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TNTESOL Journal

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Call for Papers

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The Editorial Board of the TNTESOL Journal seeks articles of general interest on any aspect of the teaching of English as a second or foreign language in elementary, middle high school, college/university, or adult/immigrant education. The topics can be varied and wide-ranging.

Articles should be no longer than twelve pages, double-spaced, or no more than 4000 words. A section entitled "Classroom Practices" will allow a maximum of 1500 words. Articles should follow APA style format, use nonsexist language, and have bibliographic references for all citations or works referred to in the body of the article.

Important note: All articles must be submitted electronically.

To submit your article electronically, please do the following:

1. Write and save the article as a Microsoft Word document.

2. Submit your paper as an attachment to an email in which you provide the following in the body of the email: your name, address, home phone number, school affiliation, email address, and title of the paper. Include a statement that your work has not been printed elsewhere and is not currently submitted elsewhere.

3. Email to paraisoj@rcschools.net and include the words "TNTESOL-J Submission" in the subject heading. You will be notified immediately by return email once the article is received.

Note: We accept articles year-round. Deadline for submission for publication: July 1, 2016.

Editor's Notes, Dr. Johnna Paraiso, TNTESOL Journal Editor

It is with great pleasure that I present the seventh volume of the Journal of the Tennessee Teachers to Speaker of Other Languages. I consider being the editor of this Journal to an honor and a privilege. As our membership continues to grow, our outreach and our scholarship as an organization continue to expand as well.

This journal contains a variety of topics that are pertinent to the topic of language acquisition and English language development. As I read and edited the accepted articles, I observed that the articles fell into three broad categories: technology and second language learning, classroom practices and strategies, and pedagogical issues that concern immigrant students.

Dr. Angela Risto, from Rutherford County Schools and Tennessee State University offers her qualitative study of nine culturally diverse students and examines their attitudes and facility with the use of technology for educational purposes. Her findings regarding the how foreign born students perceive educational technology contrasted to American born students yield some interesting implications for instruction.

In a similar vein, Ms. Meredith Spencer from Middle Tennessee State University discusses the use of game-based learning as a form of computer-assisted language learning (CALL). Ms. Spencer examines the experiences of adult English learners in an intensive English program that utilizes game-based learning. She examines the role of the learner in these situations and discusses the idea that game-based learning treats the learner as an active participant rather than a passive recipient.

The second category, classroom practices and strategies, includes a study by Ms. Tammy Hutchinson-Harosky. Ms. Harosky asserts that five components are necessary for strong reading instruction for English learners. These components are: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension and fluency.

Ms. Jane Russell, of Bellarmine University in Louisville, Kentucky, offers her practioner article examining esearch-based strategies to improve vocabulary instruction for English learners in the middle school. Best practices are discussed in her piece, as are specific strategies designed to facilitate vocabulary acquisition.

Mr. Collin Olson, of Middle Tennessee State University, offers his in-depth study of Karen immigration to the middle Tennessee region. In his thick descriptive narrative, Mr. Olson details the migration of the Karen people from Burma, through Thailand, and finally to the United States. He examines the lived experiences of Karen people in both the Thai refugee camps as well as their resettlement experiences in the United States. Finally Mr. Olson discusses the unique social and pedagogical needs of the Karen people and highlights strategies that are applicable to other refugee groups as well.

Dr. Martha Michieka of East Tennessee State University offers a collaborative article written with some of her advanced students. In this piece, the authors examine the attitudes and perceptions that American-born students may have regarding professors that have non-American accents. This article brings to light some of the changes in attitudes that American students have held over the years. This article highlights the need for continuing education in order to further eradicate cultural and linguistic prejudice on American college campuses.

The tradition of scholarship and research begun by the Tennessee Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages in previous Journals is continued in this current edition. Aspects of second language acquisition are examined from the K-12 area as well as from a higher education perspective. This Journal offers research regarding strategies and practice, immigration issues and lived experiences of those involved in the teaching and learning of a second language. I am pleased and proud to present the seventh volume of the TNTESOL to the membership of this organization.

Cultural Perspectives on Technology

Angela Risto, Ed.D.

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The changing landscape of U.S. schools demands research regarding students' perspectives regarding the use of technology. Over the last 15 years there has been a tremendous increase in the availability and use of technology in schools. More recently, there has been a significant rise in the number of ethnic students, including Hispanic, Asian, and Middle Eastern students. It has been shown that culture influences perspectives on technology. Therefore, assessing how these new culturally diverse U.S. students feel about utilizing technology in schools based upon the values and beliefs of their cultures would be of intrinsic value to the educational system. This study explores the similarities and differences regarding cultural perspectives on technology in respect to foreign-born students, U.S. students with international travel experience, and U.S. students without international travel experience. The study additionally examines whether the country of origin influences perceptions. And finally, the study probes the cultural beliefs and values that influence their perspectives. Through qualitative methods, nine students engaged in interviews, surveys and teacher observations. The study finds that foreign-born students are the least confident and knowledgeable about educational technology. U.S. students with international travel experience are the most likely to utilize technology for educational purposes, and U.S. born students without international travel experience are most likely to implement technology for personal use. The largest influence upon students' perspectives is their family usage of technology. A difference in perspectives based upon different foreign countries is discovered. However, further research is necessary to solidify these results.

Introduction

Two major changes occurring in American schools are the inculcation of technology and the integration of students raised in other cultures. U.S. schools have responded to the new population of students by implementing English Language Learning (ELL) programs to familiarize students with the language. However, students are expected to value and utilize school technology based upon American technological values without any sort of integration. Perspectives and usage of technology vary from culture to culture, yet students are expected to immediately adopt American perspectives and familiarize themselves with American based technology programs. This study examines how perspectives regarding educational technology vary according to culture.

From 1994 to 2004, technology in U.S. schools increased tremendously. In 1994, three percent of classrooms were equipped with Internet access, and by 2004, the Internet was present in 92 percent of U.S. classrooms. Technology is being utilized in educational settings to give students access to global information, and to allow for student participation in distance learning, virtual classrooms, and global learning communities. One such program is the Virtual High School, which includes two hundred schools in twenty-six states throughout the nation, as well as students in seventeen other countries (Roberts, 2004). With the current insurgence of technology in education, it is vital to determine how technology influences the education of all students. Currently, students born in other countries comprise 35.2 percent of all U.S. high school dropouts and first generation Americans account for 8.6 percent of all high school dropouts (IES National Center for Education Statistics, 2007). Due to the challenges these students face in education, it is necessary to take into account their perspectives regarding the

technology being utilized in U.S. schools, in addition to the views of students that qualify as second or greater generation Americans.

The increasing trend toward a diverse student composition is impacting primary and secondary school populations in the U.S. During the 2008-2009 school year, more international students attended American universities than ever before in our history. Approximately 671,616 international students matriculated that year yielding an 8% increase over the previous school year (Fischer, 2009).

The convergence of technology and culture is inevitable. With the insurgence of technology and new ethnic students into schools, the interaction between the two must be assessed. Researchers have found a correlation between cultural perspectives and technology. Exposure to other cultures through technology can alter the cultural perspectives of students (Cole, 2010). It remains to be proven how a student's culture influences perceptions of technology in education. Due to the differences in technological accessibility for various ethnic groups, further investigation is needed to assess differences in cultural perspectives regarding technology.

Stakeholders in the education field have asserted that U.S. students have become so technologically savvy in their personal lives that it imperative to bridge the gap between how they live on a daily basis and how they learn in school by implementing more educational technology. Four thousand American students participated in a study to determine the frequency of computer use at home, at school, and in after school programs. Students were also asked to qualify computer tasks they were comfortable performing, and then to rate the in-school activities they liked the best, including technology activities. Students also compared their perspectives on in-school computer use vs. out-of-school computer use. Several themes emerged

from the focus group sessions including: "Do you know us and how important technology is to us?" "Engage us with technology use for things such as project based learning." "Prepare us for the future by utilizing technology and let's not get left behind when it comes to technology." The study participants varied in ethnicity, SES, and gender. However, it did not separate students into groups based on generation of American citizenship (Johnson, Spires, Lee, & Turner, 2008). The goals of the American education system are rapidly changing and evolving, as well as the student composition. Educators and curriculum designers are presented with new technology and a more diverse group of students to serve. Discrepancies have been found regarding educational technology perceptions between nations. In order to serve all of America's students, both U.S. and foreign born, it is imperative that the same type of research software companies employ to appeal to students in different nations is utilized within our own student population. This type of research will provide curriculum designers and educators a better understanding student perspectives regarding educational technology. Therefore, they will become better equipped to design technological programs, curriculum and activities to enhance the education of all U.S. students.

Research Focus

Based on previous studies, this research further examines perspectives regarding technology use in the classroom based upon students' native culture. Three different groups offered their perspectives during the study: U.S. born students that are second or greater generation Americans without international travel experience, U.S. born students that are second or greater generation Americans with international travel experience, and students that were born in other countries or are first generation Americans. Through qualitative interviews, surveys, examples of student work and field notes regarding observation and the interviews, the study

addressed three main questions. First, the study attempted to identify the similarities or differences conveyed by the three groups regarding technology use in the classroom. Second, the study determined if the students' country of origin influenced their opinions. Third, the study identified cultural values or beliefs that influenced the students' opinions of technology in an educational setting. Each research question was aligned with three types of data (Diagram 1).

Student Survey

Field Journal

Individual Student Interview
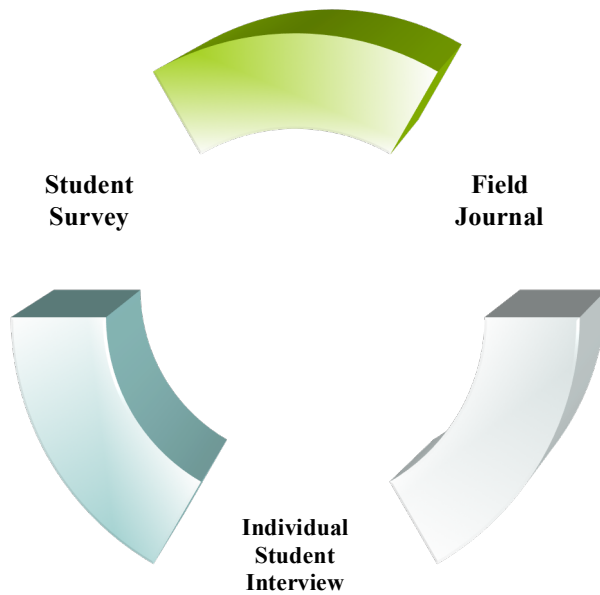
Diagram 1: Triangulation Matrix for Overarching Questions 1, 2 & 3

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative action research format. Teachers or practitioners conduct action research, in order to improve practices. When implemented by teachers, action research focuses on issues in the learning environment. This specific study attempts to gather data in order to improve technology usage in classroom comprised of students from varying cultures. The

researcher keeps a journal documenting students' comments and actions during technology use in the classroom. In addition, the study requires contributions and participation from students via surveys and interviews. Due to the action research nature, the analysis and findings are presented with intricate detail and descriptions (Craig, 2009). Action research is an effective process for examining issues in a practitioner-based setting because the research occurs in the classroom. Furthermore, by collecting data from various sources within the classroom, the researcher is provided with an in-depth analysis of how the issue influences the environment, as well as what actions may resolve or improve the issue.

Students are administered a survey regarding their perceptions on technology use in the classroom. Students then participate in individual interviews. The researcher asks the students open-ended questions regarding technology use at home, in their family, and at school. Responses are recorded and analyzed.

Several varieties of codes are used throughout the data collection and analysis processes. Setting/Context Codes are utilized to denote the setting or location of the activity. Process Codes are used to describe physical or mental processes that students were engaged in during activities. Activity Codes indicate when students were involved in non-academic activities within the research setting. Event Codes are employed to denote the students' need for assistance from peers or the instructor. Situation Codes are utilized to identify the activity structure being implemented during data collection.

Subjects

The participants were nine students from the same suburban high school in Tennessee. The school's 1,877 students are 83 percent white, 11 percent African American, three percent Hispanic, and two percent Asian. Approximately 20 percent of the students were categorized as

low socio-economic status ("City-data," n.d.). The subjects were comprised of four males and five females ranging in age from 15 to 18 years with an average age of 16.2 years. Six of the subjects were part of a Spanish Two Honors class and three of the subjects were part of English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. Out of the nine participants, none had been diagnosed with a learning disability. The three ESL students received special services to overcome their language deficiency including attending a class to strengthen their English and extra time on assignments. All nine students participated in the individual survey and individual interview and were observed working on a project in which they had to use the internet to research country specific cuisine, make a cooking video cooking one of the recipes and edit the video.

Findings

Perspectives Regarding Educational Technology

The first overarching question strives to reveal the similarities and/or differences between the three groups studied regarding their perspectives on educational technology. Information from the surveys, interviews and researcher field journal uncovers several emerging themes. The group of students born in foreign countries has the least access to technology at home and the lowest comfort level utilizing technology. Their perspectives on educational technology varied. One student wished to use less educational technology in school, another stated, "I kind of like it," while another student proclaimed, "I love it!" These students are the least likely to utilize online textbooks and teacher websites. Students born in other countries seem extremely tentative during observations of computer use, and many have questions during the research process. Although they still had questions during video editing, they seem more comfortable with this task than with the research portion.

The data from the group of second generation or greater American students with international travel experience reveals other themes. Results from the three data sources indicate that this group has the highest level of access to technology at home and the highest comfort level utilizing technology, and are the most likely to implement the use of online textbooks and teacher websites. These students value educational technology significantly more than the other groups studied. The students describe educational technology as fun, informative, and an exciting alternate way to learn. One student asserted, "I like it when it's implemented into the lesson plan and I feel that it's more hands on." Second or greater generation American students with international travel experience are the most confident and industrious group when performing online research and video editing. They have innovative ideas, become leaders in their groups, and help others with the technology.

The group of second or greater generation American students without international travel experience fall somewhere in between the two previous groups regarding their perspectives on educational technology. These students have a high level of access to technology at home and a high level of comfort utilizing technology, but slightly lower than the American students with international travel experience in both areas. Despite their virtually similar access and comfort levels, this group of students is more likely to use technology for personal purposes. They describe the use of cell phones, MP3 players, social networking, and video games for leisure. They are significantly less likely to utilize online textbooks and teacher websites than their American peers with international travel experience. Although these students are not using educational technology at home, they are supportive of implementing technology into schools. One student indicated, "It's a great thing. It helps with everything, especially projects." While these students support the use of educational technology, they also express fear that students may

become dependent upon the technology. One student stated, "I think it's useful, but I don't think we should depend on it all the time," while another said, " I kind of think that you should use it more, but like again not because you don't want to be dependent on technology." This group of students is confident when performing online research. They know how to implement the use of search engines and find valid research sites. However, this group had more questions during the video editing process than their American born peers. They seem less-versed in creating products with technology.

Variation by Country

Overarching question two explores whether the student's country of origin influences his or her opinions regarding educational technology. The two groups of students born in the U.S. revealed that they view technology as helpful and useful. While both the American-born groups are supportive of educational technology, those with international travel experience are far more likely to utilize resources such as online textbooks and teacher websites. Those born in other countries presented mixed reviews. The student from Lao wanted less technology in schools; the student from Japan "sort of" liked using technology in schools, and the student from Congo loved using technology in school. The researcher observed that the Lao student required the most assistance with technology. The American born students did well, particularly two with international travel experience. These two students have grandparents form the Middle East and Asia.

Cultural Values and Beliefs that Influence Technology Perspectives

Overarching question three seeks to discover the cultural values or beliefs that influenced the students' perspectives regarding educational technology. Survey results indicate that students born in other countries are the least comfortable utilizing technology. Survey results also indicate
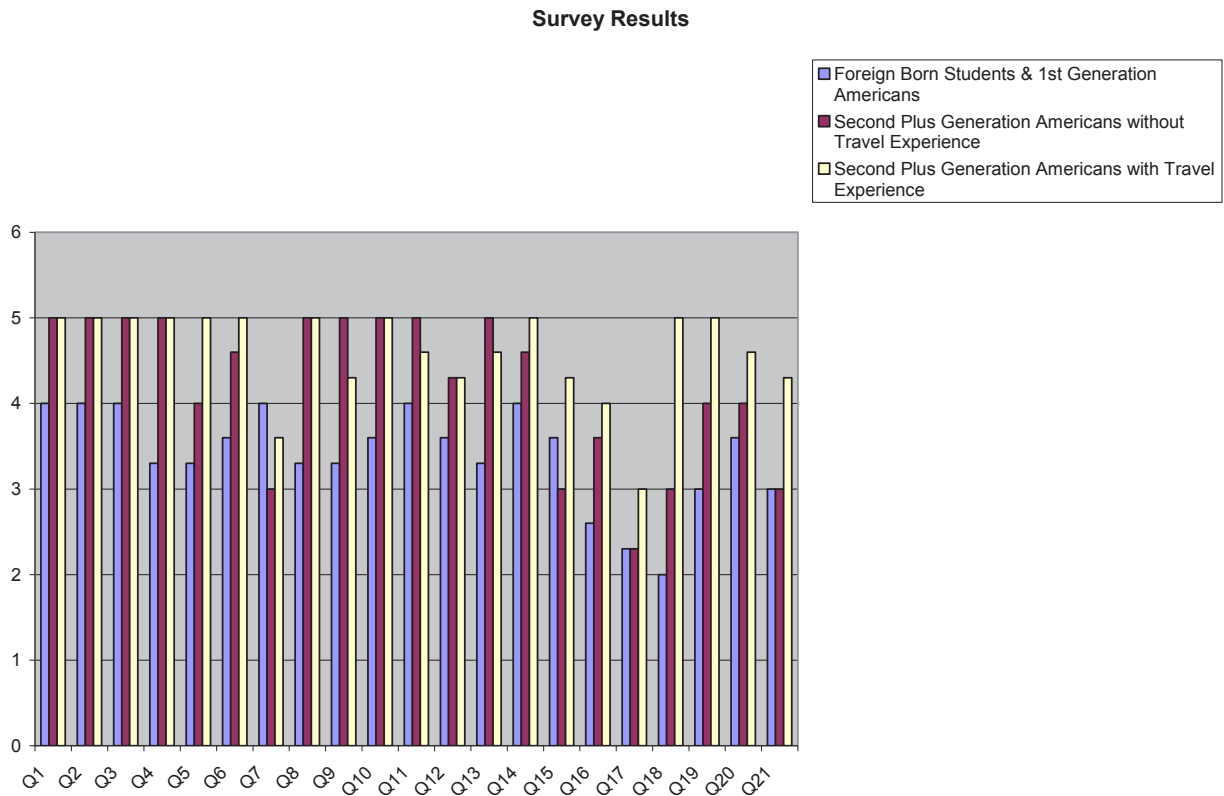
that their families were the least comfortable using technology. These students also give the statement "I feel that being able to use technology will help me in the future" the lowest rating. The students born outside the U.S. express that they liked technology because they valued the wealth of information it provided. However, their family members do not use technology frequently. When family members do utilize technology it is solely for the purpose of personal communication. The researcher noted that although students born outside the U.S. have many questions, they appear to have a desire to learn how to use the technology. They do not have much experience using word processing programs, but are familiar with how to use a search engine.

Students that are second generation or greater Americans with international travel experience give the highest ranking to the statement "I feel that being able to use technology will help me in the future." These students report that family members are mostly comfortable using technology and implement various forms of technology for work and personal purposes. They feel that technology use came natural to them, and that it was fun and informative. Students stated, "My childhood was all video games," and "I have a natural feel for technology." Additionally, this group of students request that schools have laptops and updated operating systems because although they enjoy using technology in schools they note that sometimes it was difficult due to slow computers or outdated technology. These students have an abundance of experience using technology for research and the video editing process.

Students that are second generation or greater Americans without international travel experience give the second highest ranking to the statement "I feel that being able to use technology will help me in the future." These students report that family members were highly comfortable using technology. In student interviews, this group of students notes that their

family members utilized technology for work and personal purposes. They feel that technology is part of daily life, and have some experience using online search engines and video editing software. They also request that schools integrate laptops, Interwrite boards, and texting programs. One student discussed implementing items used for personal use, such as texting, into the classroom and stated, "My psychology teacher had this thing where we could text the answer and it appeared on the screen. It was awesome." The integration of personal technology into the classroom excites the students and engages them in the activity.

Figure 2: Survey Results

Survey Results

Legend:
- Foreign Born Students & 1st Generation Americans
- Second Plus Generation Americans without Travel Experience
- Second Plus Generation Americans with Travel Experience

| Q1 - I have access to a computer at home |
| Q2 - I have access to the internet at home |
| Q3 - I have a cell phone |
| Q4 - I have a MP2 player |
| Q5 - I use the internet at home for pleasure |
| Q6 - I use the internet at home for school work |
| Q7 - I use the internet at school for educational activities |
| Q8 - I am comfortable using technology at home |
| Q9 - Most of the people in my family are comfortable using technology at home |
| Q10 - I use technology on a daily basis |
| Q11 - Most of the people in my family use technology on a daily basis |
| Q12 - I am comfortable using technology in school |
| Q13 - Most of the people in my family are comfortable using technology at school or work |
| Q14 - I enjoy using technology at home |
| Q15 - I enjoy using technology at school |
| Q16 - I feel that more technology should be included in school activities |
| Q17 - I feel that too much technology is included in school activities |
| Q18 - I have used an online textbook |
| Q19 - I have visited a teachers' website |
| Q20 - I feel that being able to use technology will help me in the future |
| Q 21 - I feel that my family views on technology have influenced my beliefs regarding technology |

Implications for the Classroom

The results of this study indicate that students born outside the United States have varied exposure to, and experience with, technology. These students value the use of educational technology and desire to become skilled users. However, their country of origin appears to impact the degree to which they feel educational technology should be implemented. This is possibly connected to the fact that some of the participants are from developing nations which likely influenced their exposure to technology as a young child. Students from these countries must receive extensive training to adapt to the extensive usage of technology in American schools and society. Students from other nations receive services through English as a Second Language classes. These classes strive to assist their language skills and aide the students in cultural assimilation. Due to the varied views and results of this study, it is clear that exposing these students to educational technology through ESL could prove a vital advantage for these students.

Additionally, American students require education regarding the advantages of educational technology. Findings indicate that teachers must demonstrate how to use online textbooks and teacher websites so that students may capitalize upon the educational technology resources that schools make available.

Another implication of this study involves the students' home lives. It was evident that the presence and use of technology at home influenced the student's perspectives on technology. Creating a partnership and educating parents on the variety of educational technology resources that are available to students would likely improve students' perspectives on educational technology and inspire future use.

Recommendations for Further Inquiry

Further inquiry is certainly necessary involving the cultural perspectives regarding educational technology. This study examined one student from Lao, one from Japan, and one from Congo. Schools must study larger numbers of students from nations that relocate to their area in order to determine their perspectives and needs regarding technology.

Further inquiry is also necessary to determine the factors that make educational technology difficult for foreign students to utilize. Research must investigate whether it is a language barrier, interface issues, navigation issue, or other factors that create barriers for foreign students when using technology.

Another factor that warrants further inquiry is the possible correlation between socio-economic status (SES) and technological perspectives. This study attempts to highlight differences based upon exposure to other cultures through the variable of international travel experience. However, it is probable that SES acts as a confounding variable while categorizing the American students based upon international travel experience. To obtain a more accurate portrayal of how exposure to international cultures influences technological perspectives without interference from the SES variable, it would be beneficial to focus on American born students that lived for substantial amounts of time in other countries and inquire regarding the differences they noticed between the technological perspectives of the two respective cultures.

Other research that would benefit students is the exploration of implementing personal devices into educational technology. Most students appeared technologically savvy when discussing MP3 players, texting and social networking. Schools must look into using programs such as Moodle as a learning tool and educate teachers regarding how to properly implement personal technology into the classroom.

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Game-Based Learning's Impact on Motivation and Perceived Language Learning in

Computer-Assisted Language Learning Labs

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Computer assisted language learning (CALL) is a crucial component of foreign language courses on many university campuses, whether required or optional. Most universities offer a language lab that promotes self-study, a library of computer-based resources that students can use to support language learning in the classroom. The same is true for intensive language programs for international adult students. Another innovative idea emerging in education is that of Game-Based Learning (GBL). GBL is rooted in the pedagogy that the learner is not an active recipient, but rather an active participant, and that experiential learning is targeted. If successfully targeted, it requires students to use their own background knowledge, reflect on observations, visualize the abstract, and test concepts. This study explores the use of Game-Based Learning with adult English learners in a university setting.

Introduction to the Focus of the Study

Computer assisted language learning (CALL) is a crucial component of foreign language courses on many university campuses, whether required or optional. Most universities offer a language lab that promotes self-study, a library of computer-based resources that students can use to support language learning in the classroom. The same is true for intensive language programs for international adult students. One leading intensive English program in the U.S. is

English Language Services (ELS), Inc., which has 63 centers across the nation, and as part of the curriculum, students are required to spend an hour a day in the language lab. This language lab is meant to promote independent study skills, and it is a pass/fail class. This is based on attendance and the ability to pass three quizzes on the computer programs.

The pedagogical idea behind the lab is that the software can control how many times a student is exposed to language structures and vocabulary using an innovative technology context, thereby supporting language acquisition (Nelson, et. al., 2012), and many studies have been published indicating that the validity of this. The concept behind Computer Assisted Language Learning in the study of foreign languages is sound, but the execution of this has been faulty. Many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students report boredom with the labs, and educators are quick to blame the lab itself, not the resources or methods used (Taylor, 1979). This factors into a negative attitude "shared by both teacher and students: study in the language lab cannot be very important, since in the majority of cases the lab tapes for ESL/EFL textbooks merely repeat what is printed in the books" (Taylor, 1979).

While apathy regarding the lab is present in many teachers and students, language labs remain an integral part of foreign language programs, and many universities seek to improve conditions, frequently announcing updates in the labs on their websites. Some educators are taking a more active role, trying to revive interest and change the way the lab is viewed in their settings. For instance, the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences in Washington, D.C. has created a task force to reinvent their language lab. Foreign language faculty are involved and excited about using project-based language learning to affect change in how meaningful the lab is to both students and staff (Chernow, 2003). The process of changing the traditional way

language labs have been executed has been rather slow, and the solution for most is updating

technology or eliciting more hands-on faculty support in the lab.

Another innovative idea emerging in education is that of Game-Based Learning (GBL).

GBL is rooted in the pedagogy that the learner is not an active recipient, but rather an active

participant, and that experiential learning is targeted. If successfully targeted, it requires students

to use their own background knowledge, reflect on observations, visualize the abstract, and test

concepts (Tan, Wong, Lim, & Chong, 2014). This particular concept has been relatively

underexplored with older learners (Charlier, Ott, Remmele, & Whitton, 2012), but it has the

potential of being a very successful method in engaging learners in independent study.

Overarching Themes and Research Questions

This study will use a qualitative approach to examine how effective it is to use game-

based language learning in a language lab to alter both teacher and student perception of its

importance and support independent language study. Research has provided validity to the

concept of using computer-assisted language learning tools to support language learning taking

place in the classroom, but reports indicate that both teachers and students are bored with it

because of the methods and programs used. Educators have tried updating technology and

methodology, but they have not tried game-based learning, nor have they done many studies on

how adults respond to this method. This information will add to the dialogue of what does and

does not work in the foreign language lab on the journey to make this an effective component of

foreign language teaching.

Research Question	Data	Data	Data
Question #1: **Will adult learners be comfortable with using technology for game-based learning?**	**Student surveys**	**Field Notes**	**Pre- and Post-Interviews**
Question #2: **Will using a game-based learning approach motivate students to maximize their time spent in the language lab?**	**Group Discussions**	**Field notes**	**Pre- and Post-Interviews**
Question #3: **Will students feel that a game-based approach strengthened their language skills and helped them succeed in other classes?**	**Group Discussions**	**Field Notes**	**Pre- and Post-Interviews**

Table 1: Triangulation Matrix for Data Utilized in Game-Based Learning's Impact on

Motivation and Perceived Language Learning in CALL Labs

Literature Review

The Background of Digital Labs in Foreign Language Teaching

Technology has been an effective tool for aiding foreign language teaching since the beginning of the 20th century. When it began, technology was primarily used in the form of recordings in which students practiced repeating with the record ("Digital Labs," 2008). The concept of language labs, where students devote an entire class period to working with technology, did not appear until the late 1960s and early 1970s. These were primarily popular in secondary schools and higher education. However, by the late 1970s, the popularity of language labs had begun to dwindle. This was thought to be the result of unpredictable technology and an old-fashioned model for foreign language teaching (Davies, Bangs, Frisby, & Walton, 1988). At this time behaviorism, the concept of reinforcing language through controlled repetition, was falling out of favor. Consequently, both teachers and students began to report boredom with the labs; moreover, they began to question if true language learning took place through monotonous drills (Taylor, 1979).

The technology available for use in the language labs progressed to cassette tapes and videos by the Mid-1980s ("Digital Labs," 2008). This advancement in technology improved the general attitude toward language labs during this time. The idea of a self-access lab became appealing to students. A wealth of new ideas also emerged, such as role-play, group work, pair work, communication games, etc. This upward trend stayed in place until the late 1990s and even into the 21st century. Educators continued focusing on improving the technology available in language labs (Davies et al., 1988), and various software packages were made available to support language teaching in the classroom in the mid 90s ("Digital Labs," 2008).

The Benefits of a Digital Language Lab

The established benefits that could result from the effective use of language labs have kept them running for over forty years. Digital labs are appealing to foreign language education because it easily allows for differentiated instruction, as students have freedom in the types and complexity of activities they choose to do. Labs have the potential of utilizing a vast source of multimedia tools and blended approaches, providing authentic, contextualized scenarios to learn the language ("Digital Labs," 2008). In addition to the authenticity of texts, learners have many opportunities to negotiate meaning through peer interaction. Students could work in collaboration to explore and articulate their thoughts (Arzal & Tanipu, 2014). Language labs are thought to lower affective filters, as students conceivably work in an environment nearly devoid of stress and anxiety. Throughout this whole process, learners become more aware of their personal learning process, further supporting learner autonomy (Mohanty, 2008). Theories behind the lab are sound, but a cyclical course of shortcomings in the execution of labs has plagued their long reign.

21st Century Obstacles in Creating Effective Language Labs

Since the late 1970s and mid 1980s, the premise of the language labs relies heavily on the support of the latest software. Both students and faculty expect a flow of new and captivating technologies to enhance language learning and provide authentic practice. If the labs do not keep up with the latest technology, it feels outdated. When students are not refreshed by the newest, most sophisticated software and technology, the language labs lose their appeal, as repetitive course work can grow old. They essentially get bored and apathetic about improving their skills in an autonomous environment (Mohanty, 2008).

This mindset of the latest technology being needed is further complicated by the necessary attainment of funds. A multimedia digital language lab requires computers or tablets, software, and routine maintenance to keep it effectively running (Mohanty, 2008). Many states or departments lack the funding to maintain a language lab. Lunden MacDonald (2011), a professor at the Metropolitan State College of Denver in Colorado, has fought for several years to get a language lab on campus. He states that in regards to state funding for higher education, Colorado ranks last in the nation. MacDonald and his department have creatively incorporated a mix of technology and pedagogical ideas to create a language lab of sorts within the classrooms, but they still do not have a space to call their own. MacDonald also points out that many other colleges or states that face similar problems, give up on the idea of a traditional language lab, justifying its absence by pointing out there is now a lot of free information available online for students. They do not need the language lab for independent study. The alarm with this is that not all of the information available online for free is reliable, and students are missing the component of peer interaction made possible by working in a language lab as a class. The ideal for a foreign language lab in Western culture has spread to the East as well. Many countries like India are working hard to incorporate language labs into their programs, but they also face the challenge of cost and how to maintain a lab full of the latest technology (Mohanty, 2008). Though finance is a recurring concern, a perhaps more pertinent concern is the method of instruction in place.

Even if language labs possess all the latest software, they still face a lot of criticism because they are traditionally viewed as being the student interacting autonomously with the computer (Singh, 2013). Even when group work and role-plays are made available, a student may feel uncomfortable participating in them in a relatively quiet room. It has also been

recorded that students do not have the patience to practice and correct pronunciation with recording devices, and since the number of students enrolled in labs tends to be high, teacher correction is sporadic, which does not provide adequate feedback to students (Singh, 2013). MacDonald (2011) has noted that technology-driven methods occurring in language labs have remained static, despite the appeal of multi-dimensional software. Teachers and students get caught up in the drills of rote repetition and passive learning. This traditional model is familiar and deeply embedded into the mindset of foreign language teaching. Seemita Mohanty (2008), a professor at the National Institute of Technology in India, eloquently explained that technology is not a replacement for solid pedagogy, and Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) brings its own set of problems. Both teachers and students have to stay abreast changes and developments, which can be overwhelming given how fast technology progresses. Mohanty states, "Implementing CALL in the classroom requires the teacher to be always 'relevant' to the students. We cannot use it as an excuse for complacency" (2008, p. 70).

This current, recurring battle between software and student boredom with the traditional model is reminiscent of the downfall of language labs in the 1970s. At the time, educators thought it was because of technology and an old methodology. It was noted in the late 80s, when looking back at the inefficiency of the 1970s' language labs, that in reality, the failure of language labs were due to inefficient teacher training and a lack of diversity in the way drills were executed (Davies et al., 1988). Advancements in technology revitalized the language labs in the 80s after the 70s' slump. However, once something changes the attitude toward a component of curriculum for the better, it is easy to become complacent. When students get into routines and repeat the same kinds of activities in class, they will grow bored, regardless of how advanced the technology is (Mohanty, 2008). This can be seen throughout the struggle today,

and many educators recognize that it is not the language lab itself that is the problem, but the methodology used.

Current Methodologies Yielding Positivity in Language Labs

In response to the growing awareness that it is the pedagogy that needs to be tweaked in language labs, university faculty and researchers around the world have attempted to change the way students approach the technology available. The Colombian College of Arts and Sciences in Washington D. C. has created a task force to reinvent their lab. Foreign language faculty are involved and excited about using project-based language learning to change how valuable the class is perceived by both students and staff (Chernow, 2003). Though data are not available on how students responded to this change, it does indicate that faculty attitudes improved, which is where the change needs to start in order to effectively reach students (Chernow, 2003).

Seemita Mohanty (2008), the professor at the National Institute of Technology in India, also experimented with project-based learning in the language lab. Students participated in solving real-life problems and business dilemmas. Some of these were presented in the form of games. The language labs at this institute are three hours long. Mohanty reflected on her experiences in classes of 30 students enrolled in 2nd year language labs. In the control group, she noted that students lost interest in the programs after about half an hour. In the test group, students were engaged during class and more comfortable with group work. Her conclusions were that it was not CALL that helped students improve their language, but the way in which the software was presented and tasks were assigned (Mohanty, 2008).

Another study, done with the same age group, was conducted in Indonesia. In this study, 23 Indonesian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students participated in a blended learning research project measuring improvements in students' listening skills. These students were in

their 2nd year of undergraduate studies and were performing at intermediate proficiency. In the control group, students participated in the traditional language lab model. In the test group, students spent half of class time receiving language instruction from the teacher and half of class time working independently on programs. Both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered. Results indicated that the experimental group performed better on the post-listening proficiency test and reported a more positive experience regarding the lab (Arzal & Tanipu, 2014).

Current research indicates that project-based learning and blended learning yield positive results in the modern language lab. However, only a few studies have been done on these. Another promising methodology that has been relatively underexplored but could prove beneficial in language labs is Game-Based Learning (GBL).

The Benefits of Game-Based Learning

GBL is rooted in the pedagogy that the learner is not an active recipient, but rather an active participant, and experiential learning is targeted. If successfully targeted, it requires students to use their own background knowledge, reflect on observations, visualize the abstract, and test concepts (Tan, Wong, Lim, & Chong, 2014). This would support learner autonomy and provide opportunities for students to negotiate meaning in authentic contexts, both of which are goals in an effective language lab.

Games can have a powerful impact on language improvement in a learning environment. Research has proven that games can support project-based, multi-sensory, experiential, and active learning. Games truly capitalize on background knowledge, as students have to recall previously learned information in order to advance. Games can also provide a multitude of feedback for students. They get instant feedback when completing a game, which allows players to learn from previous mistakes and test hypotheses. The gaming structure also helps them learn

to assess their own progress through the venue of scores and awards. Moreover, games support social interaction, as students become a part of a larger gaming community (Park, 2010).

A study conducted with 120 undergraduate students, ages ranging from 19-20, showed that students developed better social-problem solving skills after participating in games. Students played the game *Sims* 2, which is a life game, for two weeks. Qualitative data were collected, yielding positive improvements in social skills. However, this study acknowledges that within the realm of education, solid educational games to be used in the classroom are still sparse, especially with older learners (Park, 2010).

In regard to language-specific games, one particular study has shown that an improvement in vocabulary retention can be achieved with a game-based learning model. Researchers conducted a study in Iran, consisting of 60, 3rd year junior high students. Their ages ranged from 13-14 years old. Students were split equally in two groups, a control group and experimental group. The control group participated in traditional vocabulary instruction, while the experimental group participated in extensive vocabulary word games. Quantitative data were collected, and after comparing the pre- and post-test results, findings revealed that the experimental group performed better (Alemi, 2005).

Games can be a valuable resource in the classroom. Sometimes teachers are inclined to avoid games because they do not want to just fill class time with entertaining activities. It is important to remember that a well-selected game can help students acquire and retain language. In an effective language learning game, students cannot advance unless they have been able to use the necessary vocabulary and grammar appropriately (Alemi, 2010).

Game-Based Learning and Adults

The current research available for GBL has been primarily conducted on children. Educators are even more hesitant to use it in the realm of adult education, which is the sector in which language labs are the most popular. A handful of studies have been done with adults, such as the above social-problem solving case. They have all indicated a positive response from this particular population. In an interesting study done in Scandinavian university, researchers developed a stimulator to provide feedback to students as they were working through grammar and pronunciation exercises in the lab. When they piloted the stimulator individually with a volunteer student, they received a negative reaction. The student did not like the woman on the computer. He reported that it made him feel annoyed when she said things like "Outstanding!" or "Great Job!" Researchers got a completely different reaction when students were interacting with the stimulator in a classroom setting. The woman became a source of amusement, and students would cheer for each other to get desired responses from the stimulator. They also competed with each other to get the best comments. They reported that it enhanced their learning experience (Hautopp & Hanghoj, 2014). Though newer studies have begun to shed light on how adults respond to GBL in the classroom, this concept has been relatively underexplored with older learners (Charlier et al., 2014).

Conclusion

Language labs have made a home for themselves for over forty years in higher education, particularly within the realm of foreign language studies. They have been a turbulent part of the foreign language curriculum, swinging back and forth from periods of popularity and effectiveness to periods of boredom. When the labs find themselves in an apathetic period, educators are historically quick to blame the software available or the ineffectiveness of an old-

fashioned model. In reality, it is the way the language lab is approached by teachers and presented to students. Though labs are meant to be an autonomous environment, teachers are to take an active role in facilitating independent study for students. If teachers become complacent with the way things are run, so do students. Methodologies need to be continually revisited in order to infuse life into a component of curriculum that has remained in places for years. By doing this, students and teachers can remain enthusiastic about a process that has proven to be very beneficial to students when carried out effectively.

Subjects

Participants consisted of 3 tiers of advanced level English students enrolled in the language lab at the English Language Center (ELS) on MTSU's campus. The academic director is responsible for assigning students to the language labs based on levels. 26 adults were enrolled in this particular language lab.

Out of the 26 adults enrolled, one transferred to another school shortly after classes began. Although the remaining 25 participated in the game-based language learning lab, only 16 consented to participate in the data collection, so data were collected from all 16 of these participants. Their ages ranged from 20 to 35.

Table 2: Demographics of the 16 Participants

Participant	Nationality	Gender	Age
P#1	Saudi	Male	22
P#2	Turkish	Male	25
P#3	Brazilian	Female	20
P#4	Saudi	Male	25
P#5	Saudi	Male	20
P#6	Saudi	Male	35
P#7	Saudi	Male	23
P#8	Saudi	Male	35
P#9	Saudi	Female	25
P#10	Saudi	Female	25
P#11	Saudi	Male	24
P#12	Saudi	Male	20
P#13	Saudi	Male	23
P#14	Saudi	Male	30
P#15	Saudi	Male	20
P#16	Brazilian	Male	25

Methodology

This four-week study was conducted in a qualitative research format. The researcher collected data consisting of student surveys/interviews, group discussions, teacher observations, and test scores. The class was divided into six teams of four to five students. Students were assessed on their comfort with technology, perceptions of technology, and expectations for language improvement before engaging in the game-based environment. Students worked on the assigned Longman programs that are a part of the curriculum and were assigned point values for items to be completed, varying according to how well they did. They were also provided with other relevant games createed by the researcher: board games, online websites, timed reading quizzes, speaking activities, and Ted Talks. Points were assigned to these. The scores were tallied daily and added to a leaderboard, and at the end of the week, the highest scoring team got a prize (e.g. one homework pass, one late pass, etc.). Teams went back to zero at the beginning of the next week to even the playing field and avoid discouragement. At the end, students

evaluated their motivation to work in this environment, if it were any better than if a game-based approach were not used, and they evaluated their language improvement under this approach.

Data Sources and Schedule of Data Collection

Students were given a survey regarding their comfort level with technology both at home and in the classroom. Students then participated in small group discussions. They discussed their opinions about the language lab class, what activities or programs they thought were the most helpful, and their expectations of the class. After this, 5 students volunteered to participate in pre- and post-interviews. The researcher asked the students open-ended questions about their perceptions of language lab and what their language goals were. During the course of the four-week study, the research also recorded field notes at least once a week, sometimes twice. During the last week of the study, the same students scheduled post-interviews in which the revaluated their perceptions and considered whether they had met their language goals and if game-based learning assisted them more than the traditional model. It would be beneficial to note here that participant #1 did not show up for the post-interview.

Table 3: Categories, Attributes and Codes for Data Collected in Game-Based Learning

Codes, Categories, Attributes Table			
Title of Study: Game-Based Learning's Impact on Motivation and Perceived Language Learning in Computer-Assisted Language Learning Labs			
Research Question #1: Will adult learners be comfortable with using technology for game-based learning?			
Code Type	**Category**	**Attributes**	**Data Sets**
Overall Relationship Code: Patterns in students ease with using computers for game-based learning	Technology Background	• All students use technology at home on a daily basis. • The Brazilian and Turkish students use the internet less at home for enjoyment or pleasure than the Saudi Students. • The Brazilian and Turkish students report that they use the internet more in their home country for school than the Saudi students. However, Saudi students report using teacher websites and online textbooks more than the Brazilian and Turkish Students. • Saudi female students report the least amount of enjoyment for the use of technology in school. • All students feel that technology in school is important and will help them in the future.	Student Surveys
	Familiarity with Games	• The Brazilian and Turkish students reported that they seldom use the interest to play games. • Both Saudi females and males reported that they often played games online, but the females use games a little more. • All students reported a lower familiarity with games in the classroom. • Students were unfamiliar with	Student Surveys Pre- and Post-Interviews Field Notes

		common classroom games	
	In-Class Participation	• Students were initially reluctant to participate in games. • Students opted to use board games and paper quizzes more than the computers to participate in games • Students needed encouragement to interact with their teammates and other teams.	Pre- and Post-Interviews Field Notes

Research Question #2: Will using a game-based approach motivate students to maximize their time spent in the language lab?			
Code Type	**Category**	**Attributes**	**Data Sets**
Overall Relationship Code: Patterns in students' expectations and participation	Expectations	• Students of all backgrounds wanted to target similar language skills: listening, speaking, grammar, and test preparation. • Students liked the more challenging programs but felt the mandatory quizzes were not useful • Students wanted teacher guidance.	Group Discussions Pre-and Post-Interviews Field Notes
	Participation	• Students were initially reluctant to participate in games. After consistent teacher encouragement, students chose their own games. • Several participants began to arrive to class early to work on tasks. • Students reported spending more time working in the language lab and more enjoyment with this approach. • Male students preferred kinesthetic activities where as female students preferred listening and reading activities.	Field Notes Pre- and Post-Interviews
	Gender Differences	• Male students participated more in board games and speaking activities. • Female students participated more in listening activities, computer	Field Notes Pre- and Post-interviews

Code Type	Category	Attributes	Data Sets
		programs, and reading quizzes. • Males preferred working in groups, whereas females preferred working individually.	
Research Question #3: Will students feel that a game-based approach strengthened their language skills and helped them succeed in other classes?			
Code Type	**Category**	**Attributes**	**Data Sets**
Overall Relationship Code: Patterns in student feelings and confidence.	Grammar, Speaking, Reading, Vocabulary, and Listening	• Students desired to work on grammar, speaking, and listening the most. • Students felt they improved their reading and vocabulary skills by working through the grammar passages and encountering new words. • Students already knew of a lot of listening websites, but did not know how to improve listening. They appreciated the note-taking guides. • Students also did not know how to study vocabulary and appreciated tips and the vocabulary board game. • Some students did not want to spend time reading in the language lab because they could do this at home or in their reading class.	Group Discussions Field Notes Pre- and Post-Interviews
	Writing and Pronunciation	• When encouraged, students did not complete any writing tasks. Students did not feel that the language lab was a good place for practicing wiring. They said they needed more time, and they get two hours of writing in their afternoon classes. • Students also felt there was no good pronunciation practice in LTC. They feel that their friends cannot correct them since they are not	Group Discussions Field Notes Pre- and Post-Interviews

		native English speakers, and they would like more one-on-one with teachers during speaking to assist with pronunciation.	
	Confidence in Improvement	• Students were willing to peer correct after encouragement and guidance from the teacher. • Students reported learning more and doing better because there were more activities and because they felt a responsibility towards their team. • Students reported more willingness to work due to the desire for points for their teams.	Group Discussions Field Notes Pre- and Post- Interviews

Codes

Varying categories of codes were used throughout the data collection and analysis processes. Setting/Context Codes were used to denote the location of the activity or other classes to which students referred. Process Codes were used to describe the physical or mental processes students used to choose their activities in the language lab. Activity Codes indicated which programs and language skills students were working on or whether the student was off-task in the lab. Situation Codes were utilized to classify the data used during the study.

Table 4: Specific Codes Implemented to Organize Data

CODE TYPE	CODE	MEANING
Setting/Context	Gram Cl	Grammar Class
Setting/Context	Vocab Cl	Vocabulary Class
Setting/Context	Rdg Cl	Reading Class
Setting/Context	Wrtg Cl	Writing Class
Setting/Context	Lang L	Language Lab
Process	SCG	Self-Chosen Game
Process	TCG	Teacher-Chosen Game
Activity	Comp Pr	Computer Program
Activity	Comp Web	Computer Website
Activity	BG	Board Game
Activity	Spk	Speaking
Activity	Gram	Grammar
Activity	Vocab	Vocabulary
Activity	Lstg	Listening
Activity	Rdg	Reading
Activity	Wrtg	Writing
Activity	OT	Off-Tasl
Situation	GD	Group Discussions
Situation	S Int	Student Interview
Situation	S Sur	Student Survey
Situation	RFN	Researcher's Field Notes

Findings and Conclusions

Explanation of Findings

Overarching Question One

The first overarching question aimed to gage how comfortable students were with using technology for game-based learning. Students answered questions regarding their personal access to technology, personal and family history, and school history. Field notes and pre- and post-interviews were also used to interpret their comfort level. For the survey, the Likert Scale was used to analyze and organize this data. Initial findings revealed that Saudi females had similar answer patterns; Saudi males had similar answer patterns; and the Turkish Male and

Brazilians had similar answer patterns, having the same answers or within a point of each other.

The data was therefore separated into these three categories.

Table 5: Survey Results

Figure 1: Personal Access to Technology
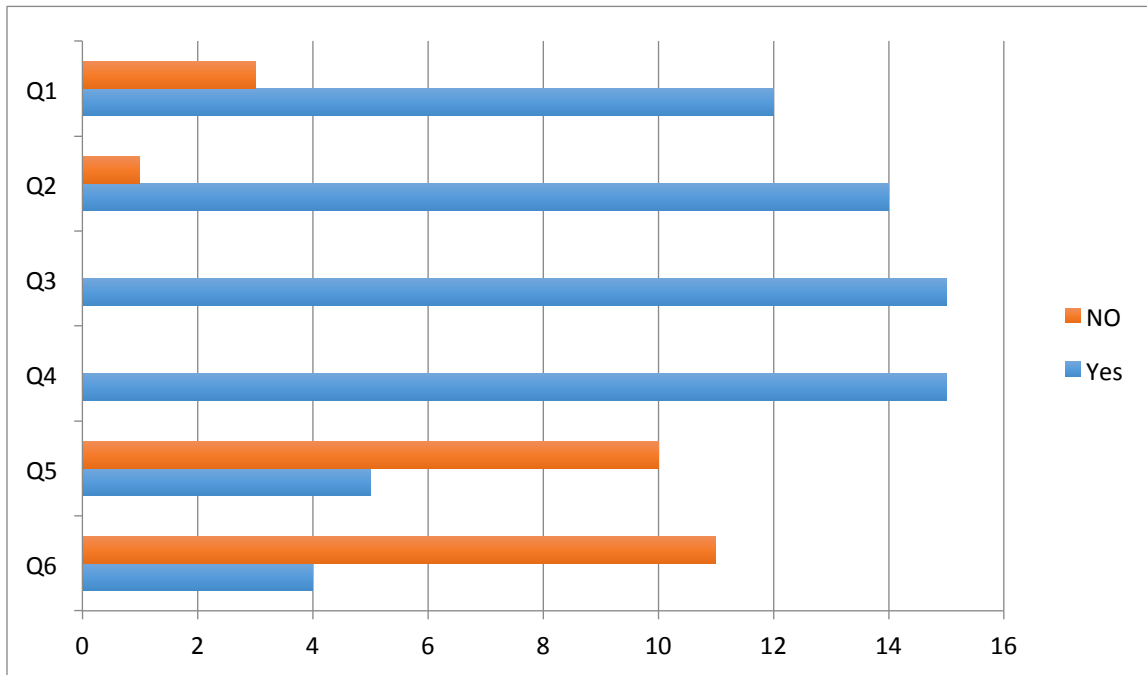
| Q1: I have access to a computer or laptop at home. |
| Q2: I have access to the Internet at home |
| Q3: I have a cell phone. |
| Q4: I have a smart phone |
| Q5: I have a tablet |
| Q6: I have a MP3 Player or iPod. |

Figure 2: Personal and Family History
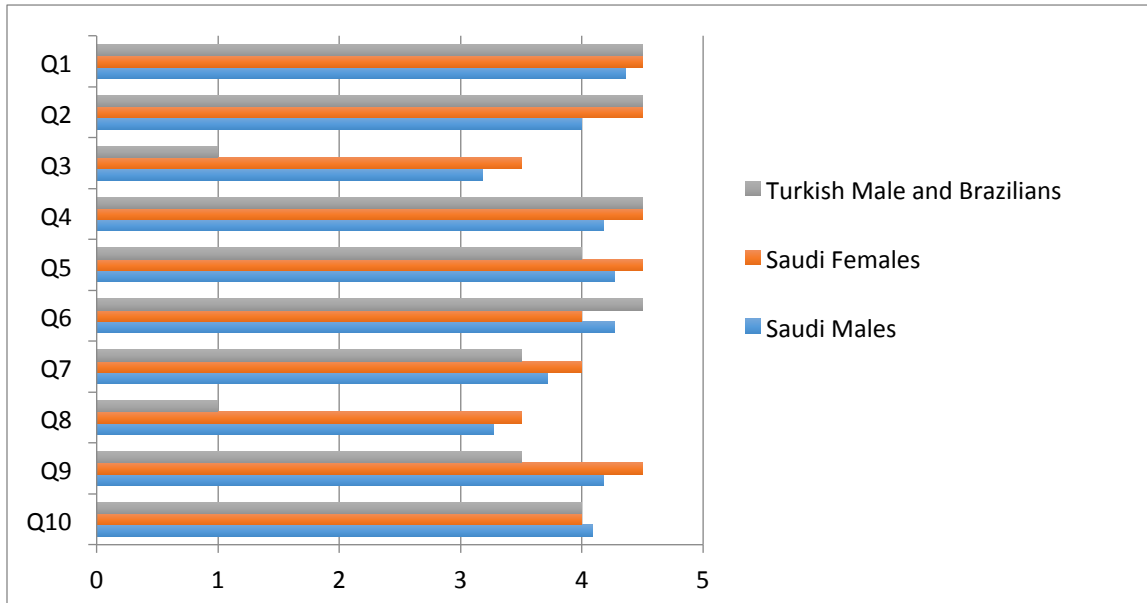
| Q1: I use technology at home on a daily basis. |
| Q2: I use the Internet at home for pleasure. |
| Q3: I use the Internet at home to play games. |
| Q4: I'm comfortable using technology at home. |
| Q5: I enjoy using technology at home. |
| Q6: Most of the people in my family use technology at home on a daily basis. |
| Q7: Most of the people in my family use the Internet for pleasure. |
| Q8: Most of the people in my family use the Internet to play games. |
| Q9: Most of the people in my family are comfortable using technology at home. |
| Q10: Most of the people in my family enjoy using technology at home. |

Figure 3: School History
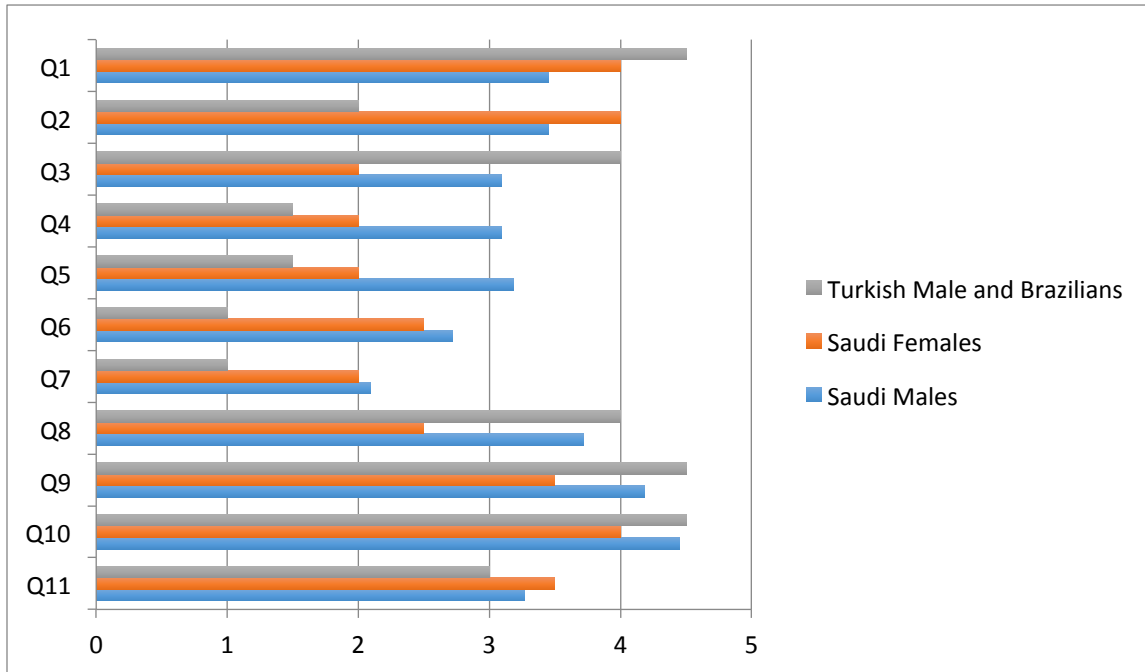
| Q1: I used the Internet for schoolwork in my home country. |
| Q2: I use the Internet for schoolwork in the U.S. |
| Q3: I used online textbooks in my home country. |
| Q4: I use online textbooks in the U.S. |
| Q5: I visited teacher websites in my home country. |
| Q6: I visit teacher websites in the U.S. |
| Q7: I have played online games or board games in class. |
| Q8: I enjoy using technology at school. |
| Q9: I feel that technology should be included in school activities. |
| Q10: I feel that being able to use technology will help me in the future. |
| Q11: I feel that my family views on technology have influenced my beliefs regarding technology. |

Technology Background

A deeper analysis of these surveys revealed that all students in the class had access to some form of technology at home. The Turkish Male and Brazilians used the Internet less at home for enjoyment that the Saudi students. In addition, the Turkish Male and Brazilians reported that they used the Internet more in their home country for school than the Saudi students. However, the Saudi students reported that using teacher websites and online textbooks for school in their home country was more common than the Turkish Male or Brazilians

reported. Perhaps, then, all students use the Internet for school in their home countries but in different ways or for different purposes. Saudi females reported the least amount of enjoyment for the use of technology in school, but all students felt that using technology in the school setting would help them in the future.

Familiarity with Games

According to the survey, the Turkish Male and Brazilians reported that they seldom used the Internet to play games, rating this statement at strongly disagree. Both Saudi males and females rated this statement a little higher, but Saudi males were inclined to choose neutral, whereas Saudi females were more inclined to choose agree. All students reported a lower familiarity with using games in the classroom.

During the pre-interviews, only 2 of the 5 participants had played games in the language lab before, but all 5 felt that games would help them learn new information. When asked why, P#15 said, "Because, uh, in my opinion, to like play a game or do something active, it's better to learn something because you put inside the mind," and P#1 stated that "It helps me to get new information. Also, the games helps me to learn a new vocabulary." Another interesting observation was that the students who had not played games in language labs before had a clear idea of what kinds of games they wanted. P#3 claimed, "I like logical games. I just like it. So I want this," and P#10 share this example:

> "I want the teacher give us groups and give us like, uh, vocab, and we need to explain
> this vocab and have a good answer. The teacher take point for not good answer. Also,
> maybe, we could spell the word, and you can get the point."

In the interviews, students demonstrated that they were positive about the idea of using games in the language lab.

Though students were open to the idea of games, they did not exhibit a familiarity with games in the classroom. Field notes revealed that students were reluctant to volunteer to participate in games. The researcher explained the games on the second day of class, assigned teams (mixing up the proficiency levels), and distributed a list of how points could be earned. Though they had this, students entered class every day the first week in the traditional manner. They grabbed their Individualized Learning Plan (ILP), which is made by the school and tells them which modules on the computer programs to work on according to their level, sat down at a computer, and either stared absently at the computer, began one of the modules, or studied out of textbooks for other classes.

During the first week of classes, when prompted students would work with their team to complete one of the modules, a timed reading quiz, a listening activity, or a board game. They reported that they enjoyed the activity, but the next day, they would not volunteer to try these activities again without being prompted. When given a board game, participants needed the directions repeated several times or the game modeled. It was not instinctive. Some students also pushed back against the idea of working in teams. P#3, who took part in the interview and was open to games, complained one day during class saying, "I don't like it. I prefer work alone." When asked why, P#3 said, "I think I work better alone. I don't like depend on the others." These initial responses indicated that students were not overly comfortable with playing games in the classroom, though this would change by the end of the study.

Comfort with Technology for Games

It was difficult to measure whether students were comfortable using technology for games. There were some technical problems during the course of this study. There was one day in which the Internet went down, and the programs do not work when there is no Internet. Several computers stopped working, so there were several days in which at least one student did not have the option of using the computer. Moreover, supplemental, educational websites did not consistently work, as they required Java Script, and this feature had not been updated in some time. Only IT staff has the ability to install these updates, but this was not accomplished during the duration of this study. Therefore, after the first week, most students opted to participate in timed reading quizzes, spelling competitions, listening activities vial their cellphones, or board games. One participant even reported at the end that he didn't like working on the computers "because I think it's not useful for me. I don't want to spend time on computers here. I can do at home." He reported that his favorite activities were the speaking games. Though many other participants still expressed an appreciation for the programs and for making the modules more game-like, they reported enjoying the variety of activities and not always having to work on the computers. In this particular study results were mixed as to whether participants were comfortable using technology for games, but this also could have been influenced by the difficulties with the technology in place.

Overarching Question Two

This question aimed to identify patterns in students' expectations of language lab and whether a game-based approach motivated them to work harder towards their goals. At the beginning of this study, students participated in small group discussions to voice their expectations for the language lab class and their motivation to work in this class. Field notes

were recorded weekly throughout the study to observe student participation and comments. Volunteer students also participated in pre- and post-interviews.

Expectations

Field notes were taken as students participated in small group discussions. Students of all backgrounds wanted to target specific skills in the language lab: listening, speaking, grammar, and test preparation. Students concluded that reading and writing were not important because they get one hour of reading every day and one hour of writing. They also have extensive reading books they have to do at home. Some of them argued that they still have reading and writing within the grammar exercises in the program. Many also said they did not need vocabulary in LTC because they get vocabulary in all of their classes, and it is embedded within the grammar exercises. Numerous students reported that they liked it when teachers told them what to do and teachers influenced how hard they worked. A majority also expressed an interest in making more pronunciation websites or programs available.

Pre- and Post-Interviews verified the small group discussions. When asked how important the language lab was, P#15 said, "It's important, but sometimes, a lot of students, not my opinion, they don't like the language lab because they always want speaking class." P#2 exhibited this desire, as he had this to report:

"I have four hours class, and one hour is language lab, so I think it's not useful. I just think waste of time. In my opinion, the students can use the computer in their free time. Most students have a computer or at least a smartphone. If the students use their computer out of the class, it will be better for them, and we might not need language lab class. I don't think programs are useful. Wastes students' time. I want to know how to use grammar in vocabulary in speaking correctly. We need class for this."

P#3 had this complaint about the ability to develop speaking in the language lab: "I have to record my voice on the computer, but I don't know if it's correct what I'm saying. (My classmates) don't speak English, and I know I don't speak correctly, and they don't correct me. I need correct way." Students also reported that reading, writing, and vocabulary was not really necessary during the interviews, and they expressed an appreciation for the grammar. P#1 said, "Language lab is the most important class to students because when I don't understand grammar, I find the program."

The desire for teacher guidance also came up during the interview. When asked if the language lab was useful, P#10 responded, "Uh, that depends about the teacher. That gives them many skills for us. But I think the students distract to focus in grammar or listening or in vocab." She was asked what she meant by this, and she clarified by saying, "The teacher can know the students where is need to work more. For example, ask us what the level of each student. So this group is low in listening, give them more listening. This group is low in grammar, give them more grammar. Like this."

Participation

As previously mentioned, students were reluctant to get involved in the game-based class in the beginning. However, with teacher encouragement, they were happy to participate and would always thank the researcher for the activity at the end of class. By the second week, several students started to arrive to class early to help the researcher turn on computers and set up game stations. They would then sit down and begin working through modules to get a head start on winning points for their team. A couple of different students asked to take listening activities home with them. They would bring them back the next day completed. Though students rarely directly picked their own games, by week 2 and through the end of week 4,

students would ask the researcher which game they should play. Often, the researcher would not give them a specific game but rather talk it out with them until they unknowingly picked their own.

During post-interviews, the 4 who participated were asked if they were more motivated to work in a game-based language lab. All 4 said yes. P#3 reported that "I had to study more, to get more points." P#15 said, "Yes, yes, it help me a lot. We do it, but we do that because we want to get the point, so we take off the stress, and we just take it as competition to get the point, and we learn." P#2, who was not a fan of the language lab or the use of computers stated, "It was perfect because you give us a lot of things to do, not computer, so I want to do it." P#10 responded, "Yes, because you be responsible for your team, and you feel your score is high it make you like motivated to do more. And when you do more, you learn something new." This was further supported by participants who had not participated in the interviews, as they made similar comments that were recorded in the field notes. P#7 shared this one day: "I really like this games. For first time, I want to come to language lab, and I want to work hard for my team, but it help me, too. I learn many grammar and vocabulary because I do more." Students firmly reported having increased motivation under this approach.

Gender

Field notes also observed that the types of activities females and males ultimately chose were very different. The 3 females who participated in this study never wanted to work with someone on their tasks. P#3 chose to do one of the speaking games once but only that one time. Other than that, they always chose to do a module quiz, listening activity, or timed reading quiz. Though they never physically worked with someone on their team, one shared that she still felt a responsibility to her team, and this helped her. P#10 said, "When you are in group, you are

responsible more if someone with you and you fail; all the students fail with you, so for that reason, you work more hard." The males were more inclined to choose the board and speaking games. That first week many of them participated in the listening activities, module quizzes, and timed reading quizzes, but by week 2, all but a small handful were at the vocabulary board game or the Jenga speaking game. P#15, who frequently participated in Jenga, stated, "I speak a lot, and I speak with higher level because I'm (lowest level), and I work with (two higher levels), and they correct my mistake." Both genders were motivated to work more, but they targeted different skill sets.

Overarching Question Three

Overarching question three targeted students' perceptions of how their language improved. Group discussions at the beginning of the study, field notes throughout, and pre- and post-pictures presented a picture of their perceptions.

Grammar, Speaking, Reading, Vocabulary, and Listening

At the beginning, students reported that grammar, speaking, and listening were the most important. They reported that reading and vocabulary skills were a part of grammar exercises, so they did not need activities or programs devoted to these skills. Students expressed that the grammar programs were still helpful to them and that the game-based approach facilitated this even more. P#3 reported, "I made more than three quizzes (on the grammar programs) than what I used to, so I learn more." Another student mentioned during class that in the past, students would share quiz answers so that they could pass the required 3 quizzes and be done, but with the game-based approach, they did not want to share answers because the other teams would get points. They were forced to learn more. P#10 reported that the listening in the game-based class helped her a lot. She said, "Um, I think Ted Talks is very helpful because programs is the same

as the textbooks. And the exercise in the programs is different like multiple-choice. So when I

answer the question writing for Ted Talks, if I make mistake, you show me the mistake."

Students also reported that the vocabulary games helped them a lot. P#2 said, "I think it's more

variety, so you don't just learn definition. You learn the grammar and form of vocabulary,

different skills, not just meaning." Participants also felt the timed reading quizzes were useful for

pushing them to read more.

Writing and Pronunciation

Students continued to feel that this was not a necessary or effective component of class.

When pushed to try writing activities, only one participant took the researcher up on it, but she

did not finished it. At the end, students still reported that language lab was not the place to

practice writing. Students also mentioned that for pronunciation they needed teacher feedback,

but this was not always possible due to the large sizes of these classes.

Confidence in Improvement

Students reported a growing confidence in their language improvement under this

approach. During the speaking games, participants were given rubrics to evaluate each other, and

after researcher encouragement, they were more willing to try peer correction. As noted before,

students reported learning more and doing better because there were more activities to choose

from and because they felt a responsibility towards their team. Their overall impressions of this

approach were very positive. When asked if a game-based lab ever made her upset, P#3 said,

"Make me upset? Yes, because I think I could have studied more in other sessions. If, uh, other

sessions was like this one, it could be better for me." This was the same participant who reported

that she didn't like this approach week 1 because she liked working alone. P#15, when asked

what he thought, said "Yes, because this session, we take it as, it's not quiz, we take it as

competition with others people. We want to get points, so we work hard and learn." Participants responded very well to this approach.

Conclusion

Students were somewhat resistant to a new layout for class and needed encouragement, but that is a big part of what endeared this class to them. The researcher had to be encouraging and active to sell this approach, and the attention and guidance of the research is ultimately what they responded to. They responded well to the variety of activities tailored to their initial expectations for the class. Though self-study is a needed skill, they still need accountability to teach them how to be self-sustaining in learning and working in a second language. This came in both the form of the active researcher as well as their teams. They felt a greater responsibility to their teams. It also helped them to see immediate gratification for their work in the form of points. When they are studying language on their own, they do not see the benefits until they pass a major test for class or do well on a writing assignment. It was more encouraging to them to see a reward for their hard work right away in the form of points. Technology is a great tool, but it does not replace the importance of a teacher. This is the main thing to remember in a language lab set up.

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Karen Immigration in Tennessee

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Since 2005, over 90,000 refugees from Burma have been admitted into the United States. A large portion of these refugees are S'gaw Karen, an ethnic minority from Eastern Burma that has been fighting with the Burmese government since 1948. As a result of this conflict, hundreds of thousands of S'gaw Karen and other minority groups in Eastern Burma have been living in refugee camps in Thailand for the past several decades. Access to quality education in the refugee camps is limited. The students and their families often have little or no background education, and many are illiterate in their first language. For schools and districts that have large populations of Karen students, the sudden and rapid growth of this population creates numerous challenges. The purpose of this article is to provide an introduction for classroom teachers to the Karen people and their languages, a brief history of the conflict that has caused the Karen to be refugees, a description of the refugee camps in Thailand where many Karen people now live, and a forecast of future Karen immigration.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) began granting applications for third-country resettlement to refugees from Burma in 2005, the population of Karen immigrants in Tennessee has grown dramatically. Table 1 below illustrates the number of refugees from Burma resettled in Tennessee by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (USORR).

Table 1: Number of refugees from Burma resettled in Tennessee, 2006-2012 (USORR, 2012)
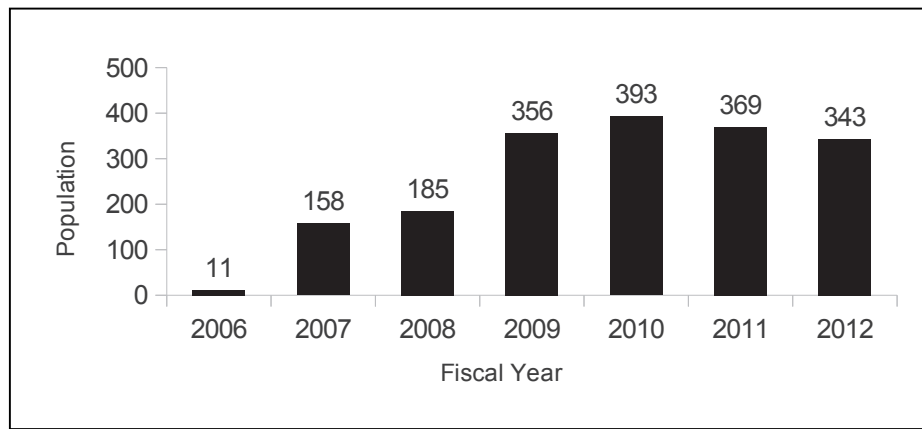
The USORR only provides information on resettled refugee populations based on country of origin rather than ethnic group membership. Thus, Karen refugees only make up a part of the total refugees resettled from Burma. Additionally, the USORR only tracks refugees who move to a different state within six months of their initial placement in the US. These two factors combined with the ever increasing number of Karen children born in the US after resettlement means that determining the actual number of Karen speakers living in Tennessee is likely impossible; however, when one examines the population of Karen-speaking school age children in Tennessee schools (see Table 2), it is obvious that the number of Karen speakers living in Tennessee is far larger than what the USORR data would indicate.

Table 2: Population of Karen speakers in TN Schools, 2006-2013 (TNDOE, 2014b)
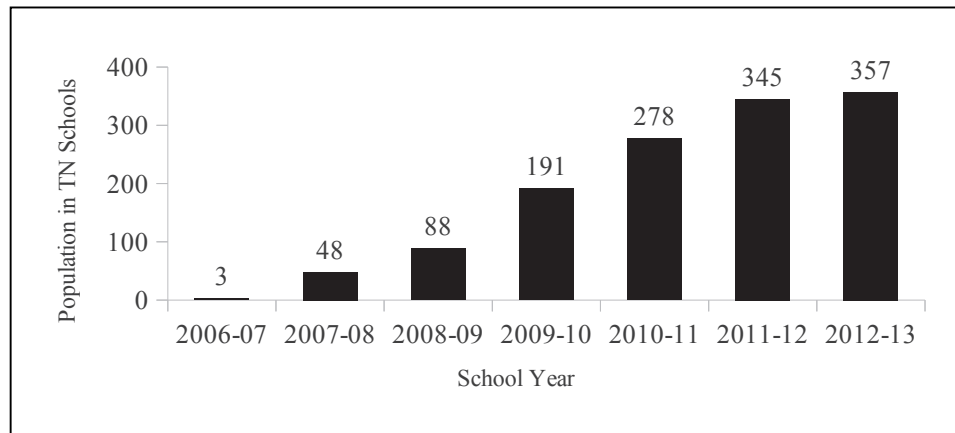
The majority of school age Karen speakers attend school in Rutherford County in Middle Tennessee. Between the years of 2007 to 2013, an average of 60% of the school age Karen-speaking students in Tennessee have attended Rutherford County schools (see Table 3). Almost all of these students attend schools in Smyrna, a city roughly twenty miles southeast of Nashville with a population of 43,060 in 2013 (US Census Bureau, 2014).

Table 3: Population of school age Karen speakers in

Tennessee (black) and Rutherford County (gray) schools (TNDOE, 2014a)
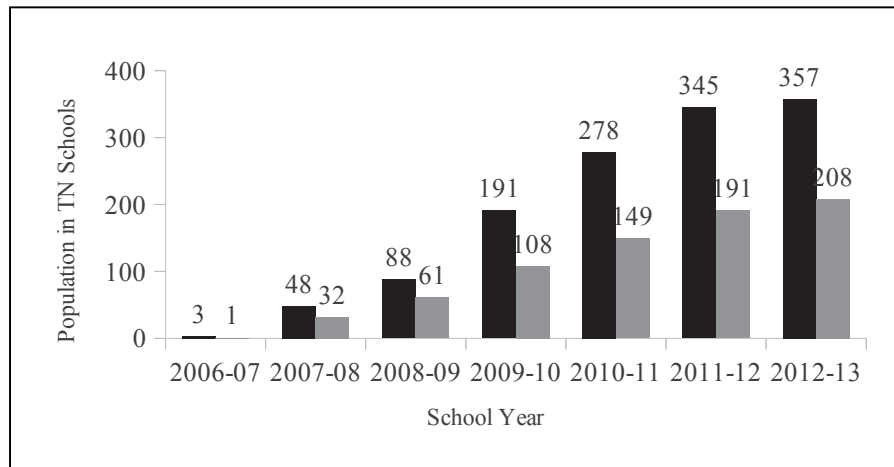
This rapid growth has created challenges in schools with large resettled Karen populations because many Karen students and their parents have limited or no background education, are illiterate in their native language, and lack many basic life skills that are necessary for success in the United States. This challenge is further compounded by the lack of current research on Karenic languages and cultures[1]. The purpose of this article is to provide an introduction for classroom teachers to the Karen people and their languages, a brief history of the conflict that has caused the Karen to be refugees, a description of the refugee camps in Thailand where many Karen people now live, and a forecast of future Karen immigration.

2. WHO IS KAREN?

The term Karen is frequently used to refer to both an ethnic group with numerous subdivisions and to a language subfamily that is part of the larger Sino-Tibetan language family (see Figure 1). In more contemporary research, the term *Karenic* is used to refer to the language subfamily while the term *Karen* is used to refer to the ethnic group.
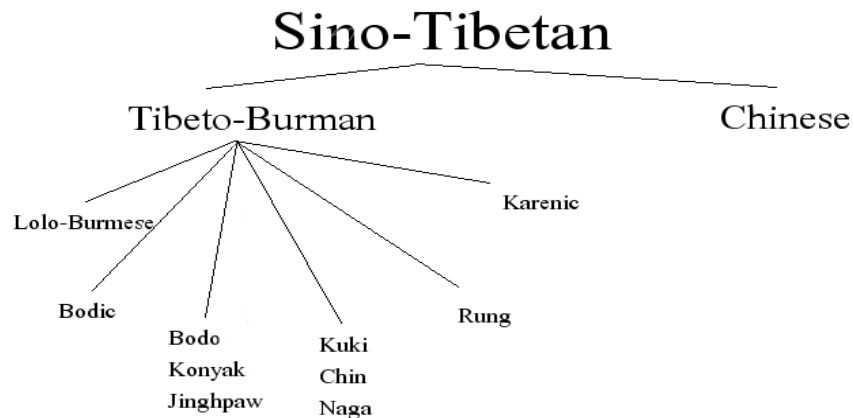
Figure 1: The Sino-Tibetan Family (Thurgood & LaPolla, 2003, p. 8-19)

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1   The sole comprehensive work on S'gaw Karen, the language spoken by the majority of refugees from Burma in the US, is R. Jones's (1961) *Karen Linguistic Studies*.

While the subdivisions of the Karen ethnic group and the subdivisions of the Karenic language

subfamily often overlap (i.e. an individual who is ethnically S'gaw Karen may also speak the

S'gaw Karen language), this is not always the case. Figure 2 illustrates the divisions of the

Karenic languages subfamily. These divisions are not necessarily representative of the divisions

of the Karen ethnic groups.
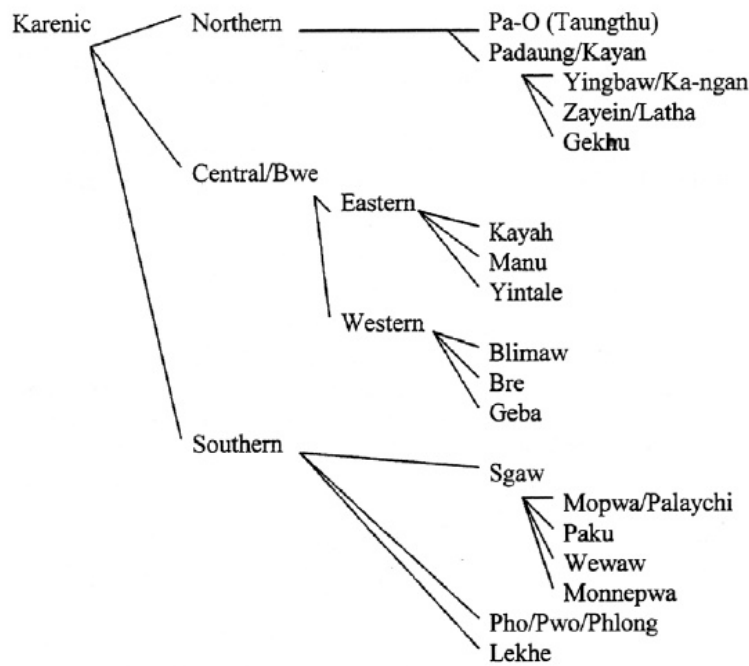
Figure 2: The Karenic Language Subfamily (Bradley, 1997)

The majority of Karen immigrants in Tennessee identify as S'gaw Karen ethnically and

speak the S'gaw Karen language. This is somewhat expected since the S'gaw Karen are the

largest ethnic Karen group and because S'gaw Karen serves as the de facto standard Karenic

language in Burma and Thailand (cf. Baa, 2001). However, individuals may identify as S'gaw

Karen or a different ethnic group without having the ability to speak that subgroup's language;

this is especially the case with younger immigrants who have grown up in the United States.

Marriage between different Karen ethnic groups or non-Karen ethnic groups, such as the Burmese, is common, but individuals may choose to self-identify with only one parent. For example, I work with one family that includes five children. The father is ethnically S'gaw Karen and speaks S'gaw Karen. The mother is ethnically Pwo Karen and speaks both S'gaw Karen and Pwo Karen. The children are all fluent in S'gaw Karen and speak and read only a little Pwo Karen (the oldest is the most competent in Pwo Karen, and the other children's competency decreases with their age), but all the children nevertheless identify themselves as Pwo Karen like their mother. Furthermore, their self-identification is often dependent on the circumstances. When a Pwo Karen student is the only Karen student in a classroom, she may identify herself as simply Karen; however, when there are many Karen students together, she may identify herself as Pwo Karen. The choice of self-identification can be the result of pride, convenience, or affinity, and this choice is fluid. As Charney (2009) writes:

> In many spheres of Burmese life, identities and identifications that [are] fluid, syncretic, multiple, or even undefined [are] common. Whether in terms of religion, ethnicity, or culture, it [is] not unusual for an individual or a group to change [his or her] self-identifications in different contexts. (p.8)

As a result, the relationships between the languages within the Karenic subgroups, which are not mutually intelligible, are far easier to map than are the relationships between the Karen ethnic subgroups.

3. POPULATION OF ETHNIC KAREN AND KARENIC SPEAKERS

It is impossible to know the precise number of ethnic Karen and speakers of Karenic languages in Burma and Thailand. The last comprehensive census in Burma was taken in 1983 (Lewis et al., 2013), so data gathered from that census are out of date. Furthermore, the Burmese

government are not particularly trustworthy when gathering statistics about ethnic groups that they are at war with. For example, the UN found that the Burmese government was not even counting the Rohingya Muslim population, estimated at around 1.3 million people, in its ongoing census (Associated Press, 2014). Since 1983, numerous Karen ethnic groups have been at war with the Burmese government, and hundreds of thousands have fled to Thai refugee camps (UNHCR, 2014a). The often interchangeable use of Karen to refer to both an ethnic group and a language subfamily makes it difficult to identify if scholars, in estimating population size, are referring to only the ethnic group, only the language subfamily, or a combination of the two. This terminological ambiguity coupled with the inaccuracy of available statistics have resulted in widely varying estimates of Karen people and Karenic speakers. Ethnologue estimates 3.7 million Karenic speakers (Lewis et al., 2013); Bradley suggests 3.9 million (1997, p. 46); Manson posits somewhere between 6 and 10 million ethnic Karen (2001, p. 1), and Solnit argues that the population is between 3 and 4.5 million (1997, p. xiii).

Estimates on the number of Karenic languages differ, usually between 20 and 30 languages (Lewis et al., 2013; Manson, 2001, p. 1). The Karenic languages with the greatest number of speakers are S'gaw Karen, Pwo Karen, Pa'o Karen, and Kayah (also known as Karenni). The most widely spoken Karenic language is S'gaw Karen, spoken by an estimated 1.5 million people worldwide (Lewis et al., 2013).

4. GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION OF THE KAREN PEOPLE

The Karenic languages form the most Eastern extreme of the Sino-Tibetan languages spoken in South Asia (see Figure 3), bordered by the Tai-Kadai languages spoken in Thailand (Solnit, 1997, p. xiii).
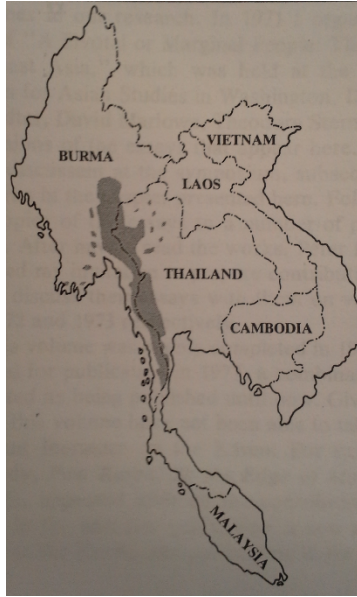
Figure 3: The Karen Homeland (Keyes, 1979)

Within Burma, the Karenic languages are primarily spoken in areas alongside the Eastern border

of Burma with Thailand in regions that were established as semi-autonomous states when the

British dissolved their Burmese colony in 1948 (Charney, 2009, p. 66-67; Silverstein, 1997, p.

15). These states include Kayah state, Kayin state, Tanintharyi State, and portions of the Mon

and Shan states (See Figure 4). Karen languages are also spoken farther west in the Irrawaddy

Delta and farther east across the Thai border, although it is likely that these are spoken

bilingually (Lewis et al., 2013; Manson, 2001, p. 1; Solnit, 1997, p. xiii).

Figure 4: The Eastern States of Burma (Dedering, 2010)

5. MODERN HISTORY OF THE KAREN

The Karen first made contact with Europeans in 1828, shortly before the British began annexing Burmese land in the First Burmese-Anglo war beginning in 1824. According to legend, this occurred when Adoniram Judson, the founder of the American Baptist Mission in Burma, purchased a Karen man named Ko Tha Byu who had been sold into slavery as punishment for crimes he committed. As The Reverend Marshall (1992) writes:

If one were planning to start a movement to transform the life and religion of a race, one would not be expected to choose a savage bandit--a cutthroat who had taken part in the murder of at   least thirty persons--to promote his enterprise. (p. 296)

The Reverend Judson successfully converted Ko Tha Byu to Christianity, and Ko Tha Byu then helped to spread Christianity among the Karen people. The Karen are one of the largest ethnic

groups in Burma (the Burmans being the largest), and there were historically ethnic tensions between the Karen and ethnically Burman monarchy. The spreading Christianity among the Karen caused further conflict between the Karen and the majority Buddhist Burmans. The British were able to play upon these tensions to align themselves with the Karen. They relied heavily on Karen soldiers during the occupation of Burma to act as a native army that could be used to control the rebellious Burman majority (Charney, 2009, p. 53-55). While there had historically been conflict between the Burmans and the Karen, this conflict was dramatically intensified after the Karen had sided with the occupying force in Burma. As an example of this, when the British withdrew their forces to India in advance of an impending Japanese invasion into Burma from Thailand during World War II, one of the first acts of the "liberated" Burmans was to attack and disarm Karen soldiers (Charney, 2009, p. 55).

Shortly after the Japanese army was forced out of Burma by the British and American forces in 1945[2], the British began to dissolve their colonial holdings. The British forces divided Burma into states that corresponded to the homelands of major ethnic groups. For example, Kayin or Karen state was created to serve as the state of the ethnic Karen people (Charney, 2009, p. 66-67). However, the delegations representing some of these ethnic groups, including the Karen, the Chin, and the Karenni, were dissatisfied with the arrangement because the states were not given greater authority to secede from Burma. As a result, they refused to sign the Panglong Agreement of 1947, which established these semi-autonomous states (Charney, 2009, p. 74). The Karen delegate, Saw Ba U Gyi, has become an iconic figure for those seeking Karen independence. His "Four Principles" reference his dissatisfaction that the Karen were not given an autonomous state and have become the rallying cry of the Karen rebel

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2   Readers interested the thrilling tale of how the British and American forces expelled the Japanese from Burma are directed to D. Webster's (2003) *The Burma Road*.

groups in Burma: Surrender is out of the question; The recognition of the Karen state must be completed; We shall retain our arms; We shall decide our own political destiny.

General Aung San, father of Aung San Suu Kyi, governed Burma during the British withdrawal and had overseen the Burmese negotiations of the Panglong Agreement. He was assassinated in 1947, shortly before Burma gained independence. His successor, U Nu, strove to hold the country together after military assaults from both communist and ethnic groups immediately following independence (Charney, 2009, p. 72). After the military junta seized control of Burma in a military coup in 1962, the Burmese army took a more proactive, rather than reactionary role, in the conflicts against ethnic separatists. This evolved into the "four cuts" policy in the 1970's, which involved depriving opposition groups of food, funds, recruits, and intelligence (Delang, 2000, p. 11). The "four cuts" policy sought to take food production out of the hands of the local people in rebel areas. Locals were forced to work under Burmese-government controlled rice paddies so that they would neither be able to contribute rice to rebel soldiers nor sell the rice in order to the fund the rebel opposition. While locals were initially transported to farms from their villages, this arrangement developed into labor camps so that men would not be able to join the rebel forces and so that local villages could not contribute intelligence to rebel forces (Delang, 2000, p. 16-20). Even though the Burmese government currently pledges reform and unity, these same abuses and strategies continue. In 2011, the Thailand Burma Border Consortium's investigation in Kayah state found that:

Land confiscation continues [...] in which troops need to supplement their rations with local produce. In May 2011, Hpruso Township authorities confiscated 2,700 acres of agricultural land from nine villages in order to support the construction of a new military training center. [...] There has been no indication that the imposition of

> forced labor is decreasing and the abuse of civilians to transport military rations
> remains widespread,[…] Villages also continue to be forcibly evicted out of
> contested areas and relocated into areas under the government's control as part of
> the counter-insurgency operations. (p. 44)

Although statistics are difficult to gather, it is estimated that there are around 400,000 internally displaced people in Burma currently, many as a result of forced labor (The Border Consortium, 2012a).

For those areas involved in active combat between the various ethnic forces and the Burmese army, the situation was much dire. If a village was suspected of helping the rebel forces, the Burmese army would destroy the village after killing the men, raping the women and sending them to labor camps, and kidnapping the male children to serve as soldiers (Delang, 2001, p.103-106, p.118, p.250-253). As this practice became widespread and awareness of the labor camps grew, many villagers decided to abandon their villages and make their way east into Thailand (Delang, 2001, p. 136). As villages were abandoned, both the Burmese army and the rebel opposition groups routinely laid mines in order to trap the other group when they would first investigate the village. As a result, many of the refugees who have fled into Thailand can never return home because much of Eastern Burma is an unmapped mine field (Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, 2013).

6. REFUGEE CAMPS

In 1984, the Burmese army managed to maintain possession of ethnic minority rebel lands in Eastern Burma, preventing civilian refugees who fled the fighting from returning to Burma from Thailand. As the Burmese army's stronghold grew, the refugee population across the Thai border continued to grow. The main Karen force, the KNU, was dealt a major blow in 1995 when another Karen armed faction, the DKBA, allied themselves with the Burmese Army and attacked and destroyed the proposed capital of a future free Karen state, Manerplaw (The Border Consortium, 2013, p. 94). The refugee population in Thailand grew dramatically as a result of this, and numerous small refugee camps in Thailand were consolidated together. There are now nine refugee camps along the Thai border. Mae La is the largest refugee camp with a population of 43,255, while the total population of all nine camps together is 119,694 as of December 2013 (The Border Consortium, 2013, p. 8).

The Thai government administers the camps, but the camps are actually run by the refugee communities themselves in collaboration with non-government organizations and donations by aid groups and outside countries (The Border Consortium, 2013, p. 44). The refugee camps have been established in Thailand for over thirty years. Many thousands of children have been born in the camps, and for many, life in the camp is all that they have known. Although camp populations have been decreasing in recent years as the Burmese army has decreased their activity in Eastern Burma, it is likely that many refugees will continue to stay in the camps for the foreseeable future. As The Border Consortium (2013) explains:

> The pace of reforms remains unpredictable. Ceasefires have yet to transom into political dialogue. Communities want to see visible evidence of reforms at a local level, but while troops remained stationed throughout the South East, governance remains weak,

infrastructure sparce, and land issues yet to be addressed, "return" often feels

more like an abstract notion than an imminent reality. (p. 3)

For these reasons, the refugee camps have many features of a permanent village. For example,

Mae La camp has cell phone coverage, internet, and electricity (The Border Consortium, 2012b).

However, the majority of the food, health care, education, and building supplies continue to be

donated by aid groups.

In 2005, the UNHCR began allowing applications for the third country resettlement to

refugees in Thai camps. Since that time, over 90,000 refugees have chosen to resettle, primarily

in the United States, Australia, and Finland (The Border Consortium, 2013, p.16). The USORR

provides information on refugees from Burma who were admitted into the US up to fiscal year

2012 (see Table 4). However,

these refugees were not all necessarily from the Thai refugee camps (many were from refugee

camps in Malaysia) nor were they necessarily Karen.
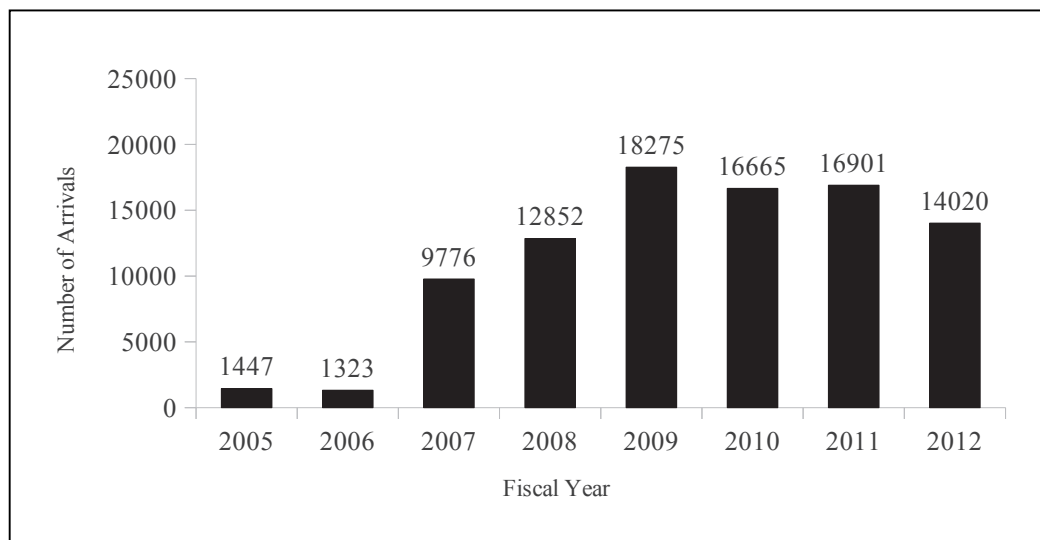
Table 4: Number of refugees from Burma admitted to the US, 2005-2012 (USORR, 2012)

In the following years, the number of refugees from Burma admitted into the US will decline rapidly as the US has stopped the group resettlement program begun in 2005 under which so many refugees from Burma have arrived (UNHCR, 2014b). The US Department of State (USDOS) writes that "Programs for Burmese refugees in Thailand [...] will begin to wind down in the next few years, as the groups eligible for these programs have largely availed themselves of resettlement opportunities in the United States or another country" (USDOS, 2013, p. vi). While large numbers of refugees from Burma will no longer be admitted into the US, the USDOS has indicated that it will accept up to 5,000 Burmese refugees who are ethnically Karen or Karenni in fiscal year 2014 (USDOS, 2013, p. 34). It is also possible that in the upcoming years an increasing number of Rohingya will be admitted in the event that conflict between the Rohingya and the Burmese government continues (USDOS, 2013, p. 32).

7. CONCLUSION

This article was meant to serve as a general overview of Karen immigration in Tennessee and a brief background of the historical circumstances that have led to the humanitarian crisis in Eastern Burma. As shown in Table 5, S'gaw Karen was the third most spoken language by refugees admitted into the US between 2008 to 2014 and Kayah was the ninth (another Karenic language, see § 2).

Table 5: Languages spoken by refugees admitted into the US, 2008-2014 (RPC, 2014)

Language	Total Speakers
Arabic	81,636
Nepali	74,827
S'gaw Karen	34,231
Somali	29,629
Spanish	25,863
Chaldean	15,030
Burmese	11,640
Armenian	11,426
Kayah	10,112

It is essential for those teachers who have Karen students to have a familiarity with their students' background: war, undernourishment, poor health care, limited education, and low literacy rates. In my experience, the Karen students and their families are so friendly and cheerful that it comes as a surprise to learn about the horrors that they have suffered. Understanding their past has aided me in trying to meet their needs not only in the classroom but frequently outside of it too as they and their families try to survive in a world that they are not prepared for.

Many teachers may not be fortunate enough to have Karen students in their classrooms, but with significant populations of Karen people having already resettled in the US or who will immigration in the future, it is increasing likely that many of us will come to know Karen people in our communities. As Anne C. Richard from the State Department said, "The United States is proud to have given a new start to these refugees. Resettled Burmese refugees have thrived in their new homes, and enriched their new communities. Many have become homeowners, small business owners, and American citizens" (UNHCR, 2014b).

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Research-Proven Strategies for Improving Content Vocabulary for Middle School

English Language Learners

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The United States has experienced various waves of immigration through different periods in its history. Most newcomers arrive with a lack of English proficiency skills thus an increase in the number of English Language Learners (ELLs) in mainstream classrooms. Middle school ELLs need certain strategies to help them learn content based vocabulary. This research article presents strategies and techniques that can make the process of teaching content area vocabulary easier and more effective for the middle school ELLs. It is important for teachers to understand the linguistic needs of ELLs beyond Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and tailor meaningful instruction that drive the ELLs to Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP).

Introduction

Over past decades there has been an increase in the number of immigrants to the United States. Most of these immigrants have limited English proficiency. Inversely, the influx in number of English Language Learners (ELLs) enrolling in schools has increased. According to the Migration Policy Institute of 2010, Limited English Proficient (LEP) immigrants make up 9 percent of the U.S. population. For example, the number of ELL students in Indiana has increased by 53.2 percent between 2007 and

2008. The total ELL students in the state grew 408 percent between 1994-95 and 2005-06 (Batalova & McHugh, 2010). This is recorded to be the third-fastest growth amongst all states. Most ELLs speak Spanish as their native language (Pandya, McHugh, & Batalova, 2011). Research statistics suggest that ELLs tend to obtain lower scores on standardized tests than native English speakers (Soto-Hinman & Hetzel, 2009). The purpose of this article is to review evidence-based research on improving the content vocabulary of ELLs in middle school.

It is a common observation that ELLs do not acquire the breadth and depth of the academic vocabulary from exposure to content texts. Tabaoda, Bianco, and Bowerman (2012) noted that exposure is not enough to make the ELLs comprehend the vocabulary needed for academic success.

According to the Nations Report Card of 2007, the overall average reading and vocabulary scores of ELLs were lower than non-ELLs. The average score of ELLs was 188 compared to 244 of non-ELLs (National Center for education statistics, 2007). Bi-literacy can be challenging for teachers. Teacher effectiveness and student success level can be enhanced if the right strategies are devised, planned, and implemented for ELLs. Borgioli (2008) stated that middle school ELLs' ability to attain academic and literary proficiency in content areas may be masked even though they may possess good interpersonal and communication skills. Content area teachers may strive to move the students into the cognitive academic language proficiency, so that the ELLs can become more effective in the use of vocabulary (Tabaoda, Bianco, & Bowerman, 2012).

Characteristics of English Language Learners

ELLs have diverse learning characteristics. The students come to school with different backgrounds and levels of proficiencies in their first language. Second language acquisition depends on the student's age, previous formal schooling, and native language proficiency. ELLs sometimes enroll into schools with limited or no reading vocabulary (Klinger, Boardman, Eppolitto, & Estella, 2012). These limiting factors contribute to the lack of ability to comprehend vocabulary in content area classrooms.

Vocabulary knowledge accounts for over 80% of the variance of reading comprehension scores at grade level (Rashidi & Khosravi, 2010). Klinger et al, (2012) discussed that teachers need to tailor instruction with scaffolding techniques that will increase the vocabulary skills of middle school ELLs. The ELLs face situations of not being able to grasp middle school content area vocabulary. Since their cultural backgrounds may not have allowed them opportunities to encounter academic learning, it may be difficult for them to use content vocabulary in everyday school activities. Uchikoshi (2013) suggested that it becomes necessary to devise teaching and instructional strategies to help ELLs acquire the needed vocabulary skills for academic achievement in content area classrooms.

de Schonewise and Klinger (2012) recommended that teachers should implement culturally responsive teaching in order to theoretically support direct vocabulary instruction for ELLs. Before a teacher can devise strategies for the students, it is necessary that they are aware of the level of language proficiency of each student. This can be the guiding principle for future strategies that can be employed in scaffolding

techniques for explicit vocabulary instruction of students (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2010).

Quirk and Beam (2012) noted that when a teacher is in the process of assessing the ELLs' language proficiency, students who might sound fluent in the language may not actually have mastered the technicalities of the new language. There are two levels of proficiency of language. The first is Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), and the second is the Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency or CALP(Cummins, 1999). It is a general observation that the students who sound fluent in a language, have strong social language skills or BICS and can discuss events related to their lives in English (Eckerth & Tavakoli, 2012). It is important that teachers should not make this a criterion of judging the academic and literal proficiency level of the students' English capabilities. ELLs usually struggle with the cognitive academic language proficiency or CALP. New language vocabulary skills require between five and ten years to develop. Complicated language structures are needed for understanding the vocabulary that has greater linguistic complexity. As stated above, the time that a student takes in learning vocabulary in a new language can be extensive. Making it a part of the knowledge base requires explicit vocabulary instruction, hard work, and practice (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2010).

According to Watkins and Lindahl (2010), adolescents possessing reading skills in their native language have an added advantage in the acquisition of English as a new language. The knowledge base can be useful in building and developing English skills. Researchers Kieffel and Lesaux (2010) found that knowledge, skills, concepts, and ideas that a student learns in their first language can transfer into their learning of the second

language as outlined by Stephen Krashen's transfer hypothesis. These researchers hypothesized that the level of transfer is dependent on the amount of similarities that exist between the two languages. The greater the similarities between the native language of the student and the English language, the easier it becomes for the student to grasp English vocabulary (Kieffel & Lesaux, 2010). In this case, the use of cognates during instruction becomes very important.

Research-based teaching methodologies for effective vocabulary instruction

Word Exposure Frequency

The Interactive Read-Aloud

ELLs need frequent exposure to new vocabulary. Researchers suggest that instruction propelled towards academic language and vocabulary skills must involve exposing the learners to decontextualized language (Harmon, Wood, Hedrick, Vintinner,& Willeford, 2009).

According to a research done by Freeman and Freeman (2006), effective teachers read aloud to and with students every day. Reading aloud promotes understanding and may foster a student to use decoding skills of vocabulary words in the reading material. When used with content area textbooks, students can participate in whole class choral reading (Paige, 2011). Whole class choral reading accompanied by readers theatre, as encouraged by Young and Rasinski (2009), will help improve reading vocabulary and comprehension skills of ELLs. Taking pauses while reading and trying to grasp the essence of the written content can also be helpful for the ELLs reading comprehension (Roy-Campbell, 2012).

Bolos (2012), depicted that interactive read-alouds can attribute to effective integration of vocabulary comprehension in the process of engaging the learners.

Word walls

A Word Wall is a literacy tool used in the classroom for displaying commonly used vocabulary sight words. It is available for students' reference and helps them visually gain familiarity with high frequency words and gain reinforcement of vocabulary. There are a number of things that a student is expected to do in class. Listening and using content vocabulary to demonstrate understanding and learning are critical. A print rich environment is necessary for middle school learners. Reutzel and Cooter Jr.(2007) advised that teachers can employ interactive word walls for students use in the classroom. Using content area word walls in and outside of the classroom can enhance the comprehension and retention of content area vocabulary for the ELLs (Cox, Jackson, and Tripp, 2011).

Explicit instruction of high frequency or Tier 2 words is necessary for comprehension purposes. These Tier 2 everyday words are important for ELLs to understand content texts (Kieffel and Lesaux, 2010).

Harmon et al (2001) asserted that in order to deepen vocabulary and word knowledge for ELLs, frequent use of interactive word walls within the classroom can enrich learning. Scott and Nagy (2004) analyzed that students need to participate in vocabulary instruction that provides multiple opportunities to engage them in comprehending numerous contexts.

Another researcher, Nam (2010) discussed that teachers can use word wall words in content area lessons as an associative learning facet for vocabulary instruction. Using

pictures and words written in English and/or in the learners native language can be helpful. Word wall items will assist the ELLs to draw on the mature conceptual and lexical systems of their native languages because target vocabulary items will have corresponding words (Nam, 2010).

Harmon et al (2009) added that the notion of acquiring knowledge through associations of one's existing experience is reinforced when visual images can be used to represent new ideas.

Morphology

Reutzel and Cooter Jr. (2007) suggeseted that morphology can be useful for vocabulary instruction. Morphology is the study of the forms and formation of words in a language.

According to Wasik and Iannone-Campbell (2012), it is important to teach morphemes across content-areas with attention given to the word's internal structure and meaning within the context of a sentence. A morpheme is the smallest indivisible unit of a language that retains meaning.

Templeton et al (2012) recommended that one of the greatest benefits of teaching vocabulary generatively through morphology, can help middle school ELLs make connections across content areas. These connections support specific word learning objectives (Flanigan, Templeton, & Hayes, 2012). Teachers can instruct vocabulary by demonstrating to the learners how words in English are formed through the combination of meaningful word parts (Flanigan, Templeton, & Hayes, 2012).

Kieffer and Lesaux (2007) reported that comprehsion is related to understanding morphology. Children have a smaller word bank stored in their mental lexicon compared

to adults. Teaching morphology will enhance their ability to expand their English vocabulary word bank.

Discussion

Vocabulary Enrichment

Intentional teaching of fluency and vocabulary are important aspects of helping ELLs learn and succeed in content area classrooms. The type and depth of vocabulary instruction will be based upon the language needs and fluency of the ELL. Paraphrasing difficult text into simpler language can help the ELL understand and use vocabulary. Discussing new and difficult vocabulary can help the ELL effectively practice its use in the future. It is worthwhile to note that students retain vocabulary words that have been explicitly taught. The strategies mentioned in this article can be a starting point for middle school ELL teachers in helping ELLs succeed in content areas.

Conclusion

Middle school ELLs need certain strategies to help them learn content based vocabulary. This research paper presented strategies and techniques that can be used to help students learn new vocabulary. It is important for teachers to understand the linguistic needs of ELLs in order to tailor meaningful instruction. Using strategies and techniques like those discussed above can makes the process of teaching content area vocabulary easier and more effective for the middle school ELLs.

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Accent and Student Attitude: Student Perception of Instructors with Non-American Accents

Accents
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This study examines the perceptions of university students regarding instructors with non-American accents. Data was collected by employing a 20-item survey distributed among willing participants. Prior research relevant to this topic indicates that individual factors such as gender, age, area of study, and grade level all impact listener perception of accented speakers. While this current data did not support all the factors listed in literature review, findings from this current study show that many students, while not openly hostile towards foreign accents, are not positive either but simply apathetic to non American accents.

Introduction

A number of colleges and universities have worked to increase diversity and diversity awareness on their campuses. Most colleges will emphasize their diversity as a way of attracting students. Having a picture on the homepage that includes students from diverse backgrounds has become a common gimmick used by colleges to attract attention and supposedly demonstrate that particular college's ability to be culturally inclusive. While students in most universities, especially the larger research universities, have the

opportunity to interact with students and even faculty from diverse cultural experiences, students from small regional colleges may not enjoy those opportunities. This lack of exposure to other cultures may lead to some students being apathetic or even hostile to multicultural issues. Levine and Cureton (1998) in their examination of college students in the late 90s state that, " Multiculturalism remains the most unresolved issue on campus today" (p.7). Similarly, Broido (2004) posits that "the Millennial will bring many challenges to student affairs practitioners and faculty particularly in the area of diversity"(p. 83).She, however, goes on to suggest that this new generation of students is "poised to be the generation most able to transform how they, and the larger world, think about and act on these issues." (p. 83). So how does this generation of college students respond to diverse issues such as instructors with foreign accents?

It is reasonable to expect that students with openness towards diversity respond more positively towards non-American accented instructors than those students who are not as open. The other factors that might influence how a student responds to foreign accents are not that obvious to predict. A study by Pascarella et al (1996), conducted in the early 90s identified various factors that influence freshman students' openness to diversity. Some of these factors include precollege exposure to diversity, the perceived non-discriminatory environment in a given institution, participation in racial or cultural awareness workshops, participation in athletics, social fraternities and sororities and enrolment in mathematics courses. Building on Pascarella et al's study, E.J. Whitt et al (2001) conducted a similar study looking at influences on openness to diversity by second and third year college students. The findings of the study demonstrate that several factors both academic and non academic influence openness to diversity on college

campuses. The findings suggest that females are more likely to have a diverse worldview than males. Their study also demonstrated that older or non- traditional students were more receptive to diversity than traditional students. Conversely, their research showed a negative correlation between tolerance of multiculturalism and how many mathematics courses a student had completed. However, this can be explained by noting that mathematics programs traditionally have tended to involve more males than females. Acceptance of diversity also positively correlates with participation in a racial or cultural awareness workshops as well as involvement in athletics. Generally, the more a student was involved in culturally diverse activities, the more openness they exhibited towards diversity.

While the studies mentioned above focus on the general atmosphere on campus, other studies have focused on the impact of openness to diversity on students' learning experiences. Lindemann (2002) demonstrated that "there appears to be a direct relationship between attitude and *perceived* success of interactions, which may ultimately have the same consequences for interactants as if the relationship were between attitude and actual success"(p.417) . Likewise, Hoffmann and Oreopoulos (2009) found that perceived effectiveness of a professor relates to student performance. As far as the results of their study are concerned, the objective characteristics of professors do not correlate with academic achievements. Neither rank, nor job status, nor instructor's salary offer any connections to students' grades or their likelihood to drop or retake a class. What is crucial is the perceived effectiveness of an instructor, combined with other subjectively evaluated traits, showed correlations with student achievements, and an increased probability to stay in one class or retake a similar one in the future. "Perceived

effectiveness" may be influenced by several subjective factors such as physical attractiveness and accents of the instructors.

Plakans' (1997) study, examined student attitude towards International Teaching Assistants (ITA). The study attempted to answer several questions including the following, "what is the relationship between students' attitudes toward ITA's and their particular year of enrollment, academic college, sex, age and other background characteristics such as expected GPA, experience living abroad or traveling outside the US, hometown size and regional location..?" (p. 100-101).   Results showed negative bias among males ages 18 to 24, especially those majoring in business or agriculture. Many of these students came from rural areas and had limited exposure to other cultures. As a result, Plakans recommends programs to raise intercultural awareness and understanding. She concludes that "universities still have the job of broadening insular students' horizons and helping them to become cross culturally aware." (p. 113). In another study of language attitudes, Major et al (2005) researched the effects of regional, ethnic, and international dialects of English on listening comprehension. Of concern was whether listeners can understand particular dialects more easily than others. Results of their research indicated that dialect does have a significant effect on both English as a Second Language (ESL) and native speakers of American English populations. While international accents had a negative impact on listener comprehension, variations of regional American accents had no negative impact, with the exception of the African American Vernacular English (AAVE) accent which negatively correlated with listening comprehension.

While this study showed that accent may impact listening comprehension, Gill and Badzinski (1992) demonstrated that information recall is *not* impacted in the same manner. However, speaker status was statistically significant (showing a negative effect) in relation to listener perception and cognitive performance. It should be noted that this study was conducted using communication students, and therefore its results may be limited in scope. However, the research of Lev-Ari et al (2010) proposes that speaker credibility and competency is a less important referent to listener perception of the speaker than accent.

The current study

Building on the existing literature, the current study sought to address the following questions

1. How do instructors with non-American accents affect the learning experience of college students?

2. Are there any individual factors that influence student attitudes toward non-American accents? These factors include: gender, age, grade level, area of study, native language, and time spent abroad.

Methodology

I. Survey item

A 20-item multiple choice questionnaire was used to collect data. Questions were designed to (1) gather general demographic information, including gender, age, and geographic place of origin, (2) establish the respondent's academic competence and performance in areas germane to the study, (3) establish the respondent's frequency of travel outside of the U.S. and general acquaintance with non-American accented

speakers, and (4) gather qualitative, perceptual responses   (positive or negative) of respondent's opinions of instructors with non-American accents.

II.   Data collection

Data was collected at multiple points on the specific campus such as outside the classrooms and in the hallways as students waited to get into their various classrooms, outside the libraries, in student activity centers and facilities, and known gathering areas. In all instances, data was collected in the absence of the non-American accented instructors.

III.   Participants

Eligible respondents must have met a twofold criterion: (1) respondents had to be enrolled at a college, and (2) they had to have had at least one class with a non-American accented instructor or be currently enrolled in the same. Respondents were told that the survey was part of a sociolinguistic study conducted for possible publication at a later date. It was made clear that the survey was entirely optional and failure to complete the survey carried no consequence. The only incentive offered to complete the survey was a suggestion that "taking the time to respond is appreciated" and that their "participation would help our research team." It was also stressed that the survey was confidential, anonymous, and had no bearing on their grade in any given class.

A total of 316 respondents participated. The demographic information was collected from the questionnaire itself. Out of these participants 55% were female and 45% female. Most of the participants (61%) were traditional college student aged 18-21 years and all except 8% were undergraduates pursing a BA or BS degree; 24% were between 22-24 years and only 15% were older than 25 years. Many participants, 89%,

reported that English was their first language while 11% reported that they were speakers of English as a second language. When asked if they considered themselves to have an accent, 54% admitted that they had an accent while 46% denied having an accent. Additionally, 88% of students enrolled in the university where data was collected are white non-Hispanics; other races comprise a statistically negligible percentage of the student body.

Out of the 280 students from the US, 15% have never traveled outside of America, 44% have traveled out of the country once, 17% have traveled twice, and 4% have traveled three times. The remaining 8% have traveled four or more times out of the country. Twenty present of respondents have spent one month or less outside of the country, 10% have spent between one and six months outside of the country, 1% have been out of the country for six to twelve months, and 6% have spent a year or more outside of the US. Three percent of participants have been a part of a Student Exchange Program, 1% have studied or interned abroad, and 4% have been employed abroad.

Results

Most of the questionnaire items asked for demographic details of the participants as already reported in the previous sections. Six questionnaire items (item 15-20) in particular surveyed the respondents' experiences with foreign accents. Item 15 asked "What sort of impact, if any, did the instructor's accent have on the ability to learn the subject matter? In response to this item, 40% felt that the instructor's accent had a negative effect on their ability to learn the subject matter, whereas 9% felt that the instructor's accent had a positive effect. The rest, 51%, were neutral.

In response to Q16 which asked "What sort of impact, if any, did the instructor's accent have on your ability to enjoy the class?", 24% of students responded "negative," 25% responded "positive," and 51% indicated it had no impact.

Q17 asked respondents what grade they received in the class in question; 35% received an A, 25% received a B 13% received a C 3% received a D, and 1% failed. Those not indicating a grade either did not finish the course, were auditing the course, did not take the course for credit, or were currently enrolled (18%) as reported in item 18.

Out of all participants, 37% had only one class taught by an instructor with a non-American accent, 27% had two courses, 16% had 3 courses, and 20% had four or more such courses.

When asked if an instructor's accent would influence future decisions to enroll in other courses taught by non-American accented instructor, 27% said that they would regard accent negatively, 6% would regard it positively, and 66% indicated that instructor accent would have no impact. The final question asked the respondents "How likely are you to drop (or if possible, change sections of) a course solely because the instructor has a Non-American accent? In response 60 % said they were unlikely to drop a course due to instructor accent, while 17% claimed they were likely to drop, and 23% indicated that they were unsure whether they would drop or not.

Discussion

Broido (2004), cited earlier in this paper, argues that the Millennial generation of college students view diversity differently from the way their predecessors did. As such we hoped that the findings of this study could reflect different patterns from those reported by earlier studies. In a study examining influences on college students' level of

openness to diversity, gender was found to be the second largest influence on students'

attitudes towards diversity, with the first being pre-college experience concerning

openness to diversity (Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora, 2001). Thus, the

study found that female students tend to be more tolerant than male students. This study

also associated the Mathematics major with less tolerance apparently because there were

more males in these classes.   Results from our study, however, showed no statistically

significant difference among the two genders and their responses. Although this conflicts

with previous research focusing on reactions toward non-native accents, we think this is a

positive progress in understanding diversity. Young men and women in our current

society are exposed to very similar experiences and we should expect the gaps in gender

reactions towards diversity to continue narrowing.

The results from Q7 and Q8 present an intriguing contradiction. Q7 asks: "Do you

consider yourself to have an accent (of any kind)?" Q8 then asks: "Do you consider

yourself to have an American-English accent?" Interestingly, 54% of respondents

asserted that they do not consider themselves to have an accent of any kind, while 73%

claimed that they do, however, have an American-English accent. This presents

conflicting data. The answer may lie in connotation. It can be assumed that many

American students associate the idea of having an "accent" as being something negative

and undesirable. However, when faced with the same notion of an accent in conjunction

with "American," the idea becomes appealing and favorable, and may even elicit feelings

of pride and patriotism. Apparently, many young people still view accent as negative and

that only non-Americans have an accent. Many do not understand the diversity of

American English and that there are various dialects and accents in the United States.

Interestingly though, the students were not able to identify accents from other contexts where English is spoken natively such as Canada, New Zealand, Australia etc. Only instructors from countries such as India and China, where English is spoken alongside other native languages were considered to have accents.

There is also a contradiction between the responses for Q15, "What sort of impact, if any, did the instructor's accent have on the ability to learn the subject matter?" and Q20 "How likely are you to drop (or if possible, change sections of) a course solely because the instructor has a Non-American accent?" Although 60% reported that they were unlikely to drop a course due to instructor accent, 17% claimed they were likely to drop, and 23% were unsure whether they would drop or not.

Data also shows that respondents feel apathetic with regards to enrolling in classes of non-American accented instructors. For example, more students gave a neutral response on their ability to learn the subject matter as a result of the instructor's non-American speaking accent. The results showed that the degree of impact that an instructor's accent has on a student's achievement was more neutral than positive or negative. Overall, the majority of students were neutral regarding the enjoyment of a non-American speaking instructor's class. When asked about their future enrollment in a class with an instructor having a non-American accent, most of the students had a neutral response, indicating that an instructor's accent would not affect their decision to purposely avoid enrolling in a class. It is important to emphasize here that despite the enormous neutral response, only 6% regarded the influence of a non-American accented instructor positively compared to the 27% that regarded the experience negatively.

Conclusion

Data from this study shows that attitudes towards diversity have changed and improved in this millennium. Factors like gender that seemed to influence results in earlier studies are no longer influential which may be a positive and reassuring sign that college students are getting more open towards diversity and foreign accents. The study however showed that accent is still viewed negatively and many respondents did not want to identify with an accent until the question was rephrased to "American Accents". The other trend that was disturbing and noteworthy was one of general apathy towards instructor accent. Although most students did not openly state that they would drop a class, it is still unfortunate that even in this era, there is still a percentage of respondents (17%) that claimed they were likely to drop, and 23% who were unsure whether they would drop or not. As long as people view accents as negative, the challenge of accepting other accents will remain. There is a need to continue educating people on diversity and the fact that accents are a normal part of every speaker regardless of where the speaker originates.

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Reading Instruction with English Language Students

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When considering reading instruction, there are five components which must be taken into consideration. These components are phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension and fluency. The integration of these five components is crucial for reading instruction in both the regular education classroom and the English as a Second Language classroom. This paper will look at the role of phonemic awareness, comprehension and vocabulary in the reading instruction of English as a Second Language students.

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness is a very important and vital skill that should be taught in early elementary school grades. By definition, phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds, called phonemes, in spoken words (What is Phonemic Awareness?). Phonemic awareness is commonly confused with phonics, but there is a very clear difference. For example, phonics skills involve learning to decode words and phonemic awareness skills are being aware of how the sounds work in words. These two skills are intertwined and should be taught together in schools starting at a very young age in order to improve reading, writing and speaking skills.

Phonemic awareness is important because it improves students' word reading and comprehension and it helps students learn to spell (What is Phonemic Awareness?). Based on research, phonemic awareness will also help with the development of separating words into syllables, detecting and generating rhymes, separating words in sentences, engaging in alliterative language play, making new words by substituting one phoneme for another, blending phonemes to make new words, segmenting words into phonemes, and identifying the middle and final phonemes of words (Yopp, 1992). All these skills are commonly related but should be taught separately in order for students to master them one at a time. Once mastery is met with the phonemic awareness skills, students should be able to read and write with more ease.

Research shows that most kindergarten and first grade students receive two forms of instruction in phonemic awareness, a "skill and drill" approach and a "metalevel" approach. The "skill and drill" approach involves the procedural knowledge of segmentation and blending of phonemes. The "metalevel" approach explicitly emphasizes the value, application, and utility of phonemic awareness for the activity of reading, in addition to teaching the procedural knowledge of segmentation and blending (Cunningham, 1990). When phonemic awareness is taught in schools, it should be a mixture of the "skill and drill" approach and the "metalevel" approach because it is important for students to not only know the rules of phonics but to also know why they are important and how they can use them in the future. If phonemic awareness is taught using these two strategies, reading achievement will be improved because students will be learning the basic skills and also learning why those skills are necessary to be a good reader and writer.

Phonemic awareness can be developed through effective activities such as identifying and categorizing sounds, blending sounds to form words, deleting sounds to form new words, and substituting sounds to make new words (What is Phonemic Awareness?). Research indicates that teachers should identify six essential phonemic awareness tasks in early elementary schools grades. First, phonemic segmentation tasks are used to break down a syllable into its component phonemes by identifying the sounds heard in a word. Second, phonemic manipulation tasks are used to determine whether or not the student can pronounce a word after its first, middle, or last phoneme has been removed. Third, syllable-splitting tasks ask the student to break off the first phoneme of a word or a syllable. Fourth, blending tasks are used to see if the child can put together the word correctly after the teacher has given the beginning and ending sounds. Fifth, oddity tasks decide whether a student can tell which word is different from a list of given words. Lastly, knowledge of nursery rhymes determines if a student can correctly hear rhymes (Adams, 1990).

Further research has shown us that several activities can help improve phonemic awareness skills in early elementary school students. For example, fun and positive learning activities such as songs, riddles, nursery rhymes, poems, read-aloud books, and games are a great way for students to remember the material. Also, students should have the opportunity to interact with other children and participate in partner or choral readings. But, parents and teachers are still encouraged to read to their students and discuss books. In addition, students should have ample opportunities to write and others should listen to stories that children tell (Yopp, 1992). In conclusion, there are several different activities that can be used to teach the importance of phonemic awareness. Most

students would enjoy these activities because instead of reading from a book, they have the opportunity to participate in intriguing activities that spark their interests.

The fact that students learn at different rates makes it important for the teacher to be aware of the individual student needs and also the amount of phonemic awareness instruction that each student needs. Many different approaches can be used to foster phonemic awareness in students. Along with an oral approach to this, incorporating a variety of print will be useful and effective as well. Using read-alouds, shared readings, and allowing for invented spellings are a few approaches that incorporate print along with the oral approach. In thinking about the oral approach of teaching students to become more proficient in phonemic awareness, the teacher should know that using riddles, rhymes, and other various word play in the classroom is an effective way to promote the development of phonemic awareness in the classroom (Cunningham, 1998, p.3).

Comprehension

Comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading instruction for English as a Second Language students. If an English as a Second Language student can read a piece of literature and be able to understand what the literature is saying, form a personal opinion, and analyze the points within the literature, then the English as a Second Language student has accomplished the ultimate goal of reading. There are several components that go into reading as a whole. These include phonemic awareness, vocabulary and fluency. While it is important that the English as a Second Language teacher address each of these topics in the classroom, it is important to remember that in the end, comprehension is the final product of reading. It can be challenging and intimidating to teach the skill of comprehension. Comprehension is such an abstract idea that it seems as if it would be

impossible to simply "teach" it. However, there are many ways that teachers can help

their students learn how to comprehend texts.

In *Beyond Direct Explanation, Transactional Instruction of Reading*

Comprehension (1992), the author refers to a type of learning referred to as

"transactional." This method involves open dialogue and interaction between the teacher

and students in the classroom in relation to the text, as well as scaffolding instruction to

ultimately lead to students who can determine which comprehension strategy they find

most compatible with the text (Pressley, 1992). These ideas parallel those in *Best*

Practices in Literacy Instruction, as Morrow and Gambrell state, "Everyone can arrive at

the same place using different paths. So it is with strategic processes in reading.

Different readers can use different strategies, combinations of strategies, and strategic

behaviors to accomplish the same goal – comprehension of text." It is critical that

students discover which strategies work best for them an in which situations. The goal of

teaching reading comprehension has transformed from giving students strategies to

helping students become strategic in their own thinking (Morrow, 2011).

Another strategy that can be used to ensure that the student comprehends what

he/she is reading is Comprehension Process Motion. This strategy requires the students

to know when to properly be able to apply it. This also helps to cut down on the

monotonous questioning of if the students understand what is going on and if anything

needs to be explained. This type of strategy also helps the students learn how to transfer it

onto other texts, while the simple questioning in the classroom does not allow the

students to be able to transfer it without teacher prompting. This type of comprehension

is seen through hand placements that are visible to the teachers. It allows the teacher to see if she needs to stop before continuing or if the students comprehend.

Comprehension does not just coincide with literature texts but also social studies, science, and any other type of informational text. Comprehension of these texts may be more important than the comprehension of certain literature. If a student does not comprehend informational text or does not know how to properly take in informational text then the student will have a harder time when addressing it in the classroom. Kevin Oliver talks about comprehending these types of texts in his article, *An Investigation of Concept Mapping to Improve the Reading Comprehension of Science Texts* (2009). Mr. Oliver talks about the importance of using graphic organizers and teaching how to use graphic organizers in order to help the students learn how to comprehend these information heavy texts. There are so many different types of graphic organizers that can be used but one of the simplest types used is the basic questionnaire. This basic questionnaire can give the students a hint of what to connect the text to with their prior knowledge in order for them to better comprehend the information being set in front of them. This will also help the students learn how to scaffold their learning through taking notes and preparing graphic organizers for them to better comprehend.

The "transactional" idea of reading instruction enforces the idea of collaboration, emphasizing that teachers and students work together to form conclusions about the text (Pressley, 1992). The text itself will lead the class, not the teacher. For example, a teacher may be reading a story to the class. The teacher will automatically assume that the students will notice a comparison between things in the story. If the students begin talking and it is obvious that they are not recognizing the comparisons, the teacher would

redirect the students in their thinking. If the students have noticed the comparisons and expand on then, the teacher can begin exploring other aspects of the story such as theme, plot, etc.

It is important that English as a Second Language students be taught strategies that will access their prior knowledge. There are several pre-writing activities that are beneficial in aiding English as a Second Language student's comprehension. Flood & Lapp (1990) suggest the following strategies: "preparing for reading practices, reciprocal teaching practices, understanding and using knowledge of text structure practices, questioning practices, information processing practices, summarizing practices and voluntary/recreational reading practices."

An important element that needs to occur before the development of comprehension is decoding. Decoding is the ability to turn letters into sounds in order to create words. "Theoretically, decodable text positions alphabetical knowledge ahead of other sources of information of word recognition" (Mesmer, 2012). Based on this, decoding is essentially the second building block of comprehension. The first building block, of course, being the alphabetical knowledge and the understanding that letters come together to create words. It is important to note that an English as a Second Language student cannot read and comprehend without being able to decode the text. It is also important to keep in mind that even if a student has mastered the skill of decoding the text, he/she may not be able to comprehend the text.

Another important element in the reading process is fluency. "Reading fluency is one of the most important signs of language proficiency" (Rasheed, 2011). Fluency is

loosely defined as the ability to speak and read comfortably. Reading fluency is the ability to take a text and read it with minimal errors. Being a fluent reader allows students to concentrate more on what the words actually mean versus decoding, which is more about finding out what the actual word is. One of the most effective activities students can do in order to have higher fluency is to read a text multiple times. Doing so will allow the reader to be more comfortable and familiar with a text (Rasheed, 2011).

Vocabulary

It is crucial that vocabulary is taught in every classroom, but there are many different strategies that can be used to accomplish this. While educators differ in their opinions concerning this issue, some strongly believe that extensive reading proves to be a highly effective strategy in this area. Extensive reading allows for students, English-speaking or not, to be exposed to a vast array of words that they may hold as previous knowledge, as well as brand new ones. Not only are students exposed to a large amount of words, but they are also able to see the same words multiple times, thus allowing them to analyze and create patterns pertaining to these words. Once students see and recognize these words, they are able to apply their morphological and contextual knowledge in order to infer meaning. This may include adding or subtracting prefixes and suffixes to bases and roots of words and using context clues around words, which could enable students to hopefully create new words as well. Although this strategy is not the only way to teach vocabulary in the classroom, it is one that creates opportunities to grow in all elements of reading and enhances the brain's activity in general.

Although words can be approached from many different angles, one could argue that taking the morphological and contextual approach works best. If students can use their knowledge of base words and affixes, then they can most likely decode many new words as well as create new ones. Not only this, but students should also be able to use words to aid in the discovery of others, which pulls in the contextual aspect of extensive reading. Authors of the article "Vocabulary Tricks: Effects of Instruction in Morphology and Context on Fifth-Grade Students' Ability to Derive and Infer Word Meanings"(2003) reveal that "for every word known by a child who is able to apply morphology and context, an additional one to three words should be understandable" (Baumann, 2003). If students are able to use this method effectively, their vocabularies should expand every single time they encounter a text. This is a promising statistic that should encourage educators to look more closely into this approach to teaching vocabulary.

This method of extensive reading does not only prove effective for English-speaking students, but also for English language learners. Although it may seem that most of their instruction would be spoken aloud, Rahmatollah Soltani believes otherwise. He states in his article concerning this issue that "Reading is important because comparison of many studies shows that written texts are richer in lexis than spoken ones" (Soltani, 2011, p.161). This reveals that ESL students may benefit from hearing spoken texts, but it is an injustice to assign them to this instruction alone. Through reading, they will be able to acquire more knowledge of English words by breaking them down into phonemes and morphemes, and be able to incorporate them into their own vocabularies eventually, which is the ultimate goal. Through extensive reading, they will also be able

to choose books and pieces of literature that appeal to them, which will make the experience more enjoyable and less formal.

In order for students to truly enrich and expand their vocabularies, there has to be some knowledge of morphology and context. Without these two components, no student, English-speaking or not, will make significant progress in this area. Not only do students need to be reading extensively in order to acquire new words and put their knowledge of these two components to the test, but they also have to enjoy what they are reading. Marlow Ediger (1999) is convinced that "Vocabulary development emphasizes that pupils seek purpose in learning" (p.7). In order for this to be accomplished, students have to understand why they are doing what they are doing as well as enjoy the task at hand. If teachers will allow students to often choose what they read, then the chances of involvement and enjoyment are much greater, hopefully creating an environment where students will want to use all the tools they have in order to grow in their vocabularies. This process may occur without the students being aware, but that is the beauty of this concept. Reading leads to exposure to new words, and analyzing new words leads to wider vocabularies in students.

Conclusion

The components discussed in this paper are essential to reading instruction for the English as a Second Language students. It is important for English as a Second Language teachers to incorporate strategies that will ensure that English as a Second Language students are acquiring the necessary skills to achieve success in the category of reading.

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