



Journal

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**Teaching about
Taboo Language**

**Creating Visually
Effective Materials
for ELLs**

The ORTESOL Journal

Volume 37, 2020

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Introduction

ESOL Instruction in the Time of Covid-19

Jennifer Morris, University of Oregon, and Verena S. Sutherland, Linfield College and Portland Community College

Usually, we as journal editors remain in the background, doing our work mostly quietly and behind the scenes, editing, coordinating, doing lay out, and emailing. But the year 2020 is not a year like any other, and we have chosen to break our relative silence in order to write a few introductory words to address the state of our profession in the face of a global pandemic and the long overdue reckoning of race and social justice in the United States.

In a political and cultural climate that already has the numbers of international students that large parts of our profession rely on dwindling - we are down by 10% as compared to 2015 (Anderson, 2019), we are now facing the fallout that this global pandemic is bringing to the field of ESOL. Even before COVID-19 hit, things were tentative for many in our industry. When it comes to job security, K-12 ESOL instruction opportunities have remained relatively robust, but teachers have been facing a multitude of challenges in the classroom. Changing immigration policies, the sudden threat of deportation through ICE's more aggressive policies, and the knowledge that families are being detained at the border are all issues that especially ESOL teachers in schools need to grapple with.

Many ESOL professionals in adult education have been struggling with job security. Most positions are part time or have limited contracts, which leads to many playing the "adjunct game" or settling for short term job security. Many work in tentative or precarious situations that do not include benefits or long-term job security. While those who are just starting out, young and hungry, may find this adventurous, it becomes old to many after a while, and the uncertainty takes a toll.

Now, we live in a changed world on top of these uncertainties. Suddenly, we are pushed into remote and online learning settings, having to redesign courses at extremely short notice to make them fit this new format that may not provide the most benefit to our students. We are facing so many choices and challenges — synchronous versus asynchronous instruction, learning modalities, the home office. And we worry about our

students. What about those that do not own a laptop or are using their phone data to connect to class? As always, we teachers have been rising to these challenges as best as we can, trying to provide content while trying to retain and connect with as many students as we can.

Current circumstances contribute to difficulties and confusion for students, both immigrants and international students. As educators, we are often called upon to discuss such hot button issues with our students in the classroom. The United States is now experiencing a social justice movement propelled by Black Lives Matter in the wake of the killing of George Floyd by police officer Derek Chauvin. How can we even tackle the magnitude of this situation and the factors that have led to it in the classroom? How do these events affect our students' sense of safety and security?

Many of our students, both immigrants and short-term, already face significant challenges when coming to the US to study, including culture shock, and are finding themselves in a situation where they need to navigate and understand their host country's view of race and systemic racism, which is a harsh reality to wake up to. They do this while navigating their own varied understanding of race as a construct, as Loo (2019) writes in his article "International Students and Experiences with Race in the United States."

The current social justice movement propelled by Black Lives Matter has thrust the USA into the global spotlight with nationwide protests as people are taking to the streets in support of demands to curb police violence against black people. Conversations around Juneteenth, the toppling of statues across the nation, the pandemic disproportionately affecting Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), and many other topics are issues that will cross our international students' social media feed and come up in discussions with host families and friends. How do we tackle this as educators, we who are grappling with these matters ourselves?

And how do we explain the reactions of the government to the current situation and the behavior of elected officials? We are writing this just a day after the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) announced the following:

"Active students currently in the United States enrolled in such programs must depart the country or take other measures, such as transferring to a school with in-person instruction to remain in lawful status. If not, they may face immigration consequences including, but not limited to, the initiation of removal proceedings" (cited in Treisman, 2020).

While this decision has now been revoked, our international students have now had to undergo an emotional rollercoaster, facing difficult personal and career decisions in an already charged climate. How do we have these conversations with our students? How do we support them?

This current issue of the ORTESOL Journal has been in the works for a while and is thus full of wonderful and exciting contributions that may currently seem a bit out of sync with the realities we are facing in 2020. One thing is clear: resources are now more important than ever, and thus we hope you will find something useful in this volume as well. Therefore, we would especially like to point you towards our first feature article by Spitzer and Yang on hybrid reading instruction, which will hopefully provide some usable insights for you.

Finally, we would like to hear from you. We would like to know how you are navigating the current situation both in and outside of the classroom, and how you are coping. Drop us a short note (no more than 30 words) that summarizes how you are feeling right now as an ESOL instructor at journal@ortesol.org.

In the meantime, take good care. These are difficult times for everyone, educators and students alike.

Jennifer Morris and Verena Sutherland
ORTESOL Journal Editors

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ORTESOL Board Statement

ORTESOL stands with Black lives and the Black Lives Matter movement. We acknowledge the protests that are happening across the country and around the world in response to the unjust and untimely deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, in addition to the many police killings of Black community members that have come before and since. We are putting forth a renewed call to action against the racism and anti-Blackness that has rooted itself across our societal systems, particularly our system of education — pre-K through higher ed.

As TESOL and EL educators, the majority of whom are White, we acknowledge our responsibility and power to meet the demands of this moment through the following actions:

- to educate ourselves more deeply on racism, and particularly, anti-Blackness, in education and its effects on our students and teachers
- to examine ourselves honestly and openly, questioning and clearing racial assumption, bias, and fragility or indifference
- to create space for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) educators and students, recognizing the truth and validity of their experience and amplifying their voices, as well as supporting the eradication of white supremacy which suppresses their voices and threatens their bodies
- to recognize the intersectionality of race, language acquisition, and English language education, and teach transparently and clearly on the history and impacts of colonization of the North American continent, slavery, segregation, mass incarceration, as well as U.S. foreign policy and immigration laws, on creating a system of unequal status and access to citizenship and civic engagement, public health, education, employment, and generational wealth
- to include as part of our professional development offering to other educational professionals our best anti-racist education and practices, encouraging everyone to shed silence, call out white supremacist, anti-Black, or racist policies or actions, as well as being open to continued education ourselves
- to advocate on administrative and governmental levels for being actively anti-racist in our professions, for the rights and interests of our students and their families, and the diversity, safety, and wellbeing of our communities.

We recognize that this is more radical action than we have heard in the past. Perhaps now we are taking the opportunity to move beyond one thematic unit or

lesson and instead integrating social justice as a daily and fully comprehensive foundation of our teaching practices in order to eradicate inequities and abuses that exist throughout our communities and our classrooms. We must remember and acknowledge that language development and racial justice cannot be separated, and that it is a vehicle of white supremacy to separate language from the bodies that produce it (Flores, 2020).

We must maintain a growth mindset about becoming fervently anti-racist in order to adequately support not only our BIPOC students and teachers, but our White students and teachers to begin to reform our educational systems, recognizing that unjust systems of segregation and oppression harm and impoverish us all. We understand that we will make mistakes and that we must expect and accept correction and stay engaged.

With this, we move forward and activate our privilege, declaring that ORTESOL is committed to anti-racist education and advocacy.

We encourage action over words, and have included five that we as a Board are taking and offer to you to consider:

1. **LISTEN & FOLLOW.** Now is the time to listen to Black voices and amplify their messages. Follow **#BlackintheIvory** on social media to hear about Black experiences in academia or **The Conscious Kid** to learn about “parenting and education through a Critical Race lens.” Read or listen to leaders **Tamika Mallory** (activist), **Patrisse Cullors** (co-founder Black Lives Matter), **Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II** (co-chair Poor People’s Campaign), **Rodney Robinson** (2019 National Teacher of the Year), **Dena Simmons** (Educator).
2. **READ, LISTEN, & SHARE.** Update your professional subscriptions to include publications such as Teaching Tolerance or Rethinking Schools. Form a virtual book club with fellow educators, administrators, or friends. Read books from the Coretta Scott King Book Award list with your students or family. Add podcasts to your playlist such as Seeing White, Teaching While White, or NPR’s Code Switch.
3. **ENGAGE.** Host an open house with students, administrators, and community organizers to hear concerns, needs, and suggestions. What support do your Black students, teachers, staff, and families need and expect right now and in the future?
4. **ADVOCATE.** As TESOL educators, our student population is often learning American history and civics, perhaps more in-depth than ourselves. It’s important to be informed and engaged in the political processes that directly impact our

work. Contact your Oregon State Senator or Representative, mayor, school or district leaders to find out how they are making changes to policing, social service funding, and education policy. Share your personal stories with them and ask for specific changes. Encourage other members from your neighborhood and schools to do the same.

5. **DONATE.** Consider supporting an organization that speaks to your heart: Black Immigrant Collective, Black Alliance for Just Immigration, Black Lives Matter, Freedom to Thrive, National Bail Fund Network, Color of Change

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Feature Article

A Case for Hybrid Learning: Using a Hybrid Model to Teach Advanced Academic Reading

Zhenyu Yang, Inner Mongolia University, and Linnea Spitzer, Portland State University

Abstract

The study investigates the use of the hybrid method in the teaching and learning of English reading for speakers of English as a second language. Through an interview, a questionnaire and class observation, the research seeks to investigate the benefits and drawbacks that the hybrid model would possibly bring to the course.

Key Words *Hybrid course, EFL, ESL, reading course, CALL*

Introduction

With the development and wide use of the computer and Internet, more teachers have turned to technology to help the instruction or assessment of their courses. Due to the increasing desire for multimodal, flexible education models at American universities over the past 30 years, *hybrid* or *blended* classes have arisen as a way of combining face-to-face interaction and online tools (Caulfield, 2011). According to the literature, research on hybrid courses mainly focuses on the following aspects: the students' self-efficacy (Hsu & Sheu, 2008; Yeou, 2016), the comparison between hybrid and traditional classes (Abdullah, 2018; Cubillos, 2007; Scida & Saury, 2005) or the design or challenges of hybrid courses in general (Caulfield 2011; Sanders, 2005). When it comes to using hybrid courses for language instruction, the research centers mainly on courses designed for native speakers or the teaching of foreign languages with the hybrid method (Abdullah, 2018; Gascoigne & Parnell, 2013). Due to the increasing number of online and hybrid classes at American universities in recent years (Lederman, 2018), university-bound students in Intensive English Programs (IEPs) could benefit from early introduction to the online learning model. Unfortunately, very few studies have been conducted on the use of the hybrid model in the teaching of English as a second language. In this preliminary study of a hybrid ESL reading course at an American university, we aim to better

understand the effectiveness of the hybrid method for this population of students. We hope our findings will not only fill a gap in the study of hybrid teaching for ESL classes, but will also benefit those who teach similar courses at other institutions.

Research Questions

1. In what ways does this hybrid reading course meet the needs of multilingual graduate students?
2. How did the students perceive the effectiveness of the hybrid reading course?

Methods

In order to answer the above questions, we conducted a qualitative case study of this class, using interviews, surveys, and class observation as sources of data. In the sections that follow, we first describe the course and then provide an overview of the participants and our data collection methods.

Course Description

The course that we are presenting in this paper is designed as a hybrid reading class for international graduate-intent students at an Intensive English Program (IEP). This course is the final level in a 7-level program where the students are expected to be able to speak, read, and write at what the Common European Framework for Languages calls B2+, or *independent user* level (Council of Europe, 2020). In this academic reading course, the students practice reading and vocabulary acquisition strategies, learn to identify different text types, find and save academic source texts, and analyze the structure of IMRD (Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion) journal articles.

As a hybrid course, the students met face-to-face in a traditional classroom setting for two classes each week; they participated in an out-of-class online learning environment for the third weekly class meeting by utilizing a course management system. The students' assignments for this class were made up of four parts: a textbook analysis, a vocabulary notebook, reading and analysis, and an annotated bibliography (see Figure 1).

Assignment	Requirements	Modality
Textbook Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • find a textbook in the library and order it • read the textbook • write weekly reports • make a plan at the beginning of the term • reflect on the process at the end of the term 	online submission
Vocabulary Notebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • write down words and phrases from the texts that the students were reading every week 	offline
Reading and Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • read the texts the students had collected • respond to a prompt • read and respond to their classmates 	online
Annotated Bibliography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • find sources, identifying current and seminal sources • summarize and analyze these sources, writing a final reflection 	online submission

Figure 1: Student Assignment Requirements and Modality

As a hybrid reading course, the students were required to write their reflections on the assigned reading task and comment on several reflections from their peer classmates in the online system. The online discussion was expected to prepare the students for the next face-to-face meeting. For example, in one week, the students were required to read three articles on how to read academic texts and on the importance of taking notes. After reading about these new reading strategies, the students then discussed their way of reading in the online forum before bringing their thoughts to the class. In another online discussion, the students reflected on three academic journal articles on vocabulary notebooks. The students shared their experiences of reading these articles and their personal experiences in studying vocabulary and using vocabulary notebooks. Other students responded by commenting on their reading methods and providing suggestions. The instructor commented at the end of the discussions.

Unless otherwise stated, posts were expected to be 150 to 200 words in length and were usually due by midnight of the online class meeting day (Fridays). The students were required to read other posts and respond to at least two in 100 to 150 words within two days after the initial assignments. They could comment on what other students wrote, ask

them a question, recommend a resource or respond in any other way they think was appropriate. The instructor graded the posts and responses based on four criteria: content, language, format and participation. The criteria were further subdivided and made clear to all students in the rubric.

Data Collection

The data from this class were collected primarily from three sources: interviews, a follow-up questionnaire, and class observations. Prior to the data collection, we completed human subjects training and obtained approval from the university Institutional Review Board. In order to collect information from the students, we first conducted in-person interviews with three students from the class. We recorded these interviews and coded their responses. The second source of student data was a questionnaire. Six months later, at the end of the first term of graduate study for these students, the same group was given a follow-up questionnaire consisting of multiple choice, a Likert scale, and open-ended questions designed to elicit students' perceptions of the applicability of the class for their graduate school preparation. The third source of data was a class observation. The first author of this article (Zhenyu) observed the weekly in-person classes throughout the duration of the entire 10-week term and took notes on the activities and patterns of student interactions. He was also added as a guest to the online learning management system (LMS) where he made note of how often and to what degree a student participated in the class discussions, as well as how frequently a student accessed different pages on the LMS.

To ensure that the students participating in the study would feel comfortable expressing their authentic opinions regarding the content and structure of the class, the teacher of the course (Linnea: the second author of this article) did not participate in the interviews or data analysis procedures. Instead, Zhenyu conducted the interviews, observations, and analysis independently. In analyzing the data and writing the article, Zhenyu checked his interpretations of the interviews and questionnaires with Linnea for further context and background information. This separation of these tasks was clearly explicated in the consent letter that the students signed in order to participate in this study.

Participants

The students who participated in this study were all female graduate-intent students whose ages ranged from their early 20s to mid 30s. Since this class is the final level in the IEP, the students were all at advanced levels of English proficiency. One of these students came from a Spanish-speaking country in South America, majoring in literature;

one came from the Middle East majoring in engineering and the third was from East Asia majoring in social sciences. Table 1 shows a description of each participant:

Participant names (all names are pseudonyms)	Region	Age	Comfort level with online learning
Aisha	Middle East	Early 20s	No previous experience with online learning, but open to the experience.
Maria	South America	Early 20s	No previous experience with online learning, not so comfortable, doesn't like technology.
Sunaki	Asia	Mid 30s	No previous experience with online learning. Feels comfortable using technology and safe in an online environment.

Figure 2: Participant Demographics

Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data for this study, Zhenyu first transcribed and coded the interviews, moving from open codes to analytical codes (Meriam & Tisdell, 2016). He then checked these analytical codes against the notes he had made from his classroom and online observations as well as the questionnaire. In order to move these analytical codes into categories that answered our research questions, he wrote memos, diagrammed, and conferenced with Linnea, who was able to serve as both a member and peer check (Saldaña, 2016). As a member, Linnea was able to provide insider details into the interactions that Zhenyu observed in the class. She also reviewed Zhenyu's analysis and commented on whether it matched with her own understanding of the students' engagement with the in person and online material, thereby providing further context for Zhenyu's emerging codes. As a peer and the second author of this study, Linnea also served as a sounding board as Zhenyu processed the information from his data by listening to his emerging analysis, asking questions, and suggesting possible refinements. Based on the analytical codes from the interviews, the observation notes, the questionnaire, and our conferencing, Zhenyu began to construct categories in answer to our two research questions. Because of the small number of participants in our study, we expected our analysis to reveal conflicting perspectives on the usefulness and appropriacy

of this hybrid course, and we therefore paid close attention to areas of disagreement between our participants. Indeed, one of the benefits of qualitative research is the possibility of reaching into these conflicting perspectives, examining them, and commenting on how they might arise out of our participants' lived experiences.

Discussion

Each of the students we interviewed for this study had different experiences with the class. Some were more comfortable, and some were less, but in general, all students found some benefit to having both the online and in-person component for this class. Below, we first summarize each student and her experience in the class. We then describe general findings that might be helpful for future teachers who are considering designing a hybrid course for their IEPs.

Aisha

Aisha had had no experience with any hybrid course before, but she was glad to have some change. She thought the online component of the hybrid reading course prepared her well for the face-to-face instruction. From class observation, Aisha was a strong participant, regularly volunteering her opinion in full class and small-group discussions. On one hand, she reported that she liked reading her classmates' feedback, but on the other hand, she found the comments not so credible, since they came from different majors and were not supposed to read the same materials most of the time. That was why she thought online reading was necessary: they need time to read other people's threads with the online dictionary. Aisha was the most neutral one of the three to the hybrid format. She admitted the hybrid model was effective and flexible, but she thought it reduced the interaction with both the instructor and her classmates.

Maria

This was also the first hybrid course for Maria, who liked the flexible schedule of the model. In class, we observed her to be an active participant, engaging with her classmates in small group and whole class discussions. Although she expressed her dislike of technology in the interviews, her comments regarding the online component of the course were generally positive. She felt that the online activity prepared her well for the face-to-face session and she enjoyed reading the feedback from her classmates, which increased her interest in the course and provided more opportunities for interaction with both the instructor and her classmates.

Sunaki

In our eyes, Sunaki demonstrated many qualities typically seen in students from East Asia. In class, we observed that she was quieter than many of the other students and more self-disciplined, meaning that she came to class well-prepared and approached her work outside of class with thoroughness and care. She had had no experience of the hybrid format, but after taking this course, she expressed her strong preference to it. Even though, the online part increased her work, she enjoyed doing it, as it brought her security and plenty of time in posting her answers and comments. She even suggested the students should be required to respond to every thread of their classmates instead of just choosing two of them. To Sunaki, the online activity made her more confident in expressing herself and better-prepared for the classroom instruction.

General Findings:

1. Students were initially unfamiliar with the hybrid model.

The students we interviewed had little idea about what a hybrid course was like before taking the course, and none of them had taken a hybrid course before. Class observations showed that in the first two weeks, the students asked more questions on the set-up of the course and the requirements of the online activities. Since the IEP at this university offers no hybrid-model courses other than this one, it is unlikely that these students would have encountered a similar class, unless they had taken one in their previous degree programs.

2. The students agreed that the hybrid method has some advantages over the traditional model.

Just as other studies have shown (Caulfield, 2011; Hensley 2005; Yeou, 2016), the students liked the flexibility that the hybrid course provided for their schedules. They were able to complete their assignments at their own pace. In addition, they had plenty of time to read a text before coming up with an idea. As Sunaki said, “Thanks to the online activity, we could have time to think a [*sic*] topic deeply, taking enough time...”

All the interviewed students agreed that the online part of the class prepared them well for the next face-to-face class. To quote two students,

I have to read my classmates’ point of view before going to class, so when I arrive to class, I already have something in mind to discuss about. So I think that I was prepared even more than the traditional

class...but in the traditional class, something more spontaneous [*sic*]... (Maria)

The discussion in the traditional classroom seemed more like the prompt idea. (Sunaki)

When asked in both the interview and the follow-up questionnaire what they would choose for a reading course among a traditional, a hybrid and a completely online course, they unanimously chose the hybrid. This is one of the few answers on which the students reached a complete agreement. The class observation also showed that students could join in the class discussion actively without spending much time on introduction or reading of the topic.

3. Technology did not add an extra burden on the students.

Students had conflicting opinions about the use of technology in the course. In our interviews, we found that the use of an online platform in itself was not attractive to the students. Maria even expressed her dislike of technology. However, they seemed comfortable enough with the online platform to the point where their online activities did not require extra work or an unnecessary learning curve. Almost all the interviewed students said they spent similar hours on the assignments for the class, whether they were online or offline. According to the interviews, each week, the students averaged five hours on the assigned tasks and reflections – about half for the posts and half for the reflections. The major obstacles that cost students extra time in completing course assignments came from the language and familiarity with the subject, obstacles that are likely to be encountered for any advanced-level reading class in an IEP.

4. “Communication” is what the students considered important for the learning model.

Although some other assignments were also submitted online, the part that most of the students liked best was reading the comments of their peer classmates on their reflections. Maria even suggested adding instant communication occasionally for further discussion. Aisha advised that “doing some written analysis of the discussions in class would help to take this assignment more seriously.”

We also noticed that students with different character traits benefited differently from this hybrid model. Maria, who we observed as rather outgoing and talkative in class, expressed her preference for the classroom discussions over the online interactions, while a Sunaki, who was a quieter student, said she was able to have more chances to express her opinions and felt “more comfortable” with the online form of

communication. The combination of these options provides a wider range of opportunities for interaction for students in hybrid classes. For students who come from more reserved cultures or who are more naturally introverted, having the opportunity to interact online could provide them with more time to process and create meaningful responses, instead of being driven by the requirements of spontaneous interaction. On the other hand, more outgoing students may need the face-to-face interaction in order to feel engaged in the class with their fellow students. Having both options in a hybrid model allows both learning styles to participate in ways that suit their communication preferences.

5. Students' comfort with the hybrid format for other courses depended on the language skill being taught.

When asked if they would choose the hybrid format for the other courses in language learning, the students expressed their reservation, especially for the courses that need more guidance from the instructor. For example, Aisha and Maria said they preferred the traditional face-to-face class for grammar. On the one hand, this response may be because they feel as though the online content would not provide them with the interaction they need or the opportunity to ask questions when presented with difficult grammar points. On the other hand, it is possible that these students would feel more comfortable than they realize in a hybrid grammar class; their reticence may be more due to their lack of experience with the hybrid model, rather than the unsuitability of this model for other language skills besides reading.

Conclusion

From the student feedback and class observations, this hybrid reading course proved to be popular and effective for the ESL students interviewed for this project and was successful in familiarizing them with the hybrid model in preparation for their graduate studies. Despite our students' lack of familiarity with the format of a hybrid class, their positive feedback shows that they were able to adapt and benefit from the flexibility and different options for communication that the course offered. The online part of the course provided the students not only with time to think deeply but also with flexibility for their schedules. However, because our students did not feel that the technology itself was an attractive element of the course, teachers of hybrid classes should prioritize creating spaces for communication rather than simply relying on technology when it comes to designing hybrid language courses.

This preliminary study is rather limited due to the small number of interviewees and our inability to compare this class with other similar, face-to-face classes. Because this reading course is one-of-a-kind in our program, several of the students interviewed had

not had similar experiences in other classes in this IEP. Because of these limitations, it is challenging to generalize these findings for a wider audience. Still, our findings suggest that hybrid courses for international students in IEPs offer many of the same benefits that they do for mainstream domestic students. For one, the flexibility of scheduling may be a welcome reprieve from the intensity of IEP study. With one online day, students have the flexibility of working from home or completing their tasks during non-working hours. Additionally, the ability of students to communicate in a non-spontaneous manner may give more reserved students a wider variety of ways to participate in class and engage with the material. In contrast to fully online classes, hybrid language courses also offer the opportunity to engage with classmates in live environments, and to practice verbal as well as written fluency.

While we are not arguing for the full transition of IEPs to the hybrid model, the inclusion of hybrid courses could provide a wider variety of learning experiences for international students studying English. Particularly in the current environment of social distancing, hybrid courses may provide an attractive option for IEPs looking to provide in-person content while limiting the contact hours between teachers and students.

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Feature Article

Instructional Coaching for Teachers of ELs in Inclusive Environments: Practical Insights for a Low-Incidence EL Setting

Svetlana V. Nuss, PhD., Grand Canyon University and University of Alaska

Abstract

As instructional coaching is being implemented to help English learners access content in school districts across the U.S., the low-incidence EL setting requires its own consideration. This article discusses an urban school district's EL coaching initiative from the practitioner's perspective. It addresses enrollment of classroom teachers into the EL coaching program, specialized areas of an EL coach's expertise, and how this drives professional development for EL instructional coaches in the larger systemic context. ELL Awareness presentations are suggested as a practical way of building equity for ELs and positively impacting the culture of inclusion in school districts. Challenges of institutional integration of an EL instructional coaching platform are discussed. The article shines light on the realities of EL coaching in low-incidence EL inclusive environments and offers practical ways of its implementation, and represents a reflection on the experience of one ELL specialist-turned-EL-coach.

Key Words *IC, ELL, ESL, instructional coaching, low-incidence EL environment, ELL data-driven decision making*

Introduction

Instructional coaching has earned its place in the educational discourse and practice in the U.S. It is employed to help professional educators advance their practice and reach better learner outcomes. There is a growing body of research pointing to the effectiveness of instructional coaching as a means of professional development for teachers, underscoring its job relevance and the on-going and cyclical nature of the coaching relationship (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Knight, 2017; Knight, 2019; Russo, 2004). More and more well-experienced and even distinguished classroom teachers along with their novice

colleagues get to experience the thrilling power of having another expert educator in the classroom to brainstorm, collaborate, and find better working instructional strategies, establish more productive and engaging classroom routines, and create a more inclusive school environment – ultimately elating practicing educators’ positive impact power to a whole new level. Coaching is often described as the art of asking questions (Knight, 2017; Medrich & Charner, 2017; Pharrams, 2016). The following article presents the reader with an exercise in and a reflection of such art: the many questions lacing through the text guide the discussion and serve the purpose of influencing one’s thinking as a way to develop reader/author communication.

EL Coaching Introduction in a Low-Incidence EL School District

When one Alaskan school district initiated its first instructional coaching program, it was only a matter of time for the district leadership to re-channel the work of its English learner (EL) specialists, aligning it with the ongoing institutional transformation. Their teaching assignments decreased, and ELL specialists were asked to coach mainstream colleagues in making their classes’ learning content better accessible to the district’s 400+ English learners. This urban school district serves over 13,000 students, about 30 percent of whom are on the lunch assistance program. A school district is generally considered low-incidence EL when the total percent of its English learners is less than 25% of all enrolled students (Consentino de Cohen et al., 2005), so this district with its EL population at around 3% of the student body was well within the low-incidence EL parameters.

Understandably, some ELL specialists took to this new line of work more enthusiastically, while others preferred to continue working mostly with students and did not step outside of their general ESL teaching mode. District leadership was able to identify the specialists who truly believed in the potential of EL instructional coaching and were willing to put energy into its implementation and advancement. District directors of federal programs strongly supported the ELL specialists who were genuinely interested in developing the new EL coaching initiative: these EL coaches had the opportunity to attend a three-day non-EL-specific instructional coaching conference early fall and were offered additional PD throughout the year that consisted of participation in monthly Title I coaching cohort professional learning sessions.

Needless to say, collegial conversations around the EL instructional coaching were rich, exciting, and meaningful, but when it came to practice, this EL instructional coach was left wondering how exactly to approach the task. One special consideration was not addressed in the EL instructional coach’s training and hardly had a presence in special literature: the district’s low-incidence EL setting. Coaching classroom teachers of English

learners in low-incidence EL environments looks different from that of high-incidence EL environments (Nuss, 2020a); however, most of the research has a high-incidence EL basis and reflects high-incidence ELL classroom realities (Nuss, 2019).

Unlike EL instructional coaching in high-incidence EL environments, where an EL instructional coach and the classroom teacher collaborate for the benefit of the entire student body or the significant EL part of the population, EL instructional coaching efforts in low-incidence EL environments are centered around a few individual students. This creates a situation when two educators, the classroom teacher and the EL coach, spend a significant amount of time and energy working out specific instructional strategies for the benefit of one or two students. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the collaborating classroom teacher and the EL instructional coach look for ways to maximize the impact of their efforts and tend to group students based on their academic English abilities outside of the ELL status to include native English speakers in need of additional scaffolding. But the effects in a low-incidence EL environment, where educators take significant work time to address the needs of just a few students, are far more reaching, and will be addressed in greater detail throughout the article.

Field-based Perspective of the EL Instructional Coach's Workflow and Areas of Expertise

What *does* an EL instructional coach's work with a mainstream colleague start with? Is there anything an EL coach could or should do before meeting with school faculty?

This district's coaching platform was grounded in research on partnership instructional coaching, which maintains that an instructional coach would be wise to meet with the teacher before actually entering the classroom for initial observation (Knight, 2017). It is advised to establish a clear picture of current instructional reality, and if observation is chosen as a means, discuss what will be observed by the coach, with the emphasis placed on the coach observing student performance and interactions – not the teacher. In this EL coach's experience, when the initial positioning was based on the student's performance and academic and social needs rather than arbitrarily focusing on teacher's instructional practices, the conversation between the teacher and the EL instructional coach had a greater chance to remain practical, professional, and objective: What is in the best interests of the EL student? How do the student's needs inform instructional practices? What are the desirable outcomes? What might instruction look like to help facilitate those outcomes? What strengths does the student have that can be capitalized on? In each student's situation, the answers to these questions would be quite different.

Facilitating the general classroom teacher's use of English-language-specific data and proficiency with ELL student software-generated reports was an area that proved useful in EL coaching. The school district in our case uses a research-based testing system of determining its newcomers' English language proficiency (ELP) level, so it was the EL coach's decision to take on the responsibility to know exactly where each of the newcomer students was in his or her English language acquisition process, which involved extensive familiarity with pertinent software and its report-generating capabilities. The EL instructional coach had the data ready and was well-positioned to help a classroom colleague better evaluate each of the EL student's progress and learning goals. The instructional coach also made connections to specific activities the learner could and could not do by quite literally highlighting the areas of what the student could do now and what their next "can do" was, and was prepared to offer the instructional strategies to help address learning needs of these particular students.

Background information on students' cultural upbringing that goes beyond the general knowledge as well as tips on communicating with newcomer families were welcomed by teachers and helped the EL coach to gain initial acceptance and build rapport with classroom colleagues. In our case, the cultural details teachers found most helpful were:

- How much is education valued in the newcomer family's home community?
- How does the school day start and what does the formal school and class environment usually look like where the English learner comes from?
- How do the school size and communication with families compare?
- How much time per day did the student spend at school?
- What does the student-teacher relationship and communication look like in the student's former schooling experience?
- Might the student be misinterpreting current educational realities?

Answers to these questions may vary greatly, as differences in school systems of diverse cultures around the world may surprise even savvy educators. Thus, it is a good idea for an EL coach to include these kinds of questions in an EL coaching program introductory communication.

When defining the realities of an EL-specific instructional coach's work environment, the following main areas emerge: a) facilitation of adult learning, b) second language acquisition theory, tools, and best practices, and c) coaching as a mode of professional development. Each one of these functional arenas comes with its own set of strengths and latent weaknesses; many potential challenges can and should be prevented or addressed in the EL coaches' professional development. In fact, the importance of PD for EL

instructional coaches is hard to overestimate: the available research literature is abundant (see a comprehensive list of references in Pharrams, 2016 – non-EL-specific; as well as Nuss, 2020a – EL-specific) and clearly points to the fact that PD of the coaches should not be taken lightly by the districts embarking on the EL coaching journey, and PD opportunities should be addressed early on, especially when one considers the many models EL coaching can assume in various contexts (Borman & Feger, 2006; Knight, 2017; Saclarides & Lubienski, 2018).

More on Teacher Enrollment Practices: Balancing Intentions and Reality of EL Coaching Initiatives

Initial EL coaching presentation delivery could take shape as a segment of a staff meeting, part of a professional learning community (PLC), or in-service. In other words, the time for promotion, explanation of the benefits, and teacher enrollment should be built into the workflow of the institution and not left to coaches' creative devices in hopes that teachers will just know to voluntarily sign up to work with a coach when they learn of an EL coaching opportunity. An EL instructional coach is sometimes put in the position of having to – for hours – scout the Internet looking for research and blog posts during and after school hours on how to better meet their job's requirements, or even just enter another teacher's classroom. What is the background of people who are hired to fill instructional coaching positions? Typically, teaching. This would mean that most of the instructional coaches are educators, not marketers, so either job descriptions need to change to openly acknowledge the promotion of services as part of this job, or district leadership should adjust its approach to program implementation and have a roadmap of teacher enrollment in place. Less marketing-savvy instructional coaches should not be considered less professional for not having developed a large following of mainstream colleagues eager to engage in collaboration.

The need of specialized PD sessions for teachers aimed at increasing their awareness of the instructional coach benefits and enrollment into a coaching program warrants special professional development for coaches, particularly on how to build their initial faculty presentations similar to the ones discussed later in the article. Such coach preparation can take place during coaching cohort meetings and requires time built into an EL instructional coach's work load.

By institutionalizing EL instructional coaching and explicitly supporting it through district-wide communication, district leaders eliminate the ambiguity when the coaches have to earn collegial support and strive to validate their worth making advances in the field on their own. A mismatch between stakeholders' intentions and their support practices is especially overwhelming in new coaching initiatives and weighs heavily on

newly hired coaches but is easily corrected when the leaders are well-connected with their workforce and continuously solicit and receive earnest feedback.

Here we find the discussion point to leadership in the EL instructional coaching, for it impacts closely related areas where the districts considering EL instructional coaching practices benefit from a clear understanding and reasoning for choosing their EL coaching model and defining the status of an EL instructional coach: When an EL specialist/ESL teacher is hired/promoted to serve by leading EL instructional coaching changes for the district's faculty, is this coach now essentially performing the functions of a teacher leader? Does the ESL specialist simply double up in his or her EL ins capacity, or does the position of an EL instructional coach come with a new level of demands? What is an EL instructional coach's standing de facto vs. de jure? Do the job's demands align with its benefits — including monetary compensation — and the coach's professional standing? Is there an incongruity in the district leadership intentions, delivery, and support of the EL coaching initiative? Are the professional growth opportunities and pathways considered and clearly communicated? Is there room for special considerations? These questions provide an initial guiding thought frame, as they are shaping a path for districts where EL instructional coaching is considered: the inquiry is stemming from practical experience and every district considering EL coaching will sooner or later find itself facing these questions.

Building Empathy for ELs with ELL Awareness Presentations

In this district's case, special considerations were abundant. In addition to the approach often recommended by the research literature — sharing specific instructional strategies and their implementation in the classroom teachers' day-to-day practices, the district's EL instructional coach facilitated and delivered ELL Awareness interactive presentations for the teachers of the district's several elementary schools, shared the expert insider knowledge of the local immigrant cultures and demographics, introduced present-day trends in language acquisition research, conducted district's EL data analysis and interpretation for classroom teachers, and was instrumental in professional development sessions introducing specific instructional strategies, among other responsibilities.

A series of ELL Awareness presentations in elementary schools across the district was conducted in an effort to help build empathy toward its diverse language learners (Zacarian, 2011; Fine et al., 2020). The idea came from the fact that the EL coach was supposed to somehow build a supportive presence in several elementary schools, but realized early on that there were only so many hours in the day, and many EL students were not always receiving the social/emotional and content support they required (session content is not discussed here; more on building equity for ELs through ELL Awareness

presentations can be found in Nuss, 2020a). The coach approached school principals individually and offered to conduct some EL-specific PD, providing them with a general outline for the sessions and the idea behind it. All of the approached principals saw the proposal's potential to not only change things for the better for their newcomer learners, but also contribute to a more positive and inclusive school culture overall, and they were very supportive of the idea. Initiated by the EL instructional coach and included in faculty workflow, these PD sessions were short 30-35 minute highly engaging interactive sessions and took place during regular staff meetings.

The ELL Awareness sessions received overwhelmingly positive feedback from teachers who specifically commented on how moved they were by the conversation. A number of classroom teachers mentioned in their exit tickets that they had experience working with ELs in the past. The teachers went on to share that while at the time they thought they were treating these learners adequately and in a professional and caring manner, and they truly were doing their best to reach the ELs in their classrooms at the time, they now realize they could do more differentiation in the future and expressed intent to treat ELs with more consideration. Several teachers also wrote they would be more responsive to the needs of their newcomer students. Teachers found particularly useful the wider cultural context of the presentations. The ELL Awareness sessions, therefore, succeeded in facilitating an engaging adult learning experience that resulted in gaining additional empathy for the district's newcomer students with limited English proficiency and contributed to the overall supportive school climate district-wide.

The EL instructional coach who conducted these EL empathy building sessions was referred to by the faculty as not only knowledgeable language pedagogy professional, but also as observably proficient in public speaking. Public presentation mastery is built over the years and cannot be expected from a teacher, ELL specialist-turned-coach, without access to some very specialized professional development. An ESL/ELL specialist is first and foremost a teacher by education and training, while the role of an EL instructional coach clearly encompasses expertise in many additional areas — working with adult learners, public speaking, and coaching per se being some of the most prominent. These skills are in addition to the professional knowledge of second language teaching and learning. District leadership aspiring to institutionalize EL instructional coaching should be realistic when setting its expectations and prepare to either bring in qualified third-party help or invest in developing presentational and marketing capacities of its ELL specialists as well as the materials they could use to help their EL coaches build equity for EL learners. While drawing on local ESL specialists seems like a natural place to start a search for a qualified workforce to perform the role of an EL instructional coach, districts should consider the fact that not every ESL teacher is capable to work with adults, or even wants to do so.

Conclusion

The practical insights in this article will further illuminate the two-fold nature of EL instructional coaching by emphasizing its low-incidence and high-incidence EL applications. Instructional coaching is one of the most effective, but also costly forms of PD, and districts employing it put a lot of thought into its systematic introduction (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Knight, 2017; Knight, 2019). Every district's needs are unique, so no one single EL coaching scenario fits all. This investigation offers practical perspectives of running such a program, and low-incidence EL districts may find them helpful and could adjust them based on local realities.

Practical advice herein is based on the low-incidence EL coaching program experience and establishes it essential for districts to a) explicitly communicate EL coaching program goals to faculty, b) have an EL coaching program advancement plan in place, c) address highly specialized PD for EL coaches and balance expectations and realities of EL coaching positions, and d) consider using EL coaching as a means to influence district's overall culture of inclusion, acceptance, and value of every learner. This investigation promotes a more robust discussion of EL instructional coaching as a fact of the modern educational landscape in the U.S. and encourages a deeper exploration of the low-incidence EL realities. Such practice-driven analysis is well-positioned to help shape and inform further theoretical investigations that would provide more practical solutions for the low-incidence EL school districts in their search for more sustainable ways of professional development for classroom teachers with English learners in an inclusive environment. ELL Awareness presentations discussed here offer one of the ways districts can build equity for their diverse language learners in low-incidence EL settings using an EL instructional coaching platform as a vehicle to deliver such specialized job-embedded PD for teachers.

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Feature Article

Teaching *about* Taboo Language in EFL/ESL Classes: A Starting Point

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Abstract

Although a range of authors have argued for the inclusion of swearing and taboo language in EFL/ESL curriculums (see Mercury, 1995; Horan, 2013; Holster, 2005; Liyanage, Walker, Bartlett, & Guo, 2015; Finn, 2017), to the best of my knowledge, no research has investigated how this could be done in a professional and pedagogically sound manner.

With this in mind, the purpose of this article is threefold. First, to present a range of arguments as to why swearing, (potentially) offensive, and taboo language (SOTL) should be covered in English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes. Second, to report on key findings from an action research project I conducted in 4 separate adult EFL classes in Seoul, South Korea aimed at developing an effective strategy for teaching students about SOTL in English. And third, to offer a range of considerations and ideas teachers should bear in mind if they choose to broach this somewhat sensitive subject matter in their English classes.

Keywords: *swearing, EFL/ESL, taboo language, teaching English, swear words, obscenities, cursing*

Introduction

In English, swearing, offensive and taboo language (SOTL) is most commonly associated with language related to bodily functions, sexual organs, sexual acts, sexual orientation, race and/or ethnicity, certain animals, religion, and gender (Pinker, 2007; Jay, 2009), and may fall into one or more of the following categories - cursing, epithets, profanity, blasphemy, obscenity, vulgarisms, and expletives (Pinker, 2007; Jay, 2009; Stapleton, 2010).

Far from being the type of language that was once almost exclusively used in private conversations held behind closed doors, SOTL has become so ubiquitous in the English language that it is almost impossible to avoid (Winters & Duck, 2001; Jay & Janschewitz, 2008; Vingerhoets et al., 2013; Mohr, 2013). For example, Howe (2012) states that the word ‘*fuck*’ is one of the most commonly spoken and most versatile words in the English language, while Jay (2009) asserts that the average person utters approximately 80-90 words a day that could be considered taboo or offensive. And these numbers do not even take into consideration the amount of times our ears and eyes are bombarded with SOTL, either explicitly or implicitly, on a daily basis

From the explicit use of SOTL in book titles (e.g., *Cunt: A Declaration of Independence* - by Inga Muscio, 1998), advertising campaigns (e.g., *Where the bloody hell are you?* – Australian advertising campaign, 2006), and in countless movies, TV shows, and song lyrics, to the implied use of SOTL used in newspaper headlines (e.g., *Tiger puts balls in wrong place again.* – New York Post headline, 14/04/13), in brand names (e.g., *FCUK* – British fashion label), and in a range of other situations (e.g., *Too Many Mother Ukers* – by the comedy duo Flight of The Conchords) it is clear to see that a) language that may be considered taboo or off limits is no longer on the fringes of everyday English language use, and b) that swearing and taboo language is related to context and culture.

Why Teach about Swearing, (Potentially) Offensive, and Taboo Language?

Before introducing my arguments for teaching about SOTL to adult English-language learners, I would like to draw your attention to an argument put forward by Adams (2002) in relation to including “bad” American English (i.e., SOTL) in liberal arts colleges and university settings in the United States of America. Here, Adams (2002) asserts that “the more knowledgeable and therefore best educated on the subjects of ‘bad’ words and language generally - will likely make the best decisions about their use” (p. 357).

Arguments for Teaching about SOTL

Argument 1: Prevention is better than cure.

Taking into consideration the above quote, I would argue that employing the same approach as espoused by Adams, but in the EFL/ESL classroom, would help equip EFL/ESL students with the appropriate knowledge required to understand the various forms and functions of SOTL, thus helping to ensure that English-language students don’t make the types of lexical or pragmatic errors which could cause them (or others) undue embarrassment, stress, or other undesirable ramifications as a result of the misuse or abuse of SOTL.

Argument 2: Having an understanding of SOTL allows learners to present themselves and their various social identities in ways in which they best see fit.

Considering language (both “good” and “bad”) is not only used to communicate and express one’s emotions, ideas, and intentions, but also to construct and display one’s various social identities (Andersson & Trudgill, 1990; Stapleton, 2010), I believe it would be remiss of the English language teaching community to avoid teaching about SOTL in EFL/ESL contexts – especially in relation to the pragmatic and social functions of this style of language.

According to Littlewood (1983), failing to acknowledge SOTL in foreign language classes “may unwittingly help to ensure that the speaker of the foreign language remains a ‘reduced personality’, since we are taking away so many of those choices and interpersonal strategies through which, over the course of his life, his personality has learnt to find its expression” (p. 203).

Argument 3: A professional approach to teaching about SOTL will yield better results.

Bearing in mind that SOTL is lexically rich, grammatically complex, has a myriad of pragmatic and social functions, is used by the majority of native English speakers, and is a staple in many English-speaking speech communities (Dewaele, 2004; Jay & Janschewitz, 2008; Horan, 2013; Kapoor, 2016), I believe that the issue of teaching about SOTL should be approached in a professional way as to help ensure our students develop knowledge related to the functions (pragmatic and emotional), nuances, and social rules of this type of language.

I would argue that taking an ad hoc method, or allowing students to learn by trial and error, would largely fail to address the cultural, linguistic, grammatical, and pragmatic complexity intricately woven into the very fabric of this style of language and expression.

As such, I advocate for a calculated and pedagogically appropriate approach to teaching about SOTL to be employed by schools and educators working with adult English-learners interested in knowing more about this facet of the English language.

Argument 4: This will help close the SOTL knowledge and power divide.

Comprised of arguably the most emotionally charged and powerful forms of expressions available (Pinker, 2007; Dewaele, 2004), SOTL is often used as a form of verbal aggression by those wishing to express their anger, frustration, contempt or, in the worst case, hatred for another person. Now, although SOTL is more commonly used in a social

way (i.e., where the intent of using SOTL is not to offend people, but for social reasons such as rapport building or humour) (Montagu, 2001; Fägersten, 2012), sadly, SOTL is also routinely used to upset, belittle, or abuse others.

With this being true, I would argue that failing to equip our students with a better understanding of how SOTL is used as a form of verbal abuse not only effectively limits their ability to understand potentially dangerous situations, but also robs them of their ability to verbally defend themselves against such attacks if they so wish, thus leaving them powerless in these precarious situations.

In addition, and according to the research, SOTL is often used to display various social identities and as a marker of group membership (Daly et al., 2004; Stapleton, 2010) and solidarity (Wilson, 2018). As such, and considering that research reveals that there is a broad knowledge gap between native English speakers and non-native speakers in relation to SOTL (Dewaele, 2007; Deaele, 2018), explicit instruction on how SOTL can be used for identity construction (and other social functions) may not only serve to reduce the knowledge gap that currently exists between native and non-native English speakers in relation to SOTL, but also allow them to construct their various social identities in ways that best suit their needs and desires.

Summary

In sum, I believe teaching about SOTL is important (especially for those wishing to work, live or study in an English-speaking environment) for several reasons. First, to help prevent usage mistakes which could potentially cause a range of undesirable consequences for the transgressor. Second, to inform adult learners about the range of ways SOTL can be employed to fulfil various social functions (e.g., for humor, rapport building, and to show in-group membership). Third, to allow adult learners to not only better understand the power and impact this style of language has, but also to show how SOTL can be employed to display a range of emotions (positive and negative) and social identities. Finally, to facilitate closing the language divide and ensuing power gap that often exists between native speakers and non-native speakers of English in regards to SOTL.

Teaching about SOTL in the EFL/ESL Classroom

Before moving on to outline and discuss the action research I undertook in order to develop a set of guidelines for teaching about SOTL in EFL classrooms, I would like to suggest that as educators, and in relation to SOTL, it is not our responsibility to take on

the role of moral compass and/or pretend that “bad” language is not a fact of modern-day English practice. Instead, it is our role to not only help our students develop the required lexical, grammatical, and pragmatic knowledge required to use English to communicate effectively, but also to facilitate our students’ abilities to present elements of their personalities and various social identities in ways that best suit them.

Action Research: How Should We Teach about SOTL in the Classroom?

After reviewing the literature related to teaching SOTL in EFL/ESL classes, three things became apparent. First, interest in teaching SOTL in EFL/ESL classes is growing (see Mercury, 1995; Horan, 2013; Holster, 2005; Liyanage et al., 2015; Finn, 2017). Second, a knowledge gap exists between native English speakers and non-native speakers in relation to understanding and using SOTL (Dewaele, 2007; Dewaele, 2018). And third, presently there is a lack of research-based guidelines for teachers to draw from in regards to teaching about SOTL in EFL/ESL classrooms.

The following action research was done in an attempt to address both the second and third observations.

Study Overview

Taking an action research approach (for an overview, see Burns, 2005), which incorporated informal group interviews and Likert scale surveys, this study aimed to develop an effective and professional way to teach adult EFL students about SOTL. The study was undertaken in early 2019 in the hopes of uncovering an effective approach, or at the very least, developing a range of thinking points teachers could consider if and when they decide to teach about SOTL in their classes.

Inclusion Criteria

To be included in this study, the volunteer participants were required to have sufficient English ability to understand the topic (this was deemed to be a minimum IELTS score of 6 or a minimum TOEIC score of 600), be over 18 years old, consent to participate in a class addressing SOTL in English, and agree to complete both the pre-class and post-class surveys and the post-class interview aimed at eliciting constructive feedback related to the lessons’ content and pedagogical approach.

Participants

Thirty-two adult Korean EFL students (1:1 ratio of males and females), who met the selection criteria mentioned above, were involved in this study. At the time of the study, the participants, all of whom were either university graduates ($n = 23$) or current university students ($n = 9$), were aged from 19 to 57 ($M = 31.5$), were voluntarily studying English twice a week (for two hours per lesson) at a private language school for their own personal reasons.

Six of the 32 students had previously lived abroad. Of the remaining 26 students, seven had aspirations of living in an English-speaking country, while the other 19 stated they only needed English for business purposes, to make travel easier, and/or to consume English media.

Methods

For this research, I conducted four separate two-hour classes specifically aimed at teaching the students *about* SOTL (i.e., the class was aimed at awareness raising and focused on the forms, functions, history, and cultural aspects of SOTL).

Each of the two-hour classes involved eight students (4 male and 4 female), all of whom had volunteered to enroll in one of the classes after seeing an information poster related to the study displayed at their private English academy.

As stated, the goal of the research project was to develop a method of teaching about SOTL in a non-offensive, non-threatening, professional and pedagogically sound manner. Due to this, surveys were filled out by each participant before and after each class to ascertain their thoughts and reactions to the class. In addition, I conducted short (approximately 15 minutes) informal group discussions immediately after the class to get the students' opinions, feedback, and suggestions on the lesson while their ideas were still at the forefront of their minds.

This approach was taken to ensure the voices of the participants were heard, to address any concerns they may have had, and to allow me to potentially implement any suggestions put forward by the participants in an attempt to develop a sound approach to teaching about SOTL in a classroom setting.

Since this research project intended to test various methods of instruction in the pursuit of developing a tenable approach to teaching about SOTL, a range of the suggestions and insights offered by the participants in relation to methodology and class content were

implemented in the subsequent class(es) to test for both suitability and practicality in a classroom environment.

By repeating this process four times, with four different groups of participants (four classes with eight participants per class), I not only garnered a range of strategies and ideas which could potentially make teaching about SOTL less stressful for all involved, but also implement and test different teaching strategies on a broader range of students to help ensure the findings of this research are applicable to teachers and students in other contexts.

Key Findings and Discussion

The five key findings are as follows:

1. All but four of the participants believed learning about SOTL was beneficial. The reasons given included being able to communicate better, being able to understand social situations better, and being able to understand media and humor better.

2. Results from the Likert surveys showed 11 participants (nine female and two male) felt “*uncomfortable*” ($n = 8$) or “*very uncomfortable*” ($n = 3$) during certain sections of the class. Interestingly, although these participants stated they felt uncomfortable, only two participants rated the class as a whole as “*a little offensive/confronting*.”

It should be noted that follow-up interviews revealed that the most problematic area for the participants was related to vocabulary associated with sex and genitalia.

3. The majority of participants either “*agreed*” ($n = 12$) or “*strongly agreed*” ($n = 18$) with the statement “*The class was enjoyable.*” Interestingly, all participants in the final group stated that they “*strongly enjoyed the class.*”

4. When asked to rate how confronting or offensive the class was as a whole, only two participants rated the class to be “*a little offensive/confronting*,” while the majority of the participants rated the class as either “*not really offensive/confronting*” ($n = 17$) or “*not offensive/confronting at all*” ($n = 13$).

5. Surveys revealed that every participant who had either lived in an English-speaking country or had the desire to live in an English-speaking country “*strongly agreed*” that SOTL should be taught in EFL classes. Upon further

investigation, it was revealed that all of these participants believed SOTL was common in English-speaking countries, and as such, they should learn more about it.

The results from this study show that although the subject of SOTL entails discussing a range of potentially offensive, upsetting, and sensitive topics, the majority of students involved in this study did not find the content offensive or confronting. Furthermore, the overwhelming majority believed that learning about SOTL was of benefit to them.

In terms of teaching SOTL related to body parts (i.e., genitalia) and sex, several of the participants suggested that female teachers should address these subject matters with female students and male teachers with male students.

In addition, although a number of participants stated they felt uncomfortable at times, this uncomfortable feeling was arguably mitigated by both the approach taken in the class (i.e., teaching *about* SOTL), and the willingness of the participants to take part in the class (knowing they could leave the class at any time).

This study also suggested that setting the scene with some interesting facts and history of swearing and taboo language, coupled with providing real life examples from a variety of different sources, can help put the participants at ease with the subject matter of the class.

Finally, it should be reiterated that the lessons discussed in this paper were not aimed at teaching students *how* to swear or use taboo language in English, instead, they were aimed at teaching the participants *about* SOTL in English (i.e., the class covered the forms, functions, history, communicative, and cultural aspects of SOTL). This approach was taken because I believed it would assist the participants to garner a deeper understanding of this style of language. In addition, I believe that this style of instruction allows the student to make a more informed decision on whether or not they would like to get extra instruction on *how* to use SOTL for whatever purpose they see fit (an assertion which was confirmed by the number of participants ($n = 27$) who stated they wanted to learn *how* to use SOTL in English).

Guidelines for Teaching *about* SOTL in EFL/ESL Classes

Although the following list of guidelines were developed based on feedback and input from 32 EFL students, it is worth reiterating that each learning context has its own unique set of challenges that need to be addressed before teaching such a sensitive topic, and as such, the following guidelines should be taken as a suggested guide.

Guidelines for consideration

Guideline 1: It is advisable to not only make the class itself an elective class, but to also make each individual section/topic of the class elective.

Guideline 2: By its very nature, SOTL is a rather sensitive subject matter. For this reason, I suggest allowing the students the opportunity to choose whether they wish to be instructed by a female or male teacher (My data suggests that female students would prefer to be taught by female teachers.).

Guideline 3: Introducing the topic of SOTL seemed to work best when I prefaced the class with some historical background and interesting facts about SOTL. This approach seemed to intrigue the students and eased the tension in the room.

Guideline 4: Building on from guideline three, I found that using prominent examples of SOTL from literature (e.g., Shakespeare, the Bible), movies, and celebrities (e.g., Bono's expletive during the 2003 Golden Globe Awards) had a positive effect on the classroom environment.

Guideline 5: Since various elements of SOTL vary in intensity, it is advisable to explain how different lexical items have different degrees of “power” or “impact.” From this starting point, I found it easy to lead into a discussion on appropriacy, pragmatic functions, and the unwritten rules of SOTL which govern the *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, and *why* of SOTL use.

Guideline 6: The grammar rules of SOTL can be rather intricate; thus, it is important to explain how certain rules that can be found within SOTL may not exist in “standard” English (e.g., the infix – *'fan-fucking-tastic'*). From a personal experience, I found it beneficial to juxtapose SOTL with more formal English as a way of further highlighting the emotional power and force certain lexical items and grammatical structures have.

Guideline 7: The study of SOTL can help students develop a better understanding of implicature and relevance. In my study, I found that using newspaper headlines and certain jokes incited the students to think more deeply about the intended meaning of the text or utterance, thus showing them how SOTL can be used for humor, irony, and innuendo.

Conclusion

This article began by providing four core arguments as to why teaching about SOTL should be incorporated into EFL/ESL curriculums for adult students. Although not an exhaustive list, the arguments presented in this article address both the concerns of the teacher (e.g., having a professional and pedagogically sound approach aimed at meeting the needs of the students) and those of the students (e.g., being able to display their personalities or social identities more accurately and being able to close the knowledge-power gap in relation to SOTL).

The second section of this article outlined five of the key findings uncovered during a research project investigating how to teach about SOTL in an EFL context. Here it was found that not only do adult students in South Korea think that learning about SOTL is important, they also believe that this feature of language should be taught in EFL classes.

In addition, the overwhelming majority of participants involved in this study did not find the class as a whole to be offensive or confronting; however, 11 of the participants did report that certain sections of the class were more sensitive or confronting than other sections, with the most problematic areas being lexical items and discussions related to sex and genitalia.

Using participant feedback and data elicited from the study to develop in-class teaching protocols and methods for teaching about SOTL, I concluded this article by outlining 7 points teachers should consider when planning their curriculums and classes aimed at addressing SOTL in English.

Far from attempting to provide the perfect methodology for teaching about SOTL, this article's sole intention was to begin the conversation (a conversation which is greatly lacking in the literature) on how teachers can go about broaching the topic of SOTL in their classes in a non-offensive, non-threatening, professional and pedagogically sound manner.

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Appendix A

Swearing, Offensive, and Taboo Language in English.

Pre-class Survey

The following 5 statements relate to the topic of learning swearing, offensive, and taboo language in English. Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with these statements.

1 = Strongly disagree / 2 = Disagree / 3 = Neutral / 4 = Agree / 5 = Strongly agree

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I am interested in learning <i>about</i> SOTL in English.					
I would like to learn <i>how</i> to use SOTL in English.					
I think SOTL should be included in English classes					

I think learning about SOTL in English would be beneficial.					
I can understand SOTL in English.					

Post-class Survey

The following 5 statements relate to the class you have just participated in. Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with these statements.

1 = Strongly disagree / 2 = Disagree / 3 = Neutral / 4 = Agree / 5 = Strongly agree

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
The class was enjoyable.					
The class was educational.					
I would like to learn <i>how</i> to use SOTL in English.					
I think SOTL should be taught in EFL classes.					
I understand more about SOTL.					

The following 3 statements relate to the class you have just participated in. Please rate your emotional response or reaction to the class.

1 = Very / 2 = A little = / 3 = Neutral / 4 = Not really / 5 = Not at all

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I found sections of class offensive/confronting.					
The class as a whole was offensive/confronting.					
I felt upset or uncomfortable during parts of the class.					

Appendix B

Swearing, Offensive, and Taboo Language in English: Lesson Overview

Note: The lesson plan below is based on the final iteration of the class.

Sections	Points Addressed
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce the topic and explain what the class will cover and remind students that they can leave the class at any time without penalty or fear of being judged. Discuss when and where SOTL is used in the L1 and juxtapose

	<p>this with English usage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss and explain the different vocabulary often used to refer to SOTL (e.g., foul language, bad language, swearing, profanity, slurs, epithets, expletives, four-letter words, cursing, cussing).
Fun Facts and History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide prominent examples from a range of sources to show how frequently taboo language is used (e.g., Shakespeare, the Bible, poetry, public figures, book titles, song lyrics, newspaper headlines, advertising). • Dispel some common myths related to SOTL (e.g., poverty of vocabulary myth) and provide some fun facts (e.g., swearing increases pain tolerance and strength) • Discuss how SOTL has been censored (e.g., George Carlin’s “7 Dirty Words”) and censored (e.g., Lady Chatterley’s Lover). • Provide an overview of how certain words were not always considered taboo (e.g., <i>fuck</i>, <i>shit</i>).
Where SOTL Comes From	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students with an overview of the sources of SOTL in English (e.g., animals, body parts, sex, sexuality, scatology, race, religion, mental illness, bodily functions) and give an overview of how different lexical items have different levels of intensity or offensiveness. • Explain that a given word in one form of English (e.g., British English) may have a very different meaning (or not exist) in another form of English (e.g., American or Australian English)
SOTL Uses and Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how SOTL has several functions: Cathartic, Social, Abusive, Expletive, Idiomatic • Compare and contrast with Korean SOTL usage (e.g., while driving, if you bang your thumb with a hammer, if someone steals from you). • Use newspaper headlines, jokes, video clips, and other realia to help students understand implicature, humor, and relevance.
The Grammar of SOTL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight how certain swearwords can be used to fit almost any grammatical purpose (e.g., <i>fuck</i>, <i>shit</i>). • Highlight how grammar mistakes, such as using the wrong article (e.g., “He is <i>the shit</i>.” vs. “He is <i>a shit</i>.”), could change the meaning completely.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce idiomatic expressions (e.g., Hell yeah!)• Juxtapose formal grammar and the grammar of SOTL.
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Feature Article

Teacher, Student, and Textbook Approaches to Pronunciation in a Community-Based ESL Setting

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Abstract

This study investigated teacher cognition and practices, student perceptions, and textbook approaches to pronunciation instruction in a community-based ESL program. Data collection included semi-structured interviews with seven volunteer teachers and eleven students, classroom observations, and textbook analyses across proficiency levels. Findings indicated that teachers acknowledged the importance of pronunciation instruction but lacked training to implement it while students believed in the importance of learning pronunciation. Textbook analyses showed that the books provided pronunciation activities only in review units, which were often skipped by teachers. In conclusion, teachers in community-based ESL programs could benefit from professional development targeting pronunciation instruction to learn how to use, adapt, and supplement the activities found in the textbook and meet the needs of their students.

Keywords: *pronunciation instruction, teacher cognition, community-based ESL program, teacher training*

Introduction

Community-based English as a Second Language (ESL) programs have increased in number and popularity (Morgan, 2002) being offered mostly through churches or libraries for immigrant adults wanting to learn English. These classes are typically free of charge, allowing the adults who attend to better engage in their communities (Snell, 2013). Such programs, however, have not been the focus of as much general education research as other ESL programs, partially because they take place outside formal institutions of education (Morgan, 2002). This is also true concerning research about pronunciation, a language subskill that has, in general, received less attention in English

language teaching and learning research compared to grammar and vocabulary (Baker, 2011).

The weak emphasis on pronunciation research is reflected in the training teachers receive on this subject, with many teachers not having adequate preparation on how to teach pronunciation (Breitkreutz, Derwing & Rossiter, 2001; Foote, Holtby, & Derwing, 2012). This lack of pronunciation training has been shown across different English teaching contexts in various countries (e.g., Baker, 2011; Baker, 2014; Couper, 2016; Derwing & Munro, 2005; Foote, Holtby, & Derwing, 2012; Wahid & Sulong, 2013), and it can result in the teachers having low confidence in their ability to teach pronunciation (Couper, 2016). Better training in pronunciation instruction could lead teachers to incorporate this type of instruction with more quality and frequency.

Most research exploring pronunciation instruction has focused on teacher cognition, or “the knowledge, beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes that teachers have in relation to their actual teaching practices in a local or specific target context” (Baker, 2014, pp. 136-137), with studies focusing on students’ perspectives about pronunciation lagging behind. English language learners, however, have been found to value pronunciation instruction and have expressed the desire for more pronunciation practice (Derwing & Rossiter, 2002; Tejada & Santos, 2014). The fact that pronunciation instruction has been found to be absent in many classrooms (Derwing & Rossiter, 2002) may contribute to students’ low confidence in their English pronunciation (Tejada & Santos, 2014). In addition, students typically struggle to identify the pronunciation problems that cause miscommunication (MacDonald, 2018), which might lead them to want instruction on pronunciation elements that do not necessarily improve intelligibility. The lack of pronunciation instruction can also lead to students not having effective techniques to manage communication breakdowns (Derwing & Rossiter, 2002).

While teachers report that they include pronunciation activities in their lessons, only around half of the teachers interviewed in Foote et al. (2012) included supplemental materials for pronunciation activities outside the textbook, indicating that the presence of pronunciation activities in a textbook may be an important factor to promote pronunciation instruction in the classroom. ESL textbooks, however, vary widely in the quantity and quality of pronunciation practice included, and, when present, the activities tend to have the same format throughout the book or focus on the same pronunciation concept (Derwing et al., 2012). Teachers must possess pronunciation pedagogy knowledge to choose textbooks that include a variety of pronunciation practice if they work in programs that give them this choice, or to supplement the textbook they are given if the pronunciation practice included is not sufficient (McGregor & Reed, 2018). A variety of activities should include a focus on both segmentals - the single consonant and

vowel sounds also known as phonemes, and suprasegmentals - all other pronunciation features occurring at the word or sentence level, such as word stress and intonation. Research has shown that when teachers do integrate pronunciation lessons in their classroom, they usually focus exclusively on segmental instruction (Couper, 2016; Foote et al., 2012; Wahid & Sulong, 2013) although a balance between segmental and suprasegmental instruction should exist to make students' pronunciation intelligible (Levis & Grant, 2003), which is the ultimate goal of pronunciation instruction.

This study combines an investigation about teacher cognition and practices and student beliefs regarding pronunciation instruction in a community-based ESL program as well as textbook analyses from each proficiency level in the same program to provide information about the pronunciation materials available to students and teachers, addressing the following research questions:

- RQ1. What are the teachers' cognition and practices regarding the teaching of pronunciation?
- RQ2. What are the students' perceptions on the pronunciation instruction they receive in the classroom compared to their self-reported pronunciation needs?
- RQ3. What pronunciation support do the ESL textbooks provide for students and teachers?

Methodology

Context

This study took place in a community-based ESL program housed on a college campus, which has been serving the local Latino community since 2008. Classes are 90 minutes long, are taught twice a week, and offer five proficiency levels: Basic to Level 4, based on the *Ventures* textbook series classification. In the semester when the study took place, due to registration numbers, levels 3 and 4 were grouped together, and there were two sections of the Basic level. All other levels had one class each. The only cost for students is the optional purchase of the textbook and the workbook – every other aspect of the program is free of charge, including childcare offered during classes. The first author, Victoria Millard, collected all the data and was the program's student director at the time of research, when around 90 students were registered with about 40 students attending classes each night. Most students are adults, with about two-thirds of them being from Guatemala and the remaining mostly from Mexico and El Salvador.

Teachers in our program are college undergraduate students, most of whom study Spanish and have been introduced to the program through a volunteer component of a required Spanish class. Many of the teachers do not have any formal training in teaching, except for those majoring in teacher education and/or minoring in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). During the research, six lead teachers taught the five levels while six assistant teachers volunteered one night a week. The only formal training offered to teachers each semester is an hour-long workshop led by the second author, Dr. Eliana Hirano – an education professor with a Ph. D. in applied linguistics and expertise in ESL, who also coordinates the TEFL minor. The topic of each workshop is chosen based on teacher feedback as well as observations made by the student director.

Data Collection

As the primary researcher, Victoria invited all the ESL students and teachers to participate in this study. Those who agreed met individually with her, usually before classes began. After going over the approved college human subjects research protocol and obtaining consent, participants engaged in 10-minute-long semi-structured interviews regarding pronunciation instruction. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim and in full. To ease communication, the student interviews were conducted in Spanish, the students’ L1 and a language that Victoria speaks well, while the teacher interviews were conducted in English. The interview guidelines can be found in the Appendix.

Teacher Participants

Seven teachers teaching at each level offered were interviewed. The table below provides information for each teacher’s role (lead or assistant), gender, time they had spent teaching ESL at the time of the interview, their major(s) and minor(s), and the ESL level they taught.

Teacher Role	Gender	Time Teaching ESL	Major/Minor	Level Taught
Teacher 1 Lead	Male	A semester and a half	Communications	Basic
Teacher 2 Lead	Male	A year	English, Spanish, TEFL	Levels 3/4
Teacher 3 Assistant	Male	Two years	Political Science, Spanish	Basic
Teacher 4 Lead	Female	A year	Sociology, Anthropology	Basic

Teacher 5 Lead	Male	Two weeks	Early Childhood Education, TEFL	Levels 3/4
Teacher 6 Lead	Female	A year	Spanish, TEFL	Level 2
Teacher 7 Lead	Male	Two and a half years	Political Science, Spanish	Level 1

Table 1: List of Teacher Participants

Student Participants

Eleven students, representing all proficiency levels, participated in this study. They all spoke Spanish, and some also spoke indigenous languages from their home country. The table below lists the participating students, their country of origin, the class they were taking at the time of the study, and number of years in the United States.

Student Information	Country of Origin	Enrolled ESL Class	Years Spent in the United States
Student 1	El Salvador	Level 2	6
Student 2	Guatemala	Basic	19
Student 3	Guatemala	Levels 3/4	10
Student 4	Guatemala	Level 1	4
Student 5	Mexico	Level 2	15
Student 6	Guatemala	Level 1	18
Student 7	Guatemala	Level 1	6
Student 8	Bolivia	Level 2	20
Student 9	Guatemala	Levels 3/4	5
Student 10	Mexico	Level 2	28
Student 11	Guatemala	Levels 3/4	11

Table 2: List of Student Participants

After the interviews, Victoria observed the participating teachers' classrooms to compare their stated and actual classroom practices, in an attempt to establish a relationship between teacher practice and teacher cognition and assist in triangulation for this qualitative study.

She also conducted a textbook analysis of the *Ventures* series. All levels from Basic through Level 4 were analyzed to identify the pronunciation activities provided in each textbook as well as the guidelines for teachers in the accompanying teachers' manuals. The textbooks were analyzed page by page to find each pronunciation activity. The pronunciation topics, the length of the activities, and the format of the activities were all

recorded. The activities were examined to determine the amount and variety of pronunciation practice provided as well as the pronunciation focus, especially in regards to segmental and suprasegmental practice.

The data collected from the interviews were analyzed through a recursive, inductive, and on-going process (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998) using open coding to identify emergent themes (Mackey & Gass, 2005) that were pertinent to the research questions.

Findings

The main findings will be presented following the order of the research questions: teachers' cognition and practices, students' perceptions, and textbook analyses.

Teacher interviews

Every teacher stated that they included pronunciation practice in their classes with most of them recognizing the importance of teaching the pronunciation of key vocabulary as indicated in the textbook. All mentioned that their students ask pronunciation questions and want their pronunciation corrected each time an error is made; however, teachers feel it is not feasible to correct every pronunciation error, so they choose what to focus on.

Half the teachers gave examples of segmental errors to explain why they teach pronunciation. The two Levels 3/4 teachers dedicated an entire lesson to English tongue twisters because of their students' expressed interest in learning more about pronunciation. These tongue twisters focused on segmental production with no attention to suprasegmentals. Teacher 2 even stated, "I know intonation isn't as important in English as it is in other languages, where a different intonation can be a completely different word whereas it's mostly not a thing in English," indicating his incomplete knowledge of the English sound system.

Teachers understood how their lack of training affected their classroom instruction. Most thought that they could benefit from more training in pronunciation instruction; however, those who are not going into education did not want more training, viewing their job as short-term and not realizing how training might make a difference for their students. For example, Teacher 3, when asked how he would benefit from more training in pronunciation instruction, explained:

"I mean, I would benefit from it, but with teaching not being what I want to go into, I'll be perfectly honest with you, it would matter one day a week and that would be it. For some of the others who are actually going into teaching Spanish

or English, that would be really important for them, but for the field of study that I'm going into, it's just not going to be important for me.”

This teacher regarded the training as potentially beneficial to himself but did not seem to realize how it might have positively impacted his students. In addition, one of the teachers, Teacher 7, believed that the additional pronunciation training was no longer necessary. Having taught in the program for almost three years, he felt that this training would have been more useful when he first became a lead teacher because he has since learned to anticipate pronunciation problems based on his experience and his Spanish and English pronunciation knowledge.

One strategy that all teachers mentioned that they use regarding pronunciation instruction is repetition of key vocabulary words or words students ask about. Two teachers mentioned a slight focus on word stress if students transferred Spanish stress patterns to English words. The teachers are aware of their students' pronunciation needs and wants but feel that they cannot address them without more knowledge of implementation strategies for pronunciation teaching.

Observations

The classroom observations showed that teachers varied widely in how much time they devoted to students producing oral English, practicing pronunciation, and receiving corrective feedback. Some classes had students conversing throughout, while others had quiet, non-interactive students with lessons mainly focused on grammar topics found in the textbook. The main pronunciation practice observed in all classes was repetition of single words after the teacher.

One of the basic level classes had students practicing the difference between “in, on, under” independently through a fill-in-the-blank textbook exercise. Any conversation among students occurred in Spanish. Most of the teacher's help was also in Spanish, and the only English pronunciation practice consisted of students repeating the unit's key vocabulary words after the teacher.

The other basic class had more pronunciation practice while students did choral repetition of words used for family members. No individual or small group repetition accompanied this. Most pronunciation issues involved the use of an incorrect segmental sound, as in /fəˈmɪli/ instead of /fæmli/ or /ʊŋkəl/ instead of /ʌŋkəl/, which were either not addressed by the teacher or were corrected using recast, with the teacher repeating the target word with the correct pronunciation, but not prompting the student to do the same.

The Level 1 class had more student output while focusing on the difference between “is” and “are” in the present continuous. Students worked in pairs to complete textbook exercises, and these conversations occurred in English. The students also read a passage aloud in their book with the teacher. Although no explicit pronunciation correction happened during the reading, the teacher made various corrections at the end and had students repeat the correct pronunciation. Two explicit whole-class pronunciation mini-lessons were present repeating the initial consonant sound in the words “thirty” or “thirsty” as well as the sounds at the end of the words “seventeen” and “seventy.” The teacher explained this last example as “seventeen” ending in the “n” sound while “seventy” ends in an “e” sound but did not address the shift in word stress.

Few pronunciation errors were present in the Level 2 class. However, one of the student pronunciation errors led to a whole class discussion on the vowel difference in the minimal pair “want” and “won’t.” The teacher emphasized the two vowel sounds so students could hear the difference. An accompanying visual on the board illustrated the meanings of the two words with a heart drawn next to “want” and an X drawn next to “won’t.” The few other segmental mispronunciations were not addressed and suprasegmental errors, such as pronouncing the monosyllabic word “aren’t” as trisyllabic, were not addressed either.

The combined Levels 3 and 4 class had multiple repetition drills for students reviewing comparatives and superlatives. Sentences the students had completed for homework were reviewed chorally. If a pronunciation error occurred, the teachers provided the correct pronunciation, but did not prompt students to say the word again. This was the only class observed with some element of explicit suprasegmental practice with a discussion surrounding the number of syllables in adjectives to determine how comparatives and superlatives are formed. At one point, a student pronounced “superlative” with the wrong stress which made the word unintelligible to the teachers. They asked the student to repeat and then addressed his question, not the mispronunciation due to word stress.

Student Interviews

All students believed pronunciation was very important or the most important aspect of language to learn because they felt they could not communicate effectively if they had poor pronunciation. Student 5, for example, felt self-conscious about her pronunciation and discussed its importance in her daily life. She mentioned that when she started learning English, she went through a quiet period during which she refused to produce the language fearing embarrassment if she said something incorrectly. She still views pronunciation as a valuable language asset as she continues to learn more about it in her ESL class.

All students provided examples of when they believed their pronunciation was the reason an interlocutor did not understand what was said, with the examples being related to either segmentals or word stress. For example, Student 8 stated that “I need to improve my pronunciation to pronounce English better because there are small consonant differences that make a difference between words.” Most students believed that these segmental mispronunciations caused interlocutors to misunderstand their speech.

Students mainly viewed pronunciation as segmental, only mentioning suprasegmental elements if one was mentioned specifically by the interviewer. For example, in response to Student 9’s request for clarification regarding possible aspects of pronunciation that might be included in the classroom, the interviewer mentioned single letter pronunciation and word stress, and the student then said that word stress was something taught in class. Students were not able to describe communication breakdown due to suprasegmental pronunciation errors beyond those related to word stress and were only aware that an interlocutor did not understand them if the person asked them to repeat themselves.

All interviewed students enjoyed the pronunciation practice in their classes with repetition being the most commonly reported strategy used by their teacher. Student 2 mentioned that her teacher showed how to produce single sounds by emphasizing mouth formation whenever the students struggled to produce a specific sound correctly. Student 4 explained that she benefitted from her teacher writing a loose phonetic spelling on the board with Spanish sounds to transfer that knowledge to English.

One student stated that she wished for more corrective feedback when there was a pronunciation error instead of the teacher dismissing it if the meaning was understood. She believed corrective feedback would allow her to have better English pronunciation. The other participants stated they were pleased with the instruction received.

Textbooks

The textbooks adopted in this ESL program are from the *Ventures* series (Bitterlin et al., 2017). In the table of contents for each book, the only pronunciation focus in each unit is the pronunciation of key vocabulary. In addition, there are pronunciation activities in each review unit, which happens every two regular units, for a total of five review units in each textbook in the series. The table below shows the focus of the pronunciation activities for each level.

Pronunciation Topic	Basic	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
/e/ vs. /o/	X				
/i/ vs. /ai/ vs. /u/	X				

/æ/ vs. /ɑ/	X				
/ɛ/ vs. /ɪ/ vs. /ʌ/	X				
Plural -s		X	X		
Past tense -ed		X	X		X
Voiced vs. voiceless “th”				X	
Initial -st				X	
Number of syllables in a word		X			
Stressed syllables in a word		X	X		
Intonation		X	X		X
Stressed word in a sentence			X	X	X
Linking sounds				X	X
Unstressed vowels				X	

Table 3: Focus of Pronunciation Activities in the Ventures Series

As can be seen on the table, considering the series as a whole, there are six types of activities related to suprasegmentals while the other eight all have a segmental focus. In each review unit, there is a page dedicated to these pronunciation activities, except for the Basic level in which only a half page is given to the practice of segmentals. The format was the same throughout, starting with listening and repeating examples, followed by exercises that varied in format depending on the pronunciation topic included. The complexity of the pronunciation topics increased as the proficiency levels grew in the series, and, considering the series as a whole, there is a good balance of segmental and suprasegmental practice. It is important to note, however, that these exercises are only beneficial if teachers use them with their students. As discussed above, none of the participating teachers mentioned these pronunciation practice pages in their interviews.

Discussion

This study investigated teachers’ cognition and practice, students’ perceptions, and textbook support regarding pronunciation instruction in a community-based ESL program. This three-pronged approach helped us identify ways to better meet the pronunciation needs of our students. The seven teacher participants recognized the importance of pronunciation instruction, especially when their students asked questions about the pronunciation of specific words. They also discussed their lack of training for pronunciation instruction, replicating findings in other studies (e.g., Breikreutz et al., 2001; Foote et al., 2012). In addition, the teachers did not have many opportunities for ESL pedagogy training, reflecting a common challenge in community-based ESL programs taught by volunteer teachers (Dytynshyn, 2008). For the most part, the

teachers believed they would benefit from more training on how to include pronunciation instruction especially since their students value it so highly.

Teachers claimed to use repetition as their main strategy to teach pronunciation with some opting to write the Spanish pronunciation for students to compare Spanish pronunciation to English pronunciation and others choosing to show the shape of their mouths as they produce a specific sound. In the classroom observations, however, repetition was the only pronunciation practice. One teacher focused on the difference between two segmentals through minimal pairs during the lesson. No suprasegmental practice was present except for the syllabification explanation in the highest proficiency level class, consistent with findings that there is more focus on segmentals than suprasegmentals in pronunciation instruction (Couper, 2016; Foote et al., 2012; Wahid & Sulong, 2013).

The eleven students interviewed across five proficiency levels stated the belief that pronunciation is very important or the most important aspect of language to be learned. Most students lacked confidence in their English pronunciation, especially when they felt that their mistakes were not corrected by their teachers. A similar situation was reported by Tejada and Santos (2014), whose student participants lacked confidence resulting from the perceived absence of pronunciation practice. The participating students, however, did not express a desire for more pronunciation practice, stating that they were pleased with the in-class practice they were receiving. This finding differs from other studies (e.g., Derwing & Rossiter, 2002; Tejada & Santos, 2014) that reported that students wanted more pronunciation practice in their classrooms. This could be reflective of the fact that students participating in this study attend classes free of charge and, being very grateful for this opportunity, do not want to say anything that might be interpreted as a criticism or complaint.

The analyses of the *Ventures* textbooks showed a good balance between segmental and suprasegmental activities. These activities were part of review units and followed the same pattern: listen and repeat examples and exercises. Derwing, Diepenbroek, and Foote (2012), who analyzed 12 ESL textbook series comparing quantity and variety of pronunciation activities, suggest that textbooks would benefit from including a wider range of pronunciation tasks and offering explicit explanations of pronunciation rules and features. We believe this recommendation also applies to the *Venture* series.

Conclusion

This study investigated teachers' cognition and practice, students' perceptions and needs, and textbook inclusion of pronunciation instruction through student and teacher

interviews, classroom observations, and textbook analyses. The results indicated that students were satisfied with the pronunciation instruction they received, even though the teachers admitted to a lack of knowledge about how to incorporate this instruction in the classroom. The textbook analyses showed that the *Ventures* series as a whole provides a good balance between the necessary segmental and suprasegmental practice for students.

The limitations of this study include the fact that the identified students' needs may not be representative of the entire program since only 11 participated in the interviews. The classroom observations also give a partial representation of the variety of pronunciation instruction provided since only one lesson per class was observed. Results may also be skewed by the fact that the teacher interviews occurred before the observations, potentially leading the teacher to adjust instruction accordingly.

One of the challenges for volunteer teachers in community-based ESL programs is to have access to pedagogy training in general, and training in pronunciation instruction in particular so that they can implement the best instruction for their students. ESL programs should strive to provide their teachers with resources, including workshops and recommendation of ESL websites, to promote professional development, and teachers should be encouraged to use, adapt, and supplement the pronunciation activities found in their textbooks to help increase their students' level of intelligibility and confidence in their English pronunciation.

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Appendix

Interview Questions for ESL Students

- Where are you from?
- How long have you been in the United States?
- How often and when do you use English outside of the classroom?
- How important do you think learning pronunciation is in an English class?
- When there is a problem with communication, do you believe it is normally because of a pronunciation issue or some other language issue?
- How hard is it for other people to understand your pronunciation based on your experiences either inside or outside the classroom?
- What aspects of pronunciation are addressed in your classroom and how are they taught?
- What aspects of pronunciation do you wish were included in your class?
- What do you believe are your biggest difficulties when it comes to English pronunciation?
- What techniques best help you learn English pronunciation?

Interview Questions for ESL Teachers

- How did you first get introduced to ESL?
- How long have you taught ESL? What levels have you taught?
- What training have you had to teach in ESL?
- Do you teach pronunciation in your classroom?
- What strategies/activities do you find the most beneficial for teaching pronunciation?
- How can pronunciation instruction be combined with other instruction in the classroom?
- How could you benefit from more training in the various aspects of teaching pronunciation?
- What do your students want to focus on the most when it comes to pronunciation?
- What support does the textbook provide you in offering pronunciation lessons to your students?

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Special Extended Research Note

STEM Teachers' Beliefs and ESOL Professional Development

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Teachers are significant figures for their students' learning and growth. How teachers view teaching and learning is usually termed "teacher beliefs." How these beliefs are defined is somewhat controversial and not always consistent, but generally equivalent to teachers' perceptions, assumptions, judgments, or opinions (Sahin, Bullock, & Stables, 2002). Teachers' classroom instruction is often impacted by these beliefs to a significant degree, and also highly resistant to changes unless the teachers are provided with further professional development opportunities.

Pettit (2011) extensively reviewed the research studies showing how teachers' beliefs about English Learners (ELs) are critical to the education of English learners in mainstream classrooms. This review also discussed teachers' common misconceptions about second-language learning and bilingualism, particularly those who have not received professional development training in English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Many of the in-service teachers, particularly STEM teachers, are not typically the ones who receive extensive training for language instruction, despite the fact that they regularly teach ELs.

Professional development training received by teachers often provides opportunities to reevaluate and improve their beliefs and knowledge about teaching. It is largely claimed as one of the most effective ways to support and improve teachers' classroom instruction by shifting their views and attitudes (Walker, Shafer, & Iiams, 2004). Also, Freeman (1998) claimed that the teaching portfolios constructed by public school teachers are useful ways to enhance their professional growth. Portfolios often contain teachers' reflections on their actual teaching practice and their sustained or changed beliefs about teaching and learning. For this reason, portfolios are helpful tools to gauge teacher beliefs and any impacts of professional development.

In this research note, I present the findings of the changes in in-service STEM teachers' beliefs about ELs and ESOL education gleaned from the teachers' written reflections in the portfolios submitted at the end of their yearlong participation in an ESOL professional development program. The objectives were to discover how STEM teachers made a self-assessment of what they learned from their ESOL professional development

experience and to further evaluate whether it contributed to changing their views on ELs and ESOL education.

The Study

The ELSTEM (ESOL for STEM Educators) project was a six-year federally funded professional development program (2012-2018) intended to improve secondary STEM teachers' awareness and understanding of ESOL education. This program aimed to design and implement an updated ESOL teacher preparation curriculum that integrated teacher training in STEM and an endorsement in ESOL, an add-on certification to participants' teaching credentials. The ultimate goal of this project was to increase middle and high school STEM teachers' abilities to meet ELs' instructional needs, thereby maximizing ELs' achievement in STEM subjects.

The in-service participants for this project were enrolled in a year-long ESOL professional development program intended to serve the needs of practicing STEM teachers. The program offered graduate-level ESOL endorsement coursework specifically tailored to meet the instructional needs of secondary STEM subjects. The curriculum of this professional development program was aligned with the Oregon state standards for ESOL endorsements.

At the culmination of this yearlong program, the participants submitted their ESOL endorsement portfolios demonstrating their knowledge and competency in teaching ESOL. Primarily using the qualitative research methods of thematic analysis loosely following Bowen (2009), a total of 36 in-service participant portfolios were reviewed to determine whether or not they reflected any changes about their existing teacher beliefs as a result of the program participation. These 36 participants were those who entered and completed the in-service curriculum during the last 3 years of the ELSTEM project after it was substantially modified to better meet the needs of secondary STEM classroom instruction. At the time of their program participation, all of the in-service participants were teaching in school districts with over 10 percent of the student population identified as ELs. Overall, the in-service program participants' teaching experience ranged from 2 years to 11 years.

Findings of the ESOL Portfolio Analysis

Shifts in Perspectives of K-12 English Learner Education

All of the participants' reflections on their program participation included the comments about how their participation in the program had altered or changed their previous teacher beliefs. Commonly observed themes that emerged in their reflections included:

- (1) Understanding linguistic structures and second-language acquisition process;
- (2) Integrating of academic language in STEM instruction;
- (3) Re-evaluating of STEM Instructional Strategies;
- (4) Understanding EL students and families;
- (5) Implementing of culturally responsive differentiated instruction;
- (6) Advocacy for and leadership in EL education.

The participants' narrative reflection included comments demonstrating their changed perspectives such as the following:

"I did not feel like I [previously] had a good understanding of EL student's situation, nor did I focus on specific ways to support my ELL students. From the readings, the assignments, the reflections from my cohort, I now understand that my children [should have] received all of the parts necessary to be successful as an English language learner in an American school. I learned how all of these pieces (knowledge of L1, prior educational experiences, parental support, bilingual environment, etc.) work together to contribute to L2 learning."

Understanding Linguistic Structures and the Second-Language Acquisition Process

All of the participants specifically reflected on how they gained knowledge about linguistic features and the language acquisition process. They mentioned that the program prepared them with foundational knowledge of linguistic structures of English, which they could apply to their STEM teaching practice. A participant specifically commented: "The program gave me an academic perspective on speech learning and production from birth through adulthood and helped me appreciate the challenges of acquiring proficiency in a second (or third, or fourth) language later than early childhood."

Fifteen participants (42%) also explicitly reflected on the complexity of the nature of language and the language learning process. To them, this part of the program was an opportunity to be awakened to the great challenges that English learners experience in learning new linguistic structures. The reflection included comments such as "I came to see the English language through the eyes of an English learner" and "the coursework opened my eyes to the complexity of the English language."

Integration of Academic Language in STEM Instruction

All of the participants discussed how they came to incorporate more explicit academic language into their STEM classroom teaching as a result of the program participation.

Eighteen participants (50%) also mentioned that they regularly pre-teach vocabulary necessary to understand the planned instruction and use sentence frames to help facilitate ELs' language practice. As for the effectiveness of using sentence frames, a participant mentioned, "I was able to turn low-level questions to higher-level questions with the help of sentence frames."

The participants also mentioned that they now think about the aspects of academic language necessary to understand STEM content when planning their instruction and how they should provide support for ELs' more active participation in class discussion.

Re-Evaluation of STEM Instructional Strategies

Twenty-three participant reflections (64%) included comments on how their STEM instructional strategies have changed as a result of their program participation. These participants commented on their changed practice towards more intentional, pre-planned differentiation for ELs' ample language practice. In addition, they came to explicitly incorporate language-learning objectives in lesson planning, specifically addressing Oregon English language proficiency standards for K-12 EL education.

A participant specifically mentioned how his teaching practice fundamentally changed as follows:

"In a way, the program has given the tools for me to revamp my unit and lesson plans for all my classes. Determining specific language goals, and being sure to teach them, alongside your course goals, will become just another facet of my lessons. I have been given the language necessary to identify weaknesses in the curriculum and correct it. I could probably lead a pretty good workshop about the reasons and ways to differentiate properly for your EL students."

Understanding EL Students and Families

This aspect of shifts in teacher beliefs was a topic that all of the participants discussed most extensively in their portfolios. They reflected at length on how they came to have increased understanding and awareness of EL students' and their families' needs. They also acknowledged that they were awakened to the special challenges of EL students in secondary schools as a result of program participation. A participant commented: "The most significant shift has been an increased awareness of culture in my classroom and a conscious effort on my part to be responsive to my students' needs in relation to their language and culture."

Embracing and celebrating cultural diversity was another aspect the participants came to view in a new light as well. The participants commented that their beliefs about cultural diversity were further strengthened and renewed by having an opportunity to closely attend to EL students' learning needs during their program participation.

Implementation of Culturally Responsive Differentiated Instruction

Along with an increased level of awareness and understanding of EL students and families, all of the participants also discussed how their beliefs and teaching practices have changed towards more culturally responsive differentiated instruction. They shared comments on their appreciation of diversity among students and how they came to make greater efforts to understand various learning needs. One participant described his understanding of differentiated instruction as follows:

"Some students can use the stairs, other students may need to use the ramp, and other students may need a push up the ramp by me or by a peer. Whatever the route a student may take, all of my students end up in the same location. Through various degrees of scaffolding, I can get all of my students to understand chemistry concepts and improve on their English language abilities."

Advocacy for and Leadership in EL Education

All of the participants acknowledged that they learned about how ESOL and bilingual education became a part of K-12 education in the U.S. The program equipped them with history and knowledge of the current situation of ESOL and bilingual education, which led to their realization of how they should engage in teaching practice with an equity lens. The following quote from a participant highlights this new teacher belief:

"Before I started this program, I was very misguided as to what my role was in supporting ELLs [English Language Learners] in my classroom. I used a single teaching approach for all students with little or no differentiation. I reduced some of the workload for the SPED [Special Education] students who required modified work but made no accommodations for ELLs. It was not because I did not want to support ELLs or felt they needed to be immersed, I just did not have the insight or the training. I assumed ELLs received all of their support in their ESL class. Among other things, I now realize content teachers must support ELLs in content areas. The ESL teacher cannot support all content areas in one class."

Generally, the participants felt that they came to recognize and advocate for EL students more after the program participation. Five participants specifically mentioned how they became a leader in their own schools for matters pertaining to EL education and established themselves as a resource for other teachers.

Discussion and Conclusion

The analysis of the ESOL portfolios shed some light on the participants' shifted beliefs and their newly gained knowledge and skills of teaching as a result of the participation in this professional development program. The program seemed to offer a wealth of new information and knowledge to the participants who had not previously had such extensive professional training on teaching EL students. In addition, the program appeared to have significantly changed the participants' views about what their role is as a teacher and how their teaching practice should be adapted to support EL students' learning, particularly in STEM subjects.

As discussed in Li, Hinojosa, and Wexler (2017), positive teacher beliefs are critical to ELs' academic success. Further, teachers' positioning and attitudes towards ELs can have a substantial impact on learners' motivation and classroom behavior (Yoon, 2008). In that regard, this ESOL professional development program appeared to have a positive impact on shifting the participants' existing beliefs, which could potentially lead to EL students' success.

There were commonly observed themes in the participants' reflection. A majority of the participants specifically reflected on the growth in their understanding of linguistic structures and the second-language acquisition process, integration of academic language in classroom instruction, and various instructional techniques and strategies. These observations showed that the participants gained foundational knowledge and instructional competence conducive to facilitating ELs' language and academic content learning. However, the most substantial discussion on the participants' shifts in perspectives was about their increased understanding of EL students and families, culturally responsive differentiated instruction, and advocacy for EL education. It appeared that although the participants indeed gained a great deal of knowledge and instructional skills pertaining to EL education, the most powerful impact of the six-year program was on the participants' increased cultural competence and advocacy for EL students and families.

Pettit (2011) emphasized that teachers should be provided with adequate professional training to implement culturally responsive instruction with the understanding that

language and culture are closely interconnected. Indeed, it appeared that the participants of the present study have most greatly benefited from the program in raising their level of understanding of not only cultural diversity but also the challenges and difficulties that EL students face in mainstream classrooms.

The participants' reflections consistently pointed to how they came to view EL education through a different lens as a result of the program participation. Obviously, it was beneficial in gaining new knowledge and a new perspective of EL education.

This study has potentially contributed to giving some insight into designing and implementing an effective professional development program to prepare practicing teachers to meet the needs of ELs. In the future, a follow-up research study would hopefully look into whether these ESOL-trained teachers continue to maintain their improved teaching practice and advocate for EL students.

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Teaching Note

Engagement, Literacy Skills, and ESL Immigrant College Students

Joanna Labov, Community College of Philadelphia

Introduction

Most teachers believe in the maxim that students who are engaged will learn. This article presents an engaging immigrant-based lesson that I created and used to teach a combined reading and writing course in the spring 2019 semester at a community college in the United States. My students' proficiencies in reading and writing English are at the low-intermediate level.

The goal of the course is to improve the 14 students' reading and writing proficiencies in English and their critical thinking skills. The lesson includes the use of four poster boards with engaging questions about the lesson. Teachers should include in their preparation time for this 55-minute lesson the time needed to create the posters and put them on the four corners of the classroom. An alternative for this lesson is for the teacher during the class session preceding the lesson to ask students to form groups to think of possible questions for each poster board.

Background Schema

The immigration theme enabled students to use their background schema to understand the concepts of immigration, departure, loss and hope. They brought to the lesson an understanding of what it means to immigrate to the United States. The students understood the motivations pushing immigrants to immigrate and the challenges inherent in the difficult process of immigration.

The Course Textbook

This curriculum was based on Liliana Velásquez's book *Dreams and Nightmares: I Fled Alone to the United States When I was Fourteen* (2017), an account of Liliana Velásquez's immigration to the United States from Guatemala. Liliana Velásquez fled violence by her mother and in her town to find a new life in the United States. This engaging book made the students reflect on their own journeys to the United States.

Here is an activity used to deepen students’ understanding of the textbook and their abilities to think critically about the immigration-related topics raised in it.

“Four Corners” American Dream Activity

The communicative activity “Four Corners” provided an opportunity for the students to discuss their thoughts about the concept of the American Dream as it relates to immigration. Students discussed four thought-provoking questions to promote their ability to think and write critically about the American Dream. A question was posted on poster board in each corner of the classroom. The students discussed each question for 15 minutes in groups before a volunteer student said “Change!”. Then, each group rotated to the next corner to discuss the next posted question. The entire class continued this rotation until every group had discussed each of the four questions.

The students were engaged throughout the Four Corners activity as evidenced by their high participation levels. Their engagement continued to the subsequent activity when each group shared with the class its answers to the four questions. (Thanks to Leslie Kirshner-Morris for introducing me to the Four Corners activity.)

Table 2 provides the four engaging questions used in the activity:

Corners	Questions
1	What does the term “American Dream” mean to you?
2	What is your American Dream?
3	Who are people who have achieved the American Dream?
4	What will you do to make your American Dream come true?

Table 2: “Four Corners” American Dream Questions

Conclusion

Engagement is the first step to improving ESL college students’ abilities to read and write in English. Immigrant-based lessons engage ESL immigrant college students because of their life experiences, identity and cultural awareness. The Four Corners activity promotes ESL immigrant college students’ abilities to think critically and discuss in English their thoughts about immigration. The use of an exciting book that centers on an immigrant’s experiences traveling to the United States engages students in the lesson.

The combined use of these activities was effective in promoting my students' engagement in their ESL Reading/Writing class.

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Author

Joanna Labov, an ESL specialist, is an assistant professor of English at the Community College of Philadelphia. Labov specializes in the teaching of literacy skills and pronunciation. She has a TESL certificate from UCLA, a master's degree in TESOL from Penn and a Ph.D. in Educational Linguistics from Penn.

Teaching Note

Boosting Mindful Observations and Writing Skills with Free Verse

Patrick T. Randolph

Introduction

ELLs often struggle in intensive English writing courses because they are not always given the needed scaffolding that nurtures a sense of comfort, control, and confidence. Four common obstacles that ELLs encounter are:

1. being asked to write in their non-native language;
2. being required to use styles different from what they are accustomed to;
3. being assigned topics with which they are unfamiliar; and
4. struggling with providing details and developing ideas in their writing (Randolph, 2012).

These issues invariably cause ELLs to be apprehensive about the writing process. Although there are no easy solutions to the above difficulties, employing creative writing activities can help (2) through (4) of the aforementioned issues. This teaching note will focus on how writing observation-based free verse inspires ELLs to develop some essential techniques to enrich their writing craft.

The Procedure

Writing observation-based free verse is comprised of five stages that can be covered over three instructional days: (1) making and discussing mindful observations; (2) writing about the observations; (3) creating free verse based on the observations; (4) peer editing; and (5) revising the poems (Randolph & Ruppert, 2020).

DAY 1

First, there is value in making mindful, daily observations. These are observations based on the three elements of mindfulness: (1) paying purposeful attention to one's immediate environment; (2) being in the moment; and (3) being nonjudgmental while observing (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). I ask my students what they observed on their way to class and why certain observations caused a "wow moment" and were thus remembered. After this, I

introduce and discuss two particular types of observations: culture-based observations and nature/environment-based observations (for a complete list of observation categories, see Randolph, 2018). We conclude by reflecting on the overall significance of making observations and how they help us in life, work, and school. As homework, I have my students make three mindful culture- or nature-based observations and write a detailed paragraph (8-10 sentences) about each one.

DAY 2

I present an observation-based free verse that one of my former students has written (for examples, see the Appendix). We discuss the general content, the observation, and the use of imagery, emotions, and the senses. After our discussion, I have the students pair up. Each one chooses their favorite observation from the homework. They read each other's paragraphs and discuss the imagery, why the observation interests them, and what emotions or sensory qualities are elicited.

The students then return to their seats and spend the remainder of the class writing a 7- to 10-line free verse poem. It should be noted that the students have written free verse in previous classes. It is, however, always a wise idea to orally review or write the main poetic devices on the board. These may include the use of:

- rich imagery,
- the emotions and senses,
- a personal/ genuine connection to the topic,
- alliteration, dialogue, metaphors, and similes.

Before the class finishes, students exchange their poems with a partner. For this homework assignment, each partner will read his/her partner's poem, comment on the images, use of emotions and the senses, and the general content. I request that they give each other positive feedback and honest critiques. This helps in the development of critical thinking and deepens their academic powers of observation.

DAY 3

The third day is used for peer discussion. The students pair up with the same partners and discuss the edits, comments, suggestions, and questions they wrote on their peer's work. I meet with the pairs and answer any questions and provide suggestions. The final homework is to revise the poems and submit them in the next class (Randolph & Ruppert, 2020).

Concluding Remarks

Studies in cognitive and educational psychology consistently show that finding a personal connection with the subject of study, creating an intrinsic interest in it, and employing the emotions and senses are surefire ways to help students encode, learn, and retain the material or develop a desired skill (Jensen, 2008). Using mindful observation-based free verse addresses each of these effectively and successfully. In addition, ELLs flourish in generating an acute ability to make various kinds of observations, from culture- and nature/environment-based ones to observations about their own evolution as writers.

Observation-based free verse helps ELLs understand the importance of employing details and description in the poems, which, in turn, helps them employ details and description in their academic writing. An equally significant point to note is that many of my former ELLs who have gone into civil engineering, education, plant biology, and psychology have reported that this activity and other poetry-based assignments helped them begin to understand the use of and need for rich description in their writing. This, they claim, allowed them to become better writers in their other classes. Effectively using details and description are crucial for solid academic writing – whether it be for the essays required in undergraduate courses or for the peer-reviewed articles that many will write with their graduate advisors. In short, making mindful observations leads to insightful poems, and writing these poems leads to a heightened ability to write creatively and critically with comfort and confidence.

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Appendix

Sample Poems

Care From a Stranger

Middle-aged man sits in the front of the bus,
Trying to hide his constant cough.

The bus driver looks at him—worry on her face—
At the next red light, she grabs a bag of cough drops
And gives it to him.

He looks at her—surprised—
“Please help yourself,” she says, smiling.

He answers with a genuine word of “Thanks.”

He feels much better now—
Not because of the bag of cough drops,
But because of the care from this stranger and her
smile.

—Anh Nguyen

My First Snow

The air is filled with a myriad of white wishes,
A wave of emotion comes with the sharp winds.
“Firsts” are always magical, bringing upon new
wisdom.

Why did I have to travel so far to see such a sight?
Such a journey, miles, and miles, and miles from
home—

But it was just now that I realized why I am here!

—Ayush Mishra

Author

Patrick T. Randolph specializes in vocabulary acquisition, creative and academic writing, speech, and debate. Patrick was awarded the “Best of the TESOL Affiliates” in 2018 for his 2016 presentation on plagiarism. He has also received two “Best of CoTESOL Awards” for his 2017 and 2018 presentations on observation journals and creative writing. Recently, Patrick received the “Best Session Award” from MinneTESOL (2019-2020), and he has published *New Ways in Teaching with Creative Writing* with Joseph Ruppert. Patrick lives with his wife, Gamze, daughter, Aylene, and cat, Gable, in Lincoln, Nebraska, USA.

Book Review

A Review of *Creating Visually Effective Materials for English Learners*

Reviewed by Nancy C. Elliot, University of Oregon

Kleckova, G., & Svejda, P. (2019). *Creating visually effective materials for English Learners*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL Press.

Editors' Note: ORTESOL would like to thank TESOL Press for providing this book free of charge.

Design is not just aesthetics, nor is it merely careful planning. An effective, well-designed classroom document that facilitates communication results from the creator following certain principles of design and considering several specific visual elements. However, not many language teachers have a background in the visual arts. Luckily, English teacher Gabriela Kleckova and design teacher Pavel Svejda, both of the University of West Bohemia, Plzen, Czech Republic, have collaborated to give the world of English teachers an eight-chapter eBook that guides the reader through the basics of graphic design and how these elements support better language learning.

The book is divided into three sections. “Into” contains two chapters that define and give an overview of graphic design, build some background knowledge, and demonstrate its importance to English language teachers. The three chapters of the second section, “Through,” present six principles of design, key visual elements relevant for designing documents, practical tips, and examples of well-designed materials. Finally, “Beyond” gives the reader three chapters on planning and applying the principles, learning from the examples of poor design, and designing specifically for digital media. The end materials include planning checklists, a glossary of 31 terms, an overview of figures grouped by type of example, and a useful bibliography of 37 works about graphic design, screen reading research, and educational materials development.

In Part 1 “Into,” Kleckova and Svejda explain the value of good graphic design to learning and processing language. Good design will guide the reader through the material, while poor design will be an obstacle to accessing the material; the authors demonstrate this with examples of poorly-designed and well-designed versions of the same documents. The reader quickly notices that with the better design, a learner can navigate through the material easily, identify important

items, group similar information together, and see the relationships between different sections. Moreover, the document will be more accessible and cause the reader to respond more positively to the material.

Part 2 of the eBook, “Through,” is a quick course in visual design as applied to creating documents. Six key design principles are covered here. *Hierarchy* shows the reader what is important, where to go next, and how the information is organized. *Contrast* helps the reader figure out the material’s organization, while *alignment* guides the eye where to go and helps the reader make connections. *Similarity* and *proximity* show the reader what is related. Finally, *repetition* guides the eye, gives cohesion, and eases navigation. These things start to happen even before the language is decoded.

Because the teacher-designer needs basic visual elements to put into effect the above six principles, Kleckova and Svejda then introduce the elements of space, typography, graphics, color, and layout. The amount of information is not overwhelming, and the authors continue to provide pedagogical validation for each design element. One example is margin space: It makes the page inviting, allows room to take notes, frames the text, and affects the length of text lines. The optimal line length for readability, the authors inform us, is 50-80 characters, or 7-12 words per line. A line that is too long or too short is more difficult for the reader to process; either it is harder to track the end of one line to the beginning of the next (too long), or the break in the text is too frequent and therefore disruptive (too short).

In Part 3 “Beyond,” the final chapters take us from principles to practice, detailing the process of making four sample types of materials step by step: worksheet, assessment, assignment page, and flier. There are plenty of sample documents in Part 3, first to illustrate steadily improving versions of the same document, and then in a chapter devoted entirely to identifying pitfalls. Readers of the eBook are asked to scrutinize 12 examples of flawed documents and identify common mistakes the authors have listed, such as ‘poor cuing for navigation,’ ‘too many visual elements,’ and ‘limited space for learners’ answers.’ In the final chapter, a few design principles specific to screen reading are laid out, involving such elements as typeface, color, and contrast.

One of the most common tasks of a language teacher is sitting down at the computer to create classroom materials. No doubt many teachers would take the extra time to improve the finished product if they knew why and how. Kleckova and Svejda show just how to make those materials more effective by giving us a clear, concise crash course in graphic design and providing useful examples and activities for practice. Along the way, they convincingly document why good design leads to many favorable outcomes for the learner. A lone critique of this eBook is that many of the pages have little text and the right margin is nearly three inches wide, with the result that readers viewing it on a screen may become confused navigating the half-blank pages. The actual design is quite artistic and interesting, but the 122-page document was noticeably easier to read when this reviewer printed it out.

Author

Nancy Elliott is an ESL instructor at the University of Oregon. She earned her Bachelor's Degree in linguistics and German from the University of Kansas and her PhD in linguistics from Indiana University, specializing in phonology and sociolinguistics. Nancy teaches listening, speaking, and pronunciation in UO's Intensive English program.

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- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| (1) Curriculum design and development | (4) Professional preparation |
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