In fact, all languages are "musical" in the sense that they have a prosodic pattern. The brain strives to detect patterns within sound in both speech and music. This processing takes place in two adjacent and closely related areas of the brain. For these reasons, I consider it valuable to implement music in the language-learning classroom.

Although in this study the amount of time devoted to pronunciation was limited due to curriculum constraints, a perceptible improvement in pronunciation proved evident. This finding prodded me to question whether a more intensive pronunciation program would result in even greater gains in intelligibility. Hence, my action research project evolved.

SETTING

The data were collected during a four-week summer school course, *Improving Pronunciation through Music and Rhythm.* The course was taught at a large high school in a major metropolitan area of the Midwest. Participants were invited to attend the class, due to their previous demonstration of difficulty using proper word and sentence stress in English. This difficulty interfered significantly with their overall intelligibility, as judged by their ESL teachers. Students attended class for two hours, four days per week. Total direct contact time was thirty-two hours. The study was conducted over a four- week period. The students were also required to practice the rap songs for thirty minutes daily outside of class.

SAMPLE

The participant sample was comprised of six ELs in grades 9-12. Their English language proficiency levels varied from Level 4, (academic English skills equivalent to grades 7-8) to Level 5 (transitional ESL), according to Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey results. At a minimum, all six students were at an advanced intermediate level of English language proficiency. This was an important consideration since the vocabulary base required for this course was quite advanced. The participants were also required to take notes, play pronunciation games, and discuss metacognitive concepts. The students ranged in age from thirteen to seventeen. Participation in the course was voluntary and students received an elective credit for completing the class.

The participants all carried over pronunciation characteristics from their primary language, which interfered with their pronunciation of English. The individual phonological structures of the primary language affect the articulatory programming of the lips, jaw, tongue, etc. Therefore, many overall patterns of pronunciation errors were language-specific (Swan & Smith, 2001). Although these first languages have diverse characteristics, they also share some common features where stress is concerned. All participants demonstrated difficulties with word and sentence stress placement in English. This is because their primary languages are more syllable-timed on the spectrum of syllable- to stress-timed language patterns. Following are some stress characteristics of the languages in this sample as well as some accompanying difficulties they encounter with English stress patterns.

Participant #1 demonstrated transfer of Farsi stress, which is highly predictable. Primary stress generally falls on the final syllable of words in the Farsi language. Farsi does not carry weak forms of stress, so the participant had difficulty with production and perception of weak forms of English speech. Participants #2 and #6 demonstrated various pronunciation influences of their multilingual background in West Africa. (These participants have had exposure to Creole English, Twi, Ga, Ewe, and French). Both African participants displayed difficulty with stress timing and rhythm. Contrastive stress, (e.g., I KNOW that, versus I know THAT), posed great difficulty for these students. Participants #3 and #5 were both from Asian language backgrounds. They tended to overstress weak syllables in English, because syllable reduction is infrequent in their first languages. They also tended to improperly stress final syllables of multisyllabic words. Since English stress patterns differ from Asian language stress patterns, these speakers sounded flat and staccato. Participant #4 is Somali and tended to give equal time to each syllable in English, much like the other participants. Weak syllables posed a problem and were often overstressed. This may be due to the Somali feature of stressing the penultimate syllable of words. This can lead to distortions such as “generaLIty, geoGRAphy, and clarINet.”

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This four-week action research project was designed to find whether overall NNS intelligibility can be improved through explicit instruction of stress rules and practice with rap music. Nunan (1992) defines action research as inquiry that is self-reflective and focused on problem-solving, expanding practice, or seeking greater understanding. According to Nunan, the greatest advantage of conducting action research is the situational aspect. This study begins with the following situation: Secondary learners who are unaware of specific issues relating to their misplacement of primary word and sentence stress are taught how to improve this. The hypothesis is that secondary ELs can improve their production of word and sentence stress through identifying areas of need, learning rules about stress in North American English (NAE), and practicing these rules to original rap songs composed by the

ESL teacher. Progress was tracked during this pronunciation class through daily tape recordings, journal entries, and teacher consultations.

It is difficult to definitively attribute improvement found at the end of the course to the variables introduced. This is the main disadvantage of action research (Nunan, 1992). Yet the positive correlation can be interesting to other ESL teachers, who may wish to employ the strategies described in this study.

INFORMATION ELICITATION

Background information about the participants in this study was gathered in order to develop appropriate instructional methods. The results of the students' most recent English proficiency test scores helped determine which types of intervention I chose to utilize in this class. An initial elicitation questionnaire provided further pertinent information about the participants. Questionnaire items included information about first languages, educational backgrounds, and student attitudes about pronunciation (see Appendix 1). The information gleaned from this questionnaire helped to provide goals and objectives for the course. The attitude items were particularly revealing and guided many of the future journal topics. The questionnaire was not intended as a base score analysis.

The students unanimously responded that they believe it is possible to improve their pronunciation. It was particularly useful for me to know that I was to teach such a positive group of students, who both desired and fully expected to improve their speaking skills. Awareness of the high degree of reception and dedication of the students led me to hold high expectations for positive results.

Following completion of the elicitation questionnaire, the students discussed specific situations in which they had experienced difficulty communicating effectively with native speakers. All of them verbalized at least one specific scenario involving a phone call, classroom situation, or work experience. The students expressed great anxiety about speaking in front of groups, job interviews, and making new friends. Sharing their stories and frustrations helped the students gain a sense of community and trust. We then established expectations for the course. The students enjoyed taking ownership of these expectations.

DIAGNOSIS AND ANALYSIS

Although ELs are aware that others are often unable to understand them, they are rarely aware of the underlying pronunciation problems. Diagnosis and analysis are the important first steps towards improvement.

Pretests were conducted on audiotape. The rationale for audiotaping versus videotaping is that raters were given no visual cues to influence their eventual scoring of pre- and post- test intelligibility. This insured greater validity. Each participant recorded two brief speech samples on a high quality digital voice recorder during the first class session. The first sample was a brief unrehearsed reading sample. This text contained words and phrases exemplifying the specific stress rules that would eventually be addressed during the course (see Appendix 1). Since no repeated exposure to this passage occurred during the four-week course, memorization could not take place. Evaluation of the initial and final readings of these speech samples were later compared for the purpose of this study. The second speech sample obtained was less structured, elicited by a visual stimulus. Participants were asked to verbalize the "story" taking place in a picture.

After listening to the initial speech samples, the ESL instructor tallied the number of correct stresses for individual participants, and then calculated the average. Additionally, the ESL teacher reported her perception of each student's overall intelligibility.

A final measurement consisted of a Likert scale completed by three NAE adults who were neither ESL teachers, nor actively involved in the pronunciation course. This scale was based upon descriptors on the Minnesota Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM) inventory (Minnesota Department of Education, 2003). The raters were trained on practice samples, in order to ensure inter- and intra-rater reliability. The raters were presented with speech samples presented in random order; they didn't know whether samples were pre- or post-class recordings. This was done to avoid influencing the raters to score post-class samples higher than pre-class samples. After participants were tape-recorded reading at the end of the course, the same measures were used to evaluate their progress (i.e., tallies, NAE adult ratings, and self- assessment.)

CONSULTATION

The students listened to tape recordings of themselves reading several pages per day of a humorous book. This book lowered the affective filter of the participants, due to its entertaining content. Initially, students were uncomfortable with both recording and listening to themselves. Most of the students cringed or laughed nervously upon hearing themselves on tape the first time, but they also gained some objective sense of how they sound to others. Eventually, the students became more accustomed to tape recording.

Following the daily recording sessions, the students had brief, 5-minute individual consultations with the ESL instructor. They listened to the recording and evaluated areas of both strength and concern. The students then wrote journal entries detailing the issues covered in their consultations. These recordings of observations, reflections and reactions to pronunciation facilitated the students in discovering their changing attitudes and ongoing creation of attainable goals regarding pronunciation. Some journal topic questions included: "Describe a time you felt frustrated because someone did not understand you." "How do you feel about recording your voice and listening to the recording?" "Are you starting to become more aware of stress patterns in the speech of others?" "Which stress rule has been the most useful to you so far?" The instructor responded to the journal entries in writing, after collecting them weekly. This dialogue created open communication, a feeling of security, and it reduced anxiety over time. By the end of the course, all of the students were able to correctly identify faulty rhythm patterns within their tape recordings.

INSTRUCTIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

The following synopsis details the main foci covered during the pronunciation course. Students were first introduced to auditory discrimination tasks in order to determine whether they could hear the difference between stressed and unstressed syllables.

Auditory discrimination

The first class session included a discussion of segmental and suprasegmental aspects of speech. The importance of proper placement of stress was illustrated through the following example in which the teacher presented the same sentence three times, demonstrating three different errors.

The first sentence was read by the teacher with a segmental error (i.e., frontal lisp of sibilants). *Thereth a pothibility that ith going to thorm today.* The following two presentations were read with no segmental errors. The sentence was read a second time

without stress or changes in intonation. Hence, this presentation was read with a monotone and sounded robotic. Finally, the sentence was read with improper placement of stress. *There's a possibilITy that it's goING TO storm TOday.* When asked to rank the intelligibility of the three readings, the students unanimously ranked the first example as most intelligible and the last example as least intelligible. This activity helped the students to understand the power of word and sentence stress in carrying meaning.

Next, a simple activity was introduced where the students held up a *same* or *different* card following the teacher's productions of word pairs such as *APple* and *inVITE*; *rePORT* and *SAlad.* The students were quickly able to identify stress patterns that were the same or different.

Syllabification

Once the importance of stress was understood, the students were enthusiastic to learn how to improve their own production of stress. They began with simple exercises in syllabification, which is a necessary first step in understanding word stress. It was surprising how much difficulty the students demonstrated in counting out syllables. This posed the greatest problem for students who demonstrated epenthesis in their habitual speech. Internal epenthesis exists when a speaker adds vowels to break up a consonant cluster (e.g., substitution of *worlid* for *world*). External epenthesis exists when a speaker adds a vowel, and consequently a syllable, to the outside of a consonant (e.g., substitution of *estreet* for *street*).

Two class periods were devoted to syllabification in order fully gain the skills necessary to decipher boundaries and count out syllables. Students worked in pairs taking turns pronouncing polysyllabic words while the partner counted the syllables on their fingers. Initially, the students made numerous errors in counting, but they improved with practice. The syllabification stage required a good amount of ear training.

Next, the students were presented worksheets for practice in dividing words into syllables. This controlled practice was first oral, and then in written form (e.g., vic-to-ry). Finally a group activity requiring student elicitation ensued. The teacher handed out an original worksheet containing spaces for words ranging in length from one to five syllables. The students were then given a category such as fruits or sport teams. They were then timed for one minute. The goal was to write as many words as possible within the given category with the proper number of syllables. No points were given if syllables were miscounted (e.g., a student wrote *broccoli* in the space for a four-syllable word). The students generated their own words for this activity, which built in authenticity to the activity. This game was a favorite among this group and was revisited many times throughout the course (see Appendix 2).

After the first two days, the students became more comfortable with counting syllables and seemed to enjoy this new empowerment. They also were more aware that one syllable within a word receives the strongest stress and length. Once students demonstrated a good understanding of syllabification, they moved into learning one word stress pattern or "rule," each day, paired with an accompanying rap song. The patterns were selected on the basis of frequency and usefulness in speaking American English (Murphy & Kandil, 2003).

Guided and controlled practice using raps

The sequence of controlled, guided, and communicative practice was utilized. The general sequence follows:

Planning Stage

- Photocopy the rap for each student.
- Prepare other materials as stated in lesson.

Teaching Stage

- Listen to the rap and have students follow along by tracking print with a finger or pencil.
- Have students circle unfamiliar vocabulary. Discuss possible meanings.
- Have students make flashcards for new vocabulary words, including slang expressions. Practice using the words.

Rap-a-long Stage

- Play rap again.
- Rap chorally without music as many times as needed.
- Rap with the version that has lyrics.
- Rap with the instrumental-only version.
- Assign 30 minutes of practice with both tracks outside of class as homework.
- On the following day offer opportunities for review by allowing students to perform raps individually or in small groups.

Following are some important details:

The students stood up, stretched rubber bands, beat drums etc. to emphasize stressed syllables. For example, the students would stand up and sit down on a compound noun such as *TOOTHbrush* (see Appendix 4).

The first introduction of the rap would be very slow. A specialized CD player with pitch and tempo control was purchased for this course. This allowed the instructor to begin practicing the raps very slowly at first, and then gradually increase the rate of speech to a more natural level. Then, the tempo was gradually increased on consecutive trials. The students enjoyed the challenge of rapping as fast as they possibly could. Speed seemed to be motivating since it is common in rap music.

The students each practiced a given rap daily on personal CD players. They reported listening to and practicing the songs for more time than was required by the teacher. This extra rehearsal was evident when they returned to class capable of reciting the raps effortlessly and often by memory.

Students were split into groups and alternated lines or stanzas. Once the class was reciting the rap smoothly, the instrumental-only track (sans the rapper) was introduced for added challenge. It was necessary to slow down the tempo once again, as the students attempted to rap independently. Following incremental increases in tempo, some students would volunteer to rap alone, with other students acting as sidekicks, adding “beat box” percussion sounds. The sidekicks really enjoyed ad-libbing. Most of the students could not contain themselves from moving or dancing to the rhythm. I believe it is plausible that this rapping fun can contribute to students’ perceived sense of empowerment and inclusion. Since rap music is so popular among today’s adolescent culture, it may stimulate learning. Lowered

anxiety certainly supports Krashen's theory of language acquisition, (Krashen and Terrell, 1983).

Throughout the guided and controlled activities, the students were encouraged to exaggerate stressed syllables and words within a sentence. This helped the students internalize the sound and feel of primary word and sentence stress. The students with the least intelligible speech seemed to improve more obviously than the others. Participants 5 and 6 made the most marked initial progress, as judged by the instructor and the classroom volunteer. These two students had been consistently producing stress on normally unstressed syllables. Therefore, the listener had to attune very carefully in order to understand the students. During the guided and controlled practice activities, the students were quite easily understood. The elements of repetition and rehearsal included in this phase of instruction consumed the majority of the time spent in this course.

Word stress

Word-level stress serves as a starting point for development of learner awareness of speech-body connections. Teaching word level stress first will also lead to future expansion to phrase, sentence and discourse levels (Murphy, 2004).

The following simple patterns governing word stress were introduced one at a time:

- One word has only one primary stress. If you hear two primary stresses, you are hearing two words.
- Only vowels are stressed, not consonants.

Over the next weeks, students were presented with the following categories of word stress patterns. Each "rule" was practiced both during and outside of class through a corresponding rap song. The rules were:

- Approximately 75% of two-syllable words receive stress on the first syllable (e.g., FAther, WINdy, MANsion)
- Cardinal numbers (e.g., SIXty versus sixTEEN)
- Reflexive pronouns (e.g., himSELF, themSELVES)
- Compound words that function as nouns (e.g., DOGhouse, FIREman)
- Functional shift: words with identical spellings but different functions

Nouns carry stress on the first syllable; verbs carry stress on the second syllable.

NOUN	VERB
INsult	inSULT
REcord	reCORD
REbel	reBEL

- Stress preceding certain suffixes such as *–tion, -ic,* etc. (e.g., creAtion, iRONic)

This knowledge of stress patterns of polysyllabic stress patterns assists ELs become confident spellers and improves their ability to predict pronunciation of orthographic forms of new words encountered (Dickerson, 1987).

Each category of word stress was imparted and practiced through listening discrimination tasks, controlled practice (this included the corresponding raps), guided practice, and finally communicative practice, as outlined by Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin (2000). The

students practiced stressing syllables and words by stretching rubber bands, standing up and down, tapping on desks, clapping, and beating drums, and ultimately, by speaking to the rhythm of rap music.

Once the students' knowledge and practice of word stress was evident, some general patterns of sentence stress were introduced. First, students were made aware of utterance lengths being equivalent to multisyllabic word length. Activities were introduced to encourage students to match stress patterns of words to phrases or sentences (e.g., *elecTRIcian* and *I don't LIKE it*.)

The following stress patterns were introduced and practiced through corresponding activities and raps:

- English syllables are often shortened between strongly stressed syllables (Appendix 3)
- Content words are stressed (e.g., nouns, verbs, adjectives, and others which carry the most information)
- Sometimes auxiliary verbs are stressed to convey emphasis (e.g., He HAS been going to school every day!)

Each student received a CD of rap music to take home for practice. Each rap was recorded on two consecutive tracks, the first with lyrics and the second with instrumentation only. This gave the students an opportunity to sub vocalize first, and then to practice solo. During class, groups were formed to alternate stanzas and compete.

Bio-feedback techniques of pronunciation were introduced and used as a daily warm up. Vocal and muscular exercises were practiced to increase flexibility and range. Students used hand mirrors to observe muscle movements as they correspond to sound. The students found their images in the mirrors to be ridiculous at first. They rolled and folded their tongues, puckered and smiled, massaged their jaws, and did vocal warm-ups. Again, as time passed, the students became more comfortable with these exercises. They were encouraged to practice the exercises at home.

The students also learned basic anatomy of the speech mechanism to increase their awareness of points and manner of articulation. These activities helped the students to see and feel what happens when they produce stress. Although articulation is more often associated with segmental aspects of pronunciation, it is also linked to suprasegmentals such as stress, rhythm and intonation (Murphy, 2004). In fact, these aspects of pronunciation are virtually inseparable. The students took the anatomy lesson very seriously. The knowledge they gained seemed to empower them.

Communicative practice

During the final week of the course, students participated in less structured tasks. Students executed various activities involving role-playing scenarios, information gaps, conducting interviews, and holding informal discussions. Some of these activities were videotaped, and then analyzed by the students. Predictably, there was less carryover evident in these activities than in the guided and controlled practice activities. It was, however, very encouraging to see the students correctly identify errors in stress production as they viewed the videotapes. Being able to recognize correct and incorrect productions is a significant step to internalizing stress patterns. Auditory discrimination is a key example of pattern recognition.

The teacher's monitoring during some of these activities revealed that the students were able to adjust their placement of stress. Error correction was used sparingly, and limited to cases where intelligibility was significantly undermined. The communicative phase of this course was integrated throughout the daily lessons.

FINAL ASSESSMENT

Participants were tested on their knowledge of and application of word and sentence stress patterns. They tape-recorded the same sample of text they had read at the beginning of class. They also repeated the pictorial story task on tape. Results were tallied and compiled into total raw scores and percentages. Pre/post scores were recorded in a table to display the individual students' total scores and percentages. A bar graph was developed from this data to provide additional visual illustration of the before and after results. The data collected from the ESL teacher have also been converted to a table of pre-post scores for each student. Three NAE adults were trained to rate the overall intelligibility of the students before and after the course. They listened to various speech samples to practice rating intelligibility. This increased intra-rater reliability. These training samples included both native speakers (NSs) and NNSs. The raters then scored the intelligibility of the participants according to the following scale:

Rate the speaker on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the least intelligible and 5 being most intelligible and most nearly approximating pronunciation of a native speaker of American English.

1) Speaker is virtually unintelligible.

2) Speaker is very difficult to understand, requiring great concentration on the part of the listener.

3) Pronunciation occasionally interferes with intelligibility.

4) Speaker is usually intelligible, although pronunciation may slightly interfere with understanding.

5) Although an accent may be present, pronunciation approximates that of a native speaker of American English to a degree of not interfering with intelligibility.

The scores were analyzed and compared.

Students practiced continuous informal self-assessment through individual consultation with the ESL teacher and through reflection about their learning in their journals. On the final day of class, students completed an informal survey regarding the class and how successful they deemed it to be.

EVALUATION

To summarize, this four-week project involved six students in an intense program of learning and practicing NAE stress patterns. Initial information elicited from the students was followed by collection of speech samples. The resulting analysis helped guide the scope and sequence of the course. The course was designed to incorporate adequate and appropriate auditory discrimination, controlled, guided and communicative practice. Particular focus was devoted to activities related to the rap songs specifically composed for this course.

Final assessments were developed in order to answer the question "Did the rap method improve the students' use of word and sentence stress?" The original unrehearsed speech sample was again presented and recorded during the last session of class. The students were

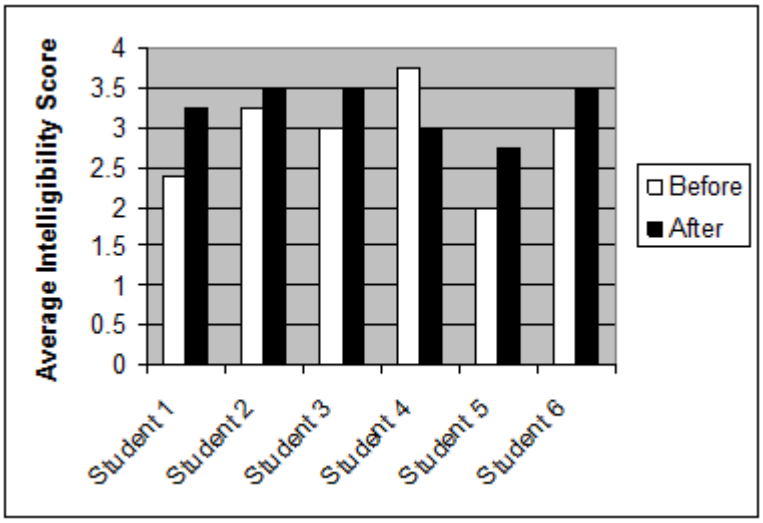
informed that people whom they have never met would evaluate the initial and final speech samples. All six of the original students were present for the final assessments.

The recorded speech samples were mixed up and dubbed onto a CD. Readings of the unrehearsed script were randomly mixed in with picture-prompted speech samples. The samples were later judged by three NAE adult speakers. These evaluators were not in any way affiliated with the field of ESL. The evaluators rated student intelligibility on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being the least intelligible and 5 being the most intelligible.

This basic scale representing the unrehearsed reading samples provided some indications that intelligibility had improved over the four-week period of study. Although the amount of change may not be statistically significant, five out of six participants received higher ratings in the final speech samples. The perceived improvement in intelligibility may have been greater if the duration of the class had been longer.

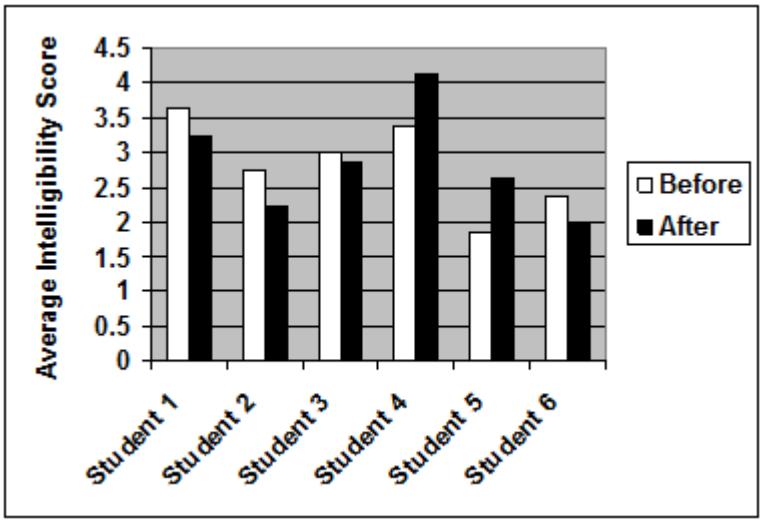
Figure 1 illustrates the averages of the numerical responses of the three evaluators in this study. This graph represents the unrehearsed reading samples.

Figure 1. Pre/Post Intelligibility Score on Unrehearsed Reading Sample



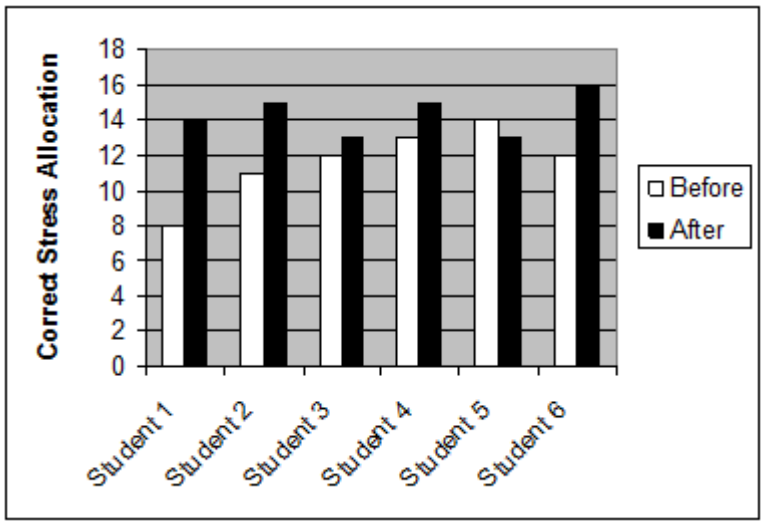
The before and after ratings of the picture-prompted speech samples were less impressive. Since this task was considerably more spontaneously generated, the chances for carryover were slim. Four participants actually had decreased scores on this task. A plausible explanation would be that more than four weeks of practice is necessary in order to see consistent improvement in spontaneous speech. Another possible reason the results are less impressive is that the word stress pattern features elicited by this picture did not match the word stress patterns taught during class (i.e., the students may not have had a chance to demonstrate the stress patterns learned in class.) Anxiety may also have played a role; the students were aware that the picture prompt would be used as a final measure of their production. All results are inconclusive, given the short duration of the class. Figure 2 represents the raters' average scores given on the picture prompt task.

Figure 2. Pre/Post Intelligibility Score on Picture Prompted Speech Sample



The instructor also listened to the speech samples collected and tallied the number of appropriate word and sentence stresses. This was only done with the unrehearsed reading samples. The reason for this was that the script was the same for each participant, allowing for accurate recording of stress marks as the samples were listened to. The spontaneous speech samples were sometimes impossible to understand, making accurate recording of stress unlikely. The speech samples were reshuffled onto another CD so the instructor did not know whether a sample was from the beginning of class or the end. Again, five of the six students increased the number of correct stress allocations, as judged by the ESL teacher. The tempo on the CD was slowed down, in order to accurately record stress marks over the words on paper. Figure 3 summarizes the number of correct stress placements, as judged by the instructor.

Figure 3. Pre/Post Score on Stress Allocation

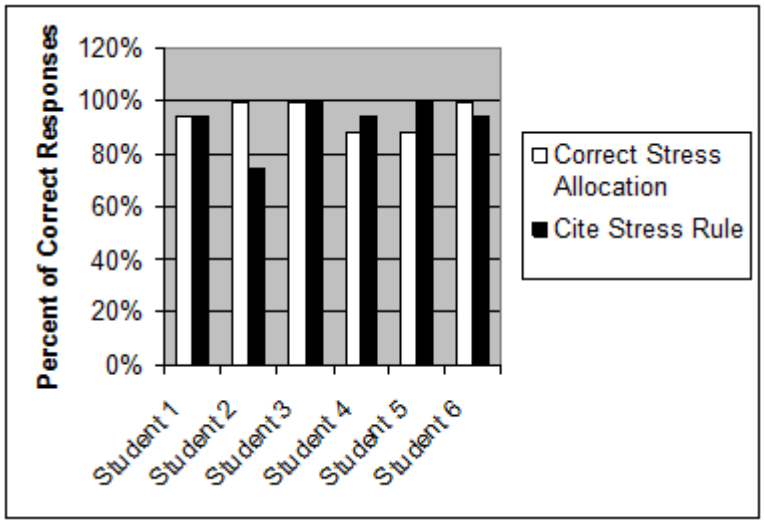


A final assessment was conducted using flashcards with targeted words and phrases. The students were assessed in the following areas:

- Correct placement of stress.
- Correct citation of the word or sentence stress rule for each flash card.

As shown in Figure 4, the students displayed impressive performances on this assessment. They showed confidence and pride in demonstrating the mastery of metacognitive strategies.

Figure 4. Score on Final Assessment



Final questionnaire

The last day of class included a final questionnaire. The students' responses were quite positive. All six students indicated affirmative responses to the following items:

§ They improved their pronunciation skills during the course.

§ They learned how to stop and correct errors in their speech because they know some stress rules.

§ They would be willing to take another similar course in the future.

§ They believed rap music is a good way to learn pronunciation. Some additional comments recorded:

"*Talking is good, but the music helps more.*"

"Music helps me remember the rules."

"It is fun to work with rap music, so I remember."

"It's fun to repeat and learn, because it's music."

§ They would continue listening to the CD and practicing stress rules even though the class was ending.

"*Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes I will!*"

§ They felt new confidence in their speech.

"*I didn't trust myself before when I was talking, but now I do.*"

"I think I'll be more confident about my speech in 12th grade."

Two of the six participants reported that someone outside of the class had commented on their improved pronunciation. Additional comments made:

"Thanks for making me a better speaker than I was before."

"Thank you very much. Now I think I'm not nervous speaking to teacher or other. You've help me a lot."

"I think this class is the best. It improved my pronunciation this summer."

OBSERVATIONS AND FIELD NOTES

The instructor wrote narratives throughout the course that provide an alternative look at progress made by the students. Here are some observations recorded:

§ Some students demonstrated difficulty in counting syllables, even at the end of the course.

§ Students' response to pattern recognition games was very enthusiastic.

§ Participants 1 and 5 attended class sporadically, which could have impeded progress.

§ Participant 5 was considerably more shy and self-conscious than the other students. She had the lowest intelligibility in the class and seemed aware of this. She was sometimes reluctant to participate.

§ Participants 4 and 6 had the most outgoing personalities and had a tendency to dominate the class. They needed reminders to let others have a chance to answer questions. Perhaps there is a correlation between personalities that are risk-taking and positive pronunciation outcomes.

§ The volunteer helper reported that students increased their awareness of errors when listening to themselves on daily tapings. She also noted that the students' frequency of self-correction increased with time during class time discussion and games.

§ Both the instructor and the volunteer were impressed by the speed and accuracy the students displayed in memorizing lyrics and complicated musical rhythm patterns.

SUMMARY

This study was developed in order to determine whether rap music may be a valuable instructional tool for improving word and sentence stress in English language learners. The first step was collecting relevant data from the students in this sample. Next, speech samples were obtained and evaluated. Then, the instructional phase was implemented using controlled, guided, and communicative practice. The final evaluation procedures were conducted in order to provide a general indication of whether intelligibility was affected as a result of the intervention of rap music.

According to the responses gathered from the three evaluators, there was general perceived improvement in the performance of most students. Perhaps the most valuable result is that the students in this sample gained a sense of autonomy through learning metacognitive skills regarding word and sentence stress production. Their focused efforts can certainly contribute to future competence in pronunciation.

QUESTIONS

Numerous questions have arisen as result of this study as well as in the years I have been using this method of pronunciation. I encourage further research to examine these questions:

- What are the connections between music and language learning?
- Just how salient are personality factors and learning styles in acquiring good pronunciation skills?
- Are some ELs simply more "talented" than others in picking up more native-like accent?
- Did the fact that this course was a voluntary experiment impact the results?
- Will a smaller, intermittent dose of rap-based instruction yield similar positive results?
- Will a longitudinal study reveal positive gains will last over time?
- Would similar results occur if a larger sample size were used?
- Will intonation and linking also improve when supported through rap-based instruction?
- Which activities in this study caused the most pronunciation gains – was it the rap activities alone, the reading and reflective journaling, or the combination of these activities?

Indeed, research is in the infancy stages regarding many of these topics. I encourage ESL teachers to forge ahead and introduce this method to teach stress patterns. Your students will thank you! There are many teachable moments when raps can be incorporated into your lessons (see Appendices 3 and 4 for sample raps relating to cardinal numbers and compound nouns). Raps can be spread out throughout the school year and/or used on an "as needed" basis. I close with the lyrics to a rap that reflects the frustration experienced by many of our students. Happy rapping!

Stress Rulz!

DON'T you HATE when PEOple ASK,
"WHAT did you SAY?"--a HUNdred times a DAY.
You KNOW your ENGlish, OH so WELL
But STILL some PEOple JUST can't TELL.
BeLIEVE me, it's KIND of a DRAG;
BeLIEVE me, it AIN'T no TREAT,
When EVery TIME you TRY to SPEAK,
You're ASKed to STOP and THEN rePEAT.
Stress RULZ! ■ Rhythm ROCKS! ■
To MAKE yourSELF more UNderSTOOD,
You'll LEARN stress RULZ, 'cuz EVerybody SHOULD.
STRESS and RHYthm ARE the KEYS
You NEED, NOW your CONverSAtions
ARE GUARanTEED to

SucCEED. NEVer aGAIN will ANYbody

PLEAD. “Now, WHAT did you SAY?”

--A HUNdred TIMES throughout the COURSE of a DAY!

Stress RULZ! ■ Rhythm ROCKS! ■

AUTHOR

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Appendix 1

ELICITATION QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is your first language?
2. What other languages do you speak?
3. How many years have you attended school?
4. How many years of ESL classes have you had?

5. Was there any pronunciation instruction in your ESL classes? How much?

6. Why do you want to improve your pronunciation?

7. Do you believe you can improve your pronunciation? Why or why not?

8. Why do you think you may have pronunciation problems?

UNREHEARSED READING SAMPLE

Hello, I am a student and I'm taking a class to improve my pronunciation. There's a gigantic amount to learn, but this class will make it as enjoyable as possible. I intend to learn about American English stress patterns, so that I'll be easier to understand. Soon, I'll be able to tell you the rules by myself.

I really want to learn more about pronunciation because I must speak in front of the whole classroom. Better pronunciation will permit me to feel more confident in every situation. I will record my speech many times in order to discover problems and to listen for improvements. I will also keep a record of my reflections about how I feel about my speech.

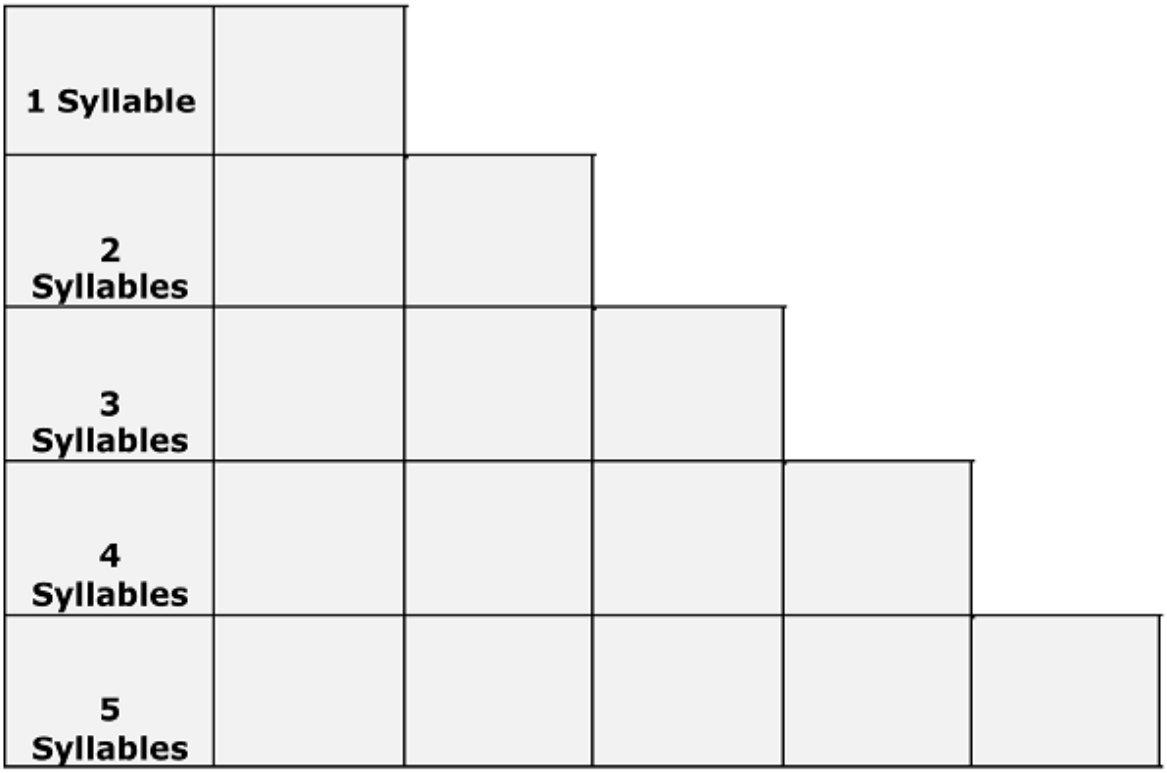
There will be seventeen days of class and I realize that good attendance is very important. I will practice for at least twenty minutes each day with my rap CD. I will copy rules from the blackboard and try to memorize as many as I can. Will this rap method really work? After working really hard, I may find that this method really does work!

APPENDIX 2

Syllabic Steps

Directions:
Write down the category your teacher gives you. On the steps, write down words that are members of that category. Try to use one, two, three, four, and five syllable words.

Category: _____ Time limit: 1 minute



Appendix 3

Cardinal Rule

13 thirTEEN	17 sevenTEEN
14 fourTEEN	18 eighTEEN
15 fifTEEN	19 nineTEEN
16 sixTEEN	

Well, you become a teen when you're thirTEEN.
How old should you be to drive? SixTEEN.
And you can vote when you're eighTEEN.
And the year after that you're nineTEEN.

20 TWENty	60 SIXty
30 THIRty	70 SEVENty
40 FORty	80 EIGHty
50 FIFty	90 NINEty

Ten plus ten equals TWENty.
You might buy a house when you're THIRty.
You may retire when you're SIXty.
And you know you're old when you're NINEty.

Let's compare the different stress
Of the two groups of numbers we must address.
I said, Let's compare the different stress
Of the two groups of numbers we must address.

13 thirTEEN	17 sevenTEEN
30 THIRty	70 SEVENty
14 fourTEEN	18 eighTEEN
40 FORty	80 EIGHty
15 fifTEEN	19 nineTEEN
50 FIFty	90 NINEty
16 sixTEEN	

60 SIXty

So don't forget this cardinal rule
We use inside and outside of school.
People will know what number you mean
When you tell the world you're only sixTEEN.

Appendix 4

Compound *Noun*sense

Don't be scered!*
When we put two nouns together to make a long word,
The very first syllable is more strongly heard.

dog + house…	DOGhouse	hard + ware…	HARDware
lip + stick…	LIPstick	book + store…	BOOKstore
dip + stick…	DIPstick	drug + store…	DRUGstore
tooth + brush…	TOOTHbrush	bath + room…	BATHroom

I lost my only TOOTHbrush; I need to find it.
I looked in the garbage, then I looked behind it.
I retraced my steps to the BOOKstore, it wasn't there
So I took a bus to the fair.

The lady at the carnival wore LIPstick,
She told me to check under my hood by my DIPstick.
No luck when I looked in a DOGhouse,
I only found a tennis ball and an old blouse.

Off to the HARDware store to buy a TOOTHbrush.
'Cuz the DRUGstore is too far, and I'm in a rush.
So I bought a new brush just like before.
I ran home but beyond my BATHroom door,

I saw my TOOTHbrush that I thought was lost
In my brother's hand. I felt double-crossed.
Still this story ends as happy as another.
I got my TOOTHbrush back from my little brother.

Repeat second stanza (DOG+house, etc.)
*scared, afraid

MINNESOTA IN-SERVICE TEACHER PERSPECTIVES ON PRE-PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

Karen Lybeck

ABSTRACT

This report gives the results of a survey given to in-service ESL teachers in Minnesota regarding the relationship between their pre-service preparation and their current practice[1]. The purpose of this survey was to help inform teacher educators about those areas that in-service teacher's felt they needed more preparation in order to strengthen both pre-service preparation and continuing professional development. The purpose of this report is to share this information with other programs that might also benefit from it.

IMPETUS FOR THE STUDY

As a result of our experiences teaching TESL content and methods courses, observing pre-service and in-service teachers in their teaching practice, and in conversations with teachers, teacher educators, and supervisors at various professional development opportunities, we felt that a number of teachers were not necessarily exhibiting the skills in their classrooms that we felt they were or should be getting in their professional education programs. While there are many factors that might contribute to such a gap, such as institutional constraints, cognitive overload, classroom management issues, etc., we wanted to find out what in-service teachers could tell us about the relationship between their pre-service training and their current practice. We hypothesized that the perceived gap might be related to, 1) differences between what we, as teacher educators, perceived we were giving students compared to what they actually came away with, 2) whether pre-professional programs focused on something different than what was needed in the classroom, or, 3) if the gap was more a problem of transferring knowledge from theory to practice. In order to better understand where the problem lay, and ultimately decide if there were changes that we could facilitate at the pre-service level, we decided to survey in-service teachers for their input.

Research Questions

In order to answer the more global question listed above, we collected data that would allow us to answer the following set of sub-questions:

1. *What is the participants' level of satisfaction with their pre-service professional development in theory and research?*
2. *By what means were participants prepared to use theory/research in their teaching practices?*
3. *What was their level of satisfaction with each of these opportunities/activity types?*
4. *How do the participants use their knowledge of the theory to teach ELLs today?*
5. *What advice do the participants have for teacher educators and TESL students on this topic?*

[1] The survey was created and conducted by Nancy Drescher and Karen Lybeck in the TESL program at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

We decided to ask the first three questions because they reflect typical areas of course work that provide students with much of the knowledge and skill they need to make informed pedagogical decisions once in the classroom. These three questions also appeared to us to elicit information about where the gaps appeared between learning and practice, and to be readily assessable for the participants. We chose the last two questions because they are the means through which in-service teachers continue to acquire and update their knowledge and skills. We felt that while in-service professional development is provided at the school and district level, and while many teachers engage in reflective teaching and peer coaching, that ultimately being prepared to carry out action research and to know what professional development opportunities specifically for ESL teachers are available were two areas that the pre-professional program should provide.

METHODS

This study was conducted via a Zoomerang online survey (See items in Appendices A & B) during the spring of 2007. Participants were recruited through the MinneTESOL K-12 interest sections' email lists and the Southern Minnesota ESL Networking list-serve. Twenty-nine people attempted the survey which was divided into the following 5 content-area categories:

- Teaching decisions based on research in L2 acquisition and pedagogy (L2 Theory).
- Use of linguistic analysis for evaluating student interlanguage output (Ling IL).
- Use of linguistic analysis in class preparation, such as in choosing, modifying, understanding the difficulties in materials (Ling Text).
- Engagement in action research (Act Res)[2].
- Continuing professional development specific to ESL (Prof Dev).

We asked the respondents to report on their satisfaction with their coursework for each of these five areas, what types of activities their instructors used in order to help them acquire knowledge and skills in these areas, how the participants currently used this knowledge/skill set in their profession, what advice they had for teacher educators in each area, and in what types of professional development they would be interested in participating. Participants were given an exhaustive list of activities from which to report and evaluate under each category. While we tried to think of all possible types of activities that might be used in any of the five areas, we also provided space for possible other answers we might not have considered and any comments they chose to share.

Of the 29 volunteer participants that logged on and gave their consent to use their input, 2 discontinued taking the survey after the first of the five sections, and two others skipped either the fourth or the fifth category. Additionally, one respondent gave overall ratings and global comments in all five categories, but left all of the activities unmarked. On a side note, we received two comments on the extensive nature of the survey directly through email; one participant complained of the length of the survey, while the other thanked us for gathering this kind of data.

We did not collect demographic information from the participants because we did not want to connect results or remarks with any specific pre-professional programs, however, several comments made by the participants made it possible to conclude that this was a diverse group. Their comments showed that the participant pool was comprised of a wide range of

[2] Action research here refers to any data gathering and analysis that teachers engage in within their own classrooms, or with peers within their school program, to better understand the needs of their ELLs or to assess the effectiveness of their program or their own teaching practices.

experiential levels, from young, first-year teachers to those retiring at the end of 30 years of service, and that they taught in a variety of K-12 contexts. Some noted where they received their pre-professional education, which ranged from Minnesota institutions, both small liberal arts colleges and public universities, to educational institutions in other states, as well as online programs. Through their list of professional development activities, it was also notable that they had wide and varied experiences within the profession outside of their classroom teaching, such as service to professional organizations and engagement in professional development. While the survey asked about their own experiences, many also answered from the perspective of mentors for new colleagues, giving their impressions of the gaps these less experienced teachers exhibited.

The data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The participants' overall satisfaction rating within each content area were calculated, as well as the consistency with which the respondents evaluated the different content areas from their pre-professional education. The most frequently used activity types for acquiring knowledge in these content areas are shown, as well as overall satisfaction with each of these activities. The qualitative data are organized into categories of comments the participants gave in terms of how they use their knowledge, how they believe pre-professional programs can improve, and their current needs for professional development.

RESULTS

1. What is the participants' level of satisfaction with their pre-service professional development in theory and research?

Table 1. *Percent of Participants Rating Satisfaction with Pre-Professional Preparation in 5 Knowledge Areas*

	L2 Theory n=29	**Ling IL** n=27	**Ling Text** n=27	**Act Res** n=26	**Prof Dev** n=26
Well	.72	.67	.67	.46	.54
Adequately	.14	.19	.15	.19	.31
Inadequate	.13	.15	.18	.35	.16

Table 1 shows the results of the participants' satisfaction with their pre-professional education in the five different areas questioned in the survey. In order to more easily see where the knowledge gaps seem to occur, Table 1 shows the results by conflating the top two categories, *very well prepared* and *well prepared* into one category, *well prepared,* and the bottom two categories, *somewhat* and *inadequately prepared,* into *under prepared* (find the raw data and percentages in Appendix C). In terms of satisfaction with their course work and preparation for ESL teaching, the majority of respondents (54 – 72%) felt well or very well prepared in all categories except for *Action Research,* where a full third of the respondents felt under prepared. In the other four categories, the results still showed that between 13-18% of the respondents felt under prepared.

While we did not ask for overall satisfaction with pre-professional programs, the individuals' scores, as shown in Table 2, reveal consistency between the highest rating, L2 Theory, and

the other categories. Table 2 shows the individual scores ranked according to satisfaction with L2 Theory, 5 being most satisfied and 1 being least. Those scores that vary by more than 1 point from the L2 Theory score are highlighted. Approximately half of the participants used only two descriptors for their programs, showing that these people experienced their programs as consistent across these categories. With the exception of one participant, the other half reported 1 score that was two or more points away from the others, most of which (7) were in the category of *Action Research,* though four were in the area of professional development and two were in the area of *Linguistic Analysis of Texts.* Of the four who rated their L2 Theory and Linguistic preparation poorly, three rated either action research or professional development more highly from adequate to good.

Table 2. *Individual Satisfaction Scores*

L2 Theory	Ling: IL	Ling: Text	Act Res	Prof Dev
5	5	5	5	5
5	5	5	5	4
5	4	5	4	5
5	4	4	5	5
5	4	4	4	5
5	5	5	2	4
5	4	4	4	2
4	5	5	5	5
4	4	4	5	5
4	4	4	4	4
4				
4	3	4	4	
4	4	4	3	3
4	4	4	3	3
4	5	2	5	5
4	4	4	2	5
4	4	4	2	3
4	4	4	2	4
4	3	4	2	3
4	4	3	2	5
4	4	3		2
3	3	3	3	3
3				
3	2	4	3	3
3	3	1	1	3
2	2	2	3	4
2	3	3	4	1
2	1	1	1	2
1	2	1	1	3
Average Rating 4.03	3.67	3.55	3.23	3.69

2. By what means were participants prepared to use theory/research in their teaching practices?

The survey gave the participants a list of activities they might have engaged in during their courses (See Appendix B). The lists of activities for the first three categories dealing with L2 Theory and Linguistic knowledge were the same. Within these three categories, most participants acknowledged that they had engaged to some extent in each of the 16 activity types presented. Table 3 shows the activities in which at least 6 participants indicated they did not engage during their course work. If an activity did not fit in a category, such as

using interlanguage data to understand the linguistic structure of authentic texts, then it was eliminated from this list.

Table 3. *Number of Participants and Activities not engaged in during Pre-professional Preparation*

L2 Theory	**Ling IL**	**Ling Text**
n=28	n=26	n=26
10 Analysis of Classroom Interaction 8 Microteaching 8 Use of Videos 6 Interlanguage Data Analysis	10 Library Research 8 Classroom Interaction Data 7 Small group/pair work 6 Observation	8 Library Research 7 Teacher Modeling 7 Small group interaction 7 Reflection 6 Observation 6 Discussion

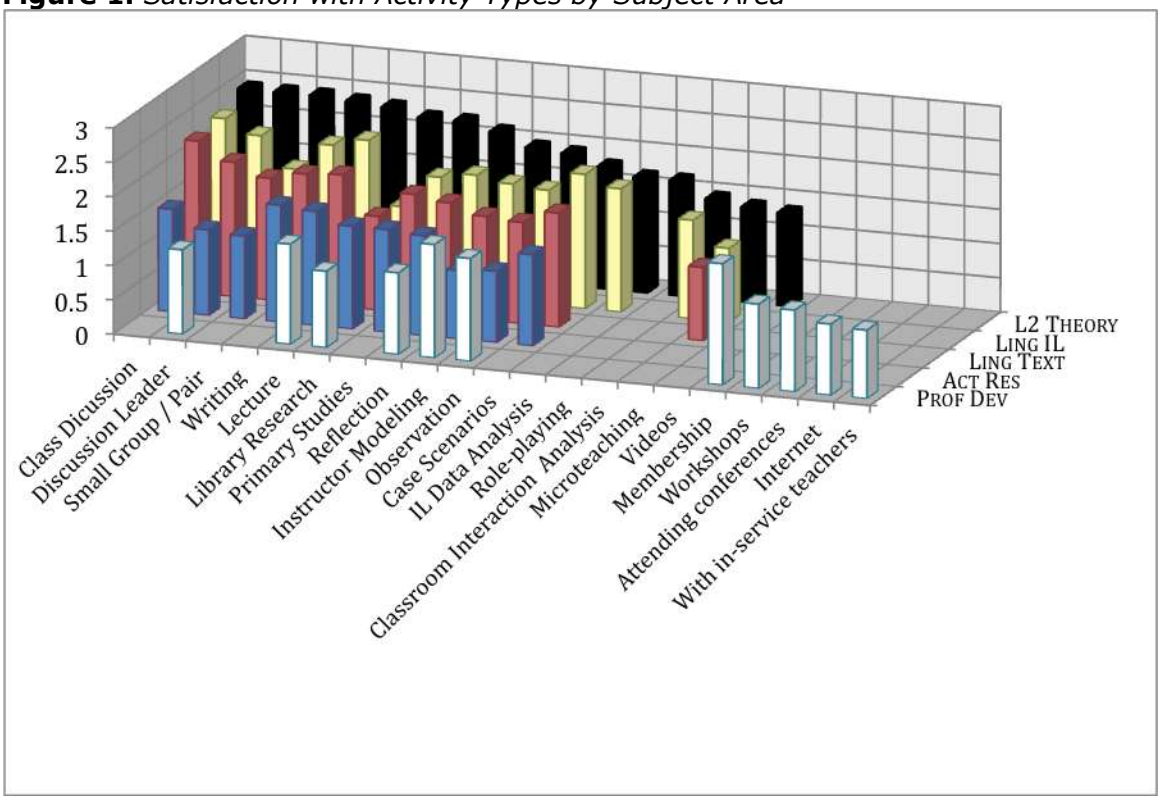
When it came to action research and professional development, however, there were many more who were not engaged in activities in these areas. Five of the 25 respondents did not receive any instruction on action research. Of the twenty who did, it was generally through lecture/discussion, primary research, writing, and reflection. The activity types in the professional development category differed greatly from the other categories and were responded to by 24 participants. Of the 12 given activities, only 5 were engaged in by most of the participants; instructor reports, lecture, membership in professional organizations, attending conferences, and district professional development functions.

3. What was their level of satisfaction with each of these opportunities/activity types?

The participants were also asked to evaluate how well these activities were used in the learning process, with 3 representing *excellent*, 2 being *adequate*, and 1 *inadequate*. Figure 1 below shows the overall rating of each activity given by the participants as a group. Each subject area is designated by a different color and organized from the most satisfactorily used activities in the L2 Theory category on the left and descending to the right. Across subject areas the highest scoring is in the back, L2 Theory, and the lowest in the front, Action Research and Professional Development.

For the most part it appears that satisfaction within activity type works similarly to overall satisfaction, with each activity most highly ranked in L2 Theory and descending forward, such as the ratings for *lecture*. There is only slight variation in this pattern. For example, *group work* and *library research* score slightly lower in *Linguistic Analysis of Interlanguage* than in *Linguistic Analysis of Text*. Another anomaly occurs in *teacher modeling* and *observation,* where *professional development* scores higher than *action research,* and about the same as *Linguistic Analysis of Text*. The only time a subject area out scores *L2 Theory* is when *Linguistic Analysis of Interlanguage* is rated slightly higher in *case scenarios* and *interlanguage data analysis*.

Figure 1. *Satisfaction with Activity Types by Subject Area*



Within the subject areas neither *professional development* nor *action research* had any activities with an overall adequate score. *Professional development* shows only *applying for membership in professional organizations* nearing the adequate range, while *action research* nears that mark in *writing assignments* and *lecture*. On the other end of the spectrum, pre-professional programs seem to utilize many activities effectively in classes on theory and applying theory to practice. Eight of 16 categories scored above *adequate*, however, use of *micro-teaching* and *videos* were rated closer to inadequate. When it comes to the two types of *linguistic analysis*, all but a few tasks are rated between inadequate and adequate. The only tasks that score above a 2 are the more traditional classroom activities, such as *lecture, discussion,* and *writing assignments*, while more interactive and applied tasks, such as *group work* and *micro-teaching* fare rather poorly.

4. How do the participants' use their knowledge of the theory to teach ELLs today?

Participants were asked at the end of each content area how they apply what they learned in their pre-professional programs in their current teaching situations. Table 4 shows the summary of the comments the participants gave. The number of participants who answered each questions is given, as well as the number of participants making each comment type. Many of the respondents gave multiple comments; therefore the number of comments is larger than the number of participants.

According to the comments given it seems that most of the participants were confident in and regularly used their knowledge of L2 theory and methods and linguistics to diagnose and meet the needs of their students. They seem slightly less confident in their linguistic ability to analyze authentic texts, but many have and use this knowledge as well. In the area of professional development, almost all the participants were active in multiple

ways each year to engage in continued learning. The area with the least amount of engagement by the participants was the area of action research. Only 13 of the 26 respondents in this area gave comments about action research and slightly over half of those did not engage in it due to lack of interest, time, or preparation. Some of the comments in this section, such as saying that they engaged in reflective teaching, made it unclear if some of them were not familiar with action research or if, because they had not engaged in it, were looking for something they could contribute to the category.

Table 4. *Self Report of how Respondents use their Knowledge in the Five Content Areas*

Category	L2 Theory	Ling IL	Ling Text	Act Res	Prof Dev
Number of responses	n=23	n=15	n=22	n=13	n=20
How knowledge is used	16 –daily lessons, inform all aspects of teaching. 5 - limited contexts: beginners, placement, student problems 2 – while mentoring, collaborating. 2 –inform teaching, but knowledge did not come from pre-professional courses.	9 - daily 5 – frequently: placement, evaluate outcomes & teaching effectiveness, set expectations, contrastive analysis.	9 – frequently: error analysis, scaffolding, teach forms & functions, find patterns, choose, analyze, & modify text, collaborate. 5 - contrastive analysis. 4 – daily lessons. 2 - only indirectly or with beginners.	6 – in at least one of the following: pronunciation, reading, brain gym, collaboration, bilingual ed., standardized test scores.	20 – in at least one of the following: conferences, committees, workshops, district functions, in-service, memberships, newsletters, coursework, additional license, book clubs, learning communities.
Why knowledge is not used	1 – lack of knowledge. 1 – lack of time.	1 – time/emphasis on formal assessment.	2 – lack of knowledge. 2 – lack of time/time on mandates. 1 –not useful.	5 – lack of preparation/ support. 2 – engagement in reflective teaching is enough.	

Table 5. *Participant Advice to Teacher Educators*

Perceived Gap	**Field Experiences**	**Classroom Reality**	**Collaboration**	**Literacy**	**Age & Proficiency Levels**
Responses n=23	n=8	n=8	n=7	n=6	n=5
Comments	*More of the following:* Observations - ELL & Mainstream, a variety of teachers & programs. Student-contact time. ESL-teacher contact. Interaction with specialists. *Do not*: exempt anyone from student teaching.	*More information/ practice with the following:* Classroom management. Diversity issues. Advocacy. Standards, formal assessments, mandates, title 1. Time constraints. Multi-tasking. Program types & how to teach in them.	*Awareness:* Working as part of a team. Working with paraprofessionals, translators, classroom teachers, special education professionals, & other specialists. Networking with others at your site, within the district, and others in the profession. Mentoring. *Add:* Support groups of student-teachers or new teachers. Pre-professional ESL training for classroom teachers and specialists.	*More coursework on:* All aspects of literacy, including trends in methodology.	*More information/ practice with the following:* Illiteracy and reading materials for older students. Differentiated instruction. Differences between elementary and secondary ESL settings and teaching. ELLs and Special Ed.

5. *What advice do the participants have for teacher educators and TESL students on this topic?*

All of the written comments given by the participants on what could be improved in ESL teacher education could be categorized into one of five areas. These categories can be considered to be gaps the in-service teachers said either they themselves or their less-experienced colleagues encountered between their preparation and their on-the-job needs. These gaps, listed in Table 5, were in the amount of observation and practical experience gained, understanding the realities of the job, preparation for collaborating with other professionals, literacy training, and understanding variation in learner needs by age, language proficiency, and literacy experiences.

Eight of the participants suggested that pre-service teachers get more time in the classroom both observing and working with students before they graduate. Not unrelated to this were 8 comments on having a better sense of the everyday reality of the job. More time in the classroom, especially simultaneously with coursework, would allow for more clarity on the work environment, as well as for multiple venues to ask their questions and come up with techniques to improve their repertoire. Also related to the on-the-job experience are 7 comments on learning more about collaboration. Teachers wanted training on how to work well with classroom teachers who were not trained to work with ELLs. Seasoned teachers also expressed that some colleagues new to the profession had difficulty working as part of a team or knowing how and with whom to network.

DISCUSSION

Over two-thirds of respondents reported being well prepared for their profession in terms of their *theoretical* and *linguistic knowledge*, and they appeared to be putting that knowledge to effective use. Despite this satisfaction, the participants' advice for teacher educators pointed out two theoretical areas in which at least a quarter of the teacher's felt they lacked adequate knowledge, namely literacy and differentiated instruction. The respondents who reported lower preparation scores in *theory* and *linguistics* generally seemed not only to lack preparation, but were the same respondents who, through their comments, showed a lack of understanding as to why such preparation is useful, and/or did not have proficient enough analysis skills to make efficient use of them. While *professional development* seemed to have a low profile during pre-service preparation, the participants were generally satisfied with this area and, in line with their written comments, were not hindered from finding and taking part in numerous professional development activities.

The most broadly neglected area, according to the survey, appears to be *action research*, with a full third of the group reporting that they were inadequately prepared to conduct action research, and less than a quarter commenting on specific projects. Because the ability to conduct local research is an important skill set for teachers, allowing them to investigate what is working in their specific contexts or with specific groups of students, we felt teachers should at least be familiar with the tools to engage in action research as a form of inquiry, even knowing they might be too overwhelmed to engage in it during their first years of service. Because programs are often obliged to justify their existence, make the case for additional resources, or legitimize program changes to individuals outside the field, teachers need to minimally understand what action research involves and where to find the appropriate resources to proceed with such exploration. Perhaps related to these obligations, many participants commented on the desire for strategies for successful

networking within their schools and for eliciting peer coaching between programs in or across districts, especially for those who may be the only ESL specialist at their site.
There appears to be consistency between the participants' reports of the activities their instructors employed in their classes, the participants' satisfaction with these activities, and their comments advising more hands-on practice for pre-service teachers. The more traditional classroom activities were used most frequently and effectively according to the survey, but they are typically not the ones that simulate the work of the classroom, such as guided video-viewing, instructor-modeled teaching practice, observations, role-play, case scenarios, and microteaching.

CONCLUSION

While this survey only netted between 26-29 responses in each of the 5 categories, it gives insight into the experiences and concerns of a cross section of in-service teachers. While the sample was not random, indications are that the population was diverse in its age, experience level, employment, student populations, and pre-professional institutions. One drawback may be that recruiting via voluntary listservs may have provided a disproportionate number of highly engaged professionals. Despite this, many comments were given not just about the participants themselves, but also about their contact with less-experienced colleagues, and the gaps the respondents observed these newer teachers to have. The participants notwithstanding, their responses give specifics into how knowledge usually taught in pre-professional preparation is or is not used by ESL teachers on the job. While the survey suggests that there are a number of areas in which pre-professional programs are doing well, it also provides information implying that the gap between theory and practice can be reduced.

Returning to our original pondering of possible reasons for why that gap exists, the survey appears to indicate that all three of our concerns are in play. 1) The differences between what teacher educators perceive they are giving students compared to what students actually come away with was shown by a small number of participants indicating that their theoretical and linguistic background was limited, useless, or inefficient. 2) A significant number of comments requesting more background in literacy, classroom management, networking strategies, and differentiated instruction indicate that pre-professional programs are not giving enough time to every area in-service teachers find necessary. 3) The problem of transferring knowledge from theory to practice was clearly indicated in the large number of comments in this area, and may be due to both a. limited practice opportunities in schools, and, b. the more traditional teaching activities used during coursework. There are certainly other factors that affect teachers' methodological choices in the classroom, not the least of which are institutional resources and expectations, however, the three issues identified here are areas where teacher educators can strive to improve.

While pre-professional programs cannot provide all the experiences individuals may need upon entering service, it may be possible to use the information provided in this survey to begin to close some of the gaps between coursework and classroom. It is not the intent of this report to provide solutions to the issues these in-service teachers raised, nor even implications for improved language-teacher education, but rather to make this data available to area colleagues so that they might benefit from considering this feedback within their specific context. While each program differs depending on its faculty and audience, the results of this survey may help any TESL

program in our area to better understand the development needs of pre-professional students.

AUTHOR

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Appendix A[3]

Second Language Teacher Professional Preparation Survey Questions

This anonymous survey will aid us in better understanding the ways in which teacher candidates process new knowledge during their education and how they utilize this knowledge when faced with the realities of the classroom and their responsibilities beyond. In order to understand your specific situation, we have included a number of comment boxes. In addition to the radio buttons, please feel free to complete as many or as few of these comment sections as your schedule allows.

The following survey is split into 5 sections, with similar questions in each section. The topics are: 1) Teaching decisions based on research, 2) Linguistic analysis of classroom texts,
3) Linguistic analysis of student output, 4) Engagement in action research, and
5) Continuing professional development specific to ESL

Teaching Decisions Based on Research

1. How well do you feel your Professional Education in TESL prepared you to apply your knowledge of research in the areas of second language acquisition and second language pedagogy to decision-making in the ESL classroom?
    - I was very well prepared.
    - I was well prepared, but there was room for improvement.
    - The preparation was adequate.
    - I was somewhat prepared.
    - I felt inadequately prepared for the job.[4]
2. What kinds of activities/assignments did you engage in during your coursework in this area and how effective were they? If you did not engage in an activity listed, just leave it blank.[5]
3. How do you currently utilize your knowledge about second language acquisition and second language teaching methods to teach your classes?

Linguistic Analysis of Classroom Texts

1. How well do you feel your Professional Education in TESL prepared you to apply your knowledge of linguistics to analyzing classroom texts, for example to evaluate the level of a text in relation to the target audience, to determine which elements of the text might be problematic for learners, to plan activities where students analyze texts to understand specific aspects such as genres, grammatical features, rhetorical structures, meaning, academic language, etc.
2. What kinds of activities/assignments did you engage in during your coursework in this area and how effective were they? If you did not engage in an activity listed, just leave it blank.
3. How do you currently utilize your knowledge of linguistics in preparation for teaching?

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[3] This appendix provides the content, but not the format of the online survey.
[4] These five options were reprinted after question 1 in each of the categories. They have been left out here because of space.
[5] See Appendix B for the options provided the participants in the online survey.

Linguistic Analysis of Student Output

1. How well do you feel your Professional Education in TESL prepared you to apply your knowledge of linguistics to analyze student output; that is to assess students' strengths and areas for improvement, and/or to understand the source of learner error?
2. What kinds of activities/assignments did you engage in during your coursework in this area and how effective were they? If you did not engage in an activity listed, just leave it blank.
3. How do you currently utilize your knowledge of linguistics in assessing student output?

Engagement in action research

1. How well do you feel your Professional Education in TESL prepared you to engage in action research; that is any type of data collection to help you solve problems, develop curriculum, or improve your teaching or your school's program in any way?
2. What kinds of activities/assignments did you engage in during your coursework in this area and how effective were they? If you did not engage in an activity listed, just leave it blank.
3. What types of action research have you engaged in (not necessarily published or shared with others, but how have you engaged in action research to answer your own classroom questions) as a teacher and what did you gain from it?

Continuing professional development specific to ESL

1. How well do you feel your Professional Education in TESL prepared you to connect to professional development activities, such as membership in professional organizations, conferences, workshops, summer institutes, courses, etc.?
2. What kinds of activities/assignments did you engage in during your coursework in this area and how effective were they? If you did not engage in an activity listed, just leave it blank
3. What discipline specific professional development activities have you engaged in since you received your license?

Follow-up questions:

1. Do you have any advice for teacher educators (especially in the field of ELL) that would help us better prepare new teachers for the reality of the classroom?
2. If you would like to improve your skills in any of the above-discussed areas, please comment on which and give any professional development ideas you have that you would be willing to participate in.

Appendix B

Survey Activity Options by Category

Each activity is rated *Excellent*, *Adequate*, or *Inadequate* or left blank if not engaged in.

Activity options provided for the theory and linguistics courses

- Lecture
- Writing assignments
- Instructor lead whole class discussions
- Instructor modeled teaching/You as language learner
- Participating as classroom discussion/activity leader
- Small group/Pair activities (info gap, jigsaw, etc.)
- Classroom case scenarios
- Microteaching
- Role-playing
- Guided discussion of teaching videos
- Observation in ESL classroom
- Guided reflection on any of the above activities
- Critical reading of primary research studies
- Library research
- Classroom interaction data analysis
- Interlanguage data analysis
- Other

Professional Development Activity Options:

- Instructor reports on conferences/workshops
- Instructor lecture/Instructor lead discussion
- Guided reflection on professional development issues
- Applying for membership in MinneTESOL, TESOL, or other organizations
- Attending local, regional, or national conferences
- Student reports on experiences at conferences/workshops
- Attending district professional development functions
- Attending workshops
- Visits by TESL professionals from outside your program
- Discussing opportunities with in-service teachers
- Internet search assignments
- Identifying journals and other print sources of information
- Library research
- Other

Appendix C

Satisfaction with Learning in Pre-professional Programs – all 5 ratings

	L2 THEORY		Linguistic analysis of learner output		Linguistic analysis of classroom texts		Action Research		Professional Development	
	N= 29	%	N= 27	%	N= 27	%	N= 26	%	N= 26	%
Very well Prepared	7	.24	5	.19	5	.19	6	.23	9	.35
Well prepared, could improve	14	.48	13	.48	13	.48	6	.23	5	.19
Adequately prepared	4	.14	4	.15	5	.19	5	.19	8	.31
Somewhat Prepared	3	.10	2	.07	3	.11	6	.23	3	.12
Inadequately prepared	1	.3	3	.11	1	.04	3	.12	1	.04

Beyond multiple learning styles, cultures and language proficiency levels: Honoring multiple *ways of knowing* in the adult ESOL classroom

Jennifer Ouellette-Schramm

Introduction

It is difficult to imagine a K-12 educator who would contend that children's developmental stages – along with their corresponding strengths and challenges - should not be explicitly foundational in the process of designing their school curricula, activities and assessments. The concept that children go through stages of development that encompass cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, and ultimately, educational implications is hardly controversial. Likewise, major theorists of child development are relatively well-known, such as Jean Piaget, the Swiss developmental theorist who described the stages of child psychological development. Entire curricula and schools have even been based on specific theories of child development, such as Rudolph Steiner's Waldorf schools.

It has been argued that, as a society in general and as adult educators in particular, our understanding of and response to adult developmental needs has a long way to go (Kegan, 1994; Weathersby, 1976). As adult educators, we have developed a rich dialog on individual adult learning needs based on learning styles and cultural educational norms. We may also catch wind of phase theories of adult development, which focus on how we may be affected by major life events. However, actual *stage* theories of adult psychological development have only sporadically intersected with the field of adult education and ESOL. Carol Hoare (2006), editor of the *Handbook of Adult Development and Learning*, points out that adult development itself is a young field, emerging as a subject heading in the *Psychological Abstracts* in 1978, and that for the most part, adult development and learning have existed as separate fields. Adult development has typically been found under the umbrella of psychology, and learning has been studied under the umbrella of education. Hoare points out that there are no professional societies, associations or journals serving as a vehicle for discourse between the areas of adult development and learning.

The understandable lack of familiarity that most of us, as adult educators, have with adult psychological development can lead to the assumption that we somehow 'plateau' in our psychological development as young adults. This assumption has also been fostered by psychology's own history. Hoare (2006) points out that until the twenty-first century, psychologists also thought of development as something relevant only to children. Rita Weathersby (1976) remarks that most educators have no "systematic and available evidence" to counter the common assumption that adults no longer develop psychologically. This assumption, combined with a lack of systematic dialog between the fields of adult development and learning, has created an ABE/ESOL field that is generally uninformed by the principles of adult psychological development. As an ESOL teacher, I have not encountered colleagues or professors who are familiar with the concept of adult development, and I have found very few graduate level course offerings addressing adult development within a department of education. One of the few departments of education that I have discovered that includes coursework on adult development is in the Harvard

Graduate School of Education, where Psychologist Robert Kegan, also a prominent adult developmental theorist, resides as faculty.

In his book *In over our heads: The mental demands of modern life,* Kegan (1994) also addresses our lack of familiarity with adult developmental stages, not only as educators, but as a society in general:

> …in the last few hundred years we have succeeded in recognizing a qualitative distinction between the mind of the child and the mind of the adult, [but] it may still remain for us to discover that adulthood itself is not an end state but a vast evolutionary expanse encompassing a variety of capacities of mind. And if we have been able to extend a disciplined sympathy to children, evoked by our analytic exploration of their capacity to meet the challenges of the various curricula we create for them, it remains for us to extend the same disciplined sympathy to adult experience. (p. 5)

Kegan (1994) maps out the stages of this "evolutionary expanse" in his theory of constructive-developmentalism, which emerges from a line of adult developmental theories by his predecessors, including Jane Loevinger (1976) and her construct of ego development, later expanded on by Susan Cook-Greuter (1999) in her theory of post-autonomous ego-development.

The NCSALL study (Kegan et al., 2001), *Toward a "new pluralism" in the ABE/ESOL classroom: Teaching to multiple "cultures of mind,"* and the resultant book, *Becoming Adult Learners* by Eleanor Drago-Severson (2004), both describe the only large-scale study to date applying Kegan's constructive-developmental theory in an ABE/ESOL setting. Their study introduces "a new definition of the resource-rich classroom, one that includes good pedagogical matches to a broad variety of adults' learning needs and ways of knowing" and suggests that learners with different ways of knowing "need qualitatively different forms of support and challenge in order to benefit more fully from ABE/ESOL programs" (p.15).

Drawing from this study, as well as from a 2006 Minnesota Literacy Council (MLC) consultation with curriculum specialist Brandy George[1], this report describes Kegan's constructive-developmental theory; outlines the three most common stages of psychological development in adults; discusses how adult stages of psychological development affect motivation, learning, strengths and challenges in the classroom; and looks at learner perspectives on what makes a good teacher. It also discusses implications for meeting distinct learner needs in areas such as pedagogy, activities and assessment.

Constructive-Developmental Theory

Drago-Severson (2004) explains that constructive-developmental theory attends to how people make sense of their experiences from emotional, cognitive, interpersonal and intrapersonal perspectives and is based on two fundamental principles. The first, *constructivism,* maintains that people *construct* meaning from their experiences. The second, *developmentalism*, refers to the critical tenet that the way in which people construct meaning *develops* over time. The way in which a person constructs meaning is

referred to as a *way of knowing*. A way of knowing is like the lens that organizes how we understand and experience ourselves, others, and life situations.

As Weathersby (1976) emphasizes, growth and development do not end in late adolescence, but continue throughout our adult lives. Kegan (1982) explains that as we grow developmentally into a more complex way of knowing, we are able to recognize our previous way of knowing, and the limitations therein, as the way we used to see things, rather than the way things necessarily were. The nature of developmental growth is that we transition out of one way of knowing and incorporate it into a progressively more complex way of knowing. As we develop into a new way of knowing, we do not discard our previous way of knowing, but 'transcend and include' it. A previous way of knowing becomes reincorporated into the new way of knowing: "Development is not a matter of differentiation alone, but of differentiation and reintegration" (Kegan, 1982, p. 67).

Kegan (1982) explains that adult developmental growth is based on *subject-object relations*, the same theory that Piaget used to describe children's psychological development. Subject-object relations theory contends that what we are *subject* to, we are embedded in or *identified* with – and thus unable to objectively see or take perspective on. As we are subject to our current way of knowing, we are not aware that we are looking through a lens that has any particular assumptions or perspective. We simply assume that we are seeing the world as it is. When developmental growth occurs, what we have been *subject* to begins to become *object*. That is, we can begin to see the lens that we were looking at the world through from the perspective of a new and more complex frame. We start to become aware of the assumptions and perspective of our previous worldview as we grow into a more complex worldview.

Drago-Severson (2004) describes how transitioning from one developmental stage to another is a gradual and progressive process that occurs step-by-step. Development also occurs in a consistent, predictable order, in stages of increasing complexity. It is important to note that developmental growth is independent of intelligence or IQ. A person with a relatively high IQ can function from a less complex way of knowing, while a person with a relatively low IQ can function from a more complex way of knowing. Developmental growth depends on and is a result of the challenges and supports (and the balance thereof) in a person's environment over the course of his or her life. Finally, while the *content* of anyone's way of knowing depends on factors such as culture, the *stages* themselves – that is, the principles underlying the frame through which we are looking at the world – are universal.

Constructive-developmentalism's distinction between *content* and *structure or way of knowing* is directly akin to the distinction between *informational* and *transformational learning*. In the discussion of implications at the end of this report, I argue that supporting learner success in our increasingly complex society requires both informational and transformational approaches to teaching and learning.While informational learning focuses on the content that learners acquire, transformational learning involves growth in the structures through which we see and interpret content - in our *ways of knowing* themselves. (Mezirow, 2000).

Kegan (1994) explains that any given way of knowing reflects an inner logic and coherence, and due to the gradual and progressive nature of development, is durable for a considerable period of time. Rarely does a person fully transition from one way of knowing to another in the time span of less than a year, and usually this type of transition takes place over several years. At any given time, our current way of knowing comes with predictable strengths and challenges.

These strengths and challenges, of course, also show up in the classroom. A learner's way of knowing determines how learning will be experienced, managed, handled, used, and understood. It also shapes predictable strengths and challenges in the classroom and explains how the same curriculum and classroom activities can be experienced significantly and qualitatively differently by different learners; how, as Drago-Severson highlights "…the very same curriculum, classroom activities, or teaching behaviors can leave some learners feeling satisfied and well attended while others feel frustrated or lost" (2004, p. 15).

In *Becoming Adult Learners*, Drago-Severson (2004) describes the three most common ways of knowing among adults as *instrumental*, *socializing*, and *self-authoring*. In *In Over Our Heads: The mental demands of modern life,* Kegan (1994) refers to these stages respectively as second, third, and fourth orders of knowing. The instrumental way of knowing is preceded by the incorporative way of knowing of infants, and the impulsive stage of childhood. Ways of knowing also exist beyond self-authoring, but are rare, and have never been detected before mid-life (Drago-Severson, 2004). She goes on to explain that the gradual nature of developmental growth also means that many individuals do not fit squarely within one particular way of knowing. Where 2 represents the instrumental way of knowing, 3 the socializing way of knowing, and 4 the self-authoring way of knowing, a person may be squarely within a 2 or 3 or 4, or may be, for example, at 2(3), where instrumentalism is the dominant worldview but aspects of the socializing way of knowing are beginning to emerge; 2/3 in which both ways of knowing are equally dominant; or 3(2) in which socializing has become the dominant way of knowing but aspects of the instrumental way of knowing are still present. American philosopher Ken Wilber (2003), whose Integral Theory has been informed by Kegan's work on constructive-developmentalism, explains that a person's way of knowing isn't static but alive and evolving. A person who is assessed at a socializing way of knowing may express a socializing way of knowing 50% of the time, an instrumental way of knowing 25% of the time, and a self-authoring way of knowing 25% of the time. However, no one will express a socializing way of knowing before expressing an instrumental way of knowing, and no one will express a self-authoring way of knowing before a socializing way of knowing. He also describes how different aspects of a person, or lines of development, will grow at different rates. The cognitive line of development is typically the first to advance to a more complex way of knowing, while the emotional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal lines of development take longer, and often years, to 'catch up.'

As we discuss the ways of knowing most common in adults, the limitations thereof, and appropriate teaching strategies, it is important to bear in mind that measuring a person's meaning-making system requires rigorous assessment such as the Subject-Object Interviews (SOI) and/or Loevinger's Ego Development Sentence Completion Test, as used in Drago-Severson's (2004) study. Any theory of a person's way of knowing based on anecdotal evidence can only be speculative and quite likely inaccurate. Limitations in a learner's English proficiency level, of course, should not be confused with a developmental limitation, and language limitations could further obscure any guesswork on a learner's way of knowing.

While we are not in a position to ascertain our learners' meaning-making systems, we can, and should, assume that they have one. We can be cognizant that, like all adults, our learners (and, of course, we ourselves) are somewhere along a trajectory of cognitive development, and function from a meaning-making system replete with its own strengths and challenges that affect their classroom experience. As we pay attention to the tasks that challenge our learners, we can begin to critically examine the nature of these tasks and challenges through a constructive-developmental lens. We can examine what implicit developmental demands our curricula and activities place on our learners, in addition to language demands, and more critically consider where learners may be facing language challenges, where they may be facing developmental challenges, and how best to refine the support that we offer them as they strive to meet these challenges.

The following sections discuss the strengths and challenges of the three most common ways of knowing, and present corresponding teaching strategies. They also present learner perspectives, within each way of knowing, on what makes a good teacher. As we consider George's (2006) teaching recommendations for the three most common ways of knowing in adults, it is also important to keep in mind that the 'transcend and include' nature of developmental growth also extends to our learning strategies. Strategies that were helpful to us in learning content such as language in a previous way of knowing will likely still be helpful for us at a more complex way of knowing. Strategies geared toward a way of knowing that we haven't reached yet, however, will not be helpful to us. That is, strategies that are helpful for instrumental learners, such as anchoring material in concrete, observable, familiar experience, will also be helpful for socializing and self-authoring learners. However, strategies geared toward self-authoring learners, such as encouraging learners to self-define, set and track their own learning goals, will be 'too much' for instrumental learners without plenty of concretization, scaffolding and support. Perhaps it is because so many of the strategies suggested for instrumental learners are helpful for all learners that we recognize in them elements of what we know about best practices. Perhaps it is because strategies suggested for self-authoring learners are not helpful for all learners that we intuitively suspect that they might not apply to all of our learners.

Instrumental way of knowing

Kegan (1994) explains that an instrumental knower is subject to, or identified with, her concrete needs, preferences, wishes, and interests. She is also identified with her own

concrete characteristics, such as "I am tall" or "I have a good car." What has become object at this way of knowing, which was subject at the previous Impulsive way of knowing, is that observable events have their own reality independent of the person's subjective perspective. An instrumental knower realizes that when she is in an airplane, objects only appear to shrink because she herself is moving away. She understands that objects have their own enduring properties separate from her own perception of that object.

Kegan (1994) refers to the underlying structure of the instrumental way of knowing as *categorical,* which points to both the abilities and challenges of this worldview. An instrumental knower is able to recognize distinct categories at this stage, and the enduring properties of those categories, such as that the Earth (category) is large (attribute), or that her aunt is kind. She recognizes that others have their own preferences, needs, and beliefs, and has acquired control over her impulses.

At the same time, an instrumental knower perceives the qualities of any given category, such as her own or another's preferences, as certain, absolute and unchanging. An instrumental knower is also oriented exclusively to the concrete world and is not able to make 'as-if' abstractions that require holding another viewpoint along with his or her own viewpoint at the same time, or to engage in a hypothetical 'as-if' situation. Concern about consequences is motivated by reward and punishment rather than by how actions might affect another. As long-term future constitutes an abstraction, the instrumental knower is oriented to the present and to short term consequences, and regards the future as "the-present-that-hasn't-happened-yet" rather than "something one lives with as real in the present" (Kegan, 1994, p. 27).

In *In Over Our Heads*, Kegan (1994) illustrates the instrumental way of knowing through a fictitious yet typical American teenager, Matty, whose parents are waiting for him to come home two hours after his midnight curfew. Kegan suggests that when Matty realizes his parents know he is late, he will respond in as a 'typical teenager' with excuses and a made-up story. He discusses how Matty's parents, like many parents, want something 'more' from him: consideration for their feelings, common sense, thinking about long-term consequences, and the ability to prioritize his agreement with them over his conflicting desires in the moment. They want a sense of loyalty. Kegan explains that:

> in order to subordinate his own point of view to some bigger way of knowing to which he would be loyal, in order to subordinate it to some integration or co-relation between his own and his parents' point of view, in order for his sense of himself to be based more on the preservation and operation of this co-relation than on the preservation and operation of his own independent point of view – for all of this to happen, Matty would have to construct his experience out of a principle that was more complex than the principle of durable categories. (p. 24)

Drago-Severson (2004) explains how the principle of durable categories, or categorical thinking, applies to and determines learning motivation. Instrumental knowers find

meaning through concrete rules. Instrumental learners in the classroom are motivated to *acquire* something, and goals are based on concrete needs and desires, such as being able to get a better job or car. Knowledge is seen as a possession that one can accumulate, and is obtained from an external authority. Instrumental learners focus on naming concrete goals and setting the right concrete steps to get there. One's learning strategy is to try to follow correct steps and rules and make sure to do each one in the right way (there being only one right way). Deviation from the prescribed way is experienced as doing it wrong.

During her consultation with the Minnesota Literacy Council, curriculum specialist and educational consultant Brandy George (2006) advised that educators should not expect instrumental learners to:

- understand abstract concepts or have a sense of nuance
- grasp hypothetical situations
- make generalizations
- exhibit self-reflectivity, e.g., why they have made particular life choices
- anticipate effects of actions (their own or others) beyond immediate context
- discern options or alternatives (there is only one right way)
- recognize problems for which there are not absolute answers
- reconcile competing categories (e.g., recognizing how something might be 'fun' and 'scary' at the same time)
- fully assume or appreciate another's perspective
- deal with any more than three of four concrete variables at a time

Teaching strategies that George (2006) recommends for instrumental learners include:

- anchor material in *concrete, observable, familiar* experience
- physically act out or demonstrate the meaning of material
- whenever possible, use props, visual aids, and timelines
- literally illustrate as much as possible using diagrams, photos, etc
- concretely model how to approach activities, handouts and assignments
  - explicitly show progression from step-to-step; do not expect learners to infer steps
  - not introduce the 'next step' until learners fully understand the preceding step
  - introduce reading material with a limited number of characters and simple concepts
- not put two unrelated assignments on a single page

Drago-Severson (2004) and colleagues interviewed learners who, based on Subject-Object Interviews (SOI) and on Loevinger's Ego Development Sentence Completion Test, entered the study with an instrumental way of knowing. She found that for these participants, good teachers:

- explain things to help them understand.
- help them learn by showing them how to do things.
- give them rules to follow so they can do things the right way.
- give them their knowledge and tell them what they should know.

They know they have learned something when they can 'do it' (demonstrate a behavior) and when they get a good grade (a consequence.) (p. 108)

Socializing way of knowing

According to Kegan (1994), the socializing way of knowing is based on an underlying *cross-categorical* cognitive structure. At this way of knowing a person has become able to coordinate more than one category at a time, and thus for the first time is able to take another's perspective. This very ability shapes what a socializing knower is subject to: the social context, ideals and relationships that he most values. He is identified with the expectations of those valued others. A socializing knower has become able to take his own inner states and motivations as object; for example he is able to reflect on reasons for life choices. A socializing knower is also able to make abstractions and orients toward abstract and psychological consequences such as a concern for a sense of belonging. Kegan explains that these abilities become possible because of the underlying capacity to subordinate *durable categories* and relate them to each other in a *cross-categorical* framework.

Drago-Severson (2004) explains that challenges for a socializing knower include evaluating another person's point of view and considering his own expectations of self. He needs a clear sense of what others expect and feels a strong obligation to meet expectations. For socializing learners, the meaning of education is to "*be* someone" (Drago-Severson, 2004, p. 29). Knowledge is still viewed as absolute in nature, but it is recognized that not everything is known, even by experts. Knowledge is still viewed as something that comes from external authorities, but is now desired in order to meet goals and expectations. A primary learning strategy is to follow the advice of an authority to work toward a goal. A socializing knower wants to set up a plan based on what the experts or authorities recommend. A socializing learner looks externally for support, encouragement and validation of progress. Success is based on positive external evaluation.

A primary challenge for socializing learners is to independently create and use their own goals, procedures, and standards for evaluation separate from and possibly in contradiction to external experts/authorities. George (2006) suggested that educators do not expect socializing learners to:

- track or monitor their own learning
- see self as the author (rather than the theater) of their inner psychological life
- risk "looking bad" in front of their peers by standing out or making a mistake
- tolerate ambiguity
- tolerate and reconcile inner conflict
- understand how context influences content

She suggested the following teaching strategies for socializing learners:

- identify both content and language objectives for all lessons (provide the expectation so the learner can meet the expectation and feel successful)
- use students' work as a model so that it can become objective
- mirror back language so that it can become objective

- use analogies (make more complex abstractions concrete)
- provide an environment that is rich in print: word walls, labels for everyday items, and vocabulary lists that are tied to the content studied in class
- assign individual work with clear guidelines and expectations
- use outlines, hierarchies and analogies to show the relationship of unknown new material to already acquired knowledge

Drago-Severson (2004) and colleagues discovered that for [socializing] learners, good teachers:

- care about them.
- explain things to help them understand.
- really listen and support them.
- know what is good for them to know, and tell them what they should know.
- have certain human qualities; they are described as kind, patient, and encouraging.

These adults can feel, inside, when they have learned something and the teacher acknowledges them in that. (p. 108)

Self-Authoring way of knowing

Kegan (1994) explains that the underlying construct of the self-authoring way of knowing is *trans-categorical*. That is, a person is now able not only to relate different categories to each other, e.g., her own perspective and another's perspective, but to step outside of those categories and take a perspective on a relationship *itself*. A self-authoring knower can now have a *relationship to* her own relationships, interpersonal contexts, emotions, and internal states. She is able to set her own internal benchmarks for success and consider the expectations of society and valued others in relationship to her self-defined priorities. She can now manage and prioritize internal and external demands, hold conflicting feelings simultaneously, and can meaningfully understand how past, present and future relate. She also recognizes that knowledge is relative.

George (2006) further explains that for a self-authoring knower, the challenges include discerning meta-systemic patterns, or developing a theory about how all of the different perspectives that she can now recognize relate to each other. She may not be able to perceive complex, long-term trends or to grasp paradox. However, she is able to successfully perform the tasks that she would be expected to perform in an ABE setting. George suggests the following strategies for self-authoring knowers:

- use scenario work in class
- use learners' own experience as text – journals, autobiographic assignments, reflective writing about learning
- generate questions that support critical thinking
- allow learners free time in which they can use the language of instruction to talk about their own interests
- encourage learners to self-define, set and track their own learning goals

Drago-Severson (2004) found that for socializing learners, good teachers:

- are one source of knowledge, and they see themselves and their classmates as other sources.
- are open to students' feedback to help improve teaching practices and they expect good teachers to listen to that feedback.
- use a variety of teaching strategies.
- help learners meet their own internally generated goals.

These participants know internally when they have learned something, and when they have, they can then think of multiple ways to teach what they know to others. (p. 109)

Conclusion and Implications for Adult ESOL

In his book *In Over Our Heads: The mental demands of modern life*, Kegan (1994) addresses mismatches between our culture's "hidden curriculum," or society's implicit expectations of adults, particularly in the realms of our professional and interpersonal lives, and the meaning-making systems of some adults. Similarly, Drago-Severson (2004) addresses the potential for mismatches between the implicit developmental expectations in ABE/ESOL curricula and classroom activities and the meaning-making systems of some learners: "In [some] cases, teachers may unknowingly be using materials, classroom designs, or teaching strategies that are more appropriate for learners who have one way of knowing while inadvertently neglecting others" (pp. 160-161). She goes on to explain that aspects of old rote learning methodologies, long discarded by most educators and boring and frustrating to most adult learners, including those making meaning from a socializing or self-authoring worldview, would actually be experienced as "satisfying and supportive" to instrumentalist learners. She concludes that a general mindfulness of developmental stages in the classroom would help teachers reach and actively support more of their students, and that without that awareness, unintentional bias is more likely.

Until theories of adult stage development are more well-known, it is reasonable to surmise that our classroom activities, curricula, and policies will not match all adult learners' developmental capacities. Perhaps one day the need to strive to accommodate all ways of knowing – to meet all adults 'where they are at' and provide the support, challenges, and continuity that foster growth and development while making necessary tasks manageable – will be as familiar and attended to in the field of ABE/ESOL as the need to honor different cultures and learning styles has become. In the meantime, it behooves us to examine policies, procedures, curricula and classroom expectations for unintentional developmental bias.

One striking, yet in all probability common example of such unintentional bias was illuminated during George's observation of the beginning level class at the MLC Arlington Hills learning center. Perhaps the most striking among her observations was in our beginning level class, in which learners were practicing *before* and *after* in the context of time. To illustrate the concept, the instructor had handed out a worksheet with a graphic of a calendar week. The graphic started with a Sunday and ended with a Saturday. All learners were able to respond to questions such as, "What day comes after Tuesday?" or "What day comes before Friday?" by looking at the graphic. George reported that some

learners, who could answer what day came after Tuesday, could not answer “What day comes after Saturday?” and looked confused upon being asked the question. She explained that to an instrumental knower, there is literally nothing after Saturday, according to the graphic. While some learners were able to infer that the week cycled around and began again on Sunday, a smaller percentage of learners were not. One could argue that this challenge could have been caused by different cultural conceptions of time, or different proficiency levels, but most of the learners were from the same culture, and at a similar language proficiency level. Since all learners were able to answer the question, “What day comes after Tuesday?” it seems that they understood the language itself.
George suggested that to make this task more accessible to learners who may be operating from an instrumental way of knowing, the instructor make a graphic of several weeks, and physically point to the Saturday wrapping back to the Sunday over a few weeks, to help make the cyclical nature of the weeks more concrete. Understandably, the instructor for the class hadn’t considered that this activity, in requiring learners to infer that the linear graphic of the week symbolized something continuous, might have posed a challenge to learners. When George implemented her suggested strategy with the learners, she said that many of them nodded and smiled, indicating that they understood.

In my own Low Beginning level class at the MLC, I have come up against these unintentional biases in my own lessons. I sometimes notice learner stumbling blocks that appear to be based not on language, but on an abstraction implicit in a task. Recently my beginning level learners were practicing telling time. When we were reading digital time, I included *a.m.* or *p.m.* on the printed examples. In one speaking chain activity, I gave each learner a slip of paper with a digital time such as 3:45 p.m. One learner would ask, "What time is it?" and the other learner would respond, "It's 3:45 p.m." When I wanted to elicit and model how to read time from an analog clock (with hands), I drew a picture of a physical clock displaying the time 3:30. One learner looked confused, pointed to the clock and asked with furrowed brows, "Teacher, a.m. or p.m.?" Other learners smiled and elbowed each other, and this learner adamantly repeated, “a.m. or p.m.?” I was reminded here of George’s recommendation not to expect all learners to understand how context influences content. It seemed that this learner may have been struggling to understand that whether it was a.m. or p.m. depended on the context, or what part of the day one was reading the clock. I expect that this learner would have been able to determine a.m. or p.m. in an authentic situation, in which the pragmatic context would have been implicit, but concrete and obvious. However, outside of that pragmatic context, she did not seem to be able to step back and explicitly realize that a hypothetical pragmatic *context* (time of day) was missing, which would be needed to determine the *content* (a.m. or p.m.) that she was seeking. These classroom examples of unintentional mismatches between classroom expectations and the meaning making systems of some learners begs the question of how often such mismatches might occur on assessment, program and policy levels.

If this learner was in fact struggling to cross-reference context and content while studying time, perhaps she also struggles to cross-reference context and content on the

CASAS tests, in which it is necessary to be able to infer a context for the authentic images upon which the questions are based, such as department directories and doctor's office sign-in sheets. The CASAS test not only assesses language content, but critical thinking and abstraction skills that an instrumental learner, for example, would not be able to complete, despite the language content that she was able to acquire. For example, the
following are CASAS competencies: Interpret information about purchasing a home, including loans and insurance (1.4.6); Identify procedures for career planning, including self-assessment (4.1.9); and Identify appropriate behavior, attire, attitudes, and social interaction, and other factors that affect job retention and advancement (4.4.1)" (https://www.casas.org/home/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.showContent&MapID=1602).

The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) also includes self-authoring in many of the tasks that they encourage learners to cultivate. The list of goals on their website includes:

- assess one's own knowledge and skills accurately;
- set specific, realistic, personal goals
- use imagination freely, combining ideas or information in new ways
- make connections between ideas that seem unrelated
- understand how beliefs affect how a person feels and acts
- identify irrational or harmful beliefs you may have and understand how to change them when they occur
- identify common goals among different parties
- clearly present one's position
- understand party's position
- examine possible options
- make reasonable compromises (http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/scans.htm).

In my work with refugees, I have seen that learners receiving Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) benefits and thus needing to attend 20 hours of class per week are required to report and track their own learning progress on a monthly basis. The purpose of this requirement is certainly understandable – to encourage learners to be self-responsible for their own learning. However, questions such as *"Do you feel that you are making satisfactory progress? Do you feel that you are getting all of the resources and assistance you need to be successful?"* seem to invite learners to set their own benchmarks of success and gauge learning progress in relationship to those benchmarks, which is an explicitly self-authoring skill.

Something 'more' than literacy and language skills alone are necessary for learners to succeed with CASAS competencies, SCANS skills and compliance with accountability procedures such as goal-setting. Comings, Reader and Sum (as cited in Drago-Severson, 2004) state that:
…the main literacy problem of U.S. workers is not that of illiteracy in the traditional sense. Instead, it is a problem of limited skills that restrict workers' ability to perform

higher skilled jobs and take on the more complicated duties that are required of workers in the New Economy. (p. 4)

As educators, it is critical for us to consider how these additional skills that our learners are being asked to acquire align with their own developmental capacities.

If we assume that the learners in Drago-Severson's (2004) study represented a relatively average developmental range of adults, we can assume that our own ABE/ ESOL classrooms include a combination of instrumental, instrumental/socializing, socializing, socializing/self-authoring, and self-authoring learners. We can also expect that classrooms comprised of refugee and immigrant learners, who have often witnessed or suffered violence and other human rights abuses and oppressions, may contain a higher percentage of learners suffering from trauma than the average population would contain, and trauma can also delay development (Hoare, 2006). The inevitable range of developmental stages, and their distinct abilities and challenges, that learners come to our ABE/ESL classrooms with, compared with the challenges that our standardized tests and policies demand, invite us, as educators and policy makers, to take pause.

As we consider the policies that influence the developmental challenges that adult learners face, along with the practices that best support learners in meeting those challenges, it behooves us to become explicitly familiar with their developmental needs. As Drago-Severson (2004) states, "…we would be wise to consider how our programs, curricula, and classroom practices might inadvertently require adults to perform tasks and demonstrate competency at a certain way of knowing" (p. 193).

We must pay attention to not only the content and knowledge, but the developmental skills that our learners need to develop in order to pursue their educational and professional goals and dreams. A constructive-developmental framework can help us to refine our own understanding of the elements of the most optimal *holding environment* for our learners, not only as they acquire language content, but as they grow in their developmental capacities.

With this framework, we can return to the concept of transformational learning and appreciate its role in the context of ABE/ESOL. Our concern can expand to include providing the support, challenge and continuity necessary not only for learning English, but for encouraging continued developmental growth. A constructive developmental lens challenges us, as educators, not only to identify and adapt unintentional developmental biases in our policies, curricula and pedagogy, but to recognize and honor the unique position we are in to support the type of developmental growth and transformational learning that Drago-Severson's (2004) research suggests our ABE/ESOL classrooms are ripe holding environments for, and that some of our learners may need to pursue their goals and dreams.

AUTHOR

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[1] Brandy George has worked in the private sector for many years as curriculum designer, theory consultant, and copy writer with emphasis on adult development and learning processes. Her employers have included the Integral Institute

(www.integralinstitute.org), Stagen Leadership Institute (www.stagen.com), and The Professional Education Institute (www.thepei.com).

A Review of Recent Textbooks for Teachers with ELLs in their Classes

Reviewed by
Ann Mabbott

Are the teachers in your school finally ready to form a study group on how to teach the English language learners in their classes? What textbook would you recommend? Have you been asked to teach a course for mainstream teachers about sheltered instruction? What textbook will you use?

After years with very few options, we are currently enjoying an explosion of textbooks for teachers on how to work with English language learners (ELLs) in the mainstream class. These textbooks are not designed for the language teaching expert, but rather the mainstream teachers with whom ELLs spend most of their school day. Although the principles offered in these texts for mainstream teachers could be applied to any educational setting, historically, the examples tended to be geared to elementary teachers. An exception is the online text*, Helpkit for Secondary Teachers* (2007), which has specific chapters on teaching the major content areas, as well as tips for working with teenage learners and their particular needs. Also, Echevarria, Vogt & Short will have a secondary version of their popular SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) model series with a 2010 publishing date.

These texts for mainstream teachers are providing support that is badly needed in our schools. The extremely popular SIOP series of texts by Echevarria, Vogt and Short (2008), for example, offers a comprehensive model and assessment of instruction for English language learners in mainstream classes. The authors have operationalized years of work in sheltered instruction (by Deborah Short and others) in a manner that makes sense to teachers, and allows them to plan for and carry out a high level of instruction to all of the children in their classes. Their sections on building background, comprehensible input and interaction are invaluable.

The SIOP texts are improved with each new edition, but they do not yet completely address the language learning needs of ELLs. They do not yet provide a clear explanation of what language objectives are and how they support academic discourse. Examples given as language objectives often name activities (such as "write five sentences" or "read and take notes from primary and secondary sources") rather than addressing the language structures needed for academic language functions (such as compare and contrast or synthesize). Teachers who work solely with a SIOP text do not walk away with a foundation in the systems of language, academic language functions, grammar, discourse or sociolinguistic competence. They also do not have a strong understanding of how to differentiate instruction and assessment to accommodate different levels of English language proficiency.

To get a foundation in understanding language and how it works, teachers can turn to Elizabeth Coelho's 2007 text, *Adding English: A Guide to Teaching in Multilingual*

Classrooms. Coelho's text is also designed for mainstream teachers, but she includes sections on phonology, grammar, and semantics, as well as discourse and sociolinguistic competence. And, she presents all of these topics in a manner that is accessible to the nonspecialist by providing practical applications.

Another text that that teachers will find useful is *Classroom Instruction that Works with English Language Learners* by Jane D. Hill and Kathleen M. Flynn (2006). Based on Marzano, Pickering and Pollock's research-based *Classroom Instruction That Works* (2001), the authors provide a series of strategies that have been shown to lead to student achievement. The strategies include:

- Setting objectives and providing feedback
- Nonlinguistic representations
- Cues, questions and advanced organizers
- Cooperative learning
- Summarizing and note taking
- Homework and practice
- Reinforcing effort and providing recognition
- Generating and testing hypotheses
- Identifying similarities and differences

What Hill and Flynn add to Marzano et al's research-based strategies is an English language learning lens. After explaining and describing the stages of second language acquisition (preproduction, early production, speech emergence, intermediate fluency and advanced fluency), Hill and Flynn show how teachers can adapt the strategies to a particular English language learner's proficiency. The goal is to find ways for English language learners, regardless of proficiency level, to engage in the same rigorous curriculum as all other students.

While Echevarria et al. provide a model of instruction that can work well, Coelho and Hill & Flynn add important information about language and how to address different levels of language proficiency. I would recommend all three books for the teachers' study group.

Reviewer

Ann Mabbott, Ph.D., is a faculty member in the Hamline University School of Education. Her work specializes in language proficiency assessment, ELL program assessment, and mainstream teachers education in the area of ESL. She has been a proponent of online options in ESL teacher education to reach those who do not have access to traditional professional development.

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Coelho, E. (2007). *Adding English: A guide to teaching in multilingual classrooms.* Toronto: Pippin Publishing. List price: $44.00

Echevarria, J., Vogt, M., & Short, D. (2008). *Making content instruction comprehensible for English learners: The SIOP model.* Boston: Pearson Allyn and Bacon. List price: $50.00

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EDGE: READING, WRITING AND LANGUAGE LEVEL A BY D. MOORE, D. SHORT, M. SMITH, AND A. TATUM

Moore, D., Short, D., Smith, M., & Tatum, A. (2007). *Edge: Reading, Writing & Language*. CA: Hampton-Brown. List price: $69.97

Reviewed by

Kristine Ranweiler

When I first glanced through the index of this ESL language arts text for 9-12 graders at an intermediate reading level, I was immediately impressed by the wonderful authors and reading selections I saw there. As an English major and avid reader, I saw a broad range of past and current authors from many cultural backgrounds.

The texts I viewed included a student edition, teacher's edition, and grammar and writing practice book. Within this Edge series, there are also other resources that I thought looked valuable and user-friendly including reading and fluency models on audio CDs, a leveled library with a variety of great authors representing many cultures, and e-Assessment to scan and score or administer tests online with immediate reports with links to reteaching.

The student edition text is divided into seven units containing:

- Essential Questions that seem very pertinent to teenagers (themes such as What influences how you act?, How much should people help each other?, What rights and responsibilities should teens have?, and Do we find or create our true selves?)
- Genre focus (four genres are represented with 28 different literary uses including advice column, letters, news commentary, survey, science articles, persuasive text, cartoons, eulogy, and consumer documents)
- Reading Strategy (one per unit)
- Grammar Points
- Writing Assignment

Each unit has several writing selections from which students can choose to read about the essential question. These different selections make each essential question interesting and accessible to students with various abilities and interests. Within the units, elements of literature are highlighted and academic vocabulary words are bolded and listed at the bottom of the page, as well as other vocabulary that students may need assistance with. There are also questions to monitor comprehension and think, pair, share questions. Each page is packed with information touching on all literacy and comprehension skills, but it can become overwhelming with so many separate pieces of text and questions on the page.

For each reading selection, a beginning section prepares the student for reading with an anticipation guide and key vocabulary they will need to know with pronunciation, word classification, the word used in a sentence, and examples of synonyms and antonyms. Following this is a "Before You Read" section which highlights a story element and shows it in use in the actual text. Next is a "Plan Your Reading" section which previews the story and allows students to make predictions, followed by the actual story during which students are asked to access vocabulary and use reading strategies throughout. Students are then asked to analyze the literature, vocabulary and reading strategy with discussion questions and reflect and assess on the reading using critical thinking, writing

about literature, reviewing key vocabulary, and testing reading fluency. Each selection also contains a workshop on one of the modalities and a section on integrating language arts content with grammar, literary analysis, language development, vocabulary study, research, and writing.

Throughout the text, there are beautiful pictures of artwork with connections to the stories and questions to ponder, diagrams, highlighting, bolding, pictures, labels, and charts that aid student's understanding of the text.

The Grammar and Writing Practice book aligns its instruction with the main text and presents a description of each grammar point and its usage. There are then sentences for students to correctly fill in the blanks and an editing or writing exercise. This workbook is not very creative in its methods, but it teaches correct grammar in a straightforward manner and the content page of the workbook makes it easy to locate specific grammar points that need teaching or reviewing if one wanted to use it separately from the textbook.

I thought this curriculum did an excellent job of presenting the best practices in ESL teaching today with its focus on the language modalities, reading strategies, fluency, vocabulary instruction, study and research skills, use of technology and visuals, ties to native language, and integration of the language arts content area using high interest, meaningful texts. The curriculum is inclusive, thorough, and accessible to both students and educators.

Reviewer

Kristine Ranweiler is a graduate student in the ESL K-12 program at Hamline University.

PERESENT YOURSELF1: EXPERIENCE BY S. GERSHON

Gershon, S. (2008). *Present Yourself 1: Experiences.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. iii + 87. List price: $23.00

Reviewed by
Katie Subra

Presentation skills come naturally for some, but for the majority of us the mere idea of public speaking incites discomfort and apprehension. The task becomes that much harder if we are asked to speak in our L2. *Present Yourself 1: Experiences* (2008) is aimed at low-intermediate students who may be unfamiliar with American presentation styles or public speaking. This textbook is the first in a two part series on presentation skills with the stated goal of giving young adult, non-native English speakers the tools to organize, prepare, and deliver speeches on select topics in American English.

The image the book cover is presenting is one of people living active lives who presumably want to talk about them. While the second book of the series is aimed at discussing viewpoints, this introductory text only asks students to speak about topics that are known and experienced. This idea of lived experience may create a comfort zone for students who have a large vocabulary, but it may also prove to be a bane for others who do not feel as comfortable talking about personal experiences.

The book is divided into units that give students a chance to speak from six different interest areas. Each unit contains a few model questions and statements as well as listening, matching, and cloze activities that may be checked vis-à-vis the audio compact disc. At the end of each unit the student is asked to put the preceding information together into a formal presentation. The preface and first unit, *A new club member*, give students a few quick tips about presentation organization and how to make introductions. These first sections prove to be most useful for students who are just getting started. While the text provides some examples of how to set-up a presentation using the standard introduction, body, and conclusion formatting style, it is very likely that students who are unfamiliar with American public speaking may need more time to familiarize themselves with these formatting concepts. Further discussion may be needed regarding ideas such as how to engage the audience, using gestures, and appropriate pronunciation.

After introductions are made, the next three units generate discussion about personal topics: *A favorite place, A prized possession*, and *A memorable experience*. It is important for the teacher to keep in mind the audience throughout these units as some people may not be prepared to talk about themselves so much. If students are uncomfortable with the topic, they may mask their discomfort by mimicking the models that are laid out in the activities and examples. For the most part, these units and the final units: *Show me how* and *Movie magic***,** should allow for some creativity as well as anonymity if the teacher supplements these discussions with other examples of presentation topics.

Other than the potential stumbling blocks presented by the themes of the topics, there is one other weakness in *Present Yourself 1: Experiences* (2008) worth addressing. While it is nice to have a model when thinking about mapping out a presentation, witnessing those presentations which have not strayed one hair away from the model's didactic forms quickly become boring and ineffectual. If the teacher is solely concerned with introducing these forms, then this textbook may be sufficient. However, if the students are ready to move beyond mimicry to a level of fluency that includes rapport with the audience, hesitation devices, idiomatic language, and heightened pronunciation awareness, then this textbook may not suffice.

Overall this is a textbook that introduces its topic with great initiative, colorful photos and charts, and models of American youth culture. All of these qualities may be appreciated by the student who is concerned with being able to model American presentation behavior. However, the lack of higher skill development will eventually create a roadblock for the student who is trying to express personal values from their native tongue or more in depth presentation topics. Keeping the individual students' fluency goals in mind will help the teacher determine whether the breadth of *Present Yourself 1: Experiences* (2008) will be sufficient to meet their presentation needs.

Reviewer

Katie Subra is a graduate student in the M.A. in ESL program at the University of Minnesota. She has taught ESL in a variety of volunteer settings for the past five years.

WELL READ 4: SKILLS AND STRATEGIES FOR READING BY M. PASTERNAK & E. WRANGELL

Pasternack, M. & Wrangell, E. (2007). Well Read 4: Skills and Strategies for Reading. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. xiii + 194. List price: $25.50

Reviewed by
Julie Sivula Reiter

Well Read 4 is the final textbook in a series that Oxford has published to present and reinforce reading skills and vocabulary strategies. Designed for students at the high-intermediate to low-advanced level, this book is chock full of authentic material from both British and American magazines, newspapers, academic sources and online texts.

The book is thoughtfully and consistently organized. Each of its eight chapters revolves around an interesting central theme—The Science of Love, Strange Phenomenon, Ethics in Science, to name a few—and each presents four texts related to that theme. Each individual text is imbedded in a lesson of eight sections, starting with interest generation and pre-reading activities, progressing through various multiple-choice and more open-ended reading activities, and concluding with post-reading discussion prompts. Its simple cover reflects its linear organization, and the text is tastefully enhanced with numerous pertinent photographs, a variety of graphics, and even a *New Yorker* cartoon.

Certain useful reading skills are promoted for all the texts—such as active previewing and reading comprehension—while other skills take center stage throughout a particular chapter, like identifying paragraph topics, understanding supporting detail, skimming, and reading critically. The strategies presented, however, are more limited than one might believe at first glance, and essentially boil down to two: skipping words and phrases, and understanding vocabulary from context. In fact, many of the vocabulary "strategies" feel more like grammar topics (describing reflexive pronouns and possessive adjectives, for example) and mere definitions (defining phrasal verbs and idioms, for example). Nonetheless, the explanations and activities related to these topics, grounded in the texts presented, could prove useful in improving students' reading despite their limited metacognitive value.

While reading is its primary focus, this book enhances the student experience by presenting engaging discussion issues and compelling writing prompts. Its philosophy is undeniably communicative and student focused; students are consistently directed to work with a partner to complete activities, demonstrate comprehension, discuss answers and provide peer feedback. In an attempt to ground itself in the twenty-first century, each chapter of the book concludes with a section entitled "Taking It Online," encouraging students to use the internet to conduct research related to that chapter's theme.

Content topics such as Hollywood, first dates, and cosmetics would likely appeal primarily to younger students; other topics include animal rights, eating soy, reusing and recycling, and corporate social responsibility. (Teachers interested in using this series should be aware that the content orientation toward younger students is consistent throughout. A cursory glance at *Well Read 1*, for example, reveals similar topics, including Hip Hop Music, Fashion Philosophy, and A Young Environmentalist.)

For learners falling within this target audience—perhaps college or college-bound ESL students—this book has strong potential to meet the authors' goals of providing insights into motivating subject matter while developing reading skills. Indeed, critical evaluation and information synthesis is encouraged by the presentation of multiple texts presenting differing views on the same topic. The development of skills is enhanced by the book's evident approach that students need not understand every word of a text in order to navigate through it and extract its basic themes. Particular skills the book promotes—such as discriminating between fact, opinion and inference, and fine-tuning descriptions of textual main ideas and paragraph topics—could prove especially useful for college-bound students.

Each book in the *Well Read* series is accompanied by an Instructor's Pack, containing a simple answer key, a test generator CD, and a PowerPoint Teaching Tool CD. The PowerPoint CD contains a presentation for each chapter, providing electronic depictions of the book's texts and images, as well as answers to the activities, which teachers—at least those who have access to the appropriate technology—can project in the classroom.

For the right audience and context, *Well Read 4* is an effective textbook that could easily form the backbone of a communicative reading course or serve as a supplemental reading source for a course with a broader scope. Its compelling topics, authentic materials, communicative focus and useful skills presentation make it a worthwhile consideration.

Reviewer

Julie Sivula Reiter works with ESL law students and foreign lawyers; she is enrolled in the MA-ESL program at the University of Minnesota.

VOICE THREAD

VoiceThread.com (2007-09). Subscriptions $10.00-$99.00 per year.

Reviewed by
Steven Ahola

What is a blog? According to Dictionary.com, a blog is a "shared on-line journal where people can post diary entries about their personal experiences and hobbies." Nowadays there are blogs to suit a person's interests including sports blogs, political blogs, and news blogs. One website—Voicethread.com—offers individuals, businesses, and educational institutions a place to create an online blog. The website describes a 'Voice Thread' as: "…a collaborative, multimedia slide show that holds images, documents, and videos and allows people to leave comments in 5 ways—using voice (with a microphone or phone), text, audio file, or video (via a webcam)."

The cost for a Voice Thread account varies depending on the features. For K-12 educators, there is Ed.VoiceThread. Ed.VoiceThread has a one-time fee of $10. With this account, students can only participate once they are added by the educator administrating the account. It is important to note that students cannot invite other people to join Voice Thread. In terms of privacy, all Voice Threads are private unless the educator or administrator of the account allows them to be made public. The website highlights this issue: "It's never necessary to make a Voice Thread publicly viewable, but we do believe students grow when they share and collaborate with others. The act of publishing content, that can be seen by anyone anywhere, reinforces the idea that student work is unique, valuable, and worthy of the world's attention."

For those teaching in higher education, the cost is $59.95 per year for an individual Pro account or $99 per year for the Manager account. The Pro account allows for unlimited Voice Threads. The Manager account receives 1 Pro account and 50 basic accounts. A basic account includes 3 Voice Threads per month.

For ESL educators, Voice Thread could be incorporated into classes in numerous ways. In a writing class, the educator could upload images, documents, or short videos which act as a prompt for writing. This activity could replace a typical journal where students respond to prompts by writing their entries into a notebook. In my ESL writing classes at a community college, my students use Voice Thread to respond to prompts about their own writing, their textbook readings, and current events in the news. My students have commented that they enjoy using Voice Thread because they can improve their typing skills.

In a pronunciation class, an educator could upload a handout featuring pronunciation exercises. The students could complete the exercises orally with the use of a microphone, telephone, or webcam. Ben Papell, cofounder of the website, addresses commenting on Voice Thread: "We've tried to make it fairly universal in access. If you don't have a microphone of your computer, you can use a telephone to comment. If you're in the classroom and don't have either, you can use text if you need to, or webcam commenting" (Papell as quoted in Weir, 2009).

One of the excellent features of Voice Thread is the technical support for educators. For example, there is an extensive FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) section and a Forum section. The topics on these pages range from troubleshooting to connecting with other schools using Voice Thread. Further, there are step-by-step tutorials on creating (uploading, commenting, sharing, and embedding) a Voice Thread and using microphones and the doodling tool. Laila Weir (2009) offers a suggestion for those new to the site: "For educators new to Voice Thread, it's a good idea to experiment a bit before starting with students… Teachers can begin there, commenting on others' threads and creating their own practice threads."

With the technical support and the various ways to start conversations with students, educators should find Voice Thread a welcome addition to their classes. Students should find the new technology interesting and motivating. Let the conversations begin!

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Reviewer

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