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A LIBRARY’S ROLE IN THE SUCCESS OF ADULT, ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

By
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A DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE

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Abstract

The purpose of this Dissertation in Practice was to explore how a U.S. library in the Midwestern United States successfully supports its English learners through English language education and how it helps them achieve their individual visions of success. The study’s aim was to make recommendations for adult, English learning programs in public libraries based on the Midwestern Library model. In order to meet these objectives, the researcher conducted a qualitative, grounded-theory study based on interviews with 15 adult, English learners, their volunteer teachers, and the program director. The resultant data from these interviews pointed to more areas of success which they had enjoyed, defined their personal goals and language objectives, and noted their desired learning opportunities in areas of citizenship, job preparation, computers, reading, spelling, grammar, and U.S. History. However, meeting these needs would require more teachers, since the English as a Second Language (ESL) Program at the Midwestern Library has only four volunteer teachers. Therefore, the researcher presents two proposals intended to meet the learners’ needs by including more teachers and expanding the already successful program. Ultimately, this qualitative study offers recommendations to the program based on data from participant students, volunteers, and the ESL Program Director from the Midwestern Library.

Keywords: public libraries, English language education, ESL
Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation, first of all, to the Lord who brought me here and guided me every step of the way and to my late parents, who gave me a lasting appreciation for formal education, good books, and a love of all learning at any age. I know they are watching now. In addition, I would like to dedicate this work to my four sons, Joseph, Thomas, Kevin, and Connor, who are kind, loving, and supportive, and to my late husband, Bob. Bless all of you.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Every day, adult immigrants come to the United States with dreams and goals for themselves and their families. According to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS, 2013), 3,000 immigrants become citizens daily, 30,000 applications for benefits are submitted, 3,400 newcomers receive Permanent Resident Status, 7,300 Permanent Resident cards are issued, and 40 individuals are granted asylum. These newcomers seek out guides and compatriots who can help them in their newly adopted country. In the process of acclimating, these newcomers find that a solid knowledge of the English language and U.S. culture are necessary to gain employment and attain a comfortable standard of living. Furthermore, in order to become eligible for the first major step of the citizenship process, naturalization, immigrants are required to speak, read, and write English (USCIS, 2013). To achieve this goal, many immigrants, especially those with few skills and little education, try to improve their facility in English by attending classes at local libraries and literacy centers.

Although libraries commonly provide gratis English classes for newcomers and often do their best to act as community centers, the paths that many immigrants take towards societal integration can be lonely and desperate. For example, many immigrants have limited forms of transportation. Initially, they have to depend upon family to transport them to English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, work-related activities, and shopping (Marshall, 2002; T. Quinn, personal communication, May 28, 2015). Furthermore, they have to acclimate to a different environment and seek necessary services, such as medical care, schools, and churches. Moreover, many newcomers have
limited English language skills, making it tedious to find work, or at least work in their preferred fields.

Whereas newcomers had previously settled in large cities such as New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago, non-traditional areas of the United States have begun in recent times to experience new waves of immigration (Muñoz & Rodríguez, 2015). Therefore, immigration issues such as employment, integration, citizenship, and language began to arise in immigration pockets around the country, including that of the Midwestern Library, serving a population of approximately 35,000 inhabitants, and the subject of this study (M. Walsh, personal communication, May 22, 2014).

Newcomers have found out about the ESL Program at the Midwestern Library through signs in public places and from librarians, relatives, and friends (M. Walsh, personal communication, May 22, 2014). Once these immigrants enroll in the English program, they depend heavily, as English language learners (ELLs), upon library services for integration into U.S. communities. Consequently, since libraries have taken on a task of such import, the question remains if these libraries, in this case, the Midwestern Library ESL Program, offer programs that truly meet the needs of the ELLs.

Statement of the Problem

In a world where an international migrant enters the United States every 30 seconds and 20.7% of U.S. households speak a language other than English at home (United States Census Bureau, 2015), the English language and concomitant learning programs have become vital to the well-being and integration of newcomers into U.S. society (World Education, 2015). As a matter of fact, World Education (2015) has predicted one out of five workers in the United States in the year 2030 will be an
immigrant. However, almost half of the foreign-born population reported to the U.S. Census Bureau that they had limited English speaking ability, and 10% admitted to speaking no English. Furthermore, there is a direct relationship between English literacy for immigrants in the United States and employment, compensation and satisfaction. That is, greater mastery of English points to better jobs, increased pay, and community engagement (Sum, Kirsch, & Yamamoto, 2004; United States Census Bureau, 2015). Therefore, facility in English represents the key for immigrants to upgrade their financial status, realize their personal goals, and achieve success.

Today, immigrants comprise almost 13% of the total population, and many of them are gravitating to unexpected areas of the United States that do not offer the same amenities, such as the highly-developed ESL infrastructures that metropolitan areas boast (Muñoz & Rodríguez, 2015). As a result, this situation of unemployed immigrants could create an unrelenting tax burden on a community’s resources and inhabitants, not to mention future marginalization of these newcomers, according to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) (2006). Consequently, it would be significant if the study site library developed a plan to ease the burdens of adjustment for immigrants within the model of its English instructional program. Modification of the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program could be realized through suggestions for improvement from those it has affected most: its participants.

This study explored the success that ELLs feel they have achieved as a result of their instruction in the library’s ESL Program. Prior to this study, it was unknown how participants valued or felt success as a result of this instruction because there were no
A LIBRARY’S ROLE

data such as exit interviews or evaluations pointing to any program outcomes. Consequently, without effective evaluation, library volunteers could only speculate if they were serving all the participants’ best interests. This dissertation aimed to provide that evaluative data which would inform recommendations for the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program.

Moreover, this dissertation adds to existing research in the fields of ESL and immigration because it focuses on one ESL Program at the Midwestern Library and its ELL participants, adult learning and learner types, adult ELLs, and best practices for English instruction. Given the data and supporting information, the study demonstrates how a library can respond best to the needs of its community, in particular its immigrant community. The site library’s educational model, focused on inclusion and support, with more research into best practices, could act as a model for other library/literacy centers that serve a similar immigrant population.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how the Midwestern Library supports its adult, immigrant learners through English language education and how it helps them achieve their individual visions of success.

Research Questions

In this study, the researcher wanted to determine whether the library’s ESL Program was responding to the multiple needs of the immigrants who participated in its classes. In order to accomplish this, the researcher asked the learners what role they thought the ESL Program played in the realization of their success.

Therefore, the following research questions informed this qualitative study:
1. What factors contributed to the English learners’ individual successes as a result of the ESL instruction at this library?

2. What improvement could the ESL Program make in order to encourage the success of future ELLs?

Significance of the Study

Libraries are obligated to fulfill their own missions, which outline their obligations to their patrons. Because they have a tradition of providing information to their tax-paying communities, the task of instructing so many learners from this group of 41.3 million new immigrants (Muñoz, & Rodríguez, 2015; Zong & Batalova, 2015) has fallen into the laps of public libraries and centers in the United States. The challenge is that some ELLs entering the United States have had little education and, therefore, have few employable or transferable skills. Others, as refugees, have had their lives interrupted due to war or invasion. These individuals require not only particular teaching skills, but also practiced sensitivity on the part of their instructors. These students need curricula that encourage their future participation in the workplace and engagement in their communities.

Most importantly, however, it is crucial for a program to listen to and subsequently respond to the unique demands of its particular community, in this case, an adult newcomer community that needs a venue to enhance its English-speaking skills. Therefore, this Dissertation in Practice focused on the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program, which was a unique site for English instruction. Although some newcomer learning sites in the United States offer integration services to immigrants and refugees
that include ESL instruction, the Midwestern Library focuses only on English instruction for its patrons.

The Midwestern Library’s mission has been to enrich the lives of its public by providing them with the information they need, according to its director (M. Walsh, personal communication, April 8, 2015). Therefore, to find out exactly what information they required, the researcher used data from ELLs to make recommendations for the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program, which could serve as a blueprint for other programs of similar makeup. Further, this newly devised model offers a new perspective into a rather haphazard system of newcomer integration which differs broadly from community to community (Muñoz, & Rodríguez, 2015).

**Aim of the Study**

The aim of this qualitative study was to make recommendations for adult English learning programs in public libraries based on the Midwestern Library’s model.

**Methodology Overview**

As Creswell (2013) noted, a grounded theory approach aims to develop a theory about a topic based on collecting data. In line with this approach, this qualitative, grounded study on ESL instruction at the Midwestern Library consisted of interviews with volunteer participants in its ESL Program. Specifically at the Midwestern Library, the data came from 15 ELL participants, who articulated their perceptions about success resulting from this program, as well as suggestions about strategies for future activities within the program, and from interviews with three of the program’s volunteers and the director concerning their students’ success along with their suggestions for enhancing the ESL Program at Midwestern Library. For triangulation purposes, the researcher
interviewed four ESL Program directors at other external sites, and conducted research in the field of English as a Second Language study.

**Definitions of Relevant Terms**

The following terms were used as a matter of course within this study:

*Citizenship:* Status of official membership in the United States by those who share a belief in the fundamental values of the U.S. Constitution (USCIS, 2014).

*Community engagement:* Involvement in activities of one’s home community

*EL:* English learner

*ELL:* English language learner

*ENL:* English as a new language

*ESL:* English as a second language; this acronym is the general usage applied in this study. Its meaning here, however, may be viewed as “English instruction,” regardless of whether the learners have one or multiple languages in their backgrounds. Further, the Midwestern Library refers to its program as the “ESL Program.”

*Grounded theory:* “Qualitative research design in which the inquirer generates a general explanation of a process, an action, or an interaction shaped by the views of a large number of participants” (Creswell, 2013, p. 83).

*Immigrants:* “Individuals with no U.S. citizenship at birth. The population included naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, refugees, and asylees, persons on certain temporary visas, and the unauthorized” (Zong & Batalova, 2015. para. 4).

*Inclusion:* State of including all individuals in a community or process

*Integration:* Settlement in and connection of immigrants with their communities

*L1:* An individual’s first or native language
L2: An individual’s second language learned; in this dissertation, English is referred to typically as the L2.

LEP: Limited English Proficient refers to individuals who stated they speak English “not at all,” “not well,” or “well” on surveys from the U.S. Census Bureau (Zong & Batalova, 2015). With the exception of the Advanced Level students, most of the ELLs in the Midwestern Library ESL Program would classify as LEP students.

Limited print literacy: Limited ability of learner to read; may be a euphemism for inability to read.

Naturalization: “Process by which U.S. citizenship is granted to foreign citizens or nationals after they fulfill the requirements established by Congress in the Immigrations and Nationality Act” (USCIS, 2013, para. 1).

Needs assessment: Process of determining what participants actually need in order to drive instruction for them

Newcomers: Individuals from a different country who are new to a community

Refugees: Oppressed persons who, for various reasons, had to flee their native lands. In this study, Palestine refugees refer to individuals and their offspring who lived in Palestine from June 1, 1946, to May 15, 1948, and lost “home and livelihood” due to the conflict in 1948 (UNRWA, 2015, para. 1).

SDL: Self-Directed Learning

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

Servant leadership: Leaders, who consider themselves first and foremost servants to the organizational members, understand, accept, and enrich their followers, and work for the common good (Greenleaf, 1977).
Success: Feelings of satisfaction upon achieving individual goals.

Transfer: Process of using prior knowledge as a basis for learning new knowledge

These terms represent the most salient points requiring definition in this dissertation. It is important to note that all of these terms were viewed from the perspective of the United States of America. Therefore, in context, if individuals are newcomers, they have come from other countries to settle in the United States. Likewise, immigrants, according to the reference here, would have arrived in the United States, usually with the intention of becoming citizens, although the researcher has found that this was not always the case. Certain assumptions concerning improvement were likewise made by the researcher, as noted below.

Assumptions

This researcher entered into the study of library support for its ELL participants and recommendations for program enhancements with the assumption that the program should and could be improved. These beliefs were based partly on change theory, insofar as most organizations undergo evolutionary change (Burke, 2011), and partly on the truism that accepts change as a given. The researcher further surmised that funding would lead to greater numbers of participants, indicating a thriving program.

With regard to the study participants, the researcher assumed that this group would offer multiple suggestions with a high level of transparency for enhancement of the program. Specifically, the researcher had hoped that they would share their honest insights during interviews. The researcher also assumed that the participants would have sufficient competency in English to participate actively in an interview conversation. However, each of the 15 higher level participants needed assistance with vocabulary or
comprehension at different junctures during the interviews. In addition to these assumptions, there are a few delimitations and one limitation which characterized this study, as explained in the following section.

**Delimitations and a Limitation**

Delimitations of this study included the time frame of March-April 2015 during which the study was conducted. During this period, the researcher held interviews with adult English learners about the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program that they were attending currently. The setting of these interviews was a table in the Children’s Department next door to the ESL classes, all of which were located in the Midwestern Library. As the singular physical site of research, this library served as a delimitation because it restricted research to itself, limiting transferability to other venues with similar programs. Nonetheless, the author has researched ESL programs in Boston, Kansas City, Chicago, and New Orleans, and interviewed four ESL program directors as background material for the original data for the improvement of the Midwestern Library’s model. This information is addressed in Chapter 2 of the Dissertation in Practice. Further, the sampling of ELLs in this study consisted only of individuals who had been engaged with the program from at least January 2015. These participants may have attended the program’s classes prior to January 2015, but some may have started as recently as January.

A potential limitation of this research was that the individuals who discontinued their participation were not present for interviews and there was no means to contact them due to a lack of informative data. Therefore, their reasons for discontinuance will
never be known, at least to this researcher. In the following section, the leadership’s role and responsibility with respect to the ESL program and its learners are defined.

The Leader’s Role and Responsibility in Relation to the Problem

The relationship between the ESL Program and its learners is defined by servant leadership. According to Johnson (2012), servant leaders look to the needs of followers, as opposed to those of the organization, or themselves, and guide their members toward the common good. They respond favorably to most of their followers’ changing requests, but retain the wisdom to choose which ones are for the betterment of everyone (Greenleaf, 1977). “Servant leadership seeks to involve others in decision-making, is strongly based in ethical and caring behavior, and enhances the growth of workers while improving the caring and quality of organizational life” (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 7; Long, 2011, p. 2). According to Shugart (1997), servant leaders guide followers in the pursuit of individual and organizational improvement. In line with this philosophy, Greenleaf (1977) suggested that a benchmark for servant leadership was improvement in the lives of those who followed. In this respect, Shugart (1997) stated the following:

Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or, at least not be further deprived? (p. 239)

At the Midwestern Library, ELLs require servant leadership because they need help in improving their English to develop sufficient independence. After all, they are strangers in a strange land, they know few people, and their economic foothold is
tentative. Accordingly, the ESL Program at the Midwestern Library exists in order to help newcomers with their English language skills because a good command of English is considered the key to a prosperous, satisfying life in the United States (Toso, Prins, & Mooney, 2013). Indeed, Martinez and Wang (2005) noted that immigrants who spoke English made 46% higher wages than those who did not; additionally, they found a 12% earnings difference in workers with English skills, even when adding experience and education to the list of offerings. Although the ELLs have experienced language-learning external to the library, those who were engaged in the library’s ESL Program have become citizens, found jobs, made friends, formed networks, and secured a greater level of safety for themselves and their families. The library leadership must take at least part of the credit because it provides a gratis educational opportunity for improvement (D. Clark, personal communication, May 14, 2014). In short, the ESL Program at Midwestern Library demands servant leaders who put their followers’ needs first and work for the common good.

Summary

The question in this Dissertation in Practice involved the role of the ESL Program at the Midwestern Library in the success of adult English learners as they integrate into new communities within the United States. Specifically, the purpose of this qualitative study was to evaluate the success of the ESL Program through interviews with participant learners and their instructors, and subsequently design an improved program based on the data. This topic is important because there are increasing numbers of immigrants entering U.S. communities who need help learning English, learning new skills, and finding their way. The library and its ESL Director have taken on the role of servant
leadership by providing free instruction in English to ELLs; however, their efforts may require some direction. The author of this Dissertation in Practice has investigated these issues and formed conclusions consistent with the interview data and research. The next chapter concerns a literary review of the research topic and the necessary background material.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter Two of this dissertation outlines the development of English as a Second Language in the United States and describes the ESL Program at the Midwestern Library, its participants, and other external ESL programs. The researcher also examined themes about adult learners that distinguish them from pre-adult learners, including physical traits, motivation, background knowledge, self-directed learning, and a preference for meaningfulness of content. Further, the researcher looked at characteristics that influence adult English language learners including post-puberty learning, less risk-taking than pre-adult learners, acculturation, and fossilization. In addition to learner characteristics, themes regarding learner types were explored. These learner types consisted of learners with limited literacy as well as those seeking career modifications, including professionals needing certification, individuals seeking vocational skills, and entrepreneurs. Based on this information, the researcher then proposed best practices for instructing these English language learners. This set of best practices responds to the data concerning the numbers of immigrants entering the United States in recent times.

Zong and Batalova (2015) of the Migration Policy Institute reported that 41.3 million immigrants make their homes in the United States. In other words, 25% of the U.S. population of 318.9 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015) consists of immigrants and their U.S.-born children. Indeed, 20.7% of U.S. households speak a language other than English at home, although not everyone in these households may be an immigrant. Significantly, as of 2013, 50% (20.4 million) of the immigrant population (41.1% in 2013) considered themselves Limited English Proficient (LEP) (Zong & Batalova, 2015).
The American Community Survey (ACS), which publishes data on English use in the United States, reported that only half of Vietnamese, Chinese, and Korean newcomers thought they “spoke English very well” (Ryan, 2013, p. 4). The data also displayed a lack of change from 2007-2011 in self-perceptions of “less than well” (Ryan, 2013, p. 4) English-speaking ability.

There is a direct relationship between English literacy for immigrants in the United States and employment recompense and satisfaction (Sum et al., 2004). In other words, greater mastery of English points to better jobs, increased pay, and community engagement (Sum et al., 2004). Facility in English is the key for immigrants to realize personal goals, while English language education is needed for adult learners to find success in an English-speaking society. Since education is not compulsory for adults, these newcomers must find venues where they can initiate or enhance their English-speaking skills and ESL literacy centers that address this challenge. According to Toso, Prins, and Mooney (2013), programs that offer English language instruction, civics preparation, and job training fit that mold precisely. Existing ESL programs have taken on new significance and burdens as they prepare to accommodate these ELLs in their transition into U.S. society. Accordingly, libraries and literacy centers have launched effective programs aimed at improving the lives of newcomers. With similar intent, this study investigated the needs of the adult English language learners in the ESL Program at the Midwestern Library. The next section illustrates the instructional tradition in the United States upon which this ESL Program is based.
Background of ESL Instruction in the United States

ESL programs have existed in the United States since the 17th century, when great numbers of immigrants with different languages began arriving on American shores. As a response to the communicative needs of these newcomers, ESL instruction began in earnest in 1664 and bilingual education programs in 1839 (Teaching Leadership, n.d.). In the early 1900s, the YMCA, YWCA, American Civic League for Immigrants, and the Daughters and Sons of the American Revolution all urged the government and other organizations to increase ESL instruction in the United States. In addition, volunteers in organizations such as Hull House spent countless time teaching English and survivor skills to immigrants to prepare them for new lives in their new land (Young, 2008). In 1914, Henry Ford initiated “The Ford English School” to prepare his immigrant employees for work at the Ford plant and for integration into U.S. society ("University of Michigan," n.d.). A few years later in 1919, ESL organizers advertised adult ESL classes (for men only) in Delaware (Young, 2008). Accordingly, literacy centers in the United States have had a long history of providing resources and education to immigrants. In public libraries, this tradition may be traced to Andrew Carnegie’s early support for libraries as places “for immigrant self-education, enlightenment, and the study of democracy and English” (USCIS & IMLS, 2006, p. 1). Carnegie, an immigrant from Scotland, was known for his philanthropy with regard to public library funding. He believed that libraries were perfect examples of democracy and education, especially for immigrants. His ingenuity continues today in many areas, including innovations in education and civic integration for immigrants (Carnegie Corporation, 2015).
At the outset of the Twentieth Century, ESL education became equally appealing for both men and women, but in different ways. Specifically, male learners wanted to learn job-related vocabulary and women preferred lessons concerning the home in order to engage more actively in their societal pursuits (Young, 2008). Today’s English instruction does not differentiate between genders unless a needs analysis of the ELLs indicates that a certain need exists. ESL instruction itself also changed. Twentieth-century instructors began to move away from grammar-based instruction and toward teaching language through content, i.e., teaching content material, such as history or literature, with L2 vocabulary and grammar embedded (Brown, 2007). For example, an instructor would teach five new vocabulary words, and then present a reading selection about any subject including the vocabulary so that students could understand them in authentic context.

Currently, ESL classes are held throughout the United States for the benefit of newcomers, international students, and others who have a different first language, yet still struggle with English. Classes vary widely and may include reading, writing, technology, citizenship, and community outreach efforts. Research indicates that newcomers favor classes with a focus on practical content such as survival discourse, transportation, money, housing, and job preparation (Auerbach, 1992; Knowles, 1984). According to Auerbach (1992), the best content is driven by learner needs, with the result that classes may be startlingly different in various parts of the country. The cost to the immigrants for these classes may be nothing or very little and thus are quite appealing for many potential learners. Typically, ESL instruction has been offered at libraries, literacy
centers, churches, community colleges, schools, and universities (American Library Association [ALA], 2013).

Recently, in April of 2015, the White House Task Force on New Americans (Muñoz & Rodríguez, 2015) introduced new initiatives to integrate ELLs’ language instruction and civic engagement throughout the United States, such as welcoming committees for immigrants new to communities, creating toolkits for communities with newcomers, offering United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) grants to organizations having naturalization programs (see Chapter Four), and creating partnerships with cities and public libraries to encourage citizenship and volunteerism. For example, the USCIS has formed partnerships through official Letters of Agreement with the cities of New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Boston, Atlanta, and Nashville to promote education about citizenship (USCIS, 2015). In addition, the White House Task Force has generated workforce training and a new program for entrepreneurs, since 10.5% of all immigrant workers are entrepreneurs in contrast to 9.3% of native-born workers, according to Fairlie (2012). Further, one-fifth of all entrepreneurs in the United States own businesses employing 4.7 million workers (Immigration Policy Center, 2012). Therefore, given the popularity of entrepreneurship with immigrants, the idea behind these initiatives is to encourage them to become U.S. citizens, find gainful employment for some, inform others about privately-owned businesses, and become actively engaged in their chosen communities. One such piece of this engagement includes education of adult English language learners. This special population of learners presents a unique skill set and challenges and requires an equally specific educational philosophy and practice. In the next section, the nature of adult learner characteristics will be discussed.
Adult Learners

The theory of adult learning, known as andragogy, emerged as an area of scholarly research in 19th-century Germany (Finn, 2011). In the United States, Thorndike, Bregman, Tilton, and Woodyard’s (1928) seminal work, *Adult Learning*, explored differences between adult and pre-adult learning (Finn, 2011; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005). In this work funded by Carnegie, students aged 15 through 45 were studied as they learned Esperanto, shorthand, typing, and other skills. The authors found that the optimum learning time was between 20-24 years, but decreased thereafter. However, they noted also that adults could learn most anything and made up for any age deficiencies by their motivation, self-directed learning, and the meaningfulness of that learning to them. Knowles’ (1968) research in the 1960s broke new ground by seeking to view andragogy in juxtaposition to pedagogy, the discipline of teaching younger students (Merriam, 2001). Knowles (1968) believed that adults had learning traits which differed from those of non-adults and offered six examples of these differences such as self-directed learning, background experience, personal reasons for learning, practicality, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Therefore, Knowles (1968) reasoned that learning strategies that conformed to this unique style should be used (Clardy, 2006). The following section outlines the traits of adult learners, which emerged from Knowles’ research and describes how each of these characteristics defines adult learning in specific ways.

Adult Learner Traits

The qualities that define adults as unique learners consist of physical traits, strong motivation, background knowledge, and a preference for self-directed learning and
meaningfulness of content (Falasca, 2011; Knowles, 1980). For example, physical traits unique to adult learners play a strong role in the way adults learn. Falasca (2011) mentioned the physical effects of aging such as diminished vision and hearing, as potential learning impediments. In addition, illness or anxiety and changing roles in life brought on by death, job loss, or other trauma may contribute to a higher learning barrier for adults (Falasca, 2011). Fisher (1988) cited fatigue as still another obstacle in adult learning. In sum, it may simply take some adults longer to learn when they have to struggle to get past these obstacles.

Motivation is another quality of adult learners that differentiates them from pre-adults. In fact, many researchers agree that powerful motivation is the strongest factor in learning (Brown, 2007; Maslow, 1970). Brown (2007) noted further that intrinsic motivation, rewarded from within an individual, is the most influential component in education because its results are reflected in feelings of self-sufficiency. Falasca (2011) agreed that adults have to be intrinsically motivated in order to be successful in learning. Encouraged by their own motivation, adults tend to choose personal, non-compulsory educational paths, inspired by practical circumstances such as employment and finance; pre-adult learners, however, have little choice because they have to conform to school systems with parents, peers, and educational regimentation. Also, motivation may help learners overcome negative feelings or inhibitions (Brown, 2007; Freeman & Freeman, 2004).

In addition to strong motivation, background knowledge is a resource for adult learners through which they process new knowledge. Through the years, adults gain a great body of background, or prior, knowledge accumulated through experience and
perhaps education. Adults can put this rich source of information to good use by applying the knowledge to life’s circumstances. They can learn more and better if they relate new knowledge to prior knowledge (Pazzani, 1991). Knowles (1980) advocated that adults use their great body of knowledge from experience and prior education as a basis for acquiring more education. Indeed, research has found that adult scoring on educational assessments had more to do with prior knowledge than with age (Lorge, 1944, 1947; Merriam, 2001). Research since Lorge (1944, 1947) has indicated that although learning may have less to do with age than with a foundational knowledge base, adults and pre-adults simply learn differently.

Self-directed learning (SDL) refers to the choices that adults make about education that respond to their immediate plans (Knowles, 1980). As competency-based learners, they look at acquiring a skill as something they will use in the near future (Merriam, 2001). As they age, adult learners evolve as self-directing individuals (Knowles et al., 2005). Further, Falasca (2011) supported self-directed learning by noting that independent adults need to use their life experiences as background knowledge as they pursue learning for specific reasons. Therefore, with many life experiences behind them, adults tend to choose more personalized, meaningful instruction in line with their immediate plans. Knowles (1980) likewise argued that adults require freedom to manage their own learning and this learning must be meaningful to them. Self-directed knowledge leads to meaningfulness of learning.

Recognition of meaningfulness of learning also differentiates adults from non-adult learners. Adults choose meaningful content due to the immediate import of its usage, as opposed to pre-adults’ possible use of content in the distant future (Auerbach,
1992; Knowles, 1980; Knowles, et al., 2005; Merriam, 2001). This nexus between information and its application encourage adult learners to act as problem-solvers in ways unique to their situations. These learners design their own agendas based on their perceived needs or goals, which leads them eventually to the realization of those goals. As self-directed individuals, “adults need to know why they need to learn something” (Knowles, 1980, p. 84, as cited in Finn, 2011, p. 37). This is why Merriam (2001) and Houle (1996) agreed that andragogy is highly learner-centered and urged the teaching profession to adopt this successful strategy in all areas of education.

Adults who learn a new language possess these same characteristics of adult learning such as particular physical traits and strong motivation. They also utilize their prior knowledge, prefer meaningfulness of content, and develop self-directed learning. In the next section, other factors that influence adult ELLs, in particular, are discussed.

**Adult Second Language Learners**

Krashen (2003) differentiated between acquiring a new language (L2) and *learning* a new language (as cited in Freeman & Freeman, 2004). Even for adults who have mastered multiple languages or dialects, English represents a new language. The *acquisition* of language often occurs among younger individuals in a subconscious way—they listen to their parents speaking the L1 at home or respond to their surroundings. For example, younger or older learners may also find themselves in a total immersion setting, forcing them to think, speak, and comprehend the new language on a constant basis. In both of these situations, learners respond to language cues without conscious learning of the language (Brown, 2007; Freeman & Freeman, 2004; Krashen, 2003). This is referred to as language acquisition, as opposed to the *language learning* that typical adult ELLs
undergo (Brown, 2007). Although older learners definitely respond to total immersion in language acquisition, this type of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) favors younger individuals, as discussed below.

In the adult brain, Broca’s area in the frontal lobe controls the motor activity that the mouth makes in speaking a language; in addition, different languages are separated in this area. Wernicke’s area in the posterior lobe, however, controls language comprehension (Talukder, 2001). According to Talukder (2001), these two different areas of usage explain why an individual may understand a question, but has trouble providing an immediate answer. In early language learners, particularly bilingual speakers, there is no brain separation of languages in either area and therefore, it is easier for non-adult learners to process language. Since research shows that the brain grows the most between the ages of six and 13, researchers regard this as the prime time for language acquisition (Talukder, 2001). At the age of 13 or so, marking puberty, language acquisition blends into language learning (Brown, 2007). At this time, the brain begins to retain the language information in two different, physical areas. Accordingly, there is a theory called the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) which points to a biological clock regarding language acquisition. Prior to puberty, students acquire a language without an L1 accent. After puberty, however, new languages may be learned, but not without some trace of an L1 accent (Brown, 2001). Nevertheless, research demonstrates that with the right learning strategies and extra time, adults can learn an L2 or multiple languages correctly. Commonly, Japanese speakers identify the “l” and “r” sounds as a singular phoneme, but with special training by researchers, some adult, Japanese speakers were able to distinguish the difference between these phonemes. Researchers used a computer
program to elongate these consonants’ sounds, and after one hour, the adults were able to distinguish between these sounds (Talukder, 2001). In doing so, nonetheless, these adults had to learn or rewire their own understanding of sounds in language, proving that adults, under the proper circumstances, are capable of learning the same material as non-adults, but in distinctive ways. This connection between the brain and language learning also influences another adult learning characteristic, risk-taking, as discussed below.

Risk-taking in language learning influences the development of language in adults because adults are simply less inclined to experience risk, according to Steinberg (2008). Pre-adults, or younger people, take more risks than adults because of socio-emotional and cognitive changes in the brain (Steinberg, 2008). Beebe (1983) noted that some adult learners showed fear in their pursuit of a new language. Specifically, they feared being laughed at by other students, looking silly, failing to communicate, and suffering “a loss of identity” (Beebe, 1983, p. 40). These propensities may naturally discourage adult learners from taking a risk, such as pursuing a second language. To this end, Rubin and Thompson (1994) suggested that “successful language learners make willing and accurate guesses” (Brown, 2007, p. 161). Consequently, the unwillingness of many adult learners to answer questions, volunteer for projects, speak aloud at the risk of looking foolish to others or answer incorrectly may prevent them from making progress in their language learning. In addition to this hesitancy to take risks, some adults do not progress due to a hesitancy to leave their comfort zones to practice the L2. This is a characteristic of another unique aspect of adult second language learners, as explained below.

Schumann (1986) noted in his acculturation model that Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals would learn the target language in relation to the degree that they
acculturated to their new society. In other words, Schumann (1978) observed that social context kept some adults from learning an L2 (Freeman & Freeman, 2004). For example, when learners gravitated to an area populated by compatriots, they predominantly used their L1 because within that society, it was not necessary to use the L2. Schumann (1978) recounted the story of the Hmong, immigrants who moved to large Hmong communities in Minnesota and California. Their dependence on one another kept them marginalized from mainstream society, having created their own “social distance” from mainstream society (Freeman & Freeman, 2004, p. 40). Just as acculturation serves as a language impediment for adults, fossilization, or error retention, impedes adult language progress, as considered below.

Still another limitation for adults is that of fossilization, a linguistic impediment marked by repetition of uncorrected errors (Brown, 2007). Individuals around ELLs hesitate to correct their mistakes, so these speakers develop “patterns of error” in speech (Brown, 2007, p. 161), which eventually may appear awkward due to the age and background of the adult speakers (Freeman & Freeman, 2004). For example, an ELL may use the present progressive form of a verb on a consistent basis, rather than the regular present tense: “I am living in Pittsburgh,” instead of “I live in Pittsburgh.” Because the thought is understandable, these speakers are rarely corrected and therefore continue to make this error. The only way to prevent fossilization is for others to utilize corrective practices and then for the ELLs to modify their language habits.

An additional challenge for adults who want or need to learn another language is the degree of literacy in the learner’s first language. The degree of competency in the first language is significant in language learning because it suggests the amount of transfer
information from the L1 to the L2 that ELLs will utilize in their instruction (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). In the following section, English learner types with varying degrees of literacy are discussed.

**Adults with Limited Literacy**

There are varying degrees of L1 literacy in learners who are learning English as a second or new language. These variations in L1 literacy consist of a complete inability to read and write; limited ability in literacy; literacy in a language without an alphabet, such as in some Asian languages; and literacy in a language devoid of a Roman alphabet, such as Hebrew (Burt et al., 2003; Burt, et al., 2008). Since these ELLs have no background knowledge in their first language, there is no language-learning information to transfer over to their English instruction. In short, they have to acquire learning strategies before they even begin learning English. An inability to read and write generally indicates that the ELLs were prevented from attending school (personal communication, D. Clark, April 1, 2015). They could have been refugees who lived in camps or were constantly on the move, or perhaps they came from rural areas or villages where there were simply no schools. ELLs from some Asian countries do not have an actual alphabet with sounds, so they must learn the English alphabet initially, plus all the sounds identified with the letters and diphthongs. Learners with non-English alphabets, such as Hebrew, must also start at the beginning, not to mention learning to begin a book where English would end it, and read the page from right to left (Burt et al., 2003; Burt, et al., 2008). For example, if ELLs are literate in Hebrew as their L1, they read a line from right to left and begin a book from the page farthest to the right while they move to the left (Parsons, 2015).
These students would have to learn and practice the customary English method, i.e., from left to right and from the English “front” of the book to the back.

Tamassia, Lennon, Yamamoto, and Kirsch (2007) have noted additionally the literacy categories of prose literate, document literate, and numeracy to indicate the kind of material with which ELLs are familiar. “Prose literate” would refer to learners who could read newspapers and books in their L1; “document literate” refers to ELLs or LEP individuals with knowledge of signs, simple forms and documents; and “numeracy” involves knowledge of numbers, which marks a necessity for entrepreneurs. Given the varying degrees of learner types, it is important that their instructors are aware of their situations, so that the proper strategies can be used to optimize their learning. In the next section, some challenges that limited literacy ELLs face in the classroom are explored.

**Challenges of Limited Literacy Learners**

When the literacy of adult English learners is categorized as limited, these ELLs face great challenges in trying to become literate in a new language. For example, these students cannot take notes in any language – therefore, retention of instructional content is more difficult. Learners might also have trouble responding to teaching materials and using the class textbook (Burt, et al, 2003). Grabe (2002) noted that limited literacy learners lack the background knowledge to support any substantial transfer of skills to their L2. This does not mean that they can or cannot learn successfully, but simply that it may take longer to attain the basic literacy skills that others already have. Often, adults do not like to admit these limitations, so they try to get by on their own (Burt, et al., 2003).
Research has also indicated that limited literacy learners have missed instruction in coding and sound-symbol connections (Vinogradov & Bigelow, 2010). Consequently, instructors need to focus on phonemic knowledge (that is, sounds made by letters) in their instruction because this awareness assists in making correct sounds following oral corrections (Vinogradov & Bigelow, 2010). Instructors could likewise use strategies from the SIOP Method (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) such as paraphrasing and slowing speech, modeling or showing directions, practice, and application when introducing content, grammar, idioms, or other unfamiliar areas of learning (Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2008).

Additionally, the National Reporting System for Adult Education (NRS) designates ELLs with beginning, low intermediate, and high advanced literacy categories (Marshall, 2002). The beginning level consists of learners who speak no or very little English. The low intermediate Level contains ELLs who have mastered survival phrases and can speak and read simply. The high advanced literacy category is reserved for those who can speak, read, and write the L2 with relative competency in most situations (Marshall, 2001).

LEP learners who are literate in their L1s learn the new language faster than those who do not have this literacy, according to Robson (1983). Hmong learners in a refugee camp who were slightly literate in Hmong learned English much faster than those who were literacy deficient in their L1 (Robson, 1983). This study by Robson (1983) suggested that learners with L1 literacy adapt more easily to language learning than those with limited L1 literacy, who are burdened with learning twice as much. Vinogradov and Bigelow (2010) considered the oral abilities of those ELLs with limited L1 literacy for
use as a starting point in transferring knowledge from the L1 to the L2. Such learners build on prior knowledge to learn the new language. Nevertheless, not everyone looking to master English is constrained by such limited literacy. In fact, many learners are already proficient in English, but require additional skills or a particular discourse genre to advance their careers. These learners who seek career modification are discussed in the next section.

**Adults Seeking Career Modification or Advanced English Skills**

While the motivations for learning English as a new language widely vary, one common motivation is career modification or advancement. Workers who commonly appear in ESL programs belong in three general classifications: professionals, workforce applicants, and entrepreneurs. Immigrants who are *professionals* enter the United States in one of three categories: (a) degreed researchers, professionals, professors, executives, and other “priority workers” (Vega-Buzon, 2015, para. 1); (b) professionals with degrees in the arts, business, or arts; and (c) professionals without college degrees, such as nurses. The Department of Labor must then certify that workers in categories 2 and 3 are not taking the place of an American worker (Vega-Buzon, 2015). According to M. Walsh (Personal communication, May 22, 2014), even though newcomers have the particular degrees demanded by their jobs, some employers require that their workers receive additional language training; for this reason, workers seek instruction at libraries and centers, such as the Midwestern Library Program.

Some ELLs, as future workforce applicants, are in the “no English class” and have few employable skills. Some of these individuals also have limited literacy. In these cases, an Executive Summary of the Center for Adult English Language
Acquisition (CAELA) (2010) stated that adults who began with ESL programs and continued with workforce programs were more likely to finish their study program, become certified in their chosen field, and attain their goals. Marshall (2002) advised starting workforce instruction with the same simple actions that students would take in the classroom: take notes, request explanations, and paraphrase directions. In addition, CAELA (2010) suggested online training for those with more intense schedules.

The adult ESL classroom is a natural place to develop workforce and civic skills. This happens when instructors view learners the way that today’s workforce increasingly views successful workers – as active, creative, and self-directed problem solvers who can work effectively on their own and with others. (Marshall, 2002, p. 4)

The third category of workers, entrepreneurs, may not necessarily require certification, but they do need advanced English skills. Actually, newcomers are more likely to start new businesses than native-born Americans, have hired 4.7 million workers, and have been responsible for 30% of small business growth from 1990-2010 (Muñoz & Rodríguez, 2015). Entrepreneurs need practice with the particular discourse community of their respective fields in order to be better prepared for the workplace (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 2010). Further, Marshall (2002) advised studying vocabulary extensively, collaborating on projects, practicing presentations, and encouraging lifelong learning skills for professionals, workforce applicants, and entrepreneurs in their ESL classes. Suggestions such as these comprise part of best practices with particular strategies designed for learners’ needs. In this Best Practices section, the researcher discusses the challenges that adult learners, specifically ELLs, face in learning a new
language. To manage these challenges, a series of best practices for optimum ELL instruction are noted below.

**Best Practices for ESL Instruction**

In addition to factors which influence adult learning, there are certain educational practices that suit adult instruction, in particular. Some best practices for adult ESL classrooms include “Interactive Planning” (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013), learners’ goals, culturally responsive teaching, meaningfulness of instruction, emphasis on phonics and vocabulary, self-directed learning, and professional development for teachers to practice these strategies (Falasca, 2011; Johnson & Owen, 2013).

Caffarella and Daffron (2013, p. 29) advised using a process they identified as “Interactive Planning” to develop programs for adults, much of which may be adapted for adults learning English. For example, they advocated a needs analysis to drive instruction, though accompanied by certain directives of the organization. A needs analysis could highlight instructional sectors in which the needs and interest were greatest (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013). To take a case in point, Caffarella and Daffron (2013) cited an example in which a community center wanted to offer new activities. In order to plan relevant programs, the board of directors sent engaged individuals around to ask stakeholders what they wanted and needed. With the public’s responses, the board then set about prioritizing these needs in alignment with its mission. This collaboration among stakeholders produced meaningful pursuits for its membership to the satisfaction of both planners and participants. Accordingly, this process should be undertaken and evaluated continuously by stakeholders in order to be effective (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013; Marshall, 1992).
The entire mechanism of the Midwestern Library has the best interests of the ELLs in mind; therefore, instruction must also be directed specifically toward these learners’ goals. For example, Falasca (2011) suggested that teachers help students sustain their motivation and meet their goals by implementing learning plans and charting their progress. Each little triumph, from being understood at the store, or reading signs on the street can demonstrate another step toward reachable goals. In fact, Mikulecky (1997) found that learners with specific goals made more progress in ESL programs than did learners with vague goals. Some examples Mikulecky (1997) noted were the desire of one ELL to receive a GED certificate in his quest toward becoming a police officer and another to gain the language competence to speak and be understood at team meetings. Similar to these goals are those in Auerbach’s (1992) participatory model, in which teachers and learners collaborate to come up with goals that suit their needs: “Rosa went to a community college; Hilda became more active in her school’s PTA; Angel had many of his writings published” (Auerbach, 1992, p. 101). Mikulecky (1997) also observed that setting specific goals of a work-related and personal nature resulted in the transfer of pertinent information to sites external to class, such as the workplace, social areas, or home with goals that suit their needs. Action-oriented goals that are relevant to the learners inspire the learners to press on in their struggles to improve their language. Marshall (1992) agreed that it is important to establish attainable goals at the outset in order to enable learners to achieve them. Marshall (1992) promoted achieving goals through simulations. As an illustration, if ELLs’ goals concern finding jobs, then instruction can include simulating job interviews, filling out applications, and looking online for jobs. Learners’ goals can be established at the outset of the beginning class
session and can be used in concert with culturally responsive teaching, a welcoming teaching style that is explained below.

Another system for instructing ELLs is a program entitled culturally responsive teaching, advocated by Johnson and Owen (2013). In this setting, culturally responsive teachers care for their students through various behavioral stratagems before, during, and after class, such as smiling and greeting students. Johnson and Owen (2013) also suggested using a “kindness box” (p. 24) for students to write nice descriptions of fellow learners. Again, this environment is learner-centered so that the ELLs can be more engaged in their learning. These authors emphasized cultural integrity through respecting others’ opinions and discussing discrimination during ESL sessions. Another aspect of this teaching mode is differentiated instruction, which responds to the particular circumstances of individual learners. For example, if learners had vision issues, the teacher could have large print materials ready for them; if ELLs had limited print literacy, the teacher would prepare more visuals and oral explanations of content. Mikulecky (1997) further reported that adult learners who had positive relationships with their teachers met their goals and changed for the better. This kind of personalized class activity and interaction is representative of learner-centered instruction, which research supports as a component of best practice for effective learning (Marshall, 1992). Other learner-centered strategies include cooperative learning, such as group learning, collaborative projects, and interaction with one another through games and conversation. Marshall (1992) believed strongly in non-threatening learner-centered instruction with the teacher facilitating. In this environment, group work is significant because it provides
practice for the teamwork involved in future jobs. Culturally responsive teaching involves a connection between students and teachers that goes beyond the classroom.

As with adult learners in general, the meaningfulness of instruction plays a significant role in ELLs’ success in and out of the classroom. Vinogradov and Bigelow (2010) emphasized a firm establishment early on between the instruction and the lives of the ELLs. Learners need to understand how content can help them. According to Vinogradov and Bigelow (2010), instructional content should be authentic and relevant. For example, the ELLs could examine different kinds of tickets or receipts used for bus rides, movie theaters, the deli, or library books. They could learn meanings of signs for their own safety or information, and practice the verbiage necessary for telling time. Indeed, Huang (2013) encouraged work with phonemic awareness, phonics, and vocabulary. Huang (2013) noted that improvement in these areas will enhance other areas of literacy, such as reading and communication. Huang (2013) agreed with Falasca (2013) and Vinogradov and Bigelow (2010) about the importance of authentic teaching materials: If ELLs feel that the content of the materials and their class will actually do them good, their motivation will remain high throughout the length of the program. Also, research supports the use of meaningful instruction for the ELLs in reaching their personal goals (Auerbach, 1992; Knowles, 1980; Knowles, et al., 2005; Merriam, 2001). However, Marshall (1992) noted that needs assessments should be coupled with information that learners need to know in their new community in order to integrate comfortably. Some examples of informational genres might be the vocabulary particular to a certain area or its geography. Marshall (1992) suggested having topics ready from which newcomers could choose. Finn (2011) also added relevance, environment, and
experience as elements of adult instruction. Adult ELLs, especially those classified as LEP with limited educational or L1 knowledge, require motivation and challenging experiences to continue enthusiastically with their instruction and make it worth their while.

Knowles’ (1980) concept of self-directed learning (SDL) is an instructional tactic well-suited to the adult ESL classroom. It hearkens back to the field of andragogy, in which adults assessed their own needs, set goals, looked to meaningful instruction, and evaluated their own learning (Grover, Miller, Swearingen, & Wood, 2014; Knowles, 1975; Merriam, 2001). In other words, ELLs would figure out what they wanted from their ESL instruction and seek it, mindful of the fact that they would not be attending ESL classes forever and eventually would become completely independent learners. Nonetheless, one goal for the instructor who practices SDL in an ESL setting is not to be needed by the learners anymore (Grover, et al., 2014).

To this end, Mikuletcky and Lloyd (1997) urged ESL programs to seek professional development for their instructors so that they would be able to tailor their instruction to various kinds of student needs. Professional development could be helpful to teachers by showing them how to determine students’ literacy levels before they proceed with instruction (Burt, et al., 2003), not to mention demonstrating SDL strategies for determining autonomous student learning levels (Grover et al., 2014). As a necessary component of adult education, professional development should be conducted on a consistent basis to respond to the ELLs’ ever-changing needs analyses (Grover et al., 2014). In the following section, some other ESL programs in the United States are considered.
Other ESL Programs in the United States

The researcher examined various ESL programs throughout the United States and has found that two general types of programs exist: English language programs and comprehensive integration programs for immigrants and refugees. Some organizations, those that fall in the English language program type, are usually located in libraries or community centers and primarily offer instruction in English to newcomers. The lessons are generally free and taught by volunteer or part-time teachers. Roughly 80% of adult education teachers in the United States, of which adult ESL is included, are part-time (NCSDAE, 2012). Of this part-time population, 35% are volunteers (Young, 2009), who often teach other external programs at library centers. The Midwestern Library falls into this category because it offers classes in the English language to its ELL participants.

The other program genre is the comprehensive program. This type of program typically involves comprehensive services for immigrants, such as citizenship/civics classes, job training, financial literacy, computer education, counseling, child care, college preparation, public safety, community engagement, conversation, reading and writing, and others as directed by needs assessments of the learners. Some programs award General Education Degrees (GEDs) (Community Resources Information, Inc., 2015; Kansas City Public Schools, 2012). In these programs, ESL classes are included as part of the total package. The main incentive of comprehensive programs, nonetheless, is to integrate immigrants into communities throughout the United States, in which they will be comfortable, self-sufficient, employed, and safe. [Table 1 lists four exemplary ESL programs, including one comprehensive and three English language programs, one
of which offers a little more than language but lacks the variety of a comprehensive, settlement program.]

These four ESL Programs were selected for examination in this dissertation for various reasons. The Massachusetts site was selected because it represented a stark contrast to the Midwestern Library’s program. The particular site was part of a larger resource consortium intended to assist many kinds of groups that had settled in Massachusetts. The Chicago program offered a contrast to the Midwestern Library’s program because it combined ESL with a literacy program. In touring this center to examine how this type of collaboration worked, the researcher developed an in-depth perspective of a program in a city center. The Kansas City Program proved very similar to Midwestern’s program in size and lack of grant status. It provided a point of comparison. With respect to the New Orleans program, the researcher had volunteered in the aftermath of Katrina to work in New Orleans for the Archdiocese, and was interested to see how the organization handled ESL programs. This program provided a rich source of information and contrast to Midwestern’s ESL Program. Information about these programs is found in the following section.
Table 1

Exemplary ESL Sites Explored in this Dissertation in Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>ELL Population</th>
<th>Grants</th>
<th># Countries of Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>Boston center</td>
<td>350-450</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>Kansas City</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>New Orleans</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exemplary ESL Programs

The researcher interviewed four ESL directors from programs in Boston, Kansas City, and New Orleans, and toured one site in Chicago. These sites offered interesting insight and spurred additional ideas for the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program. In Massachusetts, there is a resource organization called “Massachusetts 2-1-1,” which contains many different help programs at multiple help sites for communities in various parts of the state. Massachusetts 2-1-1 also uses a statewide data base to present its extensive program for assistance to the public. In the “Refugees and Immigration” section under the ESL designation, there are 91 programs listed, which are located throughout Massachusetts in libraries, churches, ethnic and community centers, refugee centers, and at the American Red Cross. These programs extend services to new Americans in the form of daily ESL classes; counseling in integration, employment, benefits, rights, legal services, housing, homeless shelters, and first aid; and citizenship preparation. Ethnic community centers within this resource system assist immigrants and
refugees from many parts of the world (Community Resources Information, Inc., 2015). The researcher examined one of these ESL non-profit sites, which was originally founded by the Sisters of Notre Dame, but is now the center for English as an Other Language (ESOL) in the state (N. Dunn, personal communication, April 23, 2015). With an average base of 400 students, this particular program instructs newcomers from 24 countries in citizenship and career preparation, and also provides a high school diploma program. There are several other sites in the Massachusetts 2-1-1 Resources that offer all these services; however, the services typically have a six-month waiting list (N. Dunn, personal communication, April 23, 2015). Therefore, Massachusetts 2-1-1 Community Resources and its ESL/ESOL branches offer excellent examples of programs that attain spiritual union with the needs of their newcomers as well as those who simply need help (Community Resources Information, 2015; N. Dunn, personal communication, April 23, 2015).

In the State of Missouri, there is an ESL Program at the Kansas City Library that offers daily English instruction, along with computer classes on Saturday for ELLs of all ages (The Kansas City Library, 2015). Approximately 15 ELLs from eight countries attend classes here. The volunteer director, E. Montez, runs this program and works elsewhere, while six volunteers teach daily at the Kansas City Library. Since the program is not funded by the government, no evaluations are required. The ELLs tend to be older and professional and rarely miss classes. Most ELLs walk to class or take the city bus. Occasionally, job-seekers attend classes until they find employment (E. Montez, personal communication, June 13, 2015). In addition, the Kansas City Public School system provides specialized training in citizenship preparation including English
vocabulary as it pertains to naturalization, literacy, life skills, and computer instruction, as well as High School Equivalency preparation (Kansas City Public Schools, 2012). Between the schools’ and library’s programs, ELLs can find everything necessary for a strong start in a new community with no payment required (E. Montez, personal communication, June 13, 2015).

Another outstanding example of a literacy center that addresses the needs of its participants is an ESL center in Chicago, which the researcher toured. Founded in 1989, this center focuses on adult ELLs from 50 countries with generally 75 students per session; however, the clientele at this center differed remarkably from that at the Midwestern Library. Whereas ELLs at Midwestern’s ESL Program were in need of work or engagement, this center’s participants lived in downtown Chicago, had few money issues, and were typically married to spouses in graduate school. The learners were seeking English fluency for reasons of integration, as opposed to employment (C. Smith, personal communication, May 7, 2015). Typically, a Basic English Skills Test (BEST) literacy assessment reveals their language levels, a needs analysis determines their reasons for language improvement, and the director places them in a conversation class.

Because the Chicago center receives grants from the government, and its director and teachers have a strong altruistic bent, the center has looked in the past for outreach programs for serving others. One example of this service included a jail mission involving five ESL volunteers from the center, who tutored prisoners weekly. Director Smith noted that both volunteers and prisoners found this undertaking very rewarding (Personal communication, May 7, 2015). Otherwise, the Chicago center
continues with upper class students and does not deal with employment issues unless ELL needs analysis points to such a demand.

The Chicago center’s reception of government grants also requires the director to be more pro-active with volunteer teachers, who must undergo 12 hours of training, plus practice teaching under the director’s tutelage. The volunteers are also encouraged to make presentations at the Literacy Volunteers of America, other ESL programs, and for national literacy programs (C. Smith, personal communication, May 7, 2015). In this case, receiving grants not only affords the center its upkeep for providing instruction, but also nurtures its staff’s professionalism.

A quite unique ESL center exists in New Orleans under the auspices of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New Orleans. This center with five sites serves 500-600 individuals per year and retains a waiting list of 100 ELLs per session. There is a $25.00 fee charged for the textbook (Catholic Charities, 2015), but otherwise the classes are free. Five levels of classes meet three times weekly from 6:00-8:30 pm. The New Orleans ESL center gives the BEST Literacy pre-test and post-test to determine if the learners have met their goals, a prerequisite for the federal funding the center receives. To continue with this funding, the ESL program must prove that it has served and shown gains for 400 ELLs (T. Quinn, personal communication, May 28, 2015). Further, the government would like newcomers to vote, pay taxes, and work, according to T. Quinn (personal communication, May 28, 2015). However, eligibility for federal funding depends on retention of learners in the program as well as proof of progress on their BEST literacy summative assessment (T. Quinn, personal communication, May 28, 2015). These benchmarks can be problematic, first of all, due to the transiency of
learners, for they may not be able to stay with the program because of family demands or new employment. Also, the government uses program retention as a goal, but the goals of the ELLs usually concern finding employment. Once this happens, they generally exit the program – even if ELLs were satisfied with the program’s content, their presence would not count toward federal funding because they did not finish the program (T. Quinn, personal communication, May 28, 2015).

In the New Orleans ESL Program, Catholic Charities works in tandem with Tulane University to provide volunteer teachers for the hundreds of learners who flock to its programs each year. Tulane University requires that preservice students in the Department of Education offer 20 hours of volunteer work as a service learning component for their university degree. Although there are 50-100 organizations in New Orleans for which students may serve, the Catholic Charities/Tulane initiative has a site on the Tulane Campus, which draws approximately 100 students per semester for this ESL service project. This service project is referred to as Linguistics 3700, Second Language Acquisition, in the Tulane University Course Catalog (Tulane, 2015). These 100 volunteer preservice students undergo a two-hour orientation and receive an ESL textbook from which lessons are derived. Each session, these university students practice teaching with approximately 150 other volunteer teachers from the New Orleans community. While serving in their community, they learn about the different cultures of the English learners and fulfill the service learning requirement for their degree from Tulane (Tulane, 2015). The Catholic Charities/Tulane ESL program addresses servant leadership by training new leaders to care for the marginalized and appreciate diversity, in the same Ignatian spirit that welcomed diverse members to a fellowship (Lowney,
2003). The ESL programs mentioned here exist solely for the benefit of their participants, and therefore, their requisites must drive instruction. This aligns with servant leadership, in which leaders naturally respond to their followers’ needs (Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011). Despite the fact that these four ESL programs are located in various geographic areas and show striking variations in makeup, there are many commonalities and shared issues among them, as is discussed in the following section.

**Commonalities among the Programs**

Notwithstanding differences between language and comprehensive programs for newcomers, the researcher has found some commonalities among the programs: needs analysis, job-related instruction, citizenship, and collaboration with other agencies. First of all, the programs all use a needs analysis in one form or another. A needs analysis here refers to the determination of learners’ needs in the course of the ESL program. In this assessment of need, the ESL Director and instructors ascertain from the ELLs why they wish to participate in classes and then use this information as part or all of the placement process. In the Midwestern Library ESL Program, the learners’ information is adequate for placement, but in the other programs, the BEST literacy assessment is used for placement. Also, a needs analysis is commonly used in all the programs to drive instruction. For example, if learners want instruction about job-seeking, the center will see to it that their instruction is tailored to this need.

Another shared feature among the ESL programs was job-related instruction. Since jobs represent an immediate goal of many ELLs and almost 17% of the US labor force consists of foreign-born workers (Muñoz & Rodríguez, 2015), ESL programs focus on job-related areas such as training, job applying, discourse genre, and linguistic
fluency. For example, the Massachusetts English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Center, part of a comprehensive resource management organization, deals with employment services and placement, plus protection for immigrants and refugees from exploitation. The Midwestern Library ESL teachers have helped their students with interview practice, resumés, and individualized preparation for job seeking, as do the other centers according to their needs analyses.

An additional commonality among ESL programs was citizenship. All the programs either offered citizenship instruction or access to citizenship classes. From this group of ESL centers, only the Boston consortium of programs offers classes in citizenship, whereas the Chicago, Kansas City and New Orleans programs offer information about where these classes are held. Actually, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New Orleans has a special Hispanic Apostolate that deals primarily with citizenship issues, and newcomers are encouraged to seek this Apostolate’s guidance in this area. The Boston centers expand on the citizenship issue with additional help in civic engagement, free legal assistance, civics education, constitutional/civic rights groups, and disability rights group information (Community Resources Information, Inc., 2015).

Collaboration with other agencies is a major feature shared by the ESL centers, the Midwestern ESL Program notwithstanding. In Boston, the various centers are interconnected with each other under Community Resources; the ESL centers also connect with government agencies and other organizations that may serve them better or more specifically (Community Resources Information, Inc., 2015). The result of this activity is a widespread umbrella of efficient service throughout greater Massachusetts.
Collaboration benefits everyone in this system, especially learners, who profit from multiple sources of information and multiple sites for convenience.

In Kansas City, there is a comprehensive literacy program in the Kansas City Public Schools, which includes High School Equivalency preparation for ELLs as well as those with limited literacy and daily ESL instruction in the Kansas City Public Library, although it is not sponsored by the library (The Kansas City Public Library, 2015; Kansas City Public Schools, 2012). Although these efforts are not officially collaborative, learners could take classes six days a week and reach their goals sooner.

The Chicago ESL center practices limited collaboration with other ESL and literacy organizations through presentations and communication. The center itself is a result of a merging of literacy and ESL agencies in the immediate Chicago area (C. Smith, personal communication, May 7, 2015). At present, the center is looking for services to which it can extend its outreach features.

It is the collaboration between Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New Orleans and Tulane University, however, which the researcher regards as the prime example of collaborative effort. Since most ESL programs capitalize on volunteer strength (NCSDAE, 2012; Young, 2009), programs have to depend on consistent, incoming volunteers, which is not always easy due to a number of reasons. The Catholic Charities/Tulane collaboration provides for a robust source of volunteer, preservice students who probably get more out of their time with the ELLs than they receive in graduation requirements (T. Quinn, personal communication, May 28, 2015). In the next section, there is particular information about Midwestern Library’s adult English learners.
Adult English Learners at the Midwestern Library

The Midwestern Library served as the study site for this dissertation in practice. While there are commonalities with the Midwestern Library and the exemplary programs discussed in the previous section, the Midwestern Library serves a unique population with its own unique mission. The ELL population at the Midwestern Library varies in goals, age, education, English literacy level, L1 literacy level, and ethnic/linguistic backgrounds (M. Walsh, personal communication, May 22, 2014). Additionally, it is important to consider the length of time that particular immigrants have already been in the United States (Burt, Peyton, & Schaetzel, 2008); if ELLs have just arrived, teachers will have to inform these participants with knowledge that others take for granted. Therefore, it is helpful if instructors determine the types of learners with which they are entrusted in order to serve them better. Also, the varying goals of these ELLs should be considered when designing their instruction. For example, some newcomers wish to obtain employment immediately and others are looking for marriage partners or are mail order brides. Other newcomers would like to become citizens as soon as possible and are looking for help in achieving this goal (D. Clark, personal communication, June 11, 2014).

Although some participants in the library’s ESL Program are educated, employed, and may be settled in a household, others have little or no education and require specialized learning. Some have few employable skills, while others find that skills they honed in their native lands do not transfer to the United States; in both cases, ELLs must seek further job training (M. Walsh, personal communication, May 22, 2014). Consequently, instructors need to employ specialized strategies to deal with these kinds
of learners. The following section describes the Midwestern Library’s place in the community as well as its ESL Program structure.

**The Midwestern Library’s ESL Program**

As the major library within a county-wide system, the Midwestern Library is nestled within a suburban community of 35,622 inhabitants (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Serving thousands of patrons each year, it offers programs to its public such as book discussions, movie presentations, computer instruction, arts and crafts, gardening, classes on insurance, a butterfly club, and a book sale room (LCPL, 2015). The library is supported financially by its share of property taxes from participating communities, whereas three cities within the county maintain their own libraries (J. Miller, personal communication, June 20, 2015). In 2014, the Midwestern Library received $9,540,262.00 from the state government as an operating fund income from the library tax rate (Indiana State Library, 2014).

The Midwestern Library’s mission is to provide the members of its community with the information they need to improve their lives (M. Walsh, personal communication, April 22, 2015). Therefore, the ESL Program has responded to aligning the program’s curricula to the goals of the ELLs. Most of the participants have expressed needs that are job related, such as searching for employment, responding to a boss’s request for improved English, or learning discourse genre, such as language specific to a situation; consequently, volunteers use the learners’ needs to develop class content (M. Walsh, personal communication, May 22, 2014). It is this mission that defines the philanthropic nature of the library’s educational program for immigrants and about which this literature section has evolved.
English classes at this library have been free and open to the public since 1974, according to Moira Walsh (personal communication, May 22, 2014), a reference librarian who also serves as ESL Program Director. Walsh’s background is in social work and library science, a suitable fit for a director of an ESL program since she has to deal with many personal situations involving the participants. For eight years, Walsh has directed this program with particular sensitivity toward immigrants who are refugees and are struggling to find their way. To this end, Walsh stated, “Americans have never had to flee” (personal communication, May 22, 2014). Likewise, the instructors of these English classes share Walsh’s desire for helping newcomers integrate into U.S. society.

ESL classes meet every Monday and Wednesday evening from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in two large rooms occupying the lower level of the library. Instruction consists of a “No English” Class, which takes in those who speak little or no English, a Beginning Class for those with some English, an Intermediate Class for those needing grammar, and an Advanced class for students who feel confident in their conversational skills (Table 2).
Table 2

*List of Classes in Midwestern Library’s ESL Program 2014-2015*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overview of Class Levels</th>
<th>ELL Skill Level</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The No English Class</td>
<td>Very little or no English at all</td>
<td>Basic communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning Class</td>
<td>Limited skills</td>
<td>Money, speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate Class</td>
<td>Good comprehension</td>
<td>Grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Class</td>
<td>Good Competency</td>
<td>Conversation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is no formal placement assessment. Throughout the year, classes run in three ten-week sessions from September through mid-June (LCPL, 2015). Students come and go at will. The program has neither attendance policies nor data kept about individuals; furthermore, instructors do not mention citizenship unless asked. Students may stop attending classes with no consequence as no financial transactions have occurred. Many, however, continue with their classes for years because the program has become more than language study; in addition, the program has become a social and emotional nexus, something they latched onto when they first came to this area. The end of each session is marked by an international potluck, in which participants are encouraged to bring their favorite dishes from their native lands. After this final session, some ELLs will not be returning, for transiency is common in the ESL Program. As they struggle to find jobs, obtain apartments, and follow family, ELLs sustain a great deal of change in their early years in the United States. This transiency represents the major
reason that the library does not keep data (M. Walsh, person communication, May 22, 2014).

**Summary**

The literature selections which comprise Chapter Two of this Dissertation in Practice concerned the background of ESL instruction in the United States, adult learners in contrast to non-adult learners, adult types such as those with limited literacy and workers seeking career modifications, best practices for ESL instruction, adult English learners at the Midwestern Library, and the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program. The following chapter will introduce this dissertation’s methodology as a qualitative, grounded study.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Recent waves of immigration from countries all over the world to the United States prompted this researcher to consider the transition between the arrival and settlement of newcomers in a community. For this purpose, the researcher set out to collect data from interviews with 15 adult English learners in order to develop a theory or theories about their ESL instruction at the Midwestern Library. This grounded theory approach involved the participants’ perception of their progress resulting from this program, as well as recommendations promoting the ELLs’ educational interests.

Research Questions

In this study, the researcher wanted to determine whether the library’s ESL Program was responding to the multiple needs of the immigrants who populated its classes. In order to accomplish this, the researcher asked the learners what they thought about the role that the ESL Program played in the realization of their success. Therefore, the following research questions informed this qualitative study:

1. What factors contributed to the English learners’ individual successes as a result of ESL instruction at the library?
2. What improvements could the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program make in order to encourage the success of future ELLs?

Methodology

This qualitative, grounded study on ESL instruction at the Midwestern Library explored best practices for the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program. The qualitative method was chosen because the researcher sought answers from the stakeholders that
would inform the two research questions concerning their success and improvement for the library. In order to answer satisfactorily these questions, face-to-face interviews were carried out with the volunteer, stakeholder participants about the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program. As the interview data were being coded, theories about the program and its beneficiaries began to emerge. The researcher deliberately obtained such data directly from the participants because they were involved with the program and therefore could offer ideas about their success and the program’s improvement. Consequently, a qualitative study was necessary for the development of these theories (Creswell, 2013). Descriptions of the volunteer participants in this research study are provided in the following section.

**Description/Rationale of Participants/Sampling**

The study participants included 15 adult ELLs in the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program, three instructors from the ESL program, and the program director. The ELL students had been attending the program for at least two sessions, which is comparable to one university semester. Students from the Intermediate and Advanced Level classes volunteered for interviews. During the Spring sessions of 2015, the program held four distinct levels of language classes with no particular transition from one to the other (Table 2). Participants at the Intermediate and Advanced levels have not necessarily worked their way up from the beginners’ class (M. Walsh, personal communication, February 17, 2015). Ten ELLs came to the interviews from the Intermediate class and five ELLs came from the Advanced Level class.

The 15 English learner participants represented Albania, China, Ecuador, Greece, Hong Kong, Japan, Macedonia, Mexico, Nepal, Palestine, and the Philippines (Table 3).
Table 3

*Participant Descriptive Statistics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELL Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Countries/Areas of Origin</th>
<th>Employment Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Veronica</td>
<td>I***</td>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sophia</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Larry</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Caesar</td>
<td>LF****</td>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>Employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Steven</td>
<td>LF</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Joe Karl</td>
<td>LF</td>
<td>Hong Kong*</td>
<td>Retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Keiko</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Jennifer</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Vera</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Michael</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Thomas</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Anne</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Paul</td>
<td>LF</td>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>Employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Mary</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Sparky</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Employed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.*  
*Hong Kong was independent from China during his residency and time of departure, according to the ELL.  
***Intermediate class with grammar  
****Advanced Level class with advanced conversation*
Seven participants were female and eight were male. Four of them had family living in other parts of the United States. Of the 15 ELLs, 10 participants were already citizens, four wanted to become citizens, and one was not sure due to hesitancy in giving up citizenship in the native country. Seven ELLs were unemployed and were searching for jobs; six had jobs and wanted to improve their English for promotions; and two were retired, but wanted more English for socialization. (See Table 3 for a summary of the participants’ descriptive statistics). The ELL participants ranged in age from the twenties to retired individuals (the researcher did not ask participants about their precise ages). Albania, Macedonia, Mexico, and the Philippines were represented by two participants each. At the time of their individual arrivals in the United States, six of them had studied English in school and nine of them could not speak English at all. In terms of

Table 4

ESL Program Director and Volunteer Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Years in Program</th>
<th>Class Taught</th>
<th>Volunteer</th>
<th>Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M. Walsh</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Director/Fill in</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Library Science, Social Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Clark</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>K-12 School Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Janković</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>No English</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>ESL Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T. Sturdy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Business Owner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Rodríguez*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Bilingual Teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This teacher volunteers with the program, but was not a participant in the study.
previous education, one had business training, two graduated from college, seven were high school graduates, three had grade school diplomas, one attended four years of grade school, and one did not attend any school (Figure 1).

The other participants who took part in the interviews included the ESL Program Director and three volunteer instructors (Table 4). M. Walsh has directed the ESL Program at the Midwestern Library for eight years and has a background in social work and library science. The three other volunteer participants have varied backgrounds and motivations for teaching at the Midwestern Library. Volunteer D. Clark is retired from a public school system, where her career spanned some 25 years. She volunteers in memory of her father, whose terrible, violent memories of World War II were punctuated by the acts of kindness he received as an immigrant to the United States. Her father’s story inspired D. Clark’s strong sense of commitment to other immigrants, for she has been teaching ESL at Midwestern Library for the past 12 years. Her beginning class with U.S. currency, banking, shopping, taxes, and other practical areas is among the most popular in the program. Some students have taken her class up to five times because they have found it so useful.

Another volunteer, Mr. Janković, has been a newcomer himself to several different countries. For many years, he taught English in Japan and Sweden. For eight years, he served at the Midwestern Library as a volunteer teacher of the “no English” class. The third instructor, T. Sturdy, a former accountant, has served as an ESL volunteer at Midwestern Library for four years and has a wide range of interests and expertise. As the instructor of the advanced level class, he encourages his students to read local and national newspapers, discuss current events, and analyze nuances of
vocabulary and collocations. There is a fourth teacher with a bilingual ESL background, J. Rodríguez, whom the researcher did not get a chance to interview. This bilingual instructor for the Intermediate Class is trained in the ESL field and had several years of ESL experience before beginning her duties at the Midwestern Library’s program. Her specialties are grammar and conversation (M. Walsh, personal communication, May 14, 2015).

![Figure 1. English Learners’ Educational Backgrounds](image)

In the next section, the data collection tools for this qualitative research study are explained.
Data Collection Tools

As the major instrument in this study, the interviews contained 12 questions for the volunteer ELLs and two questions for the director and volunteer instructors (see Appendix A for the participant interview questions). Each participant was interviewed using this same set of questions in order to evaluate their individual perceptions of the ESL Program’s role in their successes. The researcher had previously presented these questions to the ESL Program Director for approval.

The researcher utilized a pencil, pad, and an audio recorder to record the interviews. The interviews were recorded for later transcription, which were shown to the learners at a different time. The researcher also provided participants with copies of the questions along with an oral explanation, so they did not have to depend solely on their comprehension skills during the interview. A few of the ELLs had questions about the meanings of the questions and individual words before the actual interviews began.

Data Collection Procedures

During the Spring 1 Session of 2015, ESL Program Director Walsh spoke to the Intermediate and Advanced level students about the subject of the researcher’s Dissertation in Practice, asking if any learners wanted to volunteer for interviews during or after class. Every student in both classes had the opportunity to volunteer in order to express opinions about the program and explain how it has contributed to their success. After receiving multiple positive responses, Walsh escorted volunteer learners to a table where the researcher was located. The interview table was situated in the Midwestern Library’s children’s section, in an open area just outside the ESL classrooms. This site
was chosen by Director Walsh due to its proximity to the ESL area. No more than two library patrons wandered about during the six sessions of interviews.

The interviews were conducted during six separate sessions between March and April of 2015. The researcher first provided each participant with a copy of the consent form (Appendix B) and participant Bill of Rights (Appendix C) and proceeded to explain them, articulating the intention of the study and any risks or benefits resulting from their participation. Then, the researcher shared a written copy of the interview questions with the participants and read the questions aloud, conducting comprehension checks for each question. Following this step, the researcher asked for approval from the volunteers to record the sessions. The Midwestern Library Program Director had given prior approval to recording these interviews, pending ELL permission. Proxy names were established by both participants and researcher, so that the researcher could address the participants with these names during interviews. These interviews took place during their respective class times. The interviews ranged from 10-45 minutes; however, the individual time for each interview varied – some ELLs waited for questions to be posed and answered appropriately, while others talked considerably about each topic. At the end of each interview, the researcher thanked the participant for answering questions and offering suggestions.

Interviews with the director and three teachers ranged from 20 to 30 minutes. Even though they had to answer only two questions, the director and volunteers spoke at length about their backgrounds and related stories about the learners. The director was recorded in the children’s section of the Midwestern Library during one session and interviewed without recording at the entrance to the ESL classes during the other three
sessions. Earlier interview sessions resulted from projects in two other classes. She was given the pseudonym M. Walsh. The volunteer teachers were interviewed without recording during two sessions in the ESL classrooms once between classes and once during the potluck dinner at the end of the term. Because others were present and talking at close range, the interviewer decided not to record, but just to take notes during that time. The director and one of the volunteer participants also communicated with email to clarify certain points. All teachers, even the one that was not interviewed, received pseudonyms. All participants were advised of their rights through the form letter and Bill of Rights of Participants.

Upon completion of the interviews, the researcher listened to the recordings of the ELL participants once, uploaded them as audio files, and finally played them again for purposes of transcription. Following the initial interviews with the ELLs, director, and volunteer teachers, the researcher asked the participants if they wished to view transcriptions of these interviews, to which only two expressed interest. The researcher then provided transcribed interviews to the interested participants. They did not articulate any changes that needed to be made.

**Quality and Validation**

The researcher ensured validation through robust description, extra time on site, triangulation, and self-reflection. The first interview question of the study asked for ELLs to provide whatever background details and future goals that they were willing to disclose. They were encouraged also to take a critical look at the ESL Program and make suggestions toward its improvement with respect to their own experiences. All 15
participants spent the most amount of time discussing their backgrounds and how they had found their way into the library’s ESL Program. Further, all 15 participants had very clear concepts of their goals, which they connected with the ESL Program and its positive effect on their lives. One gave examples of how his accelerated English skills had helped him achieve a greater quality of life through better pay, while others told of the new confidence that they now possessed. Consequently, the Dissertation in Practice developed into a rich study due to the input of the adult learners, who connected their study at the Midwestern Library with their achievements.

Additionally, the researcher has spent increased time onsite observing all the classes and attending two end-of-class potlucks. Speaking casually to those involved in the project offered additional credence to the credibility of the research. During classes, the researcher observed learner interests and participation, whereas the potlucks afforded the opportunity to spend more time with the volunteer teachers. In this casual setting, these volunteers explained what had triggered their commitment to the ELLs and told many stories from their past experiences with learners in the Midwestern Library ESL Program.

The author practiced triangulation through research about other literacy centers. The researcher chose three programs that focused primarily on English instruction and one that was comprehensive in nature. The researcher interviewed directors of these ESL centers to look for commonalities in the various programs, as well as to explore differences. Also, the researcher was seeking validation through an analysis of issues and problems that the programs faced to determine how those compared or contrasted with the Midwestern ESL Program’s issues. To this end, the researcher interviewed a director
of a branch ESL program in Boston, the director of an ESL program in Kansas City, and the director of the ESL program run by Catholic Charities of New Orleans in conjunction with Tulane University (Table 1). These programs are described in detail in Chapter 2. The interviews with the various ESL programs also validated the researcher’s findings because the other programs were concerned with the same issues described in Chapter 4.

Further validation involved a tour of a literacy/ESL center in Chicago and an interview with the director, who knows her students are successful because “They keep coming back” (C. Smith, personal communication, May 7, 2015). In addition, the researcher used self-reflection to analyze the data from the participants and to sort out the triangulation of the ESL centers whose details supported the true data from the Midwestern Library, with themes of funding and volunteer issues. Reflections on the Midwestern Library’s ELLs, its classes, the instructional strategies, and the end-of-session potlucks were written in order to provide further background for the data. In the next section, some ethical considerations of the research are examined.

**Ethical Considerations**

Initially, the researcher obtained approval from Creighton University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) for this Dissertation in Practice. Following this, the researcher considered the ethical implications in this study, such as protecting and respecting the identities and information of the participants along with seeking their consent (Roberts, 2010). This author viewed the protection of the ELLs as particularly crucial, especially due to her role as servant leader. For this reason, a letter of informed consent (Appendix B) and Bill of Rights (Appendix C) which established the rights of the participants in this study were provided. The ELL population attending English classes at
the Midwestern Library is a potentially vulnerable population due to language limitations and newness to their surroundings. Therefore, the researcher thoroughly explained the consent form and Bill of Rights and did not go forward with interviews until it was clear that the participants understood the consent process, the information contained in the consent document, and the Bill of Rights for Research Participants. The researcher also assigned pseudonyms to the ELLs’ information by addressing them with their pseudonyms during the recording and by writing that name on the interview document. No information regarding authentic names was exchanged. (The author already knew two of the ELLs, but only on a first-name basis.) In addition, the library, the ESL Program Director, and the volunteer teachers were assigned pseudonyms. After the interviews, the researcher kept the recording device with ELL files and interview documents in a locked filing system and the audio files secured with a password.

Rather than seek only favorable responses or substantive suggestions for change, the author wanted to remain as open-minded as possible to input from the ELLs. Knowing that some participants have limited literacy skills in their first languages (L1s), the author realized that many responses to the interview questions might differ greatly, and accordingly used follow-up questions to clarify the participants’ responses.

Summary

In Chapter 3 of this Dissertation in Practice, the author described the qualitative, grounded study by means of interviews with the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program’s stakeholders, specifically the director, three teachers, and 15 ELLs.

The data were validated through a lengthy description of the process, extra time spent onsite before and after interviews, triangulation by interviews with other ESL
directors, and self-reflection. Extra communication with the participants added to the study’s authenticity. To establish reliability, the researcher read, listened to, and checked the data multiple times.

Ethically, pseudonyms were given to all the participants and extra care was taken to explain the nature of their roles in interviews. As for personal information, the researcher emphasized that they could decide which parts of their backgrounds to tell. Although language limitations existed in this sampling, the data from the volunteer participants were authentic and robust. The next chapter will cover the findings of the study and its evidence-based solutions.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND EVIDENCED-BASED SOLUTIONS

Introduction

The effect of learning the English language on the integration of newcomers is significant because English-speaking, naturalized workers are more likely to make greater wages and become more educated than those who lack English language skills and citizenship (Muñoz & Rodríguez, 2015). Of the 41.3 million foreign-born immigrants in the United States, 20.4 million (around 50%) of them stated on the U.S. Census Bureau survey that they were Limited English Proficient (LEP) (Zong & Batalova, 2015). In other words, they did not consider themselves particularly competent in English. Further, in 2013, the U.S. workforce was made up of 26.2 million (17%) immigrants. Accordingly, this set of data speaks to the importance of learning or improving English as a means for immigrants to achieve the success they want, particularly in the workplace. The data likewise indicate that half of the ELLs feel that they have some way to go in the mastery of English before they meet their goals.

Given the impact of this ESL instruction, the researcher interviewed participants in the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program to inform the study’s research questions about the specific ELL successes attributable to the library’s program as well as potential improvements to the ESL Program. Chapter Four presents the findings from the interview data and potential solutions to the issue of modifying the ESL Program to align with a needs analysis of the ELLs. Four themes emerged as a result of the interviews with study participants that inform the first research question: What factors contributed to the English learners’ individual successes as a result of the ESL instruction at this library? These themes were achievements, overall goals, language objectives, and
citizenship. A fifth theme, program improvement, informed the second research question: What improvement could the ESL Program make in order to encourage the success of future ELLs? These solutions comply with the study’s aim, which is to propose improvements to the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program, so that it may become a model for other programs of similar size to emulate. The following section describes these themes and subsequent proposed solutions.

Summary and Presentation of the Findings

Data Analysis

During each interview, the researcher assigned a pseudonym and a number to each participant. Following the completion of the interviews, the recordings were uploaded onto a computer with the corresponding pseudonyms and numbers. The researcher also backed up the transcripts and subsequent data. The researcher then listened to the recordings on the audio files three times each to get a good sense of the ideas present in the discourse. The researcher found it important to listen for themes, and to pick up nuances in tone and emphasis on certain words. After this process of familiarization, the researcher then returned to the original recording and transcribed each interview. To ensure accuracy, the researcher checked the transcription against the recordings of the participants’ interviews. The researcher transcribed all the interviews by hand, using paper and pencil. The transcriptions were put in the same notebook with the reflections and notes from committee conversations. From this, the researcher read through all the transcriptions from ELL, director, and volunteer teacher participants to get a general feeling about their statements. Then, upon the next reading, the researcher began to cross code. Iterative words and descriptive stories were circled, counted, and
placed into categories. Labels were assigned to these categories, although the researcher kept an open mind about all the data during this process. Rather than use in vivo codes, the researcher decided to designate the data by code labels that described what the categories contained.

This process was repeated for two days after the initial coding, during which time one theme was dropped. Ultimately, the researcher found five emergent themes: *achieved goals, overall goals, language objectives, citizenship, and program improvement.* Overall goals and language objectives were interconnected insofar as the language objectives brought about and sustained the personal goals; however, each theme has unique characteristics. The themes are discussed individually as they pertain to the study’s two research questions. Four themes, achievements, overall goals, language objectives, and citizenship provided the rich data that informed the first research question: What factors contributed to the English learners’ individual successes as a result of the ESL instruction at this library? Each of the following sections discusses one of these themes.

**Achievements**

Learners in the ESL Program noted the various ways in which the program has helped them integrate into U.S. society. Specifically, ELLs mentioned a wide variety of specific examples of how the program has enhanced their lives, including better communication in the workplace, improved conversational ability in public, greater confidence, learning new things all the time, improvements in grammar, vocabulary, and spelling, banking and shopping without fear, more independence, joy in socialization, and
lifelong learning. All 15 participants stated that even though they are still in the program, they can speak better now than they did before they began their classes. Jennifer reaffirmed this. “Teacher and American people at library have helped. Computer work and talking help.” Thomas supported this contention: “They [the classes] have helped me a lot on my job. Mrs. Clark’s class with money and food helped me.” They regarded these improvements as achievements or motivators that have inspired them to continue attending classes. Anne argued, “I can’t do anything without learning English. I would love to come here every day.” Keiko agreed. “I keep coming to classes till I get a good job.” These sentiments aligned with the overall goals that they set for themselves at the outset of their ESL learning. For example, three of the older students intended to continue with their classes because they felt that they were fulfilling their personal goals of being lifelong learners. As Joe Karl put it, “Learning never ends – you do it all your life.” Caesar added, “I learn something new every time I come here.” Eight younger students articulated that class discussions would help them in interviews for new and better jobs. Sparky observed, “I need interviewing skills. I want to practice daily and make it stick in my mind so I do not have to think before I speak. When they ask the questions, I will know the answers.” Conversations in class have helped him with comprehension. In follow-up questions, the ELLs responded that if they continued on this track, they would experience improvement in all aspects of their lives. Mary stated, “I worked three months at the hospital, but my English was not good. I had to resign. Now I have learned and can speak a little. I can go back and get the job.”
Similarly, three of the ESL instructors remarked the success of the program itself depends on the success of the individuals who attend it. “When they come to class and do their homework, they will be confident and successful,” M. Janković, the No English volunteer, asserted. M. Clark agreed. “They [the ELLs] need regular practice. When they keep returning to class, they show continuous improvement.” T. Sturdy observed that those who came to his Advanced Level conversational classes always improved in a short time.

ELLs have thrived on the class conversations, noting that instructors do not hesitate to correct their grammar, a task that their friends and family do not practice. Conversational practice in class has helped students socialize, manage job interviews, and communicate more efficiently and naturally in the workplace. All the interview participants agreed that class conversation provided them with more confidence and independence as they tackled the day-to-day activities that once caused hesitation. Steven believes that class conversations helped him tremendously, particularly with error correction. “The teachers will help improve your language by telling you when you make mistakes, so you don’t make them again.” As Mary put it, “I can learn a little from conversation. So many different people come from different countries. Altogether, we are talking.”

One Midwestern Library ELL, Michael, claimed that the library’s ESL Program improved his reading skills. He stated, “Now I can read and understand more. Before, I had to read something again and again, but now it only takes one time.” Michael also watched television news with the script on the lower part of the screen, asserting that the news and the ESL Program worked in tandem to assist him with reading and proper
spelling. ELL achievements are reflected in their responses to program success. When asked the following question in the interviews “On a scale of 1-4 (with 1 as the lowest and 4 as the highest), how successful do you feel as a result of the ESL classes at South Library?” Fourteen English learners gave the program “4s” and one gave it a “3.” The individual who assigned the program a 3 wanted to “move faster and study harder,” but admitted that this was often difficult due to learners of varying backgrounds in the classes (ELL, personal communication, April 6, 2015). Paul agreed: “It is very difficult to teach students of many different levels in one class.” Nevertheless, the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program received high approval from its ELL participants. A consideration of the ELL participants’ goals is found below.

**Overall Goals**

The participants were asked in the interviews about their goals in learning English (Table 5). All 15 participants responded that greater English proficiency would result in meeting some kind of tangible goal for them, such as a job, an improved work situation, university study, socialization, or simply a better life. In other words, the ELLs were motivated to learn English by something they wanted. Keiko, for example, wanted to advance her English skills in order to get a degree and a good job. “Conversation in class will help me at the university and later when I work at a job. I need help.” Anne agreed:

I want to do something. I have two kids, but I don’t want to be at home all the time. I speak my language [L1] with them. Then, I have 30 friends from my country. We all speak my language. I want to speak English well. Then, I can work and improve.
On the other hand, Caesar suffered immensely in order to realize his personal American dream. Although he has fulfilled his goals, he continues to study and practice his English skills in order to maintain his status quo:

I follow my dreams. I came here with $300 in my pocket. I had no family, no friends, no house, no one, and nothing. I worked 19 hours a day and slept in a small closet room with an open suitcase. It snowed and was so cold – it was the worst time of my life. I cried. But I got through it. I bought five stores and sold them. Now I am an engineer. I tell people ‘If you work, everything is possible.’ I want people to understand me better in my job. Sometimes, they don’t understand me and I don’t understand them.

Jennifer reported that improving her English proficiency would bring about contentment in her family. “My goal is a good job and a happy family.” She attends classes faithfully because as she put it, “This is better for me to come often. I come to speak English. I will get that job.” Another learner, Thomas, who never went to school, began his English study at the Midwestern Library 10 years ago, “I started classes 10 years ago and stopped. It was too hard to do this and work. Then, I began again. This time, I didn’t stop. I got the citizenship – now I work and am starting my own business.” Mrs. Clark has taught many students from Mexico, “Many ELLs from Mexico that I have taught never went to school. They don’t know how to learn. It is so hard for them.” To that Mr. Janković added, “they need guidance to reach their goals.”
Table 5

*ELL Participants’ Overall Goals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Pseudonym</th>
<th>Overall Goal/Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Veronica</td>
<td>A better life and a job in computers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sophia</td>
<td>Job that suits her education and better life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Larry</td>
<td>To associate with people and take care of my family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Caesar</td>
<td>Improve English for consulting engineering work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Steven</td>
<td>Improve English for socialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Joe Karl</td>
<td>Socialization and lifelong learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Keiko</td>
<td>University study and a good job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Jennifer</td>
<td>A good job and a happy family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Vera</td>
<td>A job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Michael</td>
<td>Improve English for job and citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Thomas</td>
<td>Improve English as entrepreneur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Anne</td>
<td>University study and a good job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Paul</td>
<td>University study, a good job, and citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Mary</td>
<td>A job and citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Sparky</td>
<td>A better job and citizenship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another important goal to be reached through English study is socialization. Mr. Janković noticed that some ELLs come to class to meet others. “Friends invite friends.”
D. Clark remarked, “they start out wanting to learn English and they stay because they make friends.” She also noticed that some ELLs come to class to look for a spouse.

“The goal of some of them is to simply get married.” M. Walsh reported that since she began directing the program, there have been two weddings of ELLs who met during classes. One student even invited the whole class to her wedding. Joe Karl and Steven, both retired, said they come to class to talk with people. Speaking English better helps them to communicate with more people and they feel less isolated. As Steven observed, “I cannot register like a young person, but I can sure talk.” According to the data, socialization marks an overall goal of two ELLs from their participation in the ESL Program at Midwestern Library. In the next section, the language objectives of the ELL participants are discussed.

**Language Objectives**

The number one language goal of all 15 interviewees was communication through conversation (Figure 2). They pinpointed specific forms of communication that they wanted to improve such as conversation, writing, reading, spelling, understanding, grammar, listening, and vocabulary. The component of communication that seemed most vital to them was conversation, since 11 of the 15 participants designated conversational ability as crucial. As Anne emphasized, “Communication is speaking and writing. I need this. I need to talk.” The ELLs seemed motivated to improve their English because they felt it would lead to a job or a better one, education for themselves or their families, or simple socialization. As Joe Karl stated, “It’s a good environment to talk to people and
get to know them.” Paul added that in the Midwestern Library, “You can just sit and talk to people with no stress. The conversation is good and the teachers help you learn more vocabulary.” Larry added the following: “Well, I want to come here to learn English as a second language. I make friends. I meet all different people and I learn all different cultures and customs. That is a good thing.” Larry, like Joe Karl and Paul, found that he could practice his language skills in the environment of the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program, where he was comfortable. This situation is akin to Vygotsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), in which learners do better in a particular environment with others helping them than they would do independently (Brown, 2007; McLeod, 2012).

All 15 participants indicated that they wished to talk to neighbors and colleagues more frequently. D. Clark, Beginning Level teacher, agreed that many ELLs come to the library for socialization (personal communication, May 22, 2014). In the past, some adults in the program have been mail-order brides from China and Russia, who wished to communicate more actively with their new husbands (D. Clark, personal communication, May 22, 2014). One learner noted that her difficulties in following directions and responding to requests from her manager cost her to lose her job. Sophia reported the following:

Yeah, the teacher is good. I came a few times last year, then I got a seasonal job at a store. They didn’t ask me to stay. After that, I don’t haven’t worked. All the time, I’m going to the doctor and I bring someone with me to translate. Now I come to class.
Jennifer observed, “Macedonian education had only French in school, but now it is different. Everybody is talking English. I have to speak to work.” All 15 ELLs claimed that the greatest obstacle in speaking English was that they spoke their L1s at home and, therefore, had little conversational practice in English except at their worksites. Veronica speaks her L1, Albanian, at home and does not work, so her opportunities for language practice are minimal. “I want to learn more English that’s proper. It will bring me to a better life.” Anne speaks her L1 with her husband and children at home and is not working at present, so it is hard for her to switch languages when she goes out. “I want to have the confidence to speak to other people,” she maintained. Paul admitted that although he spoke English with his wife, she did not correct his grammar. Further, he uses Arabic at work, so now he needs to focus on good English to integrate better and to finish his education.

Two of the 15 English learners had limited literacy in their native languages, or L1s. They wanted to focus more on reading in English as did four of the other participants. The two with limited literacy had no interest in learning or continuing to read in their L1s and had let any study of that lapse. Thomas explained that he doesn’t need his L1, Spanish, in his current business, so he spends his time improving his English skills. Steven can read in his L1, Greek, but claims it is not necessary for him now. He is a self-taught English reader. “After all these years, there are still many things I don’t understand. I can’t spell or write well in English, but I keep coming here and it helps me read.” Thomas mentioned that reading skills were very handy for forms and contracts for his new business.
Seven of the ELLs had great interest in improving their writing because they had found that this was necessary at their places of employment. Three ELLs felt that improvement in writing would assist them in seeking higher education. Paul wants to get a degree in Physical Therapy and work in the United States. Anne explained that she “wants to go back to school and get a good job.” The communication in the ESL Program will help her, she added. Embedded in writing, of course, were spelling and grammar, which five participants felt were crucial in communication. Thomas wanted to become proficient in reading and writing English because as a future business-owner, he needs to be independent. Thomas also took Mrs. Clark’s class on money twice and felt that the ESL Program had offered him a healthy start with his own business:
I have come to the library for four months. I want to read and write English. I want to do my own business and this will help me. I want to be strong and understanding everything. I want to have my own business.

Though coming from and heading to different places, the learners at the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program felt that the program was instrumental in boosting their confidence and providing them with a head start in their new initiatives. A topic requiring proficiency in language skills is citizenship, which is also a goal for four learners and a source of pride and an achievement for eight others. Citizenship is explored in the next section.

Citizenship

As of 2013, 47% (19.3 million) of the immigrant population of 41.3 million, that is, 6% of the U.S. population (316.1) were naturalized citizens (Zong & Batalova, 2015). Accordingly, naturalization, “the process by which U.S. citizenship is granted to foreign citizens or nationals after they fulfill the requirements established by Congress in the Immigrations and Nationality Act” (USCIS, 2013, para. 1), was a thematic topic of interest among the newcomers. Of the 15 respondents, 10 are already citizens, four intend to become citizens, and one is not sure, due to conflicted feelings about citizenship. This ELL’s native country does not offer dual citizenship and at this point, she has awkward feelings about returning to her homeland as a guest traveler. Without asking directly, the researcher asked about the ELLs’ feelings regarding citizenship, prompting a variety of responses among them. Steven stated “I’m a very proud U.S. citizen and very grateful.” Caesar reported:
I am already a U.S. citizen for five years. A class here in the library would tell you how, when, where to go, what to do. I had a lot of confusion with this and it took too long. There is so much paperwork. But everything is so much easier when you are a citizen.

Keiko is a citizen now, but struggled to achieve this: “My husband helped me become a citizen. It was hard but I did it.” Both Caesar and Keiko would have liked to have taken citizenship classes at the library. Mary noted, “I would like to take citizenship classes, but not now. There is still time. Before one year, I have to study for citizenship.” She confided further that she believes her English is not good enough to handle the civics questions. Michael felt so strongly about understanding the background for the 100 naturalization questions that he read about U.S. history as his preparation: “Yes, yes! I want to be U.S. citizen and take citizenship classes. I looked for signs in the library. At the same time, I will have more classes about U.S. history. I will do this.”

Vera’s first task in this country was to work on her citizenship process. “I am already a citizen. I came here in 1985 and eight years later, I did it [citizenship], too.” She said she was proud for not giving up. Vera and her friend Sophia, also a citizen, are both job hunting. Jennifer found the naturalization process confusing, but ended up receiving her citizenship in Chicago one year ago.

I am already a citizen – one year tomorrow. I read and began to study. I did the fingerprint, three months after I go to Chicago for citizenship. I had no paper document for five years. Then, I signed as a company worker and got a green card. After three years, I became a citizen. I did it and I am happy.
Every Saturday for two months, Thomas drove 18 miles to a citizenship class and succeeded in passing his U.S. Citizenship Test. This was a major triumph for him since Thomas has limited literacy in his L1. Likewise, Paul said he wants to become a citizen:

I am from Palestine I would like to be an American citizen because I have no official country. I feel that America is my country. It’s more comfortable for me to be a citizen. I started my English classes here [Midwestern Library] and I want to finish this process here.

Veronica, Vera, and Sophia were the only ELLs who became citizens before they studied at the Midwestern Library. To the other seven learners, their time in the ESL Program was seen as instrumental toward the achievement of their citizenship. As Larry attested, “I improved a lot here. It was real good. I got to be a citizen.” The four ELLs who are preparing for citizenship are attending classes at the library for support in anticipation of the naturalization process. Although they had taken different paths toward citizenship, and some had not yet completed the journey, all the respondents took a great deal of time considering citizenship and its effects on their lives.

Achievements, overall goals, language objectives, and citizenship informed the first research question about the factors that contributed to the ELLs’ individual successes as a result of the ESL instruction at the library. Achievements consisted of small steps along the way that empowered the learners, such as carrying through with being understood, undergoing job interviews, starting a business, and making friends. Overall goals, even if not completed, marked progress for the learners. Common overall goals were jobs, education, and socialization. Language objectives that contributed to the ELLs’ individual successes included communication in general, speaking with good
grammar, reading, and writing. Citizenship was likewise a strong theme during the ELL interviews. The data indicated that the participants had stories to tell about it or planned to prepare for the naturalization process, with the exception of one learner. All agreed, however, that having citizenship classes added to the ESL curriculum would be beneficial for them. In the next section, the fifth theme concerning improvements in the ESL Program is discussed.

**Improvements in the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program**

The fifth theme, improvement, informs the second research question: What improvements could the ESL Program make in order to encourage the success of future ELLs? In this section, the learners’ recommendations for improving the ESL Program are listed. Although the program received a generally high praise from the learners, this section introduces their ideas for more and varied classes.

Regarding ESL Program improvements, fourteen of the fifteen interviewees had ideas about creating some changes in the existing format (Figure 4). Five students wanted to expand classes from two to four per week. They wanted to keep the same classes of No English, Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced levels, but add two extra classes weekly. One-third of the respondents wanted to add a computer class specifically for English learners and a citizenship class for those seeking naturalization. Larry claimed that he would like to study “…English and computer. I took Beginner Mouse and Email. I have to stop because I have to learn how to spell first.” Although the classes are primarily conversational, Steven shared that he would like to add a reading class to the current list of offerings. Other suggestions for adding new classes included
U.S. history and some vocational classes. Even the students who had already attained citizenship agreed that extended classes at the library should include citizenship.

Along these lines, Caesar told of the confusion he experienced at different agencies about citizenship studies and testing. Due in part to his lack of comprehension, Caesar had gone from agency to agency in his community looking for help with naturalization issues, and at one point found himself in a government office in Chicago, where he finally received directions to the proper facility.

In follow-up questions and answers, the learners agreed that they liked the classes and the format that existed – they just wanted more of it. Sparky even claimed that he would come to the library to learn every single day of the week if such an opportunity were offered. Furthermore, the learners seemed very comfortable with the relaxed format. If they missed classes, they were not punished or restricted; nor were they required to explain their lapse. They could simply attend the next class and continue from there. As one student remarked, the freedom that they felt in the English instruction at the library mirrored the freedom they had found in their new country. The opportunity to grow and learn was there if they chose to seize it.
In the previous section, the four themes of achievement, overall goals, language objectives, and citizenship emerged from the participant interview data and informed the first research question: What factors contributed to the English learners’ individual successes as a result of the ESL instruction at this library? To inform this research question, the ELLs reported that the Midwestern Library’s program had helped them achieve success by supporting them along the way. The data demonstrate that the ELL participants are pleased with their progress in the ESL Program and with the program itself. They noted in the interviews how they can do things now that they could not do before. For example, Jennifer can listen to the radio and understand the news and weather. Mary knows the grammar she needs to write. Michael is not nervous when talking to people. Sparky has learned necessary vocabulary that he did not learn
elsewhere. These achievements act as motivators for the learners to continue with their instruction in order to meet their overall goals.

Of the participant ELLs in this research study, 13 of the 15 mentioned jobs or the workplace as overall goals. Even though Larry had not mentioned finding a job as a specific goal, he did mention that the unemployment office had directed him to the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program. Just as finding a suitable job was an overall goal for 13 ELLs in the study, this process also agrees with the research findings in Chapter 2. Jobs provide the motivation that leads ELLs to self-direct the meaningful learning that defines adult learner characteristics. Finding a job is a process that involves improvement of skills, particularly English skills for those who classify themselves as LEP. There is a direct link between greater mastery of English to better jobs, increased pay, and community engagement (Sum et al., 2004). Therefore, employment as an overall goal requires some study of English for these learners and, according to Mikulecky (1997), results in more progress in the ESL classroom. According to the data, the participants understand this nexus. Other overall goals which involved employment are education, happiness, and a better life. Education contributes to the employment process and happiness and a better life may result from it. Socialization was an overall goal for two participants who were already retired. The overall goals were intertwined with language objectives because the ELLs intended to use their improved English to meet their goals.

Languages objectives as a theme appeared in the data as conversation, writing, reading, spelling, understanding, grammar, listening, and vocabulary (see Figure 2). With these objectives, learners pinpointed their perceived weaknesses and also the unique
language skills that they thought would help them succeed. In doing so, they were exhibiting self-directed learning by using language objectives as benchmarks toward their unique goals. The data demonstrated a seriousness of purpose as the ELLs mentioned their regular attendance in the program and the means they chose to sharpen their skills, such as reading newspapers and speaking as much as possible. Communication in all its forms was repeated throughout the data. In addition to communication as a popular theme, another topic that caused great interest in the ELL interviews was that of citizenship.

The 10 ELL naturalized citizens expressed strong feelings of pride and satisfaction about attaining citizenship, suggesting that they had reached a milestone of achievement with this event. The other four non-citizen learners were already planning their own naturalization processes, with the exception of one learner who was unsure. The data revealed, nevertheless, that that continuation of citizenship classes at the Midwestern Library would be of practical help to the ELLs. Citizenship can be considered an achievement for the 10 citizen ELLs, while the other four marked it as a goal. Their comments in response to follow-up questions about potential citizenship classes led to suggestions about an expansion of the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program with the addition of new classes. New classes in the ESL Program formed the basis for the fifth theme, improvement, as discussed below.

The fifth theme, improvement, informs the second research question: What improvements could the ESL Program make in order to encourage the success of future ELLs? For these learners, improvements in the ESL Program aligned with areas in which the ELLs felt they needed help. They looked to their own goals as they sought to self-
A LIBRARY’S ROLE

direct new content in the ESL Program. To this end, they proposed meaningful
instruction in reading, citizenship, U.S. history, vocational classes, and computer
technology specifically for English learners. Since most of the classes already focus on
conversation, the reading class was suggested by those learners with limited literacy. As
mentioned, the data also pointed to citizenship and U.S. history classes for help with the
citizenship exam.

The data likewise indicated that the ELLs wanted more of the same classes,
reaffirming the quality of the ESL Program and the fact that it offers meaningful
instruction for the learners. The classes are typically held on Monday and Wednesday
evenings, but the data pointed to adding classes on the other three days, as well.
However, and very significantly, in order to realize more and varied classes in the
program, it is necessary to bring in more teachers. Adding teachers demands new
planning on the part of leadership, as is suggested in the following section.

Proposed Solutions

The data derived from interviews and information from existing research have
prompted solutions that fulfill the aim of the study, which was to make recommendations
for adult English learning programs in public libraries based on the Midwestern Library’s
model. The solutions offer a direct response to the needs assessments posed by the
English learners studying in the ESL Program, which is to increase the number and
variety of classes, calling for added teachers. Some of these suggestions could be
implemented with ease, while others are time-consuming and complicated. Keeping in
mind the Midwestern Library ESL Program’s high approval from the ELLs, it is clear
that the program is enjoyable as is to its present participants. Also, considering that this
vulnerable population is dependent on its services, it would not be in the library’s best interests to change its entire program dramatically. However, it is heavily dependent on a few volunteers to sustain the program. Therefore, the researcher suggests before any modifications to the program are considered, a “Statement of Purpose” (USCIS & IMLS, 2006, p.3) be created that would align with the mission of the Midwestern Library. A thoroughly-written Statement of Purpose can establish clarity in the program and provide a framework for the program’s future (USCIS & IMLS, 2006). It should also serve as a point of reference for the program’s agenda, according to the mission of the Midwestern Library, to provide instruction, not act as a refugee center or job placement office.

Therefore, the researcher has composed a Statement of Purpose for the ESL Program as follows:

Statement of Purpose for the Midwestern Library’s English as a Second Language Program

It is the purpose of the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program to offer instruction in the English language to newcomers who seek to fulfill their unique and personal goals.

Following the establishment of a Statement of Purpose, the two following proposals may be considered as a response to the ESL program’s public. They may be considered together or separately.

I. Collaboration

The ESL Program should consider collaboration among program planners and stakeholders, in a similar way as suggested by Caffarella and Daffron (2013). Collaboration in this sense would involve casual, but consistent consultation with ELLs concerning needs as they arise, so that their needs will always encourage instruction. In
view of the transiency of many attendees, any formal attempts to create committees or conduct meetings may be difficult. However, there are a few senior citizens who have attended classes continuously for years – the director might approach them to work in some capacity for the program, such as the bridge programs.

The next step in the collaborative process is to consider collaboration between Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New Orleans in conjunction with Tulane University, which offers twenty preservice hours for students to meet the Tulane Department of Education’s graduation requirement. In this program, described in depth in Chapter 2, which was originally developed right after Hurricane Katrina by Sister Robin of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, undergraduate students act as teachers’ assistants and tutors in the Diocese’s ESL Program. Working in this capacity satisfies the students’ graduation requirements and helps them gain the experience that comes from intercultural communication (T. Quinn, personal communication, June 15, 2015). A similar model may work nicely with the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program, given the close proximity of three universities and one college, all with schools of education. Specifically, the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program might explore the possibility of collaborating with these institutions to create an experiential program for education students which would benefit both the ESL program and the educational institutions and their students. Preservice teachers, or possibly students with history/political science majors, could also be called upon to teach civics classes for those ELLs interested in naturalization. Adding civics classes was a suggestion shared by the ELL stakeholders and thus, the inclusion of such courses is an important recommendation of this research.
As the next step of the first proposed solution, the researcher suggests the introduction of “bridge programs” (USCIS & IMLS, 2006, p. 3) as addenda to ESL classes, which would act as collaborative efforts between the Midwestern Library and various groups within the community. According to the USCIS and IMLS (2006), bridge programs are special events held at the same site that connect immigrants with their communities. Some examples of bridge programs that might work in conjunction with the ESL Program are special discussions about U.S. civics and the process of naturalization, family literacy programs, conversation practice led by a volunteer ELL, special meetings for senior ELLs, who are often lonely and in need of activities outside their families, a continuing education forum with guest speakers, a book club, and an American holiday program with singing groups from schools (USCIS & IMLS, 2006). Further, a small group of ELL planners could be created, which would encourage collaboration between the director and stakeholders. According to the study’s data, six ELLs were willing to perform service for the ESL Program. As a result, the ESL Director might approach them to form a committee to help set up some bridge programs of interest. Job-hunters could then express this leadership opportunity on resumés.

In conclusion, this set of recommendations, in accord with a newly developed Statement of Purpose, related to collaboration offers the possibility of a relationship between schools or universities in the area with the Midwestern ESL Program. The university would have its preservice teachers practice teach for the ESL program as a requirement for an education degree or practicum. In return, these volunteer teachers would get valuable intercultural experience for their future careers. An additional collaborative recommendation would be for the library to have bridge programs,
specifically for ELLs. Topics for monthly sessions would come directly from the ELLs, as stakeholders in the program. A second proposed solution, as a response to the data, consists of grants and funding opportunities, as discussed below.

II. Grants and Funding Opportunities

A second set of recommendations, which may be considered independently or ideally, in conjunction with the previous set of recommendations, includes the opportunity for grant funding. In order to grow the program, it is necessary to have enough instructors to offer the classes that the stakeholders want, and payment may be necessary to secure these teachers. Many of the suggested improvements identified in the data by ELLs would invariably require additional funding for courses, instructors, professional development for teachers, and added services for the ELLs. One such way to obtain these funds may be through federal and private grants. One source, the U.S. Department of Education, supports grants for ELL adult education (Muñoz & Rodríguez, 2015). Under the auspices of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) sponsors a Citizenship and Integration Grant Program which has designated $43 million in 222 grants to public and private non-profits that provide citizenship and integration services to newcomers (Muñoz & Rodríguez, 2015). Although in the distant past, the ESL Program did utilize a grant for a year, the director and other library staff might look into the possibility of using grants again for this program. Grants would enhance the prestige of the library as well as broaden the ESL Program itself to fund additional instructors, courses, and perhaps additional services to its ELLs.
Successful grant applications typically include data about a program’s current practices and needs. Even if casual, Marshall (2002) articulated the use of exit student evaluations at the end of every term as relevant and useful data. These evaluations may assess the ESL program itself, indicating the direction that instruction might take to keep it consistently fresh and useful (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013). Exit evaluations may also take the form of summative assessments such as BEST testing or instructor-generated assessments for individual students. Using entrance and exit assessments track the progress that learners have made while in attendance in the program. Assessments inform instructors of learner progress and provide the hard data that learners may use on their own or as proof of study, progress, or attendance to employers or future employers. Using evaluations as record-keeping could be completed with or without the burden of grant applications, but keeping data could help secure grants and maintain them.

A simple means of data-keeping is to have ELLs sign in when they enter class. The sign-in sheet could be situated at the entrance to the classroom and collected by the director at the end of the evening. ELLs would not be asked to provide addresses or phone numbers, just names for the purpose of keeping track of numbers for future grants or simply for the library’s own information. The Chicago, New Orleans, and Boston programs utilize sign-in sheets for their grant data. Sign-in sheets provide the library with additional data to show how often learners attend courses, or to provide data for other studies.

Since the ELLs have requested more and varied classes, applying for grants might provide a way to respond to their requests. Grants would provide a basis for paying part-time teachers or paying for volunteers to take extra training or professional development.
It would not be necessary to overhaul everything; rather, the program could add one or two different classes per term, depending on teacher supply. Examples of Term Schedules 1 and 2 are in Table 6 below.

Table 6

*Recommendations for New Class Schedules*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No English</td>
<td>MTWThF</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>RV*/NV**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning</td>
<td>MWTTh</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>RV/NV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>RV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>MTWTh</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>RV/NV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>MTWThF</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>NV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computers***</td>
<td>TTh</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>NV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Preparation</td>
<td>MW</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>TTh</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>NV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *RV:* Regular Volunteer; *NV:* New Volunteer; ***Existing Class

Term 2 would keep the same basic classes, but alternate others. Library and university representatives should be present at all sessions when preservice teachers are working. The ESL Director should also be present during all sessions for both volunteer and paid employees.

Grants and funding purport to supply the program with part-time teachers to meet the data for more and varied classes, with the aim of program improvement. A schedule
The ESL Program is fortunate insofar as it operates under the umbrella of the Midwestern Library. This organizational system contains a number of highly-skilled librarians with knowledge of and access to community resources and grant-writing resources. ESL Program Director Walsh is likewise an experienced, knowledgeable individual with a background in both Library Science and Social Studies, which is important for carrying out procedures within the program. However, due to the organizational setup of the library, the ESL Director is not free to make administrative decisions or implement any proposals without the approval of library administrators or the library board.

With respect to Proposal #1, Collaboration, the library’s immediate neighborhood includes three universities and one college in close proximity, all with teacher education programs. Perhaps one or more of these four potential partners might be willing to consider the ELL population as a new source of experience for preservice teachers, especially given the present numbers of ELLs in school systems and in the work force (Zong & Batalova, 2015). Furthermore, there are three high schools in the area, one private, and two public, whose students might teach civics classes at the library for
community service or as a National Honor Society project. Both English learners and high school volunteers would benefit as a result of this valuable intercultural contact.

According to the data, six ELLs are willing to volunteer with the ESL program and two for the community. Therefore, with this willingness in place, collaborating on bridge programs may be a realistic and manageable goal because ELL volunteers could be of valuable use in representing other learners on committees.

As mentioned in Proposal #2, the library at one time (unknown to the director) had a grant for its ESL classes and used money from it to support its instruction. According to the director, the grant-writing coupled with data collection became too unwieldy due to the transiency, or the constant moving, of the English learners (M. Walsh, personal communication, May 22, 2014). The director at that time felt that volunteers were spending too much time keeping attendance and assessment scoring and consequently found the process unworthy of their efforts. With the exception of the Kansas City center, which has older, professional ELLs, the other center directors in Boston, New Orleans, and Chicago also mentioned transiency as a limiting factor in helping English learners.

With respect to Proposal #2, Grant-writing, and Funding Opportunities, the library reference staff, as professional researchers, has the experience to explore possible grants for the library. They could also look into funding from various organizations and businesses throughout the community. For example, there is an organization in the same town as the Midwestern Library that gives thousands of dollars annually to community organizations with differing needs. Businesses that serve immigrants could also follow suit. In short, there are multiple means for gathering funds for a good cause such as
helping people who want to improve themselves. The section below outlines some potential barriers and obstacles to Proposed Solutions #1 and #2.

**Potential Barriers and Obstacles to Proposed Solutions**

With respect to the two solutions of collaboration and grant-writing, the potential barrier is that much of the first proposed solution, collaboration, depends on some agreement with a local university for the preservice teachers’ involvement. Following an agreement, the university would have to commit to a specified period of time for the initiative to take place. However, if no agreement was reached, then the program would have to focus on the next step of collaboration, engagement with community organizations for bridge programs. Whereas the university commitment would be ongoing, holding special events for ELLs could be designated for certain times of the year, with some responsibility going to the ELLs themselves. Obstacles to bridge programs might lie in the library administration’s hesitancy for taking on more work activities. However, the library has room for these activities in the ESL area, so it would only come down to reserving rooms and coordinating activities. Furthermore, educating the ELL public through bridge programs aligns with the library’s mission to educate the community in terms of what they need to know (M. Walsh, personal communication, April 22, 2015).

Clearly, the Midwestern Library has not chosen to become engaged in grant-writing for many good reasons. The process is time-consuming and its number of learners might be inadequate. Indeed, a veteran librarian or new hire would have to take on the grant-writing. Also, the program does not use evaluations so there is unawareness on the part of library administrators about needs and desires of the ELLs. However, a
transparent response to authentic data demands ways and means to provide the learners with more and varied programs, not to mention preserving the one they already have. In the next section, financial issues with reference to the proposed solutions for its improvement plan are considered.

**Financial/Budget Issues Related to Proposed Solution**

Presently, the ESL Program at the Midwestern Library takes place in the library and is run by a fulltime reference librarian employed there. There is no overhead because the program utilizes library rooms in the lower level which were intended for such purposes. Four teachers volunteer in the program currently. The ESL Program does not have an entrance fee or specific textbooks because most of the classes are conversational in nature. On occasion, teachers may make copies of lessons or use library books, but they do not order materials.

However, if the ESL program used collaboration and grant-writing to add more teachers and align the program with ELL needs, the library would have potential budget issues to consider, such as new staff, new materials, and additional details in their bridge programs. A consideration of these budgetary modifications is as follows:

**I. New Staff**

New staff might be required to coordinate preservice teachers from local education departments with English learners at the Midwestern Library. On the library’s part, collaboration with a university would involve paperwork, orientation for multiple preservice teachers, mentoring, hands-on stewardship, and staff presence during all instructional sessions.
Further, grant-writing, grant stipulations, and other funding may require an additional part-time hire, either for the writing of grants or for taking on extra duties from a fulltime librarian assigned to do so. There are many benefits to hiring new staff for this, however. A program offering citizenship classes, for example, would comply with ELL needs, bring in new students, and perhaps bring in new tax dollars for the library. The recompense may be well worth that effort in terms of quality programming, an influx of new students, and a demonstrated commitment to its community. In addition to the hiring of extra staff for collaborative and funding purposes, another budgetary issue may lie in the possible purchase of new materials, as follows.

**II. New Materials**

With collaboration, it might be necessary for the Midwestern Library to purchase some printed material, or at least more paper, for preservice teachers and English learners to use during and between classes. Schedules, outlines of lesson plans, locations of classes, directions to the library, and suggestions for instruction could be printed as a head start for both preservice teachers and learners. Some ESL programs, such as that coordinated by Catholic Charities of New Orleans, require textbook purchases by participants. If the Midwestern Library followed this pattern, it should purchase books for its teachers, at least.

With citizenship classes, the U.S. Government Bookstore sells a great deal of applicable material that can be used for classes (USCIS, n.d.). Free, downloadable material for civics study is also available from the USCIS, but extra paper would be required to print these off for teachers and ELLs. Many learners could access these
citizenship study sites online, but some ELLs, particularly older ones, still do not have the technical skills to master computer work and civics study simultaneously.

III. Additional Details

Bridge programs comprise a part of the collaborative solution, and as such, may also require extra expenses. Stipends for the speakers or other assistance, refreshments, door prizes, or use of materials during programs could be considered budgetary additions. For example, visiting speakers may need extra materials such as pencils and paper in order to conduct their programs.

Consequently, the library could anticipate expenses with regard to new staff, but also anticipate a certain amount of unexpected expenses, such as printed materials and materials needed by external contributors. In addition to budgetary expenses, change theory affects the course of the ESL Program’s instruction. The next section discusses the possible effects of the change theory on the ESL program’s adoption of Proposals #1 and #2 for its improvement plan.

Change Theory

Change theory refers to planned or unplanned modifications that organizations undergo (Burke, 2011). The ESL Program at the Midwestern Library is a perfect candidate for change. It enjoys a high approval rating by ELLs and there were no complaints about it in the interviews with ELLs or volunteer teachers. As Burke (2011, p. 11) put it, “Nothing is broken, so what’s to fix?” However, this Dissertation in Practice concerns improvement in an organization, in this case, the ESL Program at the Midwestern Library.
First of all, the data from the interviews have informed this author that the stakeholder ELLs would like multiple and varied classes in the program’s repertoire. In addition, data from other ESL centers demonstrated that having different classes creates a larger learner population. In order to comply with its taxpaying public, the ESL Program needs to begin inculcating change within its system. For one thing, its volunteers will not always wish to teach and changes must be made to accommodate the ELLs. Also, the library’s “external environment” (Burke, 2010, p. 16) will change, undoubtedly forcing the ESL Program to adjust (Kotter, 1995). Since the library’s mission is to educate, the ESL Program could follow Proposal #1 and create a Statement of Purpose which could direct its vision accordingly.

Kotter (1995) noted that proper and lasting change needs a long time to take effect and become part of the organization’s culture; therefore, it would be in the program’s best interest to begin its change right now while it can manage the change, rather than be forced to react against it in the not-too-distant future. Library staff can begin the process by writing a Statement of Purpose and then exploring the possibilities of collaboration and grant-writing as part of the next phase in its change cycle. The researcher has already written a Statement of Purpose which may be used as a starting point: 

It is the purpose of the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program to offer instruction in the English language to newcomers who seek to fulfill their unique and personal goals.

Summary

Chapter Four of the Dissertation in Practice began with the themes that emerged from the data: achievements, overall goals, language objectives, citizenship, and program improvement. These themes informed the two research questions: What factors
contributed to the English learners’ individual successes as a result of the ESL instruction at this library? What improvement could the ESL Program make in order to encourage the success of future ELLs?

Following the establishment of a Statement of Purpose, which corresponds to the library’s mission statement and sets the course for future ESL Program activity, two proposals should be considered. First of all, the library administrators and ESL Director should explore collaborative efforts with nearby universities and agencies to create more opportunities for the ELLs, in accord with their interview data. Secondly, the library administrators and ESL Director should look into possibilities for grants, at least for the citizenship classes that the students would like to take at the library. Although there are some barriers to these proposals, they are not insurmountable. The door is certainly open to change, which the library might look into now while they can control the process. Some questions remain for their consideration: Do they truly want to respond to their community? Do they want to grow the program? Positive answers to these questions require leadership with a vision. In Chapter Five, the researcher’s conclusions and recommendations for the benefit of the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program improvement plan are analyzed.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

As of 2014, 13% of the U.S. population consisted of immigrants (Muñoz, & Rodríguez, 2015), roughly half of which considered themselves Limited English Proficient (United States Census Bureau, 2015). However, since research indicates that English is the key to success (Sum, et al., 2004), it was significant and appropriate to reach out to these newcomers themselves in order to explore how they could master English as a stepping stone to achieving their goals. To accomplish this, interviews were held with the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program’s director, volunteers, and adult English learners in order to explore how the Midwestern Library helps them realize their individual visions of success. The resultant data indicated that these ELLs wanted more and varied classes. Therefore, in order to fulfill the aim of this study, which is to make recommendations for adult English learning programs based on Midwestern’s model, the researcher recommends that the program add more classes of different kinds for the benefit of the adult English learners.

Summary of the Study

The researcher explored how the Midwestern Library supports its adult, immigrant learners through English language education and how it helps them achieve their individual visions of success. In the end, the study’s aim was to make recommendations for adult English learning programs in public libraries based on the Midwestern Library model. To achieve this, the researcher conducted a qualitative, grounded-theory study that involved interviewing 15 ELLs, their three volunteer teachers,
and the Director of the ESL Program at Midwestern Library in order to determine best practices for English instruction in the program. The data from these interviews indicated that the learners wanted more opportunities to learn, with multiple classes in the areas of citizenship, computers, vocational study, reading, grammar, spelling, and U.S. history (Figure 4). Since there are only four volunteer teachers in the program now, the most important issue would be to find more teachers to implement this proposed curriculum. To this end, the researcher suggested two proposals: Collaborate with schools or agencies to find volunteers or pay part-time teachers by means of grants or library funding. Utilizing one or both of these means would create a steady supply of teachers for the proposed implementation of new instruction. In this way, more and varied instruction in the ESL Program would satisfy the data by fulfilling the learners’ needs. In the following section, considerations of the ESL program’s proposed implementation of the solutions are examined.

**Implementation of Solution Processes and Considerations**

In order to implement the solutions to the improvement plan for the ESL Program at Midwestern Library, the author considered the processes of collaboration, grant-writing and funding, and grant-writing for citizenship classes, as outlined below.

**Collaboration**

This data informed the researcher that the ELLs wished for more and varied classes, which would require multiple teachers, which the library does not have at present. Consequently, the library needs to devise a plan to welcome newly qualified teachers into its program. They can find these teachers either through volunteerism or paid part-time positions. To increase their supply of volunteers through volunteerism, the
researcher has looked favorably at the New Orleans ESL Program, which complements its cadre of loyal community volunteers with preservice students from Tulane University. As a matter of fact, Young (2009) advocated seeking teachers for adult ELLs in university education programs for preservice teachers, in K-12 school districts for current and retired teachers, and on job boards to attract retired individuals looking for extra income. Given the nature of this unique and somewhat vulnerable population, it is essential to have instructors with a background in ESL or offer training to those who lack it. Henrichsen (2010) offers three reasons for teacher ESL training. For example, many volunteers were trained in the past and would likely use outdated methods to instruct ELLs in their current classrooms. Also, some volunteers without training tend to treat adult learners like children and subsequently offend them. In addition, untrained volunteers may not be aware of the characteristics of different cultures and sometimes end up deterring their progress. The learners who need the English most for improvement tend to be the ones who can afford it least and therefore seek instruction from volunteers (Henrichsen, 2010).

In order to create the collaboration between a local school or university and the ESL Program, the university faculty in a department would have to consider its curriculum and how such an experience could benefit or challenge the current practices in its program (D. Brown, personal communication, June 19, 2015). At another university, this might be done through a curriculum committee (E. Mateo, personal communication, June 19, 2015). The experiential learning for preservice teachers could also be incorporated into a preexisting practicum requirement, without having to adjust any curriculum. Once initiated, this undertaking would demand a broader orientation,
consistent mentoring by the school’s preservice director, and observations by the ESL Program teachers and their director. Young (2009) stated that supervisors use an advisory model to suit their purpose and context, and get to know their background and teaching styles in order to suggest appropriate professional development such as workshops, online learning, mentoring, and assistance in creating a formidable curriculum. The Midwestern ESL Director and university preservice director would have to keep extensive records during the process. The university director would need to keep track of student hours for their graduation requirements; the Midwestern ESL Director would need to record data for the library’s records. From there, discussions would have to take place between the two parties about further responsibilities in this new collaboration.

Another step in collaboration, the bridge programs, requires compliance with other agencies and persons. This effort would be gradual, depending upon the schedule developed by library administrators. Perhaps a small group of volunteer ELLs could spearhead a committee to explore the types of presentations that learners would like and that the library could offer. A consideration might be finding the proper presenters or helpers who would be willing to appear for free or for a small stipend. In order to interest the ELL public, needs analyses of ELL requests could be taken. Another consideration might be ensuring that a substantial number of patrons attend the sessions. The library would have to set specifications on numbers in order to continue with the programs. In addition to collaborative efforts, the researcher’s second proposal, grant-writing, is considered below.
Grant-Writing

The other route toward increasing its teacher reserve is to take on part-time teachers by utilizing grant money to pay them. With the requests of the ELLs for multiple and varied English classes, adding two or three more part-time instructors per term would fulfill that need. However, a major challenge to this venture might be attracting and retaining an adequate number of ELLs in the program in order to comply with governmental regulations. For example, the New Orleans ESL and Chicago Programs, the program directors must ensure retention of certain numbers of learners in the program as well as progress made on the BEST Literacy testing (T. Quinn, May 28, 2015; C. Smith, May 7, 2015). As explained in Chapter 4, an earlier program director at the Midwestern Library had tried grant-writing unsuccessfully about ten years ago. Growing the program would demand undoubtedly fulltime supervision or the hire of an extra part-time employee. A unique form of grant-writing, grant-writing for citizenship is explored in the next section.

Grant-Writing for Citizenship

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) department offers grants to organizations to prepare newcomers for citizenship through English, civics, and U.S. history. To receive such a grant, an organization must provide certain services and information for both naturalization paperwork and citizenship preparation (USCIS, 2015). A challenge in applying for such a grant is that it requires 200 “lawful, permanent residents” (USCIS, 2015, para. 3) in order to receive funding; unfortunately, Midwestern Library numbers do not meet this requirement at present. Nevertheless, grants do exist for smaller programs. The Tina B. Carver Fund provides funding for class and teacher
A member of the grant-seeking institution must have membership in the TESOL (Teaching English as a Second or Other Language) organization. Another promising grant comes from the Wish You Well Foundation, which supplies literacy programs with funds from $200 to $10,000. These grants are distributed four times annually. Other grants come from the Dollar General store, the Pro-Literacy organization, which has awarded $2.9 million since its inception in 1995, the Foundation Center, and the Council on Foundations (ProLiteracy, 2011). The Barnes & Noble organization does not sponsor grants, but it does make charitable contributions to educational groups (ProLiteracy, 2011). In sum, there are many opportunities available to the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program and the chances are good that the Midwestern administrators and ESL Director could secure one of them in order to modify its curricula according to stakeholder data. In the next section, the roles and responsibilities of major stakeholders in the implementation are discussed.

Roles and Responsibilities of Key Players in Implementation

Schein (1987) conceived of a change schedule that consisted of three overlapping stages: unfreezing or getting ready for change, changing or re-identifying with something new, and integrating the change into the system (Burke, 2011). In this sense, the ESL Program Director at the Midwestern Library could act as the change agent and initiate change by reacting thoughtfully to the data from the ELLs. She would act as Program Manager by handling the day-to-day details for the program. Both the director and Midwestern administrators would work as program planners by writing a Statement of Purpose around the library’s Mission Statement to educate according to need (M. Walsh, personal communication, April 22, 2015) and in line with practical suggestions from
learners. The library staff could then work on implementing this blueprint by collaborating with the necessary co-planners to modify the ESL Program into something more congruent with stakeholder data (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013).

The role of the instructional volunteers would be to create objectives for their instruction based on the Statement of Purpose and to develop curricula in line with this (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013). The role of program evaluator would fall to Midwestern’s director and administrators, as well to the co-planners connected with the Department of Education at the university. Evaluations would take the form of “questionnaires, interviews, or observations” (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013, p. 270) along with subsequent analyses of these data. Further, the evaluators would discuss questions of whether the program has become more valuable and if the collaboration should be continued (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013).

Likewise, the ELLs as stakeholders themselves should have input not only into the bridge programs, but also in their leadership positions on a bridge direction committee. There they could consider topics of interest and work as liaisons to their ELL community to maintain robust communication with both sides.

**Leader’s Role in Implementing Proposed Solutions**

In such a system, the leader has multiple roles. First of all, the leader must act as a change agent, convincing other parties that change is necessary for the survival of the program. Part of Schein’s (1987; 2002) agenda in introducing change is to convince others of the urgent necessity for change. In like manner, the ESL Director must convince library administrators that a need for change exists, and that without it, the program might not be secure. Schein (1987; 2002) believed that these stages of change
meld into and overlap one another; therefore, as the director as the change agent initiated change, she must simultaneously encourage the other planners to identify with the new system. For example, the data showed that the ELLs wanted citizenship classes on site at Midwestern Library. As leader, the director must now demonstrate that this venture would be beneficial to everyone, including the library. Once convinced, the library staff should collaborate with the university to create a volunteer teaching system for ELLs that responds to data derived from learner interviews.

In addition to having preservice teachers, however, the director and administrators should also decide which courses to add. According to the data, the ELLs wanted to add classes in citizenship, computers, reading, U.S. history, and vocational classes. Midwestern Library already runs computer classes, so the director could inform the volunteer teachers to provide pertinent details about these classes to the learners. The computer instructor could also take some professional development in the SIOP Method, particularly with regard to scaffolding and comprehensible input, such as telling the same story in different ways. The desired U.S. history class more than likely pertained to citizenship preparation which could be handled during citizenship classes. Vocational classes do not conform to the library’s mission, which is to provide individuals with the information they need to improve their lives (M. Walsh, personal communication, April 22, 2015). Nor do vocational classes correspond to the ESL Program’s future Statement of Purpose, which has to support the library’s program as an educational one, not one for job placement and immigrant integration. Nevertheless, a job preparation class, focusing on reading and writing, and including resumé-writing and interview preparation, should satisfy the data and serve a very good purpose by guiding the ELLs toward their goals.
In the third stage of the change cycle, Schein (1987; 2002) change was applied through teamwork and care was taken to ensure the contentment of team members with change. As change agent and leader, the director would enlist the help of other planners, such as library administrators and university preservice representatives, to help the stakeholders adjust to the new climate in the ESL Program at the Midwestern Library. Consistent attempts at evaluation should be made as a new source of data that will provide the framework for further change in the program.

Consequently, the leader has been present and active at each stage of change for the ESL Program. She has initiated it, refined it, led the planning, and helped others to accept it. At this point, she also ends with the evaluations of the program that will repeat the entire change process, according to Caffarella and Daffron’s (2013) Model of Interactive Planning.

**Timeline for Implementation and Assessment**

The following is a timeline intended for the implementation of the improved ESL Program at Midwestern Library. This timeline concerns Proposals #1 and #2.

Month 1 – Write Statement of Purpose.

Month 2 – Talk with stakeholders about collaboration with a school or university.

Create task force with ELLs to research bridge programs.

Month 3 – Research various grant programs.

Months 4-5 – Contact schools and universities.

Begin grant applications. Consider bridge program list.

Month 6 – Meetings with schools and universities to work out collaboration.

Explore funding opportunities from local and national organizations.
Months 7-8 – Map out details for new collaboration. University education department co-planners sit in on ESL classes. Begin bridge programs. Appeal to organizations for funding.

Months 9-11 – Library and university co-planners schedule students and attend end-of-year potluck. Continue bridge programs throughout the summer. Continue grant applications and continue contacting philanthropic organizations.

Month 12 – ESL lessons begin with preservice teachers taking new roles.

Grant/s and funding received and stipulations followed. Bridge programs continue.

Following the creation of a Statement of Purpose, the timeline above seeks to provide an approximate course of events that might anticipate the implementation of Proposals #1 and #2 in the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program. Although individual grants and funding will have their unique guidelines, the outset of that process is described here. In the section below, steps of persuasion that may be used to convince other stakeholders are explained.

**Convincing Others to Support the Proposed Solution**

There are three steps of persuasion involved in the modification of Midwestern’s ESL Program. Initially, the director as change agent must convince the library administrators that an urgent need exists. For example, the director could state that the ESL Program’s numbers have dwindled and innovations are needed to sustain it. Without data, this might be difficult to prove, however. The director could also use the researcher’s data, which demonstrates a need and desire for multiple and varied classes.
To support these data, the director could use immigration statistics which point to increased numbers of ELLs in the workplace and school systems within the United States as well as in the Midwestern Library’s home county.

The director must still pursue this tactic for the writing of grants. She would have to seek permission from library administrators and the board in order to consider writing grants for the program or the library could assign another librarian do the grant-writing.

Secondly, in accord with the library’s policy changes, the director as change agent should communicate with all stakeholders, such as the community, the English learners, the school partners, the internal staff, and the library board, that the program is about to undergo some major, exciting changes. She should see to it that all segments of the stakeholder groups are engaged actively in the change process, and request evaluations from them prior to the iteration of the next change cycle. She should communicate the change in a positive manner for the most effective results (Burke, 2011).

Third, library planners must reach out to universities for the use of their preservice teachers. Here, the library planners would need to convince representatives of the university’s education department that having their preservice students participate in ESL volunteer teaching would be valuable, experiential learning for them. Considering the amount of paperwork for both sides, the library’s argument in favor of collaboration should remain persuasive – the venture should be experiential and productive for students, be regarded as an intercultural learning opportunity, and benefit the common good. Convincing others is a crucial part of the collaborative process. Below, some factors that distinguish the implementation of the proposals are explored.
Critical Pieces Needed for Implementation and Assessment

According to the National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP) (2012), four factors dominate implementation and assessment: commitment, readiness, flexibility, and evaluative capacity. In terms of commitment, the Midwestern Library ESL Director, its administrators, and co-planners stand committed to carry through the process of program improvement, evidenced by mutual promises (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013). The partners will remain in their collaboration unless feedback from ELLs should prove negative, forcing them to adopt a new strategy of change. They will have prepared for a year for the changes that they anticipate will enhance the program. Their readiness for change is demonstrated in the multiple meetings that have taken place in this year. The change agent will have done an efficient job convincing stakeholders that changes must occur so that program leadership could ready all concerned for the new collaboration.

However, the ESL Program has to have the flexibility to adjust when certain situations do not meet the stakeholders’ expectations or go according to plan. The collaborators need to have backup plans for those situations. Further, in Caffarella and Daffron’s (2013) Interactive Model of Program Planning, flexibility is crucial because the program always has to respond to its public. As the needs of the public change, the library should change; this concept of flexibility is contingent with “the ability to measure the effect of the program on the population” served (NREPP, 2012, p. 6). This refers to the evaluations that will produce the data that will drive future efforts. Performing consistent evaluations will help in quality improvements of the program, while positive results from evaluations will maintain support and encourage morale.
(NREPP, 2012). In the next section, some internal and external implications that might characterize the ESL program’s change are considered.

**Internal and External Implications for the Organization**

If library administrators and the ESL Director decide to implement one or two of these proposals, one result would have to be adjusting the responsibilities of the ESL Director. Currently, she is also a reference librarian, but her job responsibilities would have to be modified. For the collaborative proposal, the director would have to collaborate closely with the director of student teaching at the university to ensure that the preservice students received the appropriate orientation and that the students were providing the English learners with the best instruction possible.

For the second proposal, grant-writing, the director, another professional librarian, or a new part-time hire would undertake the proper initiatives to seek grants. Once received, the director would have to keep the program records in line with the grant-bestowing organization’s regulations. These records might include attendance, formative evaluations, exit evaluations, and reports to the grantor organization. This task might not be easy due to the unavoidable transiency of many students, but the trade-off might be the development of a stronger program due to financial support.

Externally, the pursuit of new initiatives would represent the Midwestern Library as dynamic and committed to its community, even if both initiatives fail. As McKee and Lamb (2005) point out, an organization’s enhanced efforts toward the common good may result in more resources and funding from its own community. Additional organizations may want to see themselves as part of this bandwagon community initiative. Further, the chamber of commerce and other businesses may likewise be interested in collaborating
by setting up complementary community resources for other ELL needs, such as vocational training and refugee assistance. In addition, starting the momentum for such a “good neighbor” movement may tap feelings of local pride, which could result in a better climate for the community and a safe haven for newcomers. “The combination of factors that contribute to an overall improvement in the quality of life for area residents manifests itself in this contagious enthusiasm, which in turn may lead to more growth and development” (McKee & Lamb, 2005, p. 39). Consequently, the library’s positive actions in assisting needy members of its community could have a resounding impact in its perception by the community and its leadership for a good cause. Leaders might face some particular issues in the implementation of the proposals, as discussed below.

Considerations for Leaders Facing Implementation of Proposed Solutions

Leaders facing implementation of the proposed solutions for the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program should consider the various aspects of change in the program, funding for its teachers and materials, and public relations for the library. Change is never easy. In this situation with the ESL Program, it might be of import to consider small changes over a long period of time. After all, change takes a long time to implement if it is done correctly and for the right reasons (Kotter, 1995). Leaders should consider that the ESL Program has received a high approval rating from the stakeholders in its program, and therefore, adjustments in its program might take the form of additions, rather than disrupting what is going on so well at the moment. That is, the program should keep the classes that it already has and simply add two-four more classes, as noted below the Timeline.
In addition to change, leaders should look very seriously at funding. Could the library possibly expend any funds to assist the program? Presently, its funding comes from taxpayers – the same group to which the library is reaching out. Grants might not be attainable due to lack of numbers or the source of the grants might dry up. In view of this, leaders could examine the budget to determine an availability of funding for its ESL Program. Whatever the source, funding might be used for professional development for the ESL teachers. Additionally, part-time payment for present teachers as incentive to remain, as well as for any new hires, would advance morale. Leaders should understand that the ESL Program cannot bring in new teachers and pay them, while expecting those who have devoted their services for so long to continue to volunteer. A fair solution would be to provide part-time pay for both previous volunteers and teachers new to the program.

Another issue for leaders to consider is the stakeholders’ perception of the library’s role in the community. According to McKee and Lamb (2005), “Practicing social responsibility – using the resources of an organization to promote ethically positive results for key stakeholder groups – may be the most effective public relations tool of all” (p. 40). Even when things are going well, leaders need to consider what their organizations are doing and how they are perceived by their public (McKee & Lamb, 2005). Expanding a program that can do so much good in the community as well as maximize excellent public relations for the library represents a worthwhile goal. In short, when leaders face implementation of these two proposals, they should reflect thoughtfully on change, sources of funding, and public relations for the library. The
following section explores the significance of the evaluation cycle in terms of the ESL program’s progress.

**Evaluation Cycle**

The Evaluation Cycle of the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program consists of evaluations, budget considerations, marketing for the program, details, and instruction, to be followed by iterative evaluations (Figure 4). Evaluations consist of evaluations of the program itself and assessment evaluations of individual learner progress. Program evaluations dominate the evaluation cycle because they inform leaders about satisfaction with the program and needs analysis for it. Exit evaluative assessments may be carried out for individual students to determine the progress made between beginning and ending assessments (Marshall, 2002). This determination of progress is often a stipulation demanded by grants and other funding. Beginning evaluations might consist of casual conversation with the director or a specific standardized test, administered upon arrival. So too, both program and individual evaluations should be administered at the end of each session. Since the ESL Program has three sessions from September to mid-June, the evaluative process would be repeated within each session.

The budget would be under consideration for the year, and additionally, for each of the three sessions. The frequency of a budget analysis would depend upon the requirements of the source of funding. If the collaborative strategies are undertaken, however, extensive funding would not be necessary.
The straightforward marketing process is undertaken by the ESL Director. The program is displayed on the library’s website and Facebook page; also, fliers appear in the library, as well as other locations in which ELLs normally visit. In consideration of the potential impact on the community, other marketing strategies could be contemplated, such as information on bill boards, and in churches, schools, and stores.

Instruction consists of four levels of classes: No English, Beginning Level, Intermediate Level, and Advanced Level, with communication as the premiere language objective, as recommended by the data (see Recommendations for New Class Schedules, Table 6). Four classes have been added: Citizenship, Computers, Job Preparation, and Reading. This curriculum may change from session to session depending on the number of ELLs who show interest. The other sources of learner data such as writing, spelling, U.S. history, and grammar content will be embedded in all the classes. Computer classes
are already offered at the Midwestern Library in an outreach program external to the ESL Program. In the spirit of collaboration, the computer instructors could undergo ESL professional development with other ESL instructors, in order to learn how to scaffold instruction for the ELLs in the computer class.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

This Dissertation in Practice looked at one particular ESL program at one library in the Midwest, where adult learners study English, as do increased numbers of immigrants all over the United States. For example, in 1970, the total immigrant population represented 4.7% (9.6 million) and in 2013, immigrant populations comprised 13.1% (41.3 million) of the U.S. population. Even in one year, 2012-2013, the foreign-born population increased 1.3% (523,000) (Zong & Batalova, 2015). Based on this data, research could be conducted on the number of these individuals who might seek help from ESL programs or immigrant centers and the success rate they have there based on the goals they have set for themselves.

Further, in this study, two of the 15 participants had limited literacy – one of whom could read a little in his L1, but the other not at all. Perhaps research is needed on learners with limited literacy and best practices for teaching them English. In fact, a published guidebook specifically for teaching adults with limited literacy would be most helpful, particularly in areas of the United States where the issue has not been common or the volunteers do not have a proper ESL teaching background.

Research on grants and qualifications for grants would be an important topic to cover. Normally, grants require specific criteria such as completion of the program or progress made during the program. ELLs who typically attend classes are looking for
jobs, so when they find a job, they suspend their attendance, some for a while, some forever. At the Midwestern Library, two of the participants were retired, five were satisfactorily employed, one felt under-employed and was looking for better employment, and seven were seeking employment (Table 3). Based on data from the Midwestern Library, employment is a common overall goal for the ELLs, a fact which other research reinforces (Marshall, 2002); therefore, that should be a goal for the grant undertaking, as well. Yet, the grantors adopt goals that run counter to the goals of the learners themselves. In addition, some grants demand progress based on assessment results over a period of time. The learners might not be there during that time frame and “progress” may be relative, particularly when dealing with limited literacy learners who have never taken tests. Research into the accuracy of assessments with limited literacy learners would make a profound difference in this area.

Another promising area of research might be the collaborations that centers have made with one another to offer more services more efficiently. For example, the Chicago ESL Program merged with a literacy program nearby and the result of that collaboration has been the ability to serve many more persons (C. Smith, personal communication, May 7, 2015). Research of this kind, however, might require data from the following suggestion.

Another area of research might be the creation of a database of all the ESL Programs, refugee centers, resource centers, and immigration centers in the United States for online access. That way, newcomers could simply enter any public library for help with the database or go online themselves to find the appropriate resources within their new community. Some centers, for example, specialize in helping refugees, certain
ethnic groups, or religions, or vocational training. Some program leaders find it more efficient to work with only one group because bilingual material in one L1 with English may be used for instruction. In New Orleans, for example, the Catholic Charities ESL system has a special branch specifically for Vietnamese learners at Our Lady Queen of Vietnam Church. The Archdiocese also has a particular Hispanic Apostolate dedicated to helping immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries. In Massachusetts, there are many centers for different groups combined under Massachusetts 211 Resources. Under this system, there are various centers for immigrants and refugees from Jamaica, Cambodia, Vietnam, Ireland, and Haiti, plus countless General Educational Diploma (GED) and vocational programs. On a national level, librarians could direct newcomers to a center in the community when they arrive or advise them of opportunities when they plan to move. The American Library Association (ALA) has access to grant-receiving ESL programs, but it does not have knowledge of or access to any comprehensive, ESL program database (M. Huntley, personal communication, May 11, 2015).

Summary

Chapter Five of this Dissertation in Practice involved the implementation of the solutions to the data from the participant interviews. An implementation of such solutions requires finding ways to bring more teachers into the ESL Program. This need for more teachers resulted from the interview data, which pointed to a need for more and varied instruction. Collaborating with a university’s education program and writing grants provided two ways to produce enough teachers to carry out new instruction. This process of change would be slow to allow one or both of these innovations to take effect. A timeline was created to put this process into effect, but only for the collaborative process
because individual grants would keep their own timelines. The new implementation requires that the ESL Program have flexibility in its adjustment to new situations and new teachers. Finally, an evaluation cycle was created which would offer a framework to the implementation of the solutions. The cycle would begin and end with evaluations by the participants, then move to budget considerations, marketing of the program, the details involved in the process, particularly if the collaborative solution is utilized, and instruction, which would depend on prior evaluations.

This qualitative Dissertation in Practice focused on an exploration of the successes and needs of English language learners who study at an ESL Program in a library in the Midwest. Research spanned an overview of ESL in the United States, adult learners, adult ELLs, limited literacy learners, learners seeking career modification, best practices for ESL instruction, other ESL programs, adult English learners at the Midwestern Library, and the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program. Triangulation was achieved through self-reflection and interviews with directors of ESL programs in Boston, Chicago, New Orleans, and Kansas City to explore any issues and practices they might share with the Midwestern Library’s ESL Program. The major problems that three of these programs shared were transiency of the students and finding volunteer teachers – exactly like the Midwestern Library. The researcher interviewed 15 adult learners from 11 different countries, three volunteer teachers, and the program director in order to find out about their individual successes and their suggestions for the improvement of the ESL Program. By recording and transcribing the interviews, the researcher was able to code themes of importance based on the raw data. These themes involved their achievements, overall goals, language objectives, citizenship, and ideas for program
improvements. The interview data indicated that the participants had greater confidence in their daily activities because of their participation in the ESL program. They believed that this continuous improvement would lead to the fulfillment of things they had wanted all along such as a new job, more responsibilities at the workplace, more friends, and a feeling of belonging. Further, the ELLs articulated that more and varied classes would help them improve their English and meet their overall goals. They favored classes in citizenship, computers, reading, writing, spelling, and job preparation. The emergent issue with regard to these needs was a shortage in teachers. Although the current ESL Program is excellent, it has only four volunteer teachers at present. Consequently, the researcher came up with two solutions to the teacher issue: (a) collaborate with universities and agencies to provide volunteers; and (b) hire part-time teachers from grants. Some considerations for leaders would also be to seek out library resources or community donations to fund part-time teachers.

Libraries with ESL programs have tremendous impact on people’s lives. Many newcomers without resources visit them in order to learn English, improve, and get ahead in life. The immigrant Andrew Carnegie understood that education was the way to advance in life and achieve personal goals (USCIS & IMLS, 2006). He expressed this responsibility by setting up his libraries as places of information and enlightenment for the general public, but especially for immigrants. Libraries like the Midwestern Library stand as beacons for those who seek more opportunities and are willing to work to achieve their goals. Midwestern Library’s efforts should not go unappreciated. It has helped thousands of English learners get their start and has offered a safe haven to many more. In this light, the researcher would likewise recommend that local businesses and
organizations support the Midwestern Library in its efforts toward the English learners, in the spirit of the White House Task Force on New Americans, begun last year as a cumulative effort to welcome newcomers to the United States (Muñoz & Rodríguez, 2015). This Dissertation in Practice focused on the needs of a small group of individuals who count on an even smaller group of volunteers to help them learn English in order to succeed in the ways they choose. However, this effort requires the cooperation of an entire community. For newcomers to learn about community engagement in civics, for example, they have to experience a community that is already engaged. As expressed in this dissertation’s aim, this research should make recommendations for other adult English learning programs in public libraries based on the Midwestern Library’s model. To this end, collaboration with other agencies along with grants and financial resources might offer a head start toward a brighter future.
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Appendix A

Interview Questions for English Language Learners and Volunteers at the Midwestern Library

I. Goals
A. What is your goal in learning English?
B. What would you like to learn at the library?

II. Success
A. How do you define success?
B. On a scale of 1-4 (with 1 as the lowest and 4 as the highest), how successful do you feel as a result of the ESL classes at the Midwestern Library?

III. Citizenship
A. How do you feel about becoming a citizen of the United States?
B. Would you like to take a citizenship class here at the Midwestern Library?

IV. Improvement
A. How have these ESL classes helped you to improve your English?
B. How would you improve the ESL Program at the Midwestern Library?

V. Service
A. How have the ESL instructor volunteers at the Midwestern Library helped you?
B. Would you like to help others in your community? How?

VI. Interview Questions for Volunteer Instructors:
A. How do you measure success for the participants of the Midwestern Library ESL Program?
B. How do you measure success for the Midwestern Library ESL Program?
Appendix B

Letter of Introduction of Researcher to Research Participants

February 5, 2015

Dear Participant,

My name is Judith Pete and I am conducting research about your English study at South Library. The purpose of my research is to explore how the Midwestern Library successfully supports its ESL students through English language education. Ultimately, this study will suggest program enhancements based on student and instructor interviews and additional research.

There are no risks involved for you. You will be given a different name in my study; furthermore, there are no last names written anywhere. Your interview will be heard only by me. I will write as you speak. You may then read what I have written and change the words if you change your mind or they do not reflect how you really feel.

The only benefit that you will receive is the chance to give your opinion about your English learning at the library, and also the chance to suggest improvements which could help others. There is no money reward.

If you have questions about the research, you may contact Moira Walsh, Director of ESL Studies, Midwestern Library. Her phone number is 504.791.1023 #336. Her email is the following: mwalsh@library.org. If you have questions about research subjects’ rights, please contact the following: Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 402.280.2126.

Respectfully,

Mrs. Judith K. Pete
Appendix C

Bill of Rights for Research Participants

As a participant in a research study, you have the right:

1. To have enough time to decide whether to be in the research study, and to make that decision without any pressure from the people who are conducting the research.

2. To refuse to be in the study at all, or to stop participating at any time after you begin the study.

3. To be told what the study is trying to find out, what will happen to you, and what you will be asked to do if you are in the research study.

4. To be told about the reasonably foreseeable risks of being in the study.

5. To be told about the possible benefits of being in the study.

6. To be told whether there are any costs associated with being in the study and whether you will be compensated for participating in the study.

7. To be told who will have access to information collected about you and how your confidentiality will be protected.

8. To be told whom to contact with questions about the research, about research-related injury, and about your rights as a research subject.

9. If the study involves treatment or therapy:
   a. To be told about the other non-research treatment choices you have.
   b. To be told where treatment is available should you have a research-related injury, and who will pay for research-related treatment.
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