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## Student-Centered, Interaction-Based, Community-Driven Language Teaching

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STUDENT-CENTERED, INTERACTION-BASED, COMMUNITY-DRIVEN  
LANGUAGE TEACHING

by

Sharon Lyman

A portfolio submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

Approved:

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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY

Logan, Utah

2020

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## ABSTRACT

Student-Centered, Interaction-Based, Community-Driven Language Teaching

by

Sharon Lyman: Master of Second Language Teaching

Utah State University, 2020

Major Professor: Dr. Joshua J. Thoms

Department: Languages, Philosophy, and Communication Studies

This portfolio is a compilation that highlights some of the author's accomplished work while in the Master of Second Language Teaching (MSLT) program at Utah State University (USU). Organized into sections that reflect the author's teaching and research perspectives as a MSLT graduate student and instructor, who taught intensive English reading, writing, and conversation courses for the Intensive English Language Institute (IELI).

In the first section, teaching perspectives, the author describes her desired professional environment, shares her personal teaching philosophy statement, and accounts for her professional development through classroom observations. In the second section, research perspectives, two research papers and an annotated bibliography demonstrate the author's interests, especially in regard to the teaching of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“Learning... is a whole-person, body and mind, and socially situated process” (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008, p. 180). As such has been my experience over the course of my MSLT experience I would like to thank all of those who have contributed to my socially situated learning process and enabled me to devote my whole-person, body and mind in the process.

First and foremost, I would like to thank God and my Savior for creating a world where “language is a tool to relate to the world and others” (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008, p. 178), for providing me with the means to continue my higher education, and for placing people in my path who have helped me to grow every step of the way.

I thank my dear parents for their continued support, constant encouragement, and the immense pride that they take in me. From home bottled peaches and spaghetti sauce to every call of mine you took to hear me share what I was learning and experiencing with my teaching, mom you were always there. And dad, were it not for you I would not have ended up back at USU. I may have lost sight of striking a balance between school, health, climbing, friends, and family. Your courage to start each day, knowing it could be your last, is a legacy that will live on and a lesson – that no matter our current circumstances – life should never be taken for granted.

To Dr. deJonge-Kannan I would like to say, “Echt heel erg bedankt”. No one else has revised or contributed more to my writing than you. I will forever be grateful to you for imparting your infinite knowledge, books, resources, and above all your time with me. Your around-the-clock support in all my academic and personal pursuits along with your genuine friendship and example both as a phenomenal teacher and exceptional

human being have had profound influence on me. Thank you for pushing me beyond what I felt I was capable of in my writing, learning, and teaching.

To Marta, although I still cannot say your last name, knowing you on a first name basis made all the difference in my experience as a graduate instructor for the Intensive English Language Institute (IELI). Your office was my haven and your zeal for teaching and life, literally took me all the way to NYC, where I had yet another incredible teaching experience. I hope to someday become both the great mom and teacher you are albeit a much less tech savvy one. Thank you for encouraging me to present at conferences – I still look forward to experiencing my first ever TESOL conference and seeing you there.

To Dr. Thoms, my committee chair and an integral player in ensuring I had funding and could teach as a graduate instructor every semester, thank you!

To Dr. Rogers and the IELI family – Marta, Taira, Ekaterina, Kim, Nolan, Angie, Margaret, Lena, and Ann, thank you for making me feel a part of the family. Your wisdom, love, friendship, resilience, creativity, and influence will not be forgotten, especially in the event of the COVID-19 pandemic. There are no other individuals I would have rather learned from nor intensive English program in the country I would have rather been a part of.

To Dr. Hall and the wonderful LPCS department, thank you for your continued support in my higher education. I truly appreciate your funding that made it possible for me to be a graduate instructor and research assistant as well as have opportunities to attend and present at conferences. To Darla, Kathy, and Suzann, thank you for the many chocolates, delicious homemade treats, kindness, and friendships. Truly, you turned the office into a home away from home for me these last two years.

Last but certainly not least, to my MSLT peers (many of whom I saw on a daily basis in the graduate instructor office), thank you for making this journey all that it was for me. I cannot imagine the MSLT program without you. Thanks to the Spanish office banter (con el Tío), lesson planning tidbits, shared learning insights, and surplus of interesting conversations we had, I can say I am leaving this program with a cohort of people I genuinely admire and foresee to be lifelong friends.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii
LIST OF ACRONYMS.....	viii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
TEACHING PERSPECTIVES.....	2
Professional Environment.....	3
Teaching Philosophy Statement.....	4
Professional Development through Teaching Observations.....	17
RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES.....	22
Introduction & Reflection.....	24
Current English as a Foreign Language trends in China and their Implications for Teaching English Globally.....	26
Introduction & Reflection.....	41
Using Jigsaw Reading to Promote English Language Learners' Willingness to Communicate.....	43
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	60
LOOKING FORWARD.....	75
REFERENCES.....	76



## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACTFL = American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

ALM = Audiolingual Method

CL = Cooperative Learning

CLT = Communicative Language Teaching

EFL = English as a Foreign Language

ELC = English Language Center

ELL = English Language Learner

ESL = English as a Second Language

IELI = Intensive English Language Institute

IEP = Intensive English Program

L1 = First Language / Native Language

L2 = Second Language

MSLT = Master of Second Language Teaching

NETS = National English Testing System

SCT = Sociocultural Theory

SLA = Second Language Acquisition

TESOL = Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

TL = Target Language

TPS = Teaching Philosophy Statement

USU = Utah State University

WTC = Willingness to Communicate

## INTRODUCTION

The completion of this portfolio stands as a crowning moment in time for me. Although my teaching and learning are what will remain at the pinnacle of my MSLT experience, writing each piece of this portfolio forged inimitable opportunities for professional and personal growth, especially in regard to research and reflection.

This portfolio consists of two primary sections: teaching perspectives and research perspectives. The focal point of it all being my teaching philosophy statement (TPS). This encapsulates what I believe about language learning and teaching, while firmly acknowledging there is no one-size-fits-all approach for teaching diverse and individual English language learners (ELLs) across all contexts.

In the research perspectives and annotated bibliography of this portfolio, I demonstrate my knowledge and awareness of global English and its many cultural, political, societal, and individual implications for its learners and teachers alike. The papers in this section discuss English as a Foreign Language (EFL) trends in China, jigsaw reading as a way to promote ELLs' willingness to communicate (WTC), and teaching English in a global context.

## TEACHING PERSPECTIVES

## PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT

I am proud to live in a country that is home to more immigrants than anywhere else in the world (Kobler et al., 2017), yet I am not oblivious to the many struggles that immigrants face in and upon their arrival to the United States of America (U.S.). The English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom is a place where instructors can have direct influence on individuals' lives during a challenging transition, which is why I aim to teach ESL to adults living in the U.S.

I see the ESL classroom as a truly transformative space where diversity is valued and embraced, an ideal I advocate for and hope to someday see upheld across my country and throughout the world. Prior to coming to the U.S., ESL students do not always choose to study English for future use, rather their circumstances necessitate the need for it *now* and for *everyday survival*. The ESL classroom serves as a launch pad for English learners helping them to learn the language while also adjusting to a new culture and way of life.

After the MSLT program, I plan to help refugees and immigrants overcome the language barrier they face so that they can be integral members in their communities. My desire to teach refugees and immigrants ties back to my earliest ESL experiences as a volunteer classroom aide at the Cache Valley English Language Center. It was there that I fell in love with what the ESL classroom could be – a catalyst for language learning and cultural understanding. Although I envision myself teaching English at the community level, I also look forward to opportunities to teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) abroad and ESL in the U.S. to students in collegiate academic settings. This portfolio was written and geared toward teaching adult learners of English in the ESL classroom.

## TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

*Not all players can coach. Not all English speakers can teach English... effectively.*

My journey as an English teacher began seven years ago as a volunteer classroom aide at the Cache Valley English Language Center. Since that time, I have had the opportunity to teach English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to children, teenagers, and adults in Puerto Vallarta, Zapopan, New York City, Salt Lake City, and Logan. These teaching experiences, combined with my own language learning experiences in French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian, have shaped how I view language learning and teaching. When coupled with all of the class observations, research, conferences, and courses in second language acquisition and pedagogy as part of the Masters of Second Language Teaching program, I can see how my experiences combined with education have molded me into the ESL instructor that I am today. While language learning and teaching will always be lifelong pursuits, this teaching philosophy statement (TPS) encompasses my present beliefs about language learning and teaching. It shares how I view my role as an ESL instructor as well as how I plan to create a learning environment conducive for international students, immigrants, and refugees learning English in the U.S.

I do not believe there is a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching a second language, nor am I alone in this reasoning (Hornberger & McKay, 2010; Lightbown & Spada, 2013). “The reality is that very few teachers have ever followed a single method of teaching” (Scrivener, 2011, p. 33). English Language Learners (ELLs) are diverse and differ from one another in many ways. Their native language, knowledge of other languages, previous education or lack thereof, life experiences, cultural backgrounds,

learning styles, motivation, and attitude will affect their efforts to learn English (Lightbrown & Spada, 2012; Scrivener, 2011; Snow & Campbell, 2017). Some ELLs will acquire English faster than others. Some may find language aspects such as phonetics especially challenging, whereas others struggle to read or write. For these reasons and more, I have found that focusing my efforts as an ESL instructor to create a *student-centered, interaction-based, and community-driven* classroom as opposed to solely endorsing one theoretical and/or applied perspective enables me to effectively teach learners English. As an ESL instructor, I strive to enlighten and empower individuals. I view my knowledge of English and ability to teach it as the means to enable language learners in their various pursuits.

### **Student-Centered**

American writer, George Leonard described lecturing as “the best way to get information from teacher’s notebook to student’s notebook without touching the student’s mind” (Kohn, 2011, p. 69). Leonard, who spent most of his life writing about education and human potential saw what all too often I have observed in the language classroom, teaching that situates the teacher center stage while students sit passively, unengaged in the audience. Snow and Campbell (2017) revealed three drawbacks to having language classrooms teacher- instead of learner-centered. First, it wrongly sends students a message that teachers are the all-knowing source of English, when in fact students can and should also access other resources to aid them in their learning. Second (and closely related) it solely situates learning as a classroom activity that requires a teacher. Third, and perhaps the most problematic of all, a teacher-centered class views language learning as the accumulation of knowledge. The teacher’s role is the emissary of information and

the students' job is to absorb it all up. Although knowledge accumulation is a vital part of language learning, knowledge alone is not enough for someone to master a language. Skills are also needed.

Like Leonard and many others (Gillies, 2007; Holzman, 2018; Kohn, 2011; Lightbown & Spada, 2013; VanPatten, 2017), I see the role of students being at the helm of their learning and the teacher at the rudder providing a means to support learners in their purpose to learn English. For me, this means learning is student-driven and teacher-supported. Although there is a myriad of ways to place learners at the center of the ESL classroom, I would like to touch on only a few that I have found to be useful. These practical approaches can serve an ESL instructor in any given teaching environment by taking into consideration the learners' needs and learning context.

### ***Engage Everyone***

Engaging everyone is simple in theory but requires discipline in practice. Some ELLs by nature will be more reserved in class, while others may be more confident and comfortable in leading or even dominating discussions. One tactic I regularly employ comes from an approach known as Cooperative Learning (CL), which is “the instructional use of small groups” (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1991, p. 5) to promote student collaboration and learning (Gillies, 2007; Hautemo, 2016; Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1998; Sarobol, 2012; Zuo, 2011). By pairing or putting students into small groups, each student will have more time to share in class. Giving learners an opportunity to express their ideas, converse with peers, and work together in English is huge as I will later address in more depth when I discuss interaction.

### ***Together We Govern***

After conducting classroom studies, Reeve, Nix, and Hamm (2003) found that students' intrinsic motivation and self-determination are more likely to increase when teachers give students choices. By letting students have a say in certain matters, teachers will enable students to have a sense of ownership for their actions as well as experience a greater sense of belonging to part of a community. I do this in my ESL classroom by letting students help create our classroom rules on the very first day of class. Then, throughout the duration of the course, I constantly seek learner input. From small things like deciding the order of operation (e.g., telling students what I plan to do and then letting them collectively decide the order for how we do things that class) to larger matters such as asking students for feedback (e.g., about completed assignments or the course in general via an anonymous survey); these are all excellent ways to create learner buy-in.

### ***Let Learners Assess You***

Receiving and being open to regular student feedback often distinguishes the new from the seasoned teacher (Scrivener, 2011). "Ineffective, unhelpful teaching is teaching that proceeds forward... without any reference to what impact this is having on the learners in class" (Scrivener, 2011, p. 95). Finding opportune moments to get insight from students is a must and will help learners to feel validated. One way that I do this, is by asking students to share their thoughts, feelings, and/or experiences with recently completed tests or assignments. After listening to their comments, I ask them for suggestions for ways I could modify it in the future to improve students' learning experience. In addition, I seek student feedback from time to time by giving them an



index card when they come into class and asking them to anonymously respond to the questions I have written on the board. Such questions might include: What is something I could do to improve your learning experience in my class? Name one thing you, your classmates, or teacher has done in class that has benefited you as a learner. Or if you could change one thing about this class to enhance your English and/or learning experience, what would it be and how would you change it? Just as teachers regularly assess their learners' learning, perhaps the best way to assess your teaching is to have those you teach give you feedback. This requires openness and a willingness to change on the teacher's part as soliciting feedback without any intention of implementation can lead to learner frustration and result in an ill-use of class time.

### **Interaction-Based**

Language cannot be learned in isolation (Kozulin, 2003; Long 1996; VanPatten, 2017), yet the thought of being placed into a foreign land without any access to language learning resources or preparation beforehand seems far from ideal for most learners. Acquiring a language entails interaction with others (Gass & Mackey, 2007; Long, 1996; Swain & Lapkin, 1998; VanPatten, 2017), which is why many theorists (e.g., Gass, 1997; Hatch, 1978; Long 1983, 1996; Pica, 1994) for years have argued that “conversational interaction is an essential, if not sufficient, condition for second language acquisition” (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p. 114). The way that language teachers incorporate interaction in their classrooms varies, depending on which ontological position(s) they embrace. For this reason, I would like to suggest two approaches, even though they reflect fundamentally different theoretical paradigms in how they conceptualize language learning.

### ***Cognitive Perspective***

The first comes from a cognitive perspective. For more than thirty years, this paradigm dominated the field of second language acquisition (SLA). Cognitivists view interaction as beneficial to learners in terms of comprehensible input and negotiation of meaning (Swain, 1985; White, 2007; Zuengler & Miller, 2006). Interaction according to Gass and Mackey (2007) refers to “the conversations that learners participate in” (p. 178). I would like to discuss the roles of input and negotiation of meaning as they relate to interaction from a cognitive perspective. These concepts are commonplace in SLA theories such as the Interactionist Approach (Long, 1996).

### ***Input***

The Interactionist approach considers the learning that occurs through the learner’s exposure to the language, their production of the language, and the feedback received on that production (Gass & Mackey, 2007). A learner’s exposure to the language is known as input (Gass & Mackey, 2007). VanPatten (2004) terms input as “language that learners can hear or see in a communicative context” (p. 48). Comprehensible input is what Krashen and many other SLA theorists (e.g., Payne, 2011) suggest is the fundamental ingredient for language acquisition. The learner’s production of the language is called output. Swain’s research done in language immersion classrooms showed that output was also needed for acquisition to happen (Swain, 1985). While not everyone agrees with Swain, Smith (1978, 1982) stated that “one learns to read by reading, and to write by writing. Similarly, it can be argued that one learns to speak by speaking.” (p. 248).

Understanding input and output bring us to the final and crucial component of an Interactionist approach, which is of course interaction. VanPatten (2017) provides a more technical definition of interaction as “the expression and interpretation of meaning and how people negotiate meaning during a communicative event” (p. 51). The key takeaway here is that teachers supply students with ample opportunities to interact, for it is during that interaction that communication and acquisition can occur simultaneously. Regularly assigning tasks for students to complete in groups or facilitating partner-based conversations are some of the ways that interaction can be achieved in the ESL classroom.

### ***Negotiation of Meaning***

Confusion, errors, or lacking the right words to get an idea across can all lead to breakdowns in communication. Due to the complex and sometimes unsuccessful nature of communication, negotiation is often needed. Lee (2000) defines the negotiation of meaning as “interactions during which speakers come to terms, reach an agreement, make arrangements, resolve a problem, or settle an issue by conferring or discussing; the purpose of language use to accomplish some task rather than to practice any particular language forms” (p. 65 as cited in Talley & Hui-ing, 2014). Negotiation of meaning often allows learners to receive feedback. The process of interpreting and providing signals for understanding is in essence what the negotiation of meaning is all about (Long, 1996).

Creating tasks with clearly defined objectives for students to carry out in pairs or small groups is how a teacher would incorporate interaction into the ESL classroom from a cognitive perspective. By forcing learners to use English to complete a task, it situates language as a means of communication. Through the learner and their peer’s use of

English, they will receive necessary input and opportunities to negotiate meaning in ways that overtime allow them to acquire English. Interaction therefore grants learners the essential input they need to then produce language that serves a higher purpose than explicit language practice alone (VanPatten, 2017).

### ***Sociocultural Perspective***

Another valuable yet alternative perspective I wish to highlight is a sociocultural perspective on language learning. Driven by Vygotsky's ideas about human development, others have since applied sociocultural theory (SCT) to the realm of language learning (Holzman, 2018; Kozulin, 2003; Swain et al., 2015; Vygotsky, 1978). From an SCT perspective, learning is fundamentally a social activity. With application to ELLs, language learning involves regulation, which starts between learners (termed 'other regulation') before occurring within the learner (termed 'self-regulation'). In other words, language learning begins as an intermental process between two or more people before it moves to become an intramental process within the learner.

SCT views learners' participation in language as fundamental to learning (Zuengler & Miller, 2006). Fostering interaction in the ESL classroom from this perspective looks like what Vygotsky coined as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Holzman, 2018; Swain et al., 2015). ZPD is a "collective activity" that refers to "the distance between the actual development level" of a learner (Holzman, 2018, p. 44). Through the process and activity known as ZPD, learners "co-construct their learning" and "appropriate mediating artifacts" (Swain et al., 2015, p. 16).

Important and related concepts to ZPD include scaffolding and community of practice (COP). Scaffolding is "the provision of support to learners" (Swain et al, 2015,

p.150). Overtime, teachers remove the scaffold as learners develop and are able to function without the assistance of another. Whereas “COP is a social theory” (p. 148) where individuals gain access to more language through their group participation. As a result of their group affiliation, individuals gradually assume “practices, behaviors, and beliefs” of other group members. As Firth and Wagner (1998) point out, “learning (or acquisition) occurs through use” (Zuengler & Miller, 2006, p. 45) which is supported by the SCT perspective.

Although cognitive and sociocultural theoretical perspectives view language learning very differently, both advocate the importance of interaction among language learners. Interaction provides students with the tools and practice they need to successfully communicate both inside and outside of class. Some such as Watson-Gegeo (2004) suggest “a possible new synthesis” (Zuengler & Miller, 2006, p. 50) between the cognitive and sociocultural perspectives that “originates in social interaction” (p. 50). Frequent opportunities with clearly defined objectives for learners to converse with their peers in the ESL classroom will better enable learners in their acquisition of English.

### **Community-Driven**

A study done by Rose Senior (2006) offered unanimous teacher insight that “good classes were those that functioned effectively as groups” (p. 5). In other words, “the notion of class cohesion” was a “central phenomenon” (p. 5). The best ways that I have found to establish a community-centered class include building rapport with students, fostering friendships among learners, and creating a learner-friendly atmosphere where mistakes do not silence students. If an ESL instructor can successfully achieve each of these, then learners will feel comfortable in class and motivated to learn. Below I will

briefly discuss each of these elements or what I see as three pillars that create and maintain a community-driven classroom.

### ***Building Rapport with Students***

Scrivener (2011) emphasized “the importance of ‘rapport’ between teachers and students” (p. 15), and American psychologist, Carl Rogers adds that respect, empathy, and authenticity are the core elements to creating an effective classroom environment (Scrivener, 2011). According to Scrivener, “real rapport” (p. 17) matters more than any technique a teacher could possibly mimic. For this reason, it requires authenticity, which Rogers and Frelberg (1994) stress is the most important of the three characteristics teachers bring to their classrooms. Teachers, who are true to who they are, help create an atmosphere of openness and honesty for their students. Thus, when it comes to building a positive relationship with students, there is simply no substitution for genuine intentions (Scrivener, 2011).

### ***Fostering Friendships among Learners***

The best L2 teachers know their students and are able to teach them according to both their needs and interests. In other words, good teachers “take a special interest in the lives of their students and are sensitive to their particular needs” (Shono, 2004, p. 3). When we talk about second language acquisition and learning we often hear that it takes time and practice. While I full-heartedly agree, I would also add that language learning is greatly contingent upon relationships. Until learners have people who they regularly interact with who speak the target language, they won’t necessarily have a need or strong incentive for mastering the language. When students are able to connect with others and

form friendships via the L2, their desire to learn and ability to acquire the language through use will increase.

### ***A Learner-Friendly Atmosphere***

To create classroom cohesion, teachers must “ensure that the social atmosphere of the classroom is neither too serious nor too light-hearted” (Senior, 2006, p. 272).

Mistakes are a natural and necessary part of language acquisition (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, VanPatten, 2016). Cultivating classroom unity and harboring a safe environment where learners feel comfortable and can grow from their mistakes is extremely important if communication is the ultimate goal. Just as parents nagging their young children to produce grammatical language first appears to little avail, likewise teachers may need to give corrective feedback more than once to their students. Yet it should also be noted that too much corrective feedback is contrary to fostering acquisition in the second language classroom. Overzealous teachers can inhibit learners’ progress by correcting every mistake their students make (Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Lyster & Ranta, 1997). The goal is not to shut students down and discourage them, rather to help students identify their persistent errors to prevent the errors from becoming habit or a regular part of the student’s language use.

Echoing some of Krashen’s early work (Krashen, 1981; Payne, 2011), students acquire language better when they feel less anxious (VanPatten & Williams, 2007). When students feel at ease and have a positive attitude toward learning, they are better able to process comprehensible input. To contrast this, when students feel anxious or confused, they are less effective in accessing and making use of input. Lightbown and Spada (2013) add that the primary way teachers can influence their students’ motivation is “by making

the classroom a supportive environment in which students are stimulated, engaged in activities that are appropriate to their age, interest, and cultural backgrounds” (p. 185). They also assert that creating an atmosphere “where students can experience success” (p. 185) is the most important way to maintain students’ motivation to learn.

In addition to providing the right amount of corrective feedback and creating an atmosphere where students feel less anxious about language learning, teachers should regularly review concepts they have taught their students. It is the teacher’s job to find ways to create activities for students that reinforce what students have learned while paving the way to add more. As Brandl (2008) puts it, “Effective teachers recognize the need for repetition and review” (p. 182). One way Brandl (2008) suggests that this can be done is through “task recycling” (p. 183) or having learners carry out a communicative task in alternative ways. For example, the teacher can add variety by creating activities that reinforce the same concept of language using an alternative mode of communication (i.e., interpersonal, interpretative, or presentational) (Ballman et al., 2001). Other ways to create opportunities for repetition without redundancy in tasks could include changing certain conditions or partner(s).

### **A Noteworthy Disclaimer**

Ultimately, the goal of teaching is learning (Kohn, 2011); however, the determinant for success when it comes to teaching may not always be learning because learning is primarily the learner’s responsibility. Good teaching can engage learners and accelerate the language learning process, but good teaching alone is not enough to guarantee a learner will be successful in their language learning pursuit. “Learning – of anything, anywhere – demands energy and attention from the learner” (Scrivener, 2011,



p. 21) and language learning is no exception. Learning requires continual effort on the learner's end. It also entails intrinsic motivation and continued use of the language in a wide variety of settings over time (Snow & Campbell, 2017). For these reasons, teaching does not automatically equate to learning (Scrivener, 2011).

## **Conclusion**

Anyone who has tried to learn or teach another language will know that language attainment is a complex matter (Bohn, 2003; Brown, 2014; Ortega, 2009; VanPatten, 2016; White, 2007). The complexity of language attainment has led many SLA theorists to argue that language should not be taught like other subjects if the end goal is for it to be acquired (VanPatten, 2004; White, 2007). Although there is a growing demand to learn English around the world, there remains to be a shortage of qualified English language teachers (Eoyang, 2003). My decision to teach ESL and pursue a life devoted to language education stems from my love for communication. No other skill can replace the ability to communicate or be as transformative in an individual's life than language. As I continue to reflect on my own teaching practices and experiences as well as observe learners and other teachers in the adult ESL classroom, I am confident that my teaching philosophy will continue to evolve over time.

As I continue to teach ELLs and create an ESL classroom that is student-centered, interaction-based, and community-driven, I will continue to explore and apply principles from SLA research and emerging pedagogies that align with my personal beliefs that (a) English belongs to all who speak it, and (b) language learning is both a social activity and transformative learning endeavor.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TEACHING OBSERVATIONS:

### “Observable Keepsakes”

#### **Introduction**

Observing colleagues teach is a beneficial exercise for teachers, especially those who are just starting out. To observe provides vicarious and indispensable learning, while alleviating the risk otherwise brought through trial and error when doing something for the first time. During my time in the MSLT program I observed ESL, EFL, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Russian, Arabic, and Chinese classes ranging from 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Dual Language Immersion (DLI) to upper division college classes. From these observations, I gained insights as well as saw practical applications of different theoretical perspectives. While this was useful, the more I observed different language instructors teaching in different ways, the more resolute I became in my belief that there is not a best or sole-all-encompassing way to teach language. After taking into account the various needs and learning styles at play among individual language learners, Lightbown and Spada (2013) admonished, “At minimum, research on learning styles should makes us skeptical of claims that a single teaching method or textbook will suit the needs of all learners” (p. 84). With acknowledgement that no single best language teaching method exists among all learners across all contexts, I would like to share what I refer to as “observable keepsakes” or three observation takeaways that have impacted the development of my teaching philosophy.

#### **Less is More: A Unanimous Case to be Student-Centered**

To avoid the monotony of students hearing the same voice over and over again, that comes from the antiquated model of a teacher lecture-based class, successful

teaching involves giving up the limelight. That's right – teachers must take the backstage and let students take center stage. The role of teachers is to facilitate learning. This is done by giving just enough instruction to orient students but ultimately allowing students to use and create their own meaning with the language. This may look like having students work together in small groups or pairs while the teacher actively monitors, going from one group to the next. This style of learning welcomes student interaction and emphasizes the chief responsibility each learner has in their language learning. In addition, this approach to teaching, almost always leads to greater enjoyment as students get to know their peers and develop close interpersonal relationships with many of their classmates throughout the course. With very rare exception, the classes where I frequently observed bored, distracted on their phone, or tired yawning students were the classes where teachers took center stage and remained there from start to finish.

### **The Art of Time Management: My Time is Your Time**

The difference between most novice and seasoned teachers is how they manage their time and develop their classroom activities and exercises to promote language mastery. From my experience as a novice teacher, it does not matter how much time teachers anticipate an activity will take ahead of time in planning, almost without fail when it is class time, that activity will run longer or shorter than originally anticipated depending on how the students respond to it. During an hour-long observation, I became mesmerized while watching a Chinese DLI teacher immaculately utilize her time. She kept third graders on task and engaged by guiding them from one exercise to the next, demonstrating to me the beautiful orchestration that comes when teachers run a tight ship. Spending too much time on one thing will leave students restless or bored, while racing

through something with the primary objective to move on can create confusion as observed by students' frazzled faces and blank stares.

I observed a fascinating yet simple phenomenon when it comes to classroom time management. The phenomenon is that teachers who meticulously control their time, set a precedent for students to value the time they have to learn. This relates to my together we govern concept in my teaching philosophy statement and also is another way to build rapport between the students and teacher. Unfortunately to my dismay, I observed a handful of teachers who arrived late to class or regularly ended their classes early as a result of running out of material to teach. As an observer, every time this occurred, the impression it made to me was that the teacher was more focused on teaching material than students. What I mean by this is that the teacher dismissed class on the basis that s/he had covered all the necessary content that they had intended to teach for that day. Sadly, I think these teachers failed to see or remember that teaching should always take into account the needs of the learner. Had they chosen instead to ask their students' questions, I think they would have been able to better address the needs of learners and as a result increased rapport between their students and them. Especially, as someone who comes from a culture where time is everything, I believe teachers prepare their students for success when they themselves are punctual and make the most of every minute they have to teach. The way teachers choose to manage class time can greatly influence students' attitudes toward that same class time and likely also affects learners' attitudes toward the language and teacher.

### **Your energy influences theirs: A lesson in attitude-contagious interaction**

I once observed a first-year Russian class and literally left the class believing I could master Russian, all I needed to do was enroll right away to get started. Did I have an innate aptitude for Russian? Certainly not, but what I did have was a teacher who was so positive she managed to instill a newfound enthusiasm and desire in me to learn something I previously viewed to be perilous without giving a second thought to try. What makes this even more incredible is she did this in just fifty minutes!

It should come as no surprise, that if the teacher is yawning, it is only a matter of time before students will be too. Although not all teachers have the natural ability of being talented performers or skilled entertainers, all teachers can exude a love for what they do. When teachers instruct lively and enthusiastically, the result is often highly motivated and inspired students. In my experience of observing teachers at every level, exuberant teachers yield exuberant students. The energy teachers bring to their classrooms transfers over to their students. Students excel at mirroring teacher's attitudes toward the class and matching their energy or lack thereof. Regardless of whether a teacher views language as input or participation (Zuengler & Miller, 2006), engaging and energetic teachers reach students. When those students in turn reciprocate by eagerly participating with thoughtful responses to their questions or carrying out assigned tasks, interaction can follow in a natural way.

### **The Keepsakes and the Takeaway of Observation**

Observing other teachers is an excellent way to further equip one's teaching arsenal while enhancing the professional development of both the observer and the teacher being observed. Through my observations, I have learned how less is oftentimes

more. I have seen firsthand how the way teachers utilize their time and develop tasks for their students greatly influences the outcome of their classes. I have also witnessed how energetic teachers arouse students' interests and ignite motivation even among students who initially could care less about learning. In addition to these small "observable keepsakes", I have come to understand that there is no such thing as a perfect teacher, impeccable lesson plans, or even flawlessly taught classes. Through observing others teach, I realized just how much one can learn from both great and terrible teaching.

## RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES

LANGUAGE PAPER #1

Current English as a Foreign Language trends in China and  
their Implications for Teaching English Globally



## INTRODUCTION AND REFLECTION

In the fall of 2019, I took a new linguistics course taught by Dr. deJonge-Kannan called *Issues and Topics: Teaching English in a Global Context*. This class gave an overview of the history of the English language and its legacy established through colonialism, linguistics features of World Englishes, teachers and pedagogy in global English teaching, and the status of the English language in the world today. The course discussed issues such as the myth of standard English, native speaker privilege and non-native teacher bias as well as how the use of the terms “native speaker” and “nonnative speaker” are problematic, and trends surrounding Teaching of English as a Missionary Language (TEML) and English Voluntourism. The class discussions about the implications of current trends surrounding English and its teaching led me to research what I saw as the mecca of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) – China.

This paper discusses the implementation of EFL throughout schools in China, addresses how English is currently being taught throughout China, looks at the challenges associated with EFL in China, and supplies questions for future research to be done. A major theme across the literature I read while writing this paper, was that despite the desire of many to learn English and the efforts being made by the Chinese Ministry of Education to teach English, the current pedagogy being used throughout Chinese EFL classrooms is not yielding favorable results in terms of actual language acquisition. Discovering this incongruence between the efforts and the outcome of EFL education in China served to further solidify my teaching philosophy. As a result, I felt this paper was important to include in my portfolio because it provides additional support for a student-

centered, interaction-based, and community-driven classroom, for which I advocate are essential characteristics in both ESL and EFL classrooms.

## Why English?

In a country of nearly 1.5 billion people (Worldometers, 2018), speaking over 2,000 dialects (Gao & Ren, 2019) and 297 living languages (Sawe, 2018), one might wonder why learning English has become a high priority for people throughout China. While motivations to learn English will vary among individuals, one motivation is that English serves as a lingua franca for people in China, around the world, and across the web (McCrum, 2010; Zhu, 2003). In an era of “worldwide interconnectedness” (Held & Thompson, 1999, online as quoted in Zhu, 2003, p. 36), the ability to communicate with people from different countries can be a coveted economic asset (Hogan-Brun, 2017).

According to the American International English Teachers Association (2018), “countries with better English have better incomes” (para. 4). Perhaps this is in part because English Language Learners (ELLs) find that knowing English gives them greater access to international organizations, 85% of which use English as their official language, regardless of whether they are based in an English-speaking country. As much as 90% of published academic articles in certain fields are written in English and “at least 85% of the world’s film market is in English” (Crystal, 1997, p. 99). In a time of globalization, where English is not being spoken by just its 335 million native speakers but also by an additional 734 million non-native speakers “learners increasingly need English in order to make themselves understood by people from different countries” (Zhu, 2003, p. 38). Although English has always been a conduit to its speakers, it’s increasingly becoming the conduit for communication in multilingual settings.

As the *Sunday Times* of London put it, “to be born a native English-speaker is to win one of the top prizes of life’s lottery” (McCrum, 2010, p. 283). Likewise, Zhu (2003)

observes native English speakers are “linguistically privileged” (p. 36). What does that mean for those who didn’t inherit the privilege of being raised where English is spoken? For some, it means there is no better time to start learning English than now. The demand to learn English in China, the most populous country in the world, has never been higher than it is today (Graddol, 2006; Liu, Lin, & Wiley, 2016). This merits investigation as to how English teaching and learning is perceived among Chinese ELLs, the Chinese Ministry of Education, English teachers, linguists, and more. This paper explores the present English as a Foreign Language (EFL) trends in China, beginning with a brief overview of current EFL efforts in China along with an exploration of related challenges. The paper concludes with possible future areas of EFL-related research in China.

### **Overview of EFL in China**

For nearly half a century, China has deemed learning English to be of “paramount importance” (Hu, 2004, p. 2). Politics, economics, social, and educational needs have all contributed to the development of EFL in China (Hu, 2002; Liu, Lin, Wiley, 2016). Tied to the country’s modernization and development, English proficiency creates economic, social, and educational opportunities for many people in China (Pan & Block, 2011). In 2001 China’s Ministry of Education issued new guidelines mandating the teaching of English. From the time Chinese students enter the third grade, they begin to learn English (Hu, 2007; Liu, Lin, & Wiley, 2016). Those who go on to pursue a higher education in China are required to study English for their first two years of college (Li & Rubies, 2017). This means on average a Chinese student will spend twelve years learning English in school alone.

In addition, most Chinese students supplement the time they spend learning English in school with private tutoring after school. Private English tutoring, including online coursework, is on the rise throughout China despite China's recent economic downturn. This is because Chinese parents place high priority on their children learning English, in turn driving the market for online English learning platforms. In some cases, Chinese parents even send their children to private boarding schools for high school in the U.S. The goal is to enable Chinese students to succeed in American universities by first acquiring a high level of English proficiency and second giving them time to adapt to the U.S. education system before entering college (Yan, 2015).

### **Challenges with EFL in China**

Despite English being the most commonly taught foreign language throughout China, Chinese ELLs typically do not acquire a high level of English through their public education. After spending countless hours studying English, one can only imagine the shared frustration of Chinese students, teachers, parents, and policy makers when the overall outcome of EFL in China remains poor (Wright & Zheng, 2017). While some claim China "lacks favorable conditions" (Hu, 2007, p. 360) for learning English, the millions of ELLs in China make it the largest market for teaching EFL (Graddol, 2006; He & Zhang, 2010; Hogan-Brun, 2017). For this reason, I seek to understand the challenges EFL teachers and students face in China and share how such challenges factor into learning EFL there today.

Many claim that "the Chinese education system tends to produce 'deaf-and-dumb' English learners" (Wei & Su, 2008, as cited in Liu, Lin, & Wiley, 2016, p. 138), which means that students "cannot use their English for authentic communication" (p. 138),

even though they are capable of passing their English exams. Instead of students gaining competency in all aspects of language learning, students learn to excel at reading and writing because that is what they must know to pass the required College English Test (CET) in the university. Consequently, students lack basic speaking and listening skills that are vital for real-life language use. “While Chinese students tend to be very good at grammar-based written examinations, they are by no means good speakers, and they are often ‘reticent learners’ who lack the willingness to communicate verbally” (Wen & Clement, 2003, p. 18)

The blame for Chinese ELLs’ lack of communicative competence can be accounted for by a combination of factors. One such culprit is Chinese teachers’ preference to focus on language form. As Sun (2013) puts it, the “English teaching model in China still stops at grammar-oriented” (p. 1652). Sometimes this overemphasis on grammar and form is cast as Chinese EFL teachers’ reluctance to embrace Communicative Language Theory (CLT) (Wang & Zie, 2015; Zhang, 2015). The most prevalent English teaching methodology embraced in Chinese public schools remains the Grammar-Translation method (Hu, 2002; Liu, Lin, Wiley, 2016). This method uses rote learning and focuses on being able to translate texts between the native language (L1) and target language and vice versa. Yet, one may wonder what alternative teaching approaches such as audiolingual methodology (ALM), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Sociocultural Theory (SCT), and the Multiliteracies framework have to offer Chinese ELLs?

To begin, let’s look at ALM, a method that has not been shown to promote language acquisition (Lee & VanPatten, 2003), but one that has been used throughout

much of China. In preparation for the 2008 Beijing Olympics, a new phenomenon known as ‘Crazy English’ caught the attention of thousands around China (McCrum, 2010). The entrepreneur and educator behind Crazy English, Li Yang advocated what he called a nontraditional approach to teaching English. Although his approach differed from Grammar-Translation, it failed to meet the modern language teaching standards set forth by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (2019). His approach fit the mold of an earlier twentieth-century approach to language teaching known as the audiolingual method or ALM. ALM offers an “oral approach” through which language “habits are formed through repetition, imitation, and reinforcement” (Lee & VanPatten, 2003, p. 9). Despite having attracted a huge wave of followers, Yang’s tactics mirrored those of military schools where a superior speaks, and their subordinates recite back verbatim what was said. This approach failed to give learners an opportunity to use English in a meaningful way. Thus, regardless of any well-aimed intention to enhance Chinese ELLs’ English, fads such as ‘Crazy English’ that use ALM have severe limitations. Afterall, ALM does not cultivate the skills necessary for authentic language production. Instead, it reinforces to students that as long as they know how to mimic what their teacher says, they are *speaking English* even if they have no idea what they are saying (Lee & VanPatten, 2003).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), on the other hand, is a teaching approach that seeks to develop learners’ ability to communicate. To do this, it emphasizes the importance of interaction in language learning. CLT promotes students’ use of English as a way to talk to each other and carry out tasks. It shifts learning from being teacher-driven to learner-centered (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). While this shift goes against

the current norm for English teaching in China, it could ultimately help Chinese ELLs develop their own communicative competency. Instead of prompting students with what to say as done using ALM, CLT develops learners' capacity to use language in response to open-ended questions and unrehearsed scenarios, something Chinese ELLs would expect to do when interacting with other speakers of English. Although CLT in varying degrees is slowly seeping into Chinese EFL classrooms, it has yet to receive "widespread support and popularity" throughout China (Liu, Lin, Wiley, 2016, p.138). Hu (2002) identifies a deficit exists among Chinese EFL teachers' understanding or knowledge of how CLT can be implemented into their classrooms.

In addition to CLT, alternative and more modern approaches to language teaching and human development exist, such as those informed by Sociocultural Theory (SCT) (Swain et al., 2015; Vygotsky, 1978) and the Multiliteracies framework (Kern, 2012; Paesani, 2016). SCT-oriented pedagogies go beyond CLT's view of input as key to language acquisition and conceptualize the way learners use artifacts to mediate their activities. SCT considers the vital role that cultural contexts, social interactions, and identity all learning and language development while also postulating important concepts such as Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), scaffolding, and mediation (Swain, et al., 2015). The Multiliteracies approach, on the other hand, sees learning as "a process of discovery and emphasizes textual interpretation and transformation, the interdependence of language modalities, and interactions among language forms, social context, and communication" (Paesani, 2016, p. 270). Unlike CLT, the Multiliteracies framework views more facets of language than communication alone. If implemented in Chinese EFL classrooms, according to Ganapathy (2011) the Multiliteracies framework is a



possible approach to language instruction that could equip the next generation of Chinese students with the skills they need to enter a global workforce, a place where Andrade, Hartshorn, Evans, and Davis (2018) noted “English language competency was one of the most important skills that employers were looking for” (p. 37). The Multiliteracies framework is one approach that could help achieve this by taking Chinese ELLs’ English beyond memorization and instead foster creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills in a language that an estimated 4 billion people (i.e., half of the world’s population) have acquaintance with or some knowledge of (McCrum, 2010).

The Chinese Ministry of Education and other leaders in China are not naïve to the shortcomings in EFL pedagogy (Hu, 2004; Si, 2019; Wang & Xie, 2015). In 2013, Yuan Guiren, the minister of education in China, stated, “We are still far from the ideal education aims” (Wang & Xie, 2015, p.123). In response, the Chinese Ministry of Education continues to create and modify standards for the English curriculum taught at every level from primary to tertiary. Such standards specifically aim toward the development of productive English skills (i.e., speaking and writing) rather than solely focusing on receptive English skills (i.e., listening and reading) (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2001a; Liu, Lin, & Wiley, 2016).

Along with the implementation of English standards across schools at every level in China comes the need for regular student assessment. Chinese English teachers and students alike feel pressure to perform well on the exams that are designed and used to represent to what extent standards are being met. Ironically, Chinese ELLs’ English skills have yet to reflect the new standards but instead drive both teachers and students to view passing exams as their main objective versus actual attainment of practical language use.

Pan and Block (2011) summarize this trend, stating that “although English has communication advantages, the teaching and learning of it in [Chinese] universities are still examination-oriented” (p. 391). However, perhaps this could change in the future. Just this year, the Chinese government announced plans to implement a new English proficiency test, in hopes of standardizing and improving the way English is being taught (Nott, 2019). Parts of this newly developed test, known as the National English Testing System (NETS), will be launched in 2020 and will ultimately supersede parts of China’s current English proficiency test known as the College English Test, a test that serves as a gate keeping mechanism for colleges across China (Nott, 2019).

Other factors that may contribute to ineffective EFL instruction in China could be class sizes and lack of teacher experience with authentic English interaction. The number of Chinese students learning English far exceeds the current supply of globally qualified EFL teachers in China, a trend that follows suit with the rest of the world language teacher shortage (Swanson & Mason, 2017). According to Borg and Liu (2013) class sizes of fifty or more students are the norm. Having so many students has been reported as cumbersome by many Chinese EFL teachers (Qi & Wang, 2009; Wright & Zheng, 2017). While some claim large classes make it more challenging for Chinese EFL teachers to engage their students and can dissuade teachers’ use of CLT (Borg & Liu, 2013), others recognize the average Chinese classroom is larger for all subjects and not just for EFL programs, emphasizing the importance and necessity of larger classroom sizes in China (Ming, 2017).

Another notable challenge with EFL instruction in China is the limited exposure most Chinese EFL teachers have had to English. It is commonly the case that English is

being taught by “teachers whose own level of English is low” (Kirkpatrick, 2011, p.114). Of the 60,000 Chinese EFL teachers, very few reported having lived or studied in an English-speaking country for extended periods of time (Wright & Zheng, 2017; Zhao, 2012; Zhang, 2015).

It is likely that many, if not most, native Mandarin speakers who teach EFL in China use their English only within the confines of their classrooms. This, in turn, likely creates a strong reliance on the textbook and other supplemental resources they are given to teach English. Possible solutions, therefore, could include improving the professional development of Chinese EFL teachers in China, which may include creating annual or regular teacher training workshops, incentivizing opportunities for teachers to attend language teaching conferences, establishing the means or resources for teachers to regularly be immersed in English outside of their classrooms, or creating exchange programs where professional EFL teachers in China and other countries work collaboratively to improve teaching practices and observe different types of language teaching pedagogy. Improving local Chinese EFL teachers’ English proficiency by creating seminars and other types of opportunities for them to frequently use English will help enhance their ability to teach English including the adoption of more creative and authentic ways to engage their students in English than mere grammar drilling and textbook teaching alone can do.

I would like to consider one more factor that could pose challenges to EFL instruction in China, which is the potential increased use of Mandarin by speakers outside of China. Speakers of well-known lingua francas have less need to acquire other languages (Hogan-Brun, 2017). Political, economic, technical, spiritual, philosophical,

and cultural power pave part of the way for a language to emerge as a lingua franca. As China continues to rise in economic and political power, Mandarin Chinese could evolve from its current status of being a world language to becoming a lingua franca (Graddol, 2006; Plumb, 2016; Wright & Zheng, 2017). Although already serving as a regional lingua franca throughout China and East Asia, it is unclear just how widely used Mandarin will become in the future. Some find Mandarin unlikely to become a more globally used lingua franca than English is today (McCrum, 2010). Others argue that Mandarin could “replace or at least compete equally with English” (Plumber, 2016, p.49; also see Graddol, 2006; Zhang, 2011; Zhao & Huang, 2010).

Mentioning the increased use of Mandarin worldwide is relevant when it comes to Chinese ELLs’ motivation to learn English. If students perceive English to be of value to them in the future, they will invest in learning it. If, however, they perceive Mandarin to be of equal or greater value, it’s likely students will not buy in to the opportunity to learn English within their Chinese education. However, in order for that to happen, Mandarin would need to overtake the current place that English holds in the gate-keeping system for students in China, especially among higher education institutions. So long as universities around the world push English and students desire to acquire it for future opportunities, China is bound to follow cue.

### **Future Areas to Research with EFL in China**

The trends discussed in this paper for learning and teaching English in China lay the groundwork for future research. The following are four areas of research concerning EFL in China that could be of value. First, how many Chinese college students go on to use English in their professions and/or on a daily basis? Second, what effects does a high

demand to learn English have on the quality of English instruction (e.g., on teaching pedagogy, textbooks, teacher training, online learning programs). Does a high demand to learn English in China create a higher tolerance toward the poor quality of language instruction among Chinese ELLs because the supply of qualified teachers is limited and less affordable than more widely accessible but less experienced English teachers? Third, what effects does EFL teaching in China have on the overall professionalism of global English teaching? Fourth, what cultural effects have been observed from the internal and external demands being made on Chinese students to learn English? I have broken down each area of research interest as follows.

*1. How many Chinese college students go on to use English in their professions?*

As stated earlier, the average Chinese student spends twelve years of their education learning English, two of which occur during their tertiary education (Li & Rubies, 2017). A significant amount of research has already been done concerning the time Chinese children spend learning English in primary and secondary school. Likewise, research can be found that has looked at the policies set forth by the Chinese Ministry of Education to enhance “college students’ academic performance in foreign languages, especially English” (Li & Rubies, 2017, p.2043; also see Shao, Yu, & Ji, 2013) However, less has been done to explore the time and money being spent by Chinese college students to achieve English proficiency. Knowing how much time and money Chinese college students invest in EFL and then seeing whether or not that investment yields a long-term return in their professions would be interesting to know.

*2. What effect does the high demand to learn English have on the quality of EFL teaching available to ELLs in China?*

As the demand to learn English rises around the globe and China continues to prioritize English in its education system, one wonders how the discrepancy between the vast demand from Chinese ELLs and the limited supply of qualified EFL teachers in China influence the overall cost and quality of teaching available to ELLs in China. Does a high demand to learn English contribute to a greater supply of unskilled foreign EFL teachers in China? Recent trends of voluntourism (Jakubiak & Smagorinsky, 2016) and private online tutoring show there are ample native English speakers willing to teach English. However, do such short teaching and learning stints in the case of young volunteers going to teach English in China and inexperienced teachers on online forums create repercussions that are currently not being addressed? What effects come from having a supply of both paid and unpaid temporary EFL teachers who are native English speakers without any background in language teaching? How does this affect the overall sustainability of public EFL education throughout China? Or does the high demand simply create more job opportunities for English teachers at all skill/experience levels depending on the need and/or socioeconomic situation of the learner? How do the different types of EFL teaching in China (including voluntourism and private online tutoring) affect local and long-term English teachers in China?

*3. How do the EFL trends in China influence the professionalism of English teaching globally?*

As one considers the sheer number of ELLs in China, it is logical to assume that both the quality of teaching and available resources for ELLs in China will have an impact on the overall English teaching profession. What influence do both local and foreign English teachers in China have on the overall professionalism of English teaching

around the world? What can be learned from how English is being taught throughout Chinese schools? How will the lure to teach English to Chinese ELLs affect English teachers around the world? For instance, will online teaching and learning open up new ways to teach English in other countries?

*4. What cultural effects have been observed from the internal and external push being made on Chinese students to learn English?*

China is a linguistically and ethnically diverse country. Yet, the precedence of Mandarin and the national interest in a language that will unite a country as large as China shows how the suppression of other languages (including Cantonese) and dialects leads to the diminishing of culture among smaller and less powerful ethnic groups. Surely, as Chinese students receive more and more of their education in English and technology continues to grant access to greater resources and means of communication in other languages such as English, the effect will shift in Chinese culture. Exploring both the short-term and long-term cultural repercussions that have come or are anticipated to occur as the result of English instruction and education in China is another topic of interest that likely has and could be further researched.

## **Conclusion**

China is a valuable country to analyze when it comes to both teaching and learning English. Afterall, no other country currently consists of as many potential ELLs (Bolton, 2003; Crystal, 2008; He & Li, 2009; He & Zhang, 2010). The extensive efforts that the Chinese Ministry of Education places on Chinese students learning English are also of considerable merit. Such efforts continue to be reformed through national policies that reinforce a perceived need for English within their education system. And yet, there

is a remarkable incongruence between the vast amount of time Chinese ELLs spend studying English and their limited language acquisition. When Chinese ELLs' actual English language gains prove to do little more than benefit them in the form of passing the College English Test that admits them into college, there remains a serious question that has yet to be asked. Unlike the question: What must be done to improve English teaching and learning throughout China, which has been addressed in this paper, the question that remains and perhaps is to be of far greater consequence to China and the rest of the world in regard to EFL in China is: Who ultimately benefits from learning English?

It is worth considering if the individual need(s) to learn English parallels China's national interest to learn English. From an outsider's view, the opportunity to teach English to Chinese ELLs will continue to be of economic and academic interest to businesses, educators, and even language learners of Mandarin (who seek language conversation exchanges where they can receive help with their Mandarin in return for helping an ELL in China with their English). However, from an insider's perspective, how does learning English ultimately benefit someone in China? Do individuals in China benefit from English in ways that outweigh the time and money they spend to learn English? Or is it the collective benefit of a nation literate in English that drives the insistent push for English education in China? While many questions remain to be answered about EFL in China, I hope this paper has shed light on the present concerns and encourages future research.



LANGUAGE PAPER #2

Using Jigsaw Reading to Promote English Language Learners'

Willingness to Communicate

## INTRODUCTION AND REFLECTION

This research paper is the blended product of two formerly written papers. The first was a proposed research paper written for a class that I took during my first semester in the MSLT. The class was *Second Language Acquisition: Theory and Practice* taught by Dr. Thoms and my original paper was titled: *The Role of Context, Culture, and Emotions in Students' Willingness to Communicate*. The second paper I wrote the following semester in the spring of 2019 for a class I took on *Teaching Literature in the L2 Classroom* taught by Dr. Gordon. This paper was titled *A Jigsaw Reading Approach for Literacy in ESL*. The end result of these formerly written papers is a paper that brings together my interests concerning the concept of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) and a Cooperative Learning (CL) approach known as jigsaw reading.

Writing this paper had various applications for my teaching. First, jigsaw reading is a valuable tool and interactive activity that I have used and continue to foresee myself using in the ESL classroom. Second, my understanding of English language learners' WTC in the ESL classroom has changed. Instead, of viewing some students as shy and others as outgoing, I have come to see that many variables factor into a student's WTC and that ultimately a learner's WTC will vary across context and learning activities, rarely if ever staying the same. Using dichotomies such as passive or active learners to permanently label students should be avoided as such labels will not hold consistent over time, nor serve us in our attempt to understand our learners' individual identities and their underlying motivation to learn English. Finally, writing this paper caused me to reflect on the tension that exists between fostering learners' WTC versus coercing their languaging. The latter, of course, occurring so that despite a learner's initial reluctance to participate

in jigsaw reading, they can through their participation develop the confidence and language skills that they need to promote their WTC across any given context, where they might use English both in and out of the ESL classroom.

## **Introduction**

An interesting, yet understandable predicament tends to occur in beginning language classrooms. Teachers try to get their students communicating from day one, but learners lack the vocabulary they need to express themselves. In response, teachers attempt to supply students with the vocabulary and basic structures they need in order to start communicating. Often, as learners are processing new information, they end up sitting in silence while the teacher continues to talk until eventually realizing that s/he is doing all of the talking. Ironically, it is not the teacher who needs to be doing all of the speaking, but the learners who must be engaged, interacting, and using the language if they are to learn it.

In this paper, I explore how jigsaw reading can be used as an effective means to increase English Language Learners' (ELLs) Willingness to Communicate (WTC). Jigsaw reading forces students to engage with the text and interact with their peers, while at the same time providing them with the language they need to do so, in a way that promotes their WTC. To begin, I provide a literature review on the following three areas: jigsaw reading, WTC, and literature as they relate to language learning. Next, I discuss how context and emotions influence a learner's WTC. Following this, I share the benefits that informational texts afford language learners. To conclude, I share the reasons why jigsaw reading increases learners' WTC.

## **Literature Review**

### *Jigsaw Reading*

Jigsaw reading is an activity that emerged from an educational approach known as Cooperative learning (CL), which became popular in the U.S. during the early 1970s.

Cooperative learning involves “the instructional use of small groups” in which students work together “to maximize their own and each other’s learning” (Hautemo, 2016, p.112). One particular technique rooted in CL that is of interest to me as a language instructor is jigsaw reading.

For jigsaw reading, students are put into small groups that are each assigned a different text to read. The instructor may choose to have students read the text together in class or assign students to read it before class. If the latter is done, having students complete a reading response is recommended to hold students accountable for doing the reading and to help them remember what they read. After each student has read their assigned text, students will discuss it with their group. The instructor may provide specific questions or prompts relevant to all of the readings that students can use to guide their small-group discussion. This is especially helpful at lower levels but can also push students to delve deeper into their analysis at higher levels by asking them to consider or apply what they read to another concept they have learned about in class. After students have had time to talk about these questions and thoroughly discuss their assigned reading, the instructor will form new groups.

Each new group consists of one student from each of the previous small groups. In other words, every student in the new group has read and discussed a different text. The discussion students had in their first group helps students to become knowledgeable about their assigned reading before requiring them to be the sole emissary for their assigned reading to their new group (Huang, Liao, Huang, & Chen, 2012). During this time, teachers can continue to have groups use the former prompts or new questions to guide their discussion. Students should have the opportunity to ask their peers questions

about these readings as they have not read the same text. This requires students to negotiate meaning as they communicate with their peers about the text in the L2.

For several years “intense debate” has occurred “among educational researchers, policy makers, and educators about effective approaches to literacy instruction for English language learners”; while the debate is ongoing, “there is evidence that proficient literacy in a second language can be achieved when peers engage in interactions and cooperatively negotiate meaning and shared understanding” (Adesope, Lavin, Thompson, & Ungerleider, 2011, p. 631). In a similar vein, Paesani (2016) emphasized “literacy is a social practice rather than an individual skill... shaped through interaction” (p. 10). Jigsaw reading is one way to create social interactions that promote English Language Learners’ (ELLs) acquisition through using literature and instructional texts.

#### *Willingness to Communicate (WTC)*

Khajavy et al. (2017) observed that “L2 communication depends on more than linguistic or even communicative competence, emphasizing that a learner must also develop the psychological “readiness” to speak when an opportunity arises” (p. 609). Such aptness is generally determined by the learner’s self-confidence in the situation and their desire to speak with the given person. Other possible influences of WTC are associated with other variable factors such as relationships between people, learner personality, motivation, and other existing attitudes (Khajavy et al., 2017). For example, a student’s knowledge of or interest in a particular topic of a reading or language learning activity can influence their WTC. That is, background knowledge of the topic would most likely move students to communicate and interact with fellow classmates versus being forced to talk about a topic that is of little or no interest to the student.

Willingness to Communicate (WTC) was first introduced to the communication literature by McCroskey and Baer (1985) with original reference to the native language known as the L1 (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Presently, WTC is also being used in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) to further our understanding behind the psychological, social, and situational factors that influence students' WTC or the "probability of engaging in communication when free to choose" (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 546). Nasiri et al. (2016) suggest that the main reason for learning a language is to be able to use it to communicate. Ballman et al. (2001) take this further adding that it is "by communicating students learn the language" (p. 8). Likewise, Macintyre and Charos (1996) claimed that "one must talk to learn" (p. 3). If students learn to speak while engaging in the process of communication, then naturally students' WTC is of critical importance in the L2 classroom.

#### *Theoretical Framework of WTC*

As ironic as it may seem for SLA, "many L2 learners prefer to keep away from second language communication" (Nasiri et al., 2016, p. 1274). Their aversion to communicate, however, is not always an accurate indication of their communicative competence and neither is the reverse true (Khajavy et al., 2017). That is, students with high communicative competence are not always more prone to use the L2 to communicate in or outside of class than their peers who are less proficient (Cameron, 2015). What current research shows is that "L2 learners with high WTC are more likely to use the L2 in authentic communication and facilitate language learning" (Kang, 2005, p. 278). In other words, WTC influences how often students engage with each other to communicate in their L2 (Nasiri et al., 2016). My interest in understanding what

contributes to students' WTC stems from my desire to increase my ESL students' WTC, so that as Kang (2005) asserted, they "are more likely to use their L2 in authentic communication" which in turn will "facilitate [their] language learning" (p. 278).

Although a student's learning or progress in the L2 is not always indicated by their active communication or lack thereof in the L2 classroom, having strong WTC pushes students to more readily communicate in the L2. In turn, a learner's communication or actual language use in the L2 serves as a catalyst to their language acquisition. Perhaps this is why Macintyre et al. (1998) and others (Kissau et al., 2010) have expressed that language learning is of no avail if students do not have WTC because having WTC is what will move students to communicate in the L2.

Today, WTC is seen as "both the stable, intrinsic nature of the learner and the dynamic nature of the learner's external conditions" (Kim, 2017, p. 101). MacIntyre et al. (1998) developed a diagram known as *The Heuristic Model of WTC* that attempts to show all of the variables involved in influencing a learner's WTC. Their model displays a triangle with six horizontal layers. The layers are categorized from the top of the triangle to the bottom as communication behavior, behavioral intention, situated antecedents, motivational propensities, affective-cognitive context, and social-individual context. Within each layer exist subcategories. In all, there are twelve subcategories or specific factors that influence a learner's WTC. These factors include: L2 use, WTC, desire to communicate with a specific person, state communicative self-confidence, interpersonal motivation, intergroup motivation, self-confidence, intergroup attitudes, social situation, communicative competence, intergroup climate, and personality.



Thus, the takeaways from MacIntyre et al. (1998) model of WTC are as follows. First, there are a myriad of factors that contribute to a learner's WTC. Second, there is never just one predictor or determinant of a learner's WTC. Instead, a learner's WTC should be understood as a culmination of factors that are dynamic, complex, and interrelated. As a result, variables such as the learner's context, culture, and emotions are all relevant and should be considered in relationship to one another. The value in understanding students' WTC as mentioned earlier is its immediate influence on learners' communication.

### *Literature aids language learning*

As Rushdie (2006) puts it, "in this age of information overkill, literature can still bring the human news" (p. 11). The increased accessibility and influence of the Internet has made it so that learners have no shortage of resources at their disposal but as a recent article in the Washington Post shared "literary reading is on the decline" (Ingraham, 2016). With only 43% of Americans claiming to have read one work of literature in the last year, some may wonder whether literature still has a relevant place in learning. This section explores what literature is and why it remains relevant in language education.

Literature in its broadest sense includes many types of texts that can be read (Paesani, 2016). Literature is relevant in our discussion of using jigsaw reading to increase learners' WTC because it is the medium for jigsaw reading. Literature provides a foundation of language and gives learners something to communicate about. It enriches students' "personal worldviews" by commonly "calling into question long-held convictions" (Jones & Schwabe, 2016, p. 16) and by touching on universal human issues

that cause learners to reflect and view things from a different perspective. This makes it possible for students to reflect on their own experiences, to make connections between what they are reading and their life, and to analyze more deeply the perspectives of others as well as their own ideas, all the while using the target language to do so.

The use of literature to teach languages across college campuses has received more attention than it has in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom. At the university level, literature use is predominately determined by language proficiency and has created a pedagogical divide between the way that beginning and advanced language courses are being taught. Beginning courses have the tendency to focus on “functional, interactive language use,” whereas advanced (or upper division) courses primarily consist of “literary cultural interpretation” (Allen & Paesani, 2010, p. 120). While the language/literacy gap presents challenges for foreign language (FL) educators, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators are being criticized for their disengaging “teacher-directed” learning as opposed to more “engaged learning” where students are active participants in the learning process (Zoghi, 2013, p. 537). With carefully designed jigsaw reading assignments, instructors can make literature and other non-fictional texts accessible to students at every level in the ESL classroom.

Just as careful and planned text selection by instructors can make jigsaw reading an appropriate activity for any level of language learner, it also influences students’ motivation. According to Picken (2007), language learning materials have considerable influence on learners’ motivation. As such, instructors have the responsibility to select readings that are relevant, level appropriate, and interesting to learners. Literature can be highly engaging both in its traditional and multimodal forms. Multimodal refers to “the

use of multimedia and ICT [information communication technology] to develop dynamic course resources that appeal to different sensory modes and a variety of learning styles” (Gilakjani, et al., 2011, p. 1321). In other words, multimodal courses integrate two or more forms of media (e.g. PowerPoint slides with audio. “The primary purpose... of literary text in ESL curriculum is... to involve [students] in a direct experience” (Ghasemi & Hajizadeh, 2011, p. 71). Literature is motivating and engaging to students because they “relate the fundamental human issues that literature deals with to their own lives and experiences” (Picken, 2007, p. 14). The stylistic differences across readings also tend to engage different students in different ways. This is why teachers should use different works of fiction (i.e., poems, short stories, fairytales, folktales) and non-fiction (newspapers, magazine articles, books, etc.) texts as well as incorporate multimodal forms such as videos, podcasts, documentaries, music, and more. By using multimodal forms of text, it will be easier to keep students engaged in their language learning. If the teacher can diversify the types of texts students read, see, and/or listen to all the while ensuring they are level appropriate and relevant, both the students and teacher will find that “literary texts are authentic, motivating, and a stimulus for language acquisition” (Lazar, 1993, p. 14-15). Unlike language textbooks, worksheets, or other materials tailored specifically for classroom use, literature exposes learners to original and authentic language.

Never before have students had more access to such literary exposure than they do today. It has been argued that literature “is more democratic than oral proficiency: Not everyone can learn how to speak, and not everyone can go abroad, but *almost* [word added] everyone can read a book” (Kramsch & Kramsch, 2000, p. 556). While there

remain people around the world who do not have books in their homes or access to a library or online resources, the internet offers nearly-limitless access to a wide range of text types and will continue to make them more conveniently and readily available (and also more accessible to people with disabilities) as well as more affordable to learners.

### **Jigsaw Reading and Learners' WTC**

Jigsaw reading forces students to interact while providing them with the language; they need to do so in a way that promotes their WTC. Within the learning context of a language classroom, several findings have come from studies done using the theoretical framework of WTC.

First, the interaction that occurs between learners and their peers builds students' communicative competence. Jigsaw reading fosters this interaction among students in a way that provides them with new content and vocabulary to discuss. From a cognitivist perspective (Ballman et al., 2001; Gass & Mackey, 2007; Lee & VanPatten, 2003; Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Shrum & Glisan, 2016; VanPatten, 2004) jigsaw reading can be used as a task to enable students' language learning by supplying them with meaningful input and creating opportunities for students to negotiate meaning. From a sociocultural perspective on human development (Holzman, 2018; Lantolf & Poehner, 2008; Swain et al., 2015; Vygotsky, 1978; Zuengler & Miller, 2006) jigsaw reading can be seen as an activity where learners mediate and interact with their peers, facilitating students' Zones of Proximal Development. No matter what theoretical approach one favors, group interaction plays a vital part in successful second language communication (Nasiri et al., 2016).

The interaction that is inherent in jigsaw reading creates a sense of community for learners. Denies, Janssen, and Yashima (2015) conducted a study in Belgium on native Dutch speakers and their L2 acquisition of French. Their study showed that the classroom environment (or the culmination of perceptions of teacher immediacy, class group cohesion, and task orientation) can be used to predicate students' WTC. When students feel a shared identity with their classmates, positive interpersonal and intergroup relations come as a result (Eller & Abrams, 2004). Developing interpersonal relationships while working toward the common goal of language acquisition in the L2 classroom has been reported as a primary source of enjoyment (Khajavy, MacIntyre, & Barabadi, 2017).

In addition, instructors play a significant role in influencing their students' WTC through their support, efforts to create students' cohesiveness, and task orientations (Cao, 2014). A study done by Khajavy, MacIntyre, and Barabadi (2017) suggested "that students who enjoy learning more also tend to be more willing to communicate" (p. 620). Jigsaw reading is designed to create group unity as students are forced to first discuss assigned readings and then later learn from their peers about readings they did not read but are related to what they read in some way. Jigsaw reading is also helpful in establishing learning that is student- rather than teacher-centered. Learners are likely to feel more comfortable expressing their opinion among their peers in small groups than they would in addressing the entire class or communicating directly with the teacher.

Khajavy, MacIntyre, and Barabadi (2017) reinforced that WTC goes along with increased communication skills in the L2. Jigsaw reading prepares students to communicate, thus increasing their WTC. It is structured in a way that builds students' confidence. Before students are expected to be the sole emissary of the instructional text

they read, they are first grouped with peers who have also read the same text. This gives learners time not only to discuss the text but to ask their peers questions about anything they found confusing or did not understand. From a cognitive perspective, preparing learners in this way can lower their anxiety levels. Such preparation works by first supplying students with comprehensible input when they read the text. If the reading is assigned outside of class, students can take as much time as they need to understand the text. If done in class, instructors must decide how much time students will need to read and complete a reading response (e.g., writing down their takeaways and any questions they may have about the text). Following this, students discuss what they read in small groups.

Enjoyment and anxiety are not inversely related, yet studies show that enjoyment has a positive influence on students' WTC and anxiety has a negative one. Although more research shows the negative effects of anxiety on WTC than the positive effects associated with enjoyment, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2016) stress instructors have “a stronger influence on learners' enjoyment of the classroom than they have on learners' anxiety levels” (Khajavy, MacIntyre, & Barabadi, 2017, p. 620). As opposed to an independently done reading comprehension exercise, students who participate in jigsaw reading are likely to experience greater satisfaction because it gives them the freedom to use the language found in the text to discuss the aspects of the reading(s) that are most relevant to them.

Khajavy, MacIntyre, and Barabadi (2017) also supported the notion that communicative competence and anxiety are the most commonly accepted predictors of WTC. Anxiety in the foreign language class is defined as “worry and negative emotional

reaction aroused when learning or using a second language” (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 27). As Maftoon and Ziafar (2013) put it, “anxiety prevents learners from effective participation in classroom interactions” (p. 75). The use of jigsaw reading lowers learners’ anxiety and increases their participation by supplying them with the language they need to communicate. The anxiety students have concerning L2 communication is the primary obstacle in their perceived WTC (Khajavy, Ghonsooly, Hosseini, & Choi, 2016; MacIntyre, Baker, Clement, & Donovan, 2002; Peng & Woodrow, 2010). Denies, Janssen, and Yashima (2015) emphasize that the main goal of L2 instruction is to stimulate WTC. They also share that anxiety and perceived competence have a reciprocal relationship in the context of L2 acquisition. They claim that WTC has a direct relation with higher levels of competence and lower levels of anxiety. A way that teachers can help their students have greater competence is to increase the enjoyment their students feel in class as more enjoyment is associated with less anxiety. This can be accomplished through jigsaw reading.

### **Why Jigsaw Reading increases students’ WTC**

Jigsaw reading gives language learners something to talk about in a way that is meaningful and goes beyond the already exhausted introductory topics of family, weather, food, etc. Students can communicate about what they have read, and their reading will supply the vocabulary that students need to talk about what they have read. Jigsaw reading is an excellent way to introduce students to new topics, thus boosting vocabulary acquisition, which in turn builds students’ cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 2008). Jigsaw reading is a way to create a context in which students are forced to communicate.

Most students respond positively to jigsaw reading because they find it helps them learn. First, jigsaw reading is “less threatening for many students” (Maiz, 2015, p. 6), after all it is not a competition. Students do not come out as winners or losers by engaging in it. The non-competitive nature therefore removes pressure and makes it “enjoyed” by students who may otherwise be deemed “low achievers” because of its non-competitive nature (Ghaith & Bouzeineddine, 2003, p. 116). Working in a group environment can serve as motivation for students who otherwise struggle with reading comprehension. Sarobol (2012) also observed this phenomenon saying, “students who find English very difficult benefit by sharing the workload” (p. 119). Likewise, working in small groups tends to lower students’ anxiety levels as opposed to an entire class discussion where students are likely to fear being called on or put on the spot by the teacher to answer a question in front of the whole class.

Second, jigsaw reading increases overall “student participation in the classroom” (Maiz, 2015, p. 6) by giving everyone a chance to talk about what they read. This is beneficial for shy students who otherwise would not speak up unless called on by the teacher. It also helps with classroom management, when one is teaching a mixed-level language class composed of different proficiency levels and learning styles. Teachers are able to select different levels of readings that fit students’ different language levels. The teacher can group more advanced students together and let them work independently, while helping to lead the weakest group of students in their initial discussion. When it comes time to regroup students, all students should be able to share what they read according to their language level and having mixed levels together works just fine.



Third, jigsaw reading invites students to both reflect and think critically about what it is they read. Parkinson and Thomas (2000) add that asking students questions about what they read will “help to widen cultural horizons,” which, in turn, will “reduce the imprisonment of learners in the worldview and values of their own time and place” (p. 31). When students come to see “language as a system for organizing the experience of people,” they will also see that language “emphasizes whatever is prevalent or important to the culture of the people” (Lwin, 2015, p. 79). Stewart and Santiago (2006) report that “engaging FL reading activities centered on literary text”, which in my view includes jigsaw reading, “resulted in complex, cultural understandings that had a lasting impact on students” (Paesani, 2016, p. 149). Although not all ESL class readings need to be literature that touches on learners’ cultural understanding, the lasting impact that any engaging reading and meaningful discussion can have on learners can go beyond language learning. Additional skills such as collaboration, critical thinking, articulating their opinions, and reflection can be developed. Thus, collaborative, text-based learning has been found to be effective for the individual reflection and collective group discussion in response to the reading(s) (Paesani, 2011; Widodo, 2016).

Finally, teachers are enthusiastic about jigsaw reading because it “reduces the teacher’s dominance in the classroom” (Maiz, 2015, p. 6). Instead of having the teacher center stage, students are in control and ultimately get out what they put into it. Through the use of informational texts in the L2 classroom, jigsaw reading allows students to “read the text, hear the text, master new vocabulary, paraphrase, and interact at all stages of the activity” (Dycus, 1996, p. 1). Depending on the selected reading(s) and associated prescribed tasks by the teacher, jigsaw reading can be used at both lower and higher

levels. For these reasons and more, jigsaw reading has been considered by students and teachers alike to be much more effective than other more traditional approaches (i.e., teacher-directed, text-centered) (Adams, 2013; Gocer, 2010; Ghaith & El-Malak, 2004; Maiz, 2015).

### **The challenges with using Jigsaw Reading in ESL classrooms**

As with any teaching approach, Jigsaw Reading is not without its flaws. The following are four possible challenges that can arise when using jigsaw reading with ELLs. First, jigsaw reading, as with other types of reading, can be very time-consuming because it requires multiple stages and involves students to change groups. If reading is assigned to be done outside of class, students who take longer to read may feel it takes too long. If class time is taken for students to read together in their groups, less proficient students may be embarrassed to read out loud in front of their peers. It may also be hard for the teacher to find related readings that are similar lengths so that each group of students can finish reading at approximately the same time.

Second, I know from personal experience that some students fixate over the new words they see when reading a text for the first time. While increasing their vocabulary and helping students learn the meaning of key words is important, teachers must not let the focus of jigsaw reading become vocabulary. Instructors might consider providing a short vocabulary list of key words from the reading or allowing students to use their dictionaries after the first read-through. However, it is the teacher's responsibility to remind students that an overall understanding of the story and text is what they should be focused on rather than using class time to understand the meaning of every word they find and do not know in the text.

Third, selecting the text for jigsaw reading can be challenging for teachers. Teachers must carefully choose a reading that is “not too far from the students’ level of comprehension” (Kurniawati, Komariah, Maolida, & Salsabila, 2018, p.11). If a reading is too difficult, it can become an obstacle that impedes students’ learning (Kurniawati et. al, 2018). When ELLs become frustrated by a text, they are likely to do one of two things. They may first fixate on finding the definitions of the unfamiliar words in the text. Second, they may give up altogether. The latter is especially problematic because if students have negative experiences with literature in the L2, they will likely not seek to read or understand L2 literature outside of class, which can hinder their overall language acquisition.

Lastly, one size never fits all and so it is with pedagogy and students’ preferred learning styles. Due to the diversity in most ESL classes, Soto Huerta and Perez (2015) caution that while some “approaches to second-language literacy may succeed with one immigrant group... the same approaches may fail for similar immigrant groups” with distinct social boundaries existing within their host community (p. 498). This means that having success with one jigsaw reading will not guarantee it will always be a hit among different or even the same group of ESL learners.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, jigsaw reading is an excellent way to increase ELLs’ WTC through the use of literature. Jigsaw reading is interesting and motivating to students (Dycus, 1996; Esnawy, 2016) and can be used to foster learning in the language classroom (Huang, Liao, Huang, & Chen, 2014). Jigsaw reading increases students’ WTC by creating “self-confidence” and a “better understanding of the world” (Hautemo, 2016, p.

96). Using carefully selected texts, jigsaw reading creates opportunities for learners to interact. The interaction that occurs through jigsaw reading helps students “acquire critical thinking skills” (Sarobol, 2012, p. 111 as cited in Ghaith & El-Malak, 2004), improves their language proficiency (Hautemo, 2016), and gives them other useful learning strategies that come from collaborating in a small-group setting (Esnawy, 2016; Hautemo, 2016; Huang, Liao, Huang, & Chen, 2014; Sarobol, 2012). Jigsaw reading can be applied at any level of language instruction (Dycus, 1996; Esnawy, 2016). Thus, jigsaw reading applies a modern approach to using literature in the ESL classroom and enhances learners’ language acquisition by building their CALP, giving them opportunities to interact both with the text and with their peers.

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

## Teaching English in a Global Context

English proficiency has become one of the most sought-after skills in professional and academic contexts throughout the world. As a result, English as a source of individual capital has ignited the trend to learn English by speakers of other languages as well as to teach it across the globe (Damari, Rivers, Brecht, Gardner, Pulupa, & Robinson, 2017; Hogan-Brun, 2017; Shrestha, Awasthi, & Pahari, 2018). This global phenomenon to learn and teach English is of great interest to me as a professional who is pursuing to teach adult English language learners (ELLs) English as a Second Language (ESL) in the United States. As a student in the Master of Second Language Teaching program and someone who has dedicated the last seven years of my life to helping people learn English, I have taught English privately and publicly as both a volunteer and as a paid professional to diverse groups of learners at nearly every level of language proficiency.

As an English teacher in a continuously growing, competitive, and global market, I am a beneficiary of the nearly unanimous desire that people throughout the world have to learn English. However, by virtue of being a native speaker of the language and investing to become a trained English teacher, I have also encountered frustrations with the general perceptions and low standards of acceptance that any native speaker of English can and should qualify to teach English. This annotated bibliography seeks to explain how English grew into the world hegemony that it is today, why the native speaker fallacy is harmful to the English teaching profession, why English education is in high demand, and what concerns exist surrounding the prevalence of native speakers yet inexperienced teachers volunteering to teach English around the world.

**Phillipson (2013)** wrote a book called *Linguistic Imperialism*. This book looks at the study of linguistic imperialism, which takes a “theoretically informed” approach to view “how and why certain languages dominate internationally” (p. 1). He explains that linguistic imperialism is not limited to but entails all of the following: the structure of imperialism, exploitation, ideologies, hegemonic dominance, unequal rights, and linguicism (i.e., favoring one language over another). He declares that despite its prevalence, linguistic imperialism is contested and resisted. He discusses ongoing tensions between linguistic imperialism, and the development of a linguistic hierarchy. In his book, he also gives historical context for why languages such as English have come to have the influence and power they do in the world today. He elaborates on how political, economic, and scientific factors create a need for English worldwide. In essence, Phillipson uses the concept of linguistic imperialism to draw awareness to the imperialism that exists surrounding predominantly learned languages in the world today such as English.

**Deterding and Kirkpatrick (2006)** point out that there are more non-native speakers of English than native speakers using the language on a regular basis. Around the world, there is an estimated 430 million second or additional language (L2) users of English compared to the 330 million first language (L1) users. These numbers don’t account for the additional and presumed to be as many as one billion people who are learning English (statistics taken from Crystal, 2003 as cited in Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2006). The prevalence of English has made English become a lingua franca for many and, as such, Deterding and Kirkpatrick take interest in investigating features of pronunciation among L2 speakers of English in ten different ASEAN (The Association of

South Eastern Asian Nations) countries that contributed to their intelligibility between other L2 speakers and native speakers of English.

After collecting data from twenty different L2 speakers of English in Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Indonesia, Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, and Darussalam, Deterding and Kirkpatrick (2006) observed that L2 speakers' intelligibility in business and tourist hubs such as Singapore and Malaysia is benefited from their interaction with English speakers. However, one concern they had with gauging speakers' intelligibility involved the assumed instances in which speakers did not understand but were still able to hold a conversation. They noted that widespread pronunciation features typically do not hinder communication. In other words, a tolerance for "certain kinds of variation" appeared to exist. However, "other kinds of non-standard features" sometimes cause problems (p. 394). Such pronunciation features tend to be those that people from different countries do not share.

In addition to this observation, Deterding and Kirkpatrick (2006) claimed that "inner circle pronunciation," or the pronunciation in countries where English is the predominately spoken language, "is not always straightforward to understand or the most appropriate model for learners" (p. 398). They advocate that instead of assuming English from inner circle countries to be the standard for spoken English that "the ability to accommodate one's pronunciation to the needs of one's listeners" and knowing when it is necessary to do so is likely the most crucial skill for international communication (p. 406).

Similar to Deterding and Kirkpatrick's research done in 2006, **Allan (2016)** sought to contribute to the research on the communication among different L1 speakers



using English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) to communicate. She suggested that, “As technology brings different parts of the world ever closer, it is incongruous to overlook ELF from a worldwide perspective” (p. 160). Using qualitative data collected from a corpus, she examined the lexical bundles used in the ELF communication that takes place during business meetings. Her findings suggest that L2 speakers of English in business settings are more likely to follow lexical bundles whereas in social settings “lingua franca communicators avoid formulaic language” (p. 144). She adds that “ELF is not a single language variety,” rather it “varies according to its context” (p. 142).

Just as Deterding and Kirkpatrick (2006) imply the use and understanding of English is determined by both its speakers and listeners regardless of nativeness and Allan (2016) shows variation in L2 speech depending on the context, **Mesthrie (2010)** discusses the concept of the native speaker within the field of linguistics, looking specifically at examples of Indian English spoken in India. He asserts that English has always been immersed in a multicultural environment since its beginnings and that its early history gives way to the critique of “nativeness” being far more complex than is idealized by many monolingual individuals of Anglo-American descent. Mesthrie looks at what happens when an L2 (i.e., largely introduced in the classroom) turns to be an L1 (i.e., what’s being used at home). He argues that the terms ‘native speaker’ and ‘mother tongue’ are problematic as they are no longer transparent in the sociology of English. He advocates that any nonnative speaker who studies and speaks a language long enough can attain a level of English that passes for the native variety.

As an English educator, it is important to acknowledge the bias and prejudice that surround the terminology of “native speaker.” After all, as Mesthrie explains, proficiency

is not dependent upon a person's mother tongue nor does the differentiation benefit language learners as they become proficient but continue to find themselves marginalized or seen as inferior to "native" speakers of the language. Mesthrie's article (2010) is encouraging for language teachers and learners because he states that proficiency is within every human's attainment but that certain factors allow some to get there quicker than others.

Although nativeness, according to Methrie (2010), should not be used in the distinction of one's language use or proficiency, **Moyer (2013)** states in her book *Foreign Accent: The Phenomenon of Non-native Speaker Speech* that "the salience of accent is both immediate and real; it is the means by which we make ourselves understood, and the yardstick by which others judge us, whether we like it or not" (Dewaele & McCloskey, 2015, p. 221). In her book, she attempts to connect cognitive and sociolinguistic theoretical paradigms surrounding L2 speaker accents so that an appreciation of "sounding foreign" can be made. She advocates "the need to integrate multiple understandings of accent" (p. 8).

**Dewaele and McCloskey (2015)** did a study on foreign accents. They had over 2,000 multilinguals from 204 different countries ranging from teenagers to adults over sixty complete a questionnaire. The vast majority of their participants were highly educated having college degrees with only 29 who had only received a high school diploma. They concluded that overall "attitudes toward foreign accents are ambiguous" (p. 236) and that those who participated in their study were more bothered by their own foreign accent as opposed to the foreign accents of others. To their surprise, they discovered that the participants who knew more languages and had higher proficiencies

in those languages were more critical toward foreign accents. They reasoned this could be because such individuals have their own higher expectations in regard to language use.

The increased use of English as a lingua franca around the world is especially evident across Europe and throughout countries where English is being used as a medium for instruction in higher education. In a chapter from his book, *Evolving Agendas in European English-Medium Higher Education*, **Earls (2016)** focuses on Germany's sociopolitical background, the role English has had historically in Germany, and the current use of English throughout higher education in Germany via English Medium Instruction (EMI) programs. Earls discusses how the use of English first began in Germany post WWI. Today, Germany along with many other European countries are moving toward diglossia with English being more widely used in higher education as a means to overcome any "competitive disadvantage from their linguistic situation" (p. 29). Earls predicts the present trend for increased English use throughout higher education in Germany will continue as people view English proficiency as a necessity for academic research publication and a competitive edge in the global job market after they finish college. This drives many Germans to learn English; however, the rise of English use throughout universities in Germany has resulted in German's decreased influence as an important global language.

**Lasagabaster and Sierra's (2009)** research compared the attitudes of high school students toward English in EFL and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) classes. As a basis for their research they assert, "The need for multilingual citizens is becoming more and more evident in many different social spheres which encompass not only the job market, but also social integration (ever increasing migratory movements) ...

education, research, and many others” (p. 4). Their study specifically looked at students in their last two years of required education in the Basque Country of Spain, with participants ranging from ages 14-16. They note that “one of the main challenges teachers have to face has to do with the efforts to avoid students’ attitudinal decline as the latter gets older” (p. 12) making their findings relevant as such attitudes will be inherent in the experiences of their participants in EFL and CLIL courses.

The findings as a result of their research were as follows. First, CLIL students had more positive attitudes toward English than EFL students did. Second, girls had more positive attitudes toward foreign languages than boys. And third, CLIL students have more positive attitudes toward studying Spanish and Basque than they do English. In other words, CLIL outshined the foreign language teaching of English for Basque secondary students in several ways. Primarily, CLIL engaged students with the language in more authentic ways and allows them to achieve something concrete on top of learning the language. Lasagabaster and Sierra support the communicative nature of CLIL and recognizes that too often foreign language classrooms hinge on “artificial environments,” unappealing role plays that feel childish to older students, and boring textbooks. They therefore support CLIL approaches and promote additional future research on the efficacy of CLIL be done.

**Bohn (2003)** points out that the growing use of English as an international language has caused many Latin American countries to also reconsider how they are teaching foreign languages in public schools. Despite the lack of resources to fund qualified English teachers in order to help achieve local foreign language acquisition, Brazil and Latin America at large have the need and social interest to learn English. After

not teaching foreign languages for twenty years, Brazil reintroduced foreign languages as part of their curriculum in 1996. Today, “a strong popular feeling is developing that language may be the last remaining feature that all citizens can contribute in the construction of their cultural identity” (p. 163). Thus, the decision to reimplement foreign language education in Brazilian schools was made in effort to preserve local identities associated with local languages as well as respond to the global demand for English among workers in various industries.

Bohn shares that the ideal classroom approach to teaching English insists that language should be a social practice, but that foreign language (FL) instruction is not always implemented as such. Foreign Language education has seen several cuts leaving the teachers with more to do and little available resources to achieve their goals. Brazil’s need for a national language policy continues as the country remains without a single entity overseeing what is happening with foreign language education in schools throughout Brazil. Bohn thinks the outlined ideals are a step in the right direction and support recent research findings, but still need to be implemented across Brazil. He quoted Perrenoud (1999), stating “new legislation and new discourses do not necessarily lead to better quality education or to more efficient learning practices” to emphasize this (p. 166). Bohn’s takeaway in observing English as a Foreign Language in Brazil is that policies influence FL education, but they also don’t ensure that FL education is being done right as one would hope good education policy would seek to achieve. Teachers have to understand the policy and embrace it before it truly yields any desired results.

**Andrade, Hartshorn, Evans, and Davis (2019)** take an alternative approach to understanding the effects of EFL learning and teaching by looking at international

students enrolled in graduate business schools in the U.S., United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada. A study they conducted posed the following overarching research question: In what ways does having a large percentage of international ESL students impact business graduate programs and how do these programs help students achieve desired outcomes, particularly English language proficiency?

Andrade et al.'s findings identified a range of practices associated with international student success and categorized them as good, better, and best. They also discovered an overall consensus among deans that "schools of business with large concentrations of international ESL students are aware of the benefits of having diverse student body as well as the issues that accompany it" (p. 46). I was surprised to see that the data they collected showed that while the U.S. annually hosts more international students than any other nation, students and teachers in U.S. higher education institutions often do not experience the same amount of diversity as university students do in other inner-circle countries. International student enrollment in the U.S. is just barely over 5%, whereas in countries like the U.K. and Australia, around 20% of their entire student population are international students.

Research done in the U.S. and Australia reflect different models being used to address the increasing trend and need for ESL among international students. The concept of development in Australia versus support in the U.S. is noteworthy. Good practices are stand-alone and generic in nature, in that academic English skills are disconnected from the course vocabulary and content. Better practices go beyond the traditional approach to address certain needs but not show deliberate planning, consistent review of data, or other types of evaluation. Best practices include initiatives based on feedback. This means

teachers evaluate what is working and what isn't, then design their lessons to focus on identified challenges.

Moving from EFL among international students to the informal teaching of English in outer and expanding circle countries (places that English is not commonly spoken or accepted as the main language), I wanted to understand perspectives of learners and teachers in regard to the global teaching of English as an International Language (EIL). An increasingly popular trend sometimes referred to as “voluntourism” (Jakubiak, 2012, p. 435) or volunteer English language teaching abroad is discussed in depth in the following article that I read.

**Jakubiak (2012)** posed interesting questions about the effects of volunteers, who are “native speakers of prestige-variety, or inner-core English” (p. 437) that teach English to people in outer and expanding circle countries. His article discusses both justification and critiques for such volunteers as well as presents data that he collected from volunteers and organizations taking part in the social practice of volunteer tourism. He uses to Wearing's (2001) definition of volunteer tourism or voluntourism: to “volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the poverty of some groups in society” (Wearing, 2001, p.1) and adds voluntourism is a “short-term practice” (Jakubiak, 2012, p. 436). Since the mid 1990s voluntourism has grown in unprecedented ways and has been promoted both by groups within and outside of the tourism industry. By virtue of its increased popularity, the social practice of voluntourism has both advocates and critics.

Those who advocate for voluntourism include “NGOs, faith-based coalitions, and state actors”, which “promote volunteer tourism in the names of development aid and

public diplomacy or “soft power”” (p. 436). Many supporters of voluntourism claim that volunteers can “harness civil society’s power and solve long-term problems” and/or lead to “increased civic engagement” (p. 437). He notes that many NGOs deem “English language voluntourism is beneficial for service recipients and constitutes development aid” (p. 437) and brings up the argument that any teaching done by a volunteer is better than no teaching at all. Jakubiak ties the perspective of voluntourism supporters to the ideology of neoliberalism. He says that “within a neoliberal frame, to participate in volunteer tourism exemplifies proper civic action and personal virtuosity” (p. 439).

Those who criticize voluntourism on the other hand look beyond the mark of selfless service. “Despite its pretensions to altruism, then, English-language voluntourism may in fact be aiding and abetting the very formations and ideologies that lead to structural inequities in the first place” (p. 441). Jakubiak (2012) and others express concerns surrounding the notion that volunteers need only “enthusiasm and a desire to help adult and youth students” (p. 437) but can do without prior teaching experience. He likewise finds issue with the idea that “one can address dissatisfactory social issues through consumption (i.e., the purchase of a volunteer vacation)” (p. 439). Then fully anticipate the outcome of “providing others with the tools for life-long learning (i.e., the English language)” to be the result of a volunteer vacation experience (p. 439). He points out the implications involving power surrounding volunteer English teachers and learners as discussed in Heath (2007) and suggests that volunteers accrue “symbolic capital” in return for their “economic capital” (p. 437). In other words, “through the purchase of a volunteer vacation, already privileged people are able to appear distinctly altruistic and worldly” (p. 437).



Contributing to the problematic pretense of voluntourism accomplishing an altruistic purpose without containing underlining agendas includes the assumption that English is relevant and useful to those being taught by English language volunteers. Jakubiak refers to what he terms English for the global and English for the local or the marketing appeals used to attract both volunteers and learners to the mission of both teaching and learning EIL. English for the global “suggests that unlimited opportunities exist on the so-called world stage and that English skills alone permit admittance” (p. 441). English for the local paints English as a solution to overcome individual poverty and the source of attainment for personal empowerment.

Jakubiak concludes by calling into question English as “a magical cure-all” (p. 448). He points out that “in the English-language voluntourism context, EIL teaching stints are short, frequently conducted by inexperienced volunteers, and often disconnected from broader educational curricula” (p. 441). As a result, it remains unclear whether English language voluntourism is the source of individual and nation development or if it exists to promote the continued empowerment of English speakers and English-speaking nations in the guise of helping individual non-native English speakers in the current era of globalization.

**Pennycook and Coutland-Marin’s (2003)** article focuses on the concerns and consequences that are associated with EFL being taught by Christian missionaries. The four main areas they explored include: 1) what is the scale of EFL being taught and used as a proselyting tool?; 2) what cultural politics surround such Christian teaching of EFL?; 3) how are the issues of trust and disclosure being used to access EFL students to spread

the Christian message?; and 4) how does Teaching English as a Missionary Language (TEML) implicitly support the global spread of English over other possibilities?

Pennycook and Coutland-Marin gathered data from religious websites' mission statements. Such statements openly reflected their use of English to teach Christianity, the number of converts at Christian camps that teach English and, rhetoric from political leaders and scholars. It's analyzed qualitatively, but some numbers are given to help see the widespread use of such tactics. They express concern for what appears to be a service of *free English teaching* (more often than not by unqualified teachers who are native speakers of English) with the real agenda of converting people to Christianity. They looked at different cultural and political positions being taken by various Christian organizations in their initiatives to teach EFL. These include using English as a gateway to find people to teach the message of Christianity, assuming NSs are qualified to teach EFL, knowing English will bring greater prosperity to people and communities, seeing English as a Christian service, and the overall ethics involved in TEML.

One of the main conclusions that Pennycook and Coutland-Marin make in their article is highlighted by the following quote: "As language teachers we should 'restrict the purpose of our teaching to facilitating the life purposes of our students'" (Julian Edge, 1996 as cited in Pennycook & Coutland-Marin, 2003, p. 337). As should be the goal of all formal education, it is not the teacher's role to persuade students' beliefs to have their own personal agendas to more closely align the beliefs of their students with their personal convictions. However, ideal and obvious as this seems, Pennycook and Coutland-Marin acknowledge that education is never culturally or politically neutral, but

that English language teaching does not have to promote particular positions as it has been observed to do with Teaching English as a Missionary Language.

## **Conclusion**

The teaching of English as a global language was and continues to be a topic that fascinates me. By reading these articles, I was able to gain a better understanding of how the desire and opportunity to learn and teach English is unparalleled to what it has ever been at any other given moment in history. There is no shortage of books and articles available on the history of the English language, especially in regard to how it rose to have the power and influence it does today. The connotation and impact that the terms native and non-native speakers have on learners and teachers alike was also insightful as I realized these terms create bias and prejudice, oftentimes misleading individuals to believe nativeness should carry greater weight in deciding who should teach them English rather than language proficiency, education, and actual teaching experience. As for the conglomerate of individuals that make up the global market and collective of English teachers, I believe the current trends show that from inexperienced but native-speaking volunteers to highly educated and experienced English teachers in the world, there will continue to be a demand for all. Sadly, unless perceptions change to acknowledge that skilled and trained teachers have more to offer in terms of actual acquisition, then English teachers will continue to be a low-paying industry that welcomes anyone who wants to join the industry to do so.

## LOOKING FORWARD

While years of studying and education are vital to many professions, education alone does not make a person ready to enter their field. This is why doctors complete residencies, electricians have apprenticeships, and k-12 teachers do student teaching. I am grateful that when I chose to pursue a master's degree that would help me teach English as a Second Language (ESL) to adult learners, I did not have to remove myself from the ESL classroom. While in the MSLT program, I had the opportunity to professionally develop as an English instructor for the Intensive English Language Institute (IELI) at Utah State University. As a result of my combined education and teaching experiences over the last three years, I feel prepared to enter the English teaching profession.

As I look ahead, I anticipate becoming a part of another great Intensive English Program (IEP), so that I can continue to teach international students English at the university level. Ideally as I do this, I will have the opportunity to continue doing research in the field of SLA, while pursuing a PhD in educational or applied linguistics. However, before beginning a PhD, I plan to first seek additional opportunities to teach English in a community setting where I can assist immigrants and refugees in their efforts to learn English. My ultimate interest and long-term desire include teaching adult learners English in the United States, where I plan to eventually open up my own English school.

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