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Editors’ Message

Dear Reader,

On behalf of the editorial team we are pleased to introduce the sixth issue of the MSU Working Papers in Second Language Studies. The MSU Working Papers in SLS is an open access publication, the content of which is distributed freely online. The materials are accessible without restrictions.

Ever since the inaugural issue, which was published in 2009, the Working Papers have been organized, written, reviewed, selected, proofread, and edited by volunteers affiliated with the Second Language Studies and TESOL programs at Michigan State University. The main purpose of the journal is to provide a platform for students to get familiar with the publication process through publishing the works they prepare during their studies including course projects, qualifying research papers, and Master’s theses.

This issue of the Working Papers features one full research paper, “Investment and Translanguaging: A Case of Nepalese Immigrant Women in Michigan.” In her study, Hima Rawal, a first-year doctoral student in the MSU second language studies program, provides insight into how adult immigrants learning English choose to utilize different resources to achieve communicative success. It also describes how they make use of translanguaging in the negotiation strategies they employ to navigate communication with both native and nonnative speakers of English.

The Working Papers also showcases works in progress. This year, we publish a research proposal and a literature review paper. It is our hope that readers will send any helpful feedback to the authors. Laurel Waller, an MSU MA TESOL graduate, proposes research on students’ motivational characteristics and their perceptions and reactions to written corrective feedback. Her study could provide preliminary evidence for the motivational underpinnings of how learners perceive and act upon teachers’ feedback. Next, Lisa Domke, a doctoral student from the MSU Curriculum, Instruction, and Teacher Education (CITE) program, provides a thorough review of literature on integrating language and content instruction in English American K-12 immersion classrooms.

This issue contains interviews featuring a diverse set of second language researchers. Dr. Joe Barcroft, a former student of MSU’s Dr. Bill VanPatten, discussed the importance of counter-intuitive findings in SLA research. Dr. Patricia Duff shared her views on the generalizability of case studies. Dr. Dana Ferris talked about bridging the gap between teaching theory and practice with respect to grammar feedback. Finally, Dr. Keith Folse gave insight into “how you can let students run the show and still teach them a language.”

We conclude this issue with Laura Eickhoff’s review of Grammar and Beyond, 3, a textbook introducing a corpus-based, three-dimensional framework approach that demonstrates a clear pedagogical process of presentation and learning that can help keep students engaged with its wide variety of tasks and themes.

Finally, in addition to the contributors to this issue, we would like to thank the volunteer section and copy editors whose names are listed below and Magda Tigchelaar. We are indebted to the anonymous reviewers who provided valuable feedback on various drafts of the articles. We also received support from Dr. Paula Winke and the rest of the SLS
department, and Russ Werner, who provided tech support for the Working Papers website. Without the help of these volunteers, the Working Papers would not be possible.

All of the volunteers listed below are MSU students:

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Investment and Translanguaging: A Case of Nepalese Immigrant Women in Michigan

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Abstract

This research study investigated the learning and use of English by Nepali immigrant women from two theoretical perspectives: investment and translingualism. The research questions addressed what sort of investment the participants were making to learn English and to see how they used different translingual practices to co-construct their identity with both the target language and other transnational communities. Data were collected through questionnaires, observations, interviews, journal writings, and Facebook group chats. The key findings are that the Nepali immigrant women are not only motivated to improve their English but are also highly invested in doing so. They adopt different translingual negotiation strategies for the purpose of meaning-making among linguistically diverse groups of multilingual speakers. The study is significant for those connected to ESL classrooms composed of adult immigrants, as these immigrants constitute a substantial proportion of the US population.

Investment

It is self-evident that the learners who are motivated to learn the target language learn it better and faster than the less motivated learners. However, the psychological concept of motivation has been studied by second language researchers in terms of an individual character as it is the mental drive that forces him/her to learn a language. The earlier work on motivation can be traced back to the work of Gardner and Lambert (1959) in which motivation was “characterized by a willingness to be like valued members of the language community” (Gardner, 1991, p. 45). Though the studies on L2 learner motivation have attracted attention of second language researchers, what the learner faces when he/she interacts with people and how this interaction shapes his/her identity in a particular setting remains under-explored. Norton’s (1997) exploration of the notion of investment digs deep into the learner’s variable desires to engage in social interaction. Learners’ desire for recognition, affiliation, security and safety (West, 1992) makes them invest in learning and practicing the target language. The type of capital (Bourdieu, 1977) the learners make use of is of paramount importance to study this
complex nature of identity construction through real interaction. A learner may be highly motivated to learn the target language but if he/she does not invest in learning and practice it in different possible settings, there may not be successful language learning. In this study, I explored three immigrant Nepali women’s investment in learning English. How the gap between their imagined identity (Norton, 2013) and their perception of the self after coming to the US has impacted their investment in learning English was one focus of my study.

There are many research studies conducted to explore the notion of investment in the field of language learning. McKay and Wong’s (1996) two-year long qualitative study of four Chinese-immigrant students in California dealt with the multiple discourses which the participants were exposed to. The data were collected when they were studying in grade 7 and 8. This ethnographic study showed the investment of the participants in their schools and in the US society. Another very intriguing study by Skilton-Sylvester (2002) revealed that the traditional views of participation and motivation of adults are limited as they do not take into account the complex and dynamic nature of the adult interaction and how their investment in learning the language in the classroom and in their daily lives is constructing their identity. Collecting comprehensive data from four Cambodian immigrant women in the US, the researcher showed that their different roles as mothers, daughters, sisters, spouses and workers shaped their investment in learning English in adult ESL classrooms. Likewise, De Costa (2010a) conducted a critical ethnographic study of a designer immigrant student from China. With her exercise of agency and investment in practicing the Standard English language, the participant became able to identify herself as an academically able student. She wanted to invest in learning English because many big companies in China looked for good English speakers. In a similar vein, Kelly (2014) investigated the notions of identity, language socialization, investment and power dynamics in L2 English among Burmese women refugees. Over a period of three months, Kelly collected data from five participants using multiple sources of data: questionnaire, unstructured interviews and the participants’ journal writing. The findings revealed that the participants used English in different naturalistic settings such as while shopping, during medical appointments, at work and several other places. Due to their inability to communicate in English, the participants reported that they experienced different emotional states such as embarrassment, nervousness, sadness, etc. They also reported that they felt they were instilling low self-esteem in their kids because of their inability to help them with their homework. The overall finding was that the participants felt that their low proficiency created a barrier for their access to the American communities. They realized that the solution for this insufficiency was to study English more.

Transnational Identity and Translanguaging

In the present globalized world, the size of the immigrant population throughout the world is increasing day by day. The notion of transnationalism has attracted the attention of researchers mainly in the field of anthropology. Transnationalism is viewed as the “processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multistranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1994, p. 7). The
migrant communities also referred to as transnational communities constitute a significant population in the host countries. “Transnational communities are migrant populations living in a country other than their country of origin but with ties to the country of origin” (Tsakiri, 2005, p. 102). They are the people who “have moved across geographical borders and immersed themselves in new cultural and linguistic environments” (Block, 2009, p. 75). The nature of their relationship with their country of origin may differ from group to group and may also be influenced by their use of technology and several other aspects. These types of communities engage in issues surrounding identity as they are connected to two different countries and cultures. They form different groups or associations due to their multiple identities and the sense of their connection to their country of origin. As they migrate to a new country, they may wish to identify themselves with the target language community but at the same time, they also wish to form such transnational communities to show their bond or connection among immigrants. As they migrate, they carry their own identity in terms of language, culture, religion, ethnicity, gendered ideologies, political beliefs, and so on. However, their identity is reshaped, negotiated and reconstructed through interaction in a new setting and through their changing beliefs. Research studies have shown that migrants have different types of relationships with their countries of origin and the new place where they migrate. According to Lam and Warriner (2012), these relationships are “multilayered and multisited, including not just the countries of origin and settlement but also other sites around the world that connect migrants to their conationals” (p. 193).

For example, many Nepali people have migrated to India and other Asian and Middle Eastern countries for employment, leaving their families behind. This type of migration has also created Nepali transnational communities. Even many Nepali women have moved to different countries for work. This kind of migration of women is related to Tsakiri’s (2005) idea of feminization of migration. Such associations and transnational communities provide the new immigrants with support and guidance. The present study attempted to look at how the Nepali immigrant women in Michigan maintain their transnational identity and how they are reshaping it. Transnational communities in turn have resulted in new linguistic practices called translanguaging.

Translanguaging is a term mainly used in discussing the use of languages in bilingual language teaching and learning practices. In its original sense, the term refers to the purposeful pedagogical alternation of languages in spoken and written, receptive and productive modes (Baker, 2001, Williams, 1994). The notions of translanguaging and transnational literacies are framed within the concept of ‘sociolinguistics of globalization’ (Blommaert, 2010). By sociolinguistics of globalization, Blommaert refers to language-in-motion rather than language-in-place which is related to the idea of using not only the multiple languages and sources but also the multiple varieties of those languages- vernacular, formal, academic, etc. The use of such multiple sources is highly influenced by such aspects as race, gender, ethnicity, and so on. The origin of the term translanguaging can be traced back to the work of Williams (1994) who first
used the term to describe a classroom practice in bilingual classroom where input (listening and reading) and output (speaking and writing) are in two different languages. Garcia (2009) extends this concept and clarifies that “translanguaging or engaging in bilingual or multilingual discourse practices, is an approach to bilingualism that is created not on languages as has often been the case, but on the practices of bilinguals that are readily observable” (p. 44). Garcia draws this notion of translanguaging from the long studied area of bilingualism/multilingualism and the practices of code-switching in which speakers mix some linguistic features from two or more languages (Gumperz, 1982). Gumperz’s discussion of code-switching was related to such issues as language interference, language transfer, and borrowing. Translanguaging “shifts the lens from cross-linguistic influence” to how multilinguals “intermingle linguistic features that have hereto been administratively or linguistically assigned to a particular language or language variety… translanguaging is thus the communicative norm of bilingual communities” (Garcia, 2009, p. 51). It not only focuses on the use of language but also other modes of communication. The main idea behind the notion is the global-local connections (Warriner, 2007). Collectively, all the above mentioned identities and relationships practiced by migrants make it an interesting area of identity study to explore what, how and why they are connected across national boundaries.

Learners often find it more comfortable to participate in the linguistic and cultural behaviors of their own communities. The social, cultural, political, and linguistic practices they are involved in make them connect to the transnational groups. In some research studies, learners are found to resist their new positions in different ways. Canagarajah (2004a) calls it ‘subversive identities’ when the learners maintain their membership in their vernacular communities and cultures while still learning a second language. However, if the learners really invest in developing their trajectory of identity, they engage themselves in transnational communities (Warriner, 2007) where they go beyond their own linguistic and cultural communities and widen their horizons of practices by participating in other cultures and communities.

In translanguaging, researchers do not look at the linguistic items only that the language learners or speakers use. They also look at other semiotic devices that are used to make meaning in a particular context. This idea comes from such models as integrationist linguistics, which was developed by Harris (2009), where the belief is that all the linguistic and any other types of resources that language users use for the meaning making process work integratively. Language users make use of multiple sources for meaning making in their “contact zone”. Contact zone is defined as “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today” (Pratt, 1991, p. 40). Canagarajah (2013) mentions that Pratt’s modes initiate a useful shift from a “linguistics of community” to a “linguistics of contact”. It indicates that there has been a shift from the study of language of a particular group of people, which is ideally a homogeneous and fixed system, to how a language is actualized in a particular contact zone. Canagarajah (2013) also states that the
label translilingual highlights two key concepts: “communication transcends individual languages” and “communication transcends word and involves diverse semiotic resources and ecological affordances”. By the first concept, he means that languages “mutually influence each other” and the second concept means that “communication involves diverse semiotic resources … treating language as … a self-standing product, and autonomous in status distorts meaning-making practices” (pp. 6-7). This is a very helpful description of how translanguaging goes beyond the ideal perception of perfection in two or more languages. Even different varieties of the same language can be used by a multilingual consciously or subconsciously for the meaning making purpose. What is more important is that all the linguistic and other semiotic resources work in unison. There is also a lot of mixing of different codes within the same situation. Canagarajah (2013) presents the notion of English as being a translilingual entity in the present multilingual world and states:

English is used … in contact situations….the type of mixing will differ from speaker to speaker according to their level of proficiency in English and according to their language backgrounds. So, speakers of language A and language B may speak to each other in a form of English mixed with their own first languages, and marked by the influence of these languages. Without looking for a single uniform code, speakers will be able to negotiate their different Englishes for intelligibility and effective communication. (pp. 68-69)

This shows that all the learners may not have the same linguistic repertoire at their disposal. However, they are engaged in making meaning and resort to mobilizing their multiple resources which results in translanguaging. In this sense, “meaning is an inter-subjective accomplishment” (p. 69) and “translingual practice therefore calls for a sensitivity to similarity-in-difference … and difference-in-similarity” (p. 9). Since learners make use of their multiple but not necessarily competent knowledge, they adopt different translinguistic negotiation strategies. The four types of translinguistic negotiation strategies he has presented are: envoicing, recontextualization, interactional, and entextualization. He has described each of these strategies as follows:

Envoicing strategies shape the extent and nature of hybridity, as a consideration of voice plays a critical role in appropriating mobile semiotic resources in one’s text and talk; recontextualization strategies frame the text/talk and alter the footing to prepare the ground for appropriate negotiation; interactional strategies are adopted to negotiate and manage meaning-making activity; and entextualization strategies configure codes in the temporal and spatial dimension of the text/talk to facilitate and respond to these negotiations. (p. 79)

Among these four types of translinguistic negotiation strategies presented by Canagarajah, I have chosen to focus on the “interactional” negotiation strategies while looking at my data. The
Investment and Translanguaging: A Case of Nepalese Immigrant Women

reason I adopted the interactional translingual negotiation strategies was that I wanted to investigate how my participants make sense of the meaning being conveyed in a particular contact zone and how even their disfluency makes sense through negotiations. According to Canagarajah (2013), an interactional translingual negotiation strategy is:

a social activity of co-constructing meaning by adopting reciprocal and collaborative strategies. The enactment of these strategies is also dynamic. Participants do not necessarily use the same strategies. They are reciprocal in the sense that interlocutors adopt strategies that complement and/or resist those of the other for negotiation of meaning or rhetorical and social objectives. These are largely strategies of alignment… ways in which interlocutors match the language resources they bring with people, situations, objects, and communicative ecologies for meaning-making. (p. 82)

From this definition of interactional translingual negotiation strategies, what we can infer is that translanguaging is a social process that takes place in the contact zone of the interlocutors where they seek different interactional means to agree with or disagree with others but all the resources they resort to work mutually. Negotiation strategies can be explicit or implicit. They can be self-initiated or other-initiated during interactions. Kirkpatrick (2010) provides some examples of listener-initiated and speaker-initiated strategies. Listener-initiated strategies include: lexical anticipation, lexical suggestion, lexical correction, don’t give up, request, repetition, request clarification, let it pass, listen to the message, participant paraphrase, and participant prompts. Speaker-initiated strategies include: spell out the word, repeat the phrase, be explicit, paraphrase, and avoid local/idiomatic reference (Kirkpatrick, 2010, p.14). These strategies help the interlocutors make meaning of a particular piece of discourse through different means. According to Canagarajah (2013), these strategies are “dynamic” and “interlocutors make instantaneous and strategic decisions on how to reciprocate the moves of the other” (p. 83).

There have been a lot of research studies on translanguaging. Hornberger and Link (2012) gathered data from the US and international educational contexts to see the translanguaging and transnational literacies. They analyzed their ethnographic data from the perspective of critical sociolinguistics of globalization and commented that translanguaging and transnational literacies in classrooms are ‘not only necessary but desirable educational practice’ (p. 261). They mentioned that students’ multilingual repertoires could provide a rich source of practices in classrooms. Martin-Beltran (2014) conducted a research study in a high school program with the Language Ambassadors program in the Washington D.C. The aim of this study was to investigate how the students learning English and the students learning Spanish took part in translanguaging through their multiple resources. She collected data from the students with diverse background such as Latino/a, African American, White, Asian, and other race/ethnicities. The data were collected using different data collection tools such as participant observations,
student writing, interviews, and audio/video recordings of peer interactions. The researcher adopted sociocultural theory as the conceptual framework and used interactional ethnography and microgenetic analysis to analyze the data. The findings showed that the language-minority students used “more translanguaging and more of their target language than their language-majority peers” (p. 215). The study also presents some uses of translanguaging among the participants: translanguaging to invite others to co-construct knowledge; drawing upon funds of knowledge to defend word choice and deepen understanding; translanguaging to meet halfway between languages to co-construct meaning; translanguaging to recognize students as multilingual language users; and translanguaging highlights room for growth and future trajectories (pp. 217-223). All these studies illustrate that since multilinguals have different linguistic and other semiotic means at their disposal, they strive to negotiate interactions through those different means. They are not only invested in making use of the resources they already possess but also attempt to learn new ways to achieve communicative success. What follows next is the discussion and review of the notion of investment, which is also a theme of this research study.

**Nepali Immigrants in the USA and in Michigan**

The US Census 2000 reports 11,715 as the total number of Nepal-born Nepalese residing in the US, but the informal estimates made by Non-resident Nepali (NRNs) associations place that figure between 80,000 and 150,000 (Sijapati, 2009). This number has certainly increased since then due to the growing number of Nepali immigrants who came to the US through the lottery system. The Nepali Americans are primarily located in large cities like New York, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles and so on. Beyond these areas that have historically received a large South Asian population including Nepalese, the Nepali community has also grown significantly in other areas of the United States.

According to the US Census Bureau (2010), between 2000 and 2010, the South Asian population became the fastest growing major ethnic group in the United States and has emerged in new areas of the country. Over 3.4 million South Asians live in the United States. Indians constitute the largest members of the South Asian community in the United States. However, comparing the Census results of 2000 and 2010, the South Asian community as a whole grew 81% over the decade. The Bhutanese community shows the highest growth exhibiting 82.55% followed by Nepalis, Maldivians, Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, and Sri Lankans. Though the Nepalese communities contain different languages, ethnic groups, cultures and social strata, the major lingua franca they use in the US is the Nepali language (Dhungel, 1999).

The American Immigration Council (2015) cites the American Census Bureau and states that the Asian population in Michigan grew from 1.1% in 1990, to 1.8% in 2000 to 2.5% (242,232 people) in 2011. They comprised 1.1% (or 53,000) of voters in the 2008 election. However, there is no specific data showing the total number of Nepalese in Michigan. In conversation with a Nepali resident who has been living in Michigan for the last 30 years and who has been a faculty member at Michigan State University, I learned that there are more than
25 Nepali families in Michigan. Troy, Detroit, Grand Rapids, Holland, and Ann Arbor are some places where many Nepali immigrants are residing. According to the Migration Policy Institute (2014), in 2012, foreign-born Asians comprised 29.4% and US-born Asians comprised 0.8% of the total population of Michigan. There is no specific distribution of the Nepali immigrants in the Michigan demographics. However, the number of Nepalis in Michigan is growing as a result of childbirth, the electronic diversity visa or the lottery, student visa, and so on.

There have not been many research studies in the Nepali community although the number of Nepali immigrants in the US is growing day by day. Tamot (2008) examined the anthropological concepts of ‘self’ and ‘other’ to explore the marginalized identity of Nepali professionals in the US. He explicated the notions of identity and globalization to see how the professional Nepali cadre in the US compared their identities when they were in Nepal and their careers in the US. Through his narrative study and survey data, he showed that a majority of his participants had come to the US to pursue higher education and stayed here after the completion of their study as they were attracted by the opportunities they had seen here. In their view, Nepal could not create any situation to attract back home the Nepalese elite groups who pursued their higher education abroad. Very few of the research participants wanted to go back to Nepal to use the skills they had learned in the US.

Even though Tamot’s study looked at the Nepali community in the US, this study was limited to the elite group and did not explore their identity in relation to the English language learning processes. Many Nepalese women in Michigan were working in Nepal in different positions before their husbands came to the US. Then, they had to accompany their husbands along with their children. Their limited English language proficiency did not help them continue their study, nor could they maintain the professional status they had before immigrating. Therefore, many of them are struggling to improve their proficiency in English to continue their studies and/or their professional jobs. The present study is an attempt to look at the role of English in the construction of the participating women’s identity in the US.

**Research Questions**

The data collection process and analysis were guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the Nepalese women’s investments in learning the conversational skills in English and what impact do these investments have in their overall process of learning English?
2. What translingual practices are these women involved in and how are these practices related to their learning of English for daily communication?
Methodology

Participants

The participants in this research study were three Nepali women living in East Lansing, Michigan. I used the purposive non-random sampling procedure to select my population because it would be difficult to find women who are learning English through random sampling though there are many Nepali immigrants in Michigan. Since the research aimed to look into how their investment and their translanguaging practices determine their decision to enroll in ESL classes, I purposefully selected these three women: Bhoomika, Ranjeeta, and Shakuntala, who were enrolled in English language classes at the community college in Lansing. The reason only three women were selected was that my focus was on the depth of data collection rather than its coverage. Bhoomika and Ranjeeta were enrolled in level 2 and Shakuntala was enrolled in level 3 at the Lansing Community College when the data collection began.

I have used pseudonyms the participants themselves liked and chose. In the beginning of my communication with them, they had expressed their willingness to be addressed with their original names in the study. However, as our meetings went on, each of them at some point realized that they would not be comfortable being addressed according to their real names. During the meetings, I came to know through informal communication with them that their fear of being recognized by the people familiar to them made them feel uncomfortable, and therefore, they chose pseudonyms. The participants’ ages range from 25 to 35 years. All of them are mothers and their children range in age from 2 to 17 years. My main intention behind choosing mothers for this study was to see how multiple roles they play affect their investment in the English learning process. Most of the time, they use English to communicate with people just because they have to deal with several different issues related to their children, for example, at the hospitals, at their children’s schools, at the child care centers, and so on.

Table 1 summarizes the biographical information of the participants.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>L1</th>
<th>L2</th>
<th>Occupation in Nepal</th>
<th>Occupation in the US</th>
<th>Length of residency</th>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Number of children (age)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bhoomika</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Doteli, Nepali</td>
<td>Hindi, English</td>
<td>Receptionist</td>
<td>Dollar Tree Store</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>High school (was enrolled in undergraduate course)</td>
<td>1 (3 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakuntala</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Nepali</td>
<td>Hindi, English</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Nanny</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Certificate in nursing</td>
<td>2 (15 and 17 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranjeeta</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Nepali</td>
<td>Hindi, English</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>3 (2, 6 and 17 years)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tools for Data Collection

Data for this study were collected from multiple sources for the triangulation process. A questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, journal entries and participant observations were used for the collection of as rich a set of data as possible. Some informal group chats on Facebook were also analyzed. The participants mostly provided me with the journal entries but sometimes they were also engaged in a group chat, where they could share their experiences of communicating in English. The group chat occurred among the three participants and me. Sometimes they would ask me for help related to the incidents they encountered while communicating in English. These multiple sources of data were used to enhance the validity and credibility of the results (Chapelle & Duff, 2003).

**Questionnaire.** A questionnaire was used to collect the demographic information from the participants, information about their education background, and their family. The participants completed the questionnaire on the first day of my meeting with each of them.

**Interview.** There were 15 interviews altogether over the time period of three months. Each participant was interviewed five times and each interview session lasted for an hour. A semi-structured interview guide was followed initially. However, the subsequent interview questions were based on the participants’ responses. The medium of interview was Nepali. The interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and translated by me, that is, the researcher herself. Literal translation was the mostly used translation technique. However, some expressions were translated through free translation technique because the literal translation would not give the exact meaning that the participants wanted to convey. This was done to translate the proverbs they have used and to make an attempt to preserve the sociocultural meanings they expressed. There was a time gap of at least one week between two interviews with the same participant. The questions for the subsequent interviews with each participant were based on their responses to the previous interview. I would listen to the recorded interview two or three times and make a list of tentative questions to be asked in the subsequent interviews. Most of the questions were open-ended in the subsequent interviews, where the participants were asked to elaborate on the previously mentioned themes and to recall some examples and incidents they remembered from the time of their arrival in the US.

**Journal.** The participants wrote journals at least once a week (for three months – from December to February) in which they kept a record of their reflections on their interactions with their classmates, their teachers, children’s teachers, other native speakers of English, and so on. They were asked to write the most intriguing interactions that generated either a sense of success or failure regarding the (un)intelligibility in their conversations and how they felt about that. They were asked to write in any language with which they were most comfortable. They were asked to do so in a diary. After I talked to them and determined that they were comfortable, I created a Facebook chat group of four including me where they could share their ideas. The
portions written or posted in the Nepali language were translated by me. The journal entries were in English, Nepali and sometimes in both languages.

**Observation.** I made field notes of the behaviors or interactions that are related to the theoretical concepts in question. I spent at least a day with each participant to observe their behaviors in daily life. I called it ‘A Day in the Life of X’. I joined them in their household activities and also accompanied them to the grocery store. I observed their linguistic behaviors when they communicated with their children at home. This was mainly done to see if the responses elicited from interviews really matched their day-to-day behaviors and practices and to explore their real language practices. The participants gave me permission to do that.

**Procedure of Data Collection**

As mentioned, I purposefully selected three women from the Nepali immigrant community living in East Lansing. I visited the participants and explained my research to them. They were asked to sign the consent form. The questionnaire was given to them to answer on the day of my first meeting with each participant and I explained the questions to them, when needed. Then, the journal writing template was given to them and was explained to them. Looking at their time availability, the first interview date was scheduled and each subsequent interview was scheduled after the interviews. I met with each participant at their apartments. The interviews were rescheduled a couple times due to some conflicts in the participants’ schedules. The interviews were tape recorded, transcribed and translated within one week after each interview so that the emerging themes would guide the subsequent interview questions. I spent at least one day with each participant at their homes and also accompanied them to the grocery store. I wrote field notes by hand. The incidents and the participants’ use of language related to the selected themes were written on the same day in the evening. Whenever I observed some interesting incident or conversational exchanges, I would type some words in my mobile message box and would save it in the draft folder to remind myself of the incident while writing about it later. Except for some special Nepali cultural terms and expressions they used, other things were written in English.

**Researcher Positionality**

Though a researcher is an important part of a research study, few studies have explored researcher identity. In an ethnographic case study of a male Hmong refugee, De Costa (2010b) found himself in three researcher positions: researcher as outsider or insider, researcher as resource, and researcher as befriender (p. 524). Similarly, in Norton and Early’s (2011) analysis of narrative data, they found four researcher identities most commonly recurring: researcher as international guest, researcher as collaborative team member, researcher as teacher, and researcher as teacher educator. In the present study, I find myself an insider in the community. Recently, I was appointed as the President of the Nepali Students’ Association of MSU and we organized three different Nepali festivals in the East Lansing Nepali community. I have also attended some ceremonies such as the rice feeding ceremony, worshipping the deities, special
festival dinners, welcoming the newcomers to East Lansing, and birthdays. They changed the term of address for me from ‘Hima madam’ to ‘Hima didi’ (Hima sister). The former is a very formal term that is used to address a female teacher in Nepal and the latter is used to address sisters, cousins or close friends. Since my participants are also a part of this group, I was able to elicit in-depth data over a period of three months.

**Analysis and Results**

The analysis of data started during the data collection process as qualitative data analysis is concurrent with data collection and management (Saldaña, 2011). The interviews were transcribed within a week of the interview schedule so that the recurring themes, patterns, and categories would be listed or merged according to their occurrences. Data analysis followed an iterative, spiraling, or cyclical process (Creswell, 1998) as there was the identification of the codes and categories, restructuring of them as the data appear and cross-referencing. Codes are defined as the “names or symbols used to stand for a group of similar items, ideas, or phenomena that the researcher has noticed in his or her data set” (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 55). I adopted both deductive and inductive reasoning. In deductive reasoning, we draw from established facts and evidence whereas induction follows from particular to general and so we induce from the evidence available (Saldaña, 2011). The analysis was deductive in that the identification of codes and themes was guided by the theoretical notions of gendered identity, investment and translanguaging. At the same time, some recurring examples led to the discussion of related but new themes, and therefore, it was inductive too. In fact, I had expected patterns, categories, or themes to evolve as data collection proceeded rather than imposing them a priori (Chapelle & Duff, 2003, p. 175). I focused on the emic perspective (Chapelle & Duff, 2003; Friedman, 2012) to dig deep into the participants’ behaviors and practices. Pseudonyms of the participants were used to maintain confidentiality. After the analysis, ‘member checks’ (Duff, 2012; Friedman, 2012) were done to find out if any of the participants was not willing to share some data.

The data collected from different sources: questionnaires, interviews, journal entries, observations, and Facebook interactions were analysed. I translated all the data into English. The data were read and re-read to analyze them in line with the research questions. First, the recurring themes related to the research questions were located throughout the data. This recursive process was adopted to find the themes in terms of the words the participants had used, for example, the use of specific recurring adjectives, nouns, verbs, and adverbs because during the data collection process I had realized that they were always trying to find some content words to express their feelings. Similarly, the excerpts in terms of phrases, clauses, sentences, proverbs, and even small paragraphs were found to support the themes in research questions. The results of the study are presented in the following subsections in line with each research question.
Discussion

Investment

Research Question 1: What are the Nepalese women’s investments in learning conversational skills in English and what impact do these investments have in their overall process of learning English?

In the second language acquisition literature, it is said that silent period is a noticeable phenomenon (Ellis, 1985) and second language learners in the very beginning of their language learning process pass through a silent period although the length of the silent period varies from learner to learner. However, in this study, all three participants were not in the beginning phase of second language learning. Each of them had some prior knowledge of English and they had learned English in a formal setting in Nepal as they all had at least a high school degree before their arrival in the US. In Nepal, English is taught as a compulsory course throughout school starting from the primary level to the higher secondary level. Despite having some knowledge of English, they preferred to be silent on several occasions in the beginning. All of them recalled their earlier days in the US and stated that they felt blank even if they knew some English. Bhoomika said, “Sometimes I thought that it was better to be quiet and listen than to say something that people would not understand due to my Nepali accent.” Similarly, Shakuntala said, “I would just listen to people talk in the gatherings and would smile along with them but would not speak until they asked me some questions.” In a similar vein, Ranjeeta stated, “I used to try my best to avoid the situations where I had to talk… it was only in the beginning… maybe for some months… I did not want to be comic in front of people… maybe it was my fear only… people were always nice to me.” The participants’ resistance to participate in interactions in the beginning of their arrival in the US is similar to the silent period phenomenon, when they might have wanted to develop some confidence before they could communicate freely. Their fear of being humiliated stopped them from participating in interactions in the native English speaker settings.

The participants’ investment in learning English in the data collected could be traced to different sources. Each story they told me, every experience they went through directly or indirectly informed me that they were committed and dedicated to learn and improve their English. Two of the participants, Bhoomika and Shakuntala, had experienced free English classes at the community center. Shakuntala even showed me the flyer she had in her file for the last four years. She had a very organized collection of many flyers, brochures, and leaflets related to free English classes, insurance and health plans, free family counseling sessions, and so on. The flyer that was related to the free English classes at the community center read as:

Perfect my English
Bring your lunch or just yourself and engage in fruitful conversation with a native-speaker. We look forward to meeting you.
This sentence was followed by a picture in which two heads were shown (a native speaker and a non-native speaker) and the knowledge was flowing from the native head to the non-native head. Shakuntala told me that she had an emotional attachment to that flyer since it offered her the first free English sessions. Her response illustrated how invested she was in improving her English. However, she was not satisfied with the service provided. The following excerpt from an interview between myself (H) and Shakuntala (S) indicated her dissatisfaction. For all quotes, an ellipses (…) represents removed text.

S: I was so happy to join the free English conversation classes… I thought that was the time when my English would be polished. I would learn more words, more rules… improve my pronunciation … I don’t want to say that those classes did not help me at all, but they were just too informal … unstructured.

H: What do you mean by unstructured?

S: I mean it was just like meeting one person or two and talk on some random topics for half an hour or more… I could make good friends with the tutor and a couple other ESL learners but they did not tell me directly … how to initiate a talk … how to reply to different types of questions … how to say yes/no to the invitations, how to offer help like … you know? I respected the way they were providing free help … it just did not help me to improve my English … may be I had too high expectation … may be that would help me in the long run … I don’t know … I was so desperate that I wanted to start working as soon as possible as it was difficult for four of us to live only on my husband’s stipend.

In this excerpt, Shakuntala expressed her expectation of her English classes. Her desire to learn English explicitly might have come from her way of learning English in Nepal where the vocabulary items and grammatical rules are provided to the learners and they are told when to use them. All the examples she has provided in the excerpt indicate that what she wanted to learn was the communicative functions in English and take part in the real life discourse. At the same time, her desire to learn English in a speedy way and then start working immediately shows that part of her investment was still instrumental in nature. Her feeling at that time was more guided by her emotions to support her husband financially and to look after her two children. Similarly, Bhoomika had gone to attend the informal ESL classes offered by Friendship House, run by a Church, to improve her English. She remembered her first day there and said, “I was so nervous to enter the building … I had thought that the people there would think that I was not smart … I felt relaxed when I was warmly welcomed by the members there … the behaviors were in line with the name of the organization … Friendship House … more importantly, there were so many other ESL learners like me.” She enjoyed the informal conversations at the Friendship house. She also said that she would notice how other people start conversations. She made many American and international friends, many of whom are still in touch with her through Facebook and email. While Shakuntala did not benefit much from the informal conversational classes,
Bhoomika found them helpful. On the other end of the spectrum lies the third participant, Ranjeeta who did not even bother to attend such informal classes because according to her, she had to look after her daughter. When I told her that some of those types of classes also managed a childcare facility, she replied, “Maybe but I did not care … I was so lazy [smiles]. Instead I knitted the sweaters, scarves for my children and husband … and better excuse than that is … there was a Bhutanese woman nearby who spoke Nepali … I hang out with her … I know I should have taken initiatives to look for such free classes … but now I have even my third child to look after”.

Bhoomika and Shakuntala had joined the ESL classes at Lansing Community College in the fall of 2014, whereas Ranjeeta joined in the fall of 2015 only. Their investment in those classes is guided by similar purposes. They have all been learning English for both instrumental and integrative purposes. As noted by Shakuntala, “The unstructured informal classed did not help me much … more importantly, I want to go for my nursing degree in future so that I could be a certified nurse in the US … I need to pass certain level in the ESL classes … also I want to be more fluent so that I could be a part of American society because we are going to live here forever … so, we can’t always compromise with our lack of English.” Similarly, Bhoomika joined the ESL classes with the motivation of getting admitted to an undergraduate program in an American university and also wants to “feel like English speakers.” Although Ranjeeta’s experience has been different from Bhoomika’s and Shakuntala’s, she also has both instrumental and integrative motivation for joining ESL classes. She said, “I will enroll in an undergraduate program after I complete all five levels at the community college … now that we are living in the US for at least until our children graduate, I want to be a part of American culture … who knows? My children may have American spouse in future [laughs].” Regarding the continuation of their formal study, Bhoomika and Ranjeeta are not quite sure in which discipline they will major, whereas Shakuntala knows for sure that she will pursue nursing since she was working as a nurse in Nepal.

**Investment through different sources.** In addition to the participants’ investment in attending English classes either in an informal, unstructured setting or in the formal community college setting, the data also demonstrated their self-initiated investment in learning through several other sources such as YouTube videos on learning English, free English learning websites, television, email, and Facebook. Bhoomika seems to be relatively more invested in improving her communicative English. An interesting excerpt from one of her diary entries is as follows:

Today I searched for some YouTube videos to learn and improve my English … there were so many of them … I did not have an idea of what to watch … I chose the ones that were related to pronunciation … First, the speaker produced single words and then he put them into sentences … he was showing that same word can be produced differently when it comes in a sentence … I was surprised and then realized that’s why
it is difficult to understand American speakers … they speak so fast and the words also change their color in sentences … the speaker in the video was producing parts of sentences and then he would stop for some seconds for the listeners to repeat after him … I liked it and at the end, I subscribed to their channel to watch more videos.

I was always amazed by Bhoomika’s enthusiasm during the data collection process. Every time I met her, she would have a list of questions related to English. Her questions were either related to grammar rules or the meaning of vocabulary items. She would then write down the answers. One day after the interview, she asked me to stay a little longer with her and help her with the tense system in English. I helped her but just an hour was not sufficient to show her how the tense system works. She was not completely ignorant of the tense system but wanted to learn more about it. She came to my apartment a couple of times to continue our discussion on tense. Every time she would come with the same notebook so that she would not miss her notes. She would ask me to give her some sentences for practice and in turn I would ask her to which tense a particular sentence belonged. She was always full of questions. In an interview, she also stated that she looked for some free websites that teach English. However, she could not benefit much from them because she said, “First, they showed some short clips which looked very helpful … later they asked for money [smiles] … maybe I am not very good at searching for free websites.” Bhoomika frequently referred to the YouTube videos in her diary entries and interviews. She was not only motivated but also invested in improving her English.

On the other hand, according to Ranjeeta, watching TV is a good way to learn English. She mentioned that she could not understand anything while watching English channels and movies, but slowly she learned to understand. She stated, “It took me long time to be able to understand … maybe one year … now I watch and listen to English news … I am worried about what is happening in the world … I keep on changing channels … I don’t feel left behind anymore.” When I further enquired what she meant by “left behind”, she said that her son and her husband would understand the news and programs in English, and then would comment on them but she had to ask them what the news was about. However, the situation has totally changed now. She said, “I did not stop watching TV even if I did not understand … I had no option … I could not watch Nepali, Hindi channels on TV … but everything happens for good … since I had no other options, I kept on watching English programs.” However, it is not only Ranjeeta who thinks that TV is helpful; Shakuntala also thinks that TV has helped her develop her level of understanding native speakers of English. All three participants admit that watching TV helps them improve their receptive skill, especially listening, but none of them believes that it has a great impact on their productive skills, that is, speaking.

Regarding the participants’ access to native speakers of English and other ESL speakers, the participants have different views. Whereas Shakuntala thinks that it is easy to interact with other ESL speakers because they also encounter the same feelings and struggles. The following excerpt shows her feeling towards her perceptions of ESL learners:
I rent a small garden at the community center every summer and fall … I grow a lot of vegetables there … when I go to water the saplings, I meet many other ESL speakers there … we observe each other’s garden and give advice, if necessary … we share seeds of green leafy vegetables with each other … I feel comfortable talking with them … I always look forward to seeing them in the morning and in the evening so that I could talk to them in English … a Chinese told me that my English was easy to understand … he could speak only some words in English …I feel more secured to talk to them as they are also not perfect … they are not judgmental.

This excerpt shows that Shakuntala’s insecurity lies in her feelings that the native speakers would judge her lack of proficiency in English. Due to that fear, she prefers to invest her time and effort to interact with other ESL learners. On the other end of the spectrum lies Bhoomika whose view is totally different regarding her perception towards communication with native English speakers and other ESL speakers. She thinks that it is worth spending time with native speakers because in her opinion, they are the ultimate source of reference. The following excerpt shows her view about investing in learning English from native speakers:

I think it is more helpful for me to communicate with native English speakers than with other ESL speakers. The ESL speakers initiate the conversation abruptly … and they directly dive into the topic of what they have to say … otherwise there is just “hi” and “hello” stuff with them … whereas with the native speakers, it is so easy … they begin by saying “I liked the color you are wearing; wow what an adorable child,” like things which make me feel more comfortable to discuss the topic … they do not directly touch the topic … they do not stop the conversation abruptly … I have picked up so many expressions from native speakers which I try to use to start and end the conversations.

This excerpt indicates that one of Bhoomika’s many assets is her willingness to communicate with native speakers of English. Her perception is that native speakers make her feel more comfortable by “setting scene” to foster interaction. This idea is related to the listener-initiated strategies proposed by Kirkpatrick (2010).

Another illustration of Ranjeeta and Shakuntala’s investment is that they have the benefit of having high school children from whom they can receive assistance in some cases. Shakuntala said, “When I am reading for my ESL classes and doing homework, instead of checking the online dictionary, I turn around to my children … I ask them … they help me many times… I don’t feel small when I take help from my children.” Similarly, Ranjeeta’s eldest son has helped her many times with her homework and to overcome her confusion. He even helps her when her pronunciation is inaccurate. He does so, however, in a nice manner, according to her. She said, “My son always corrects my pronunciation of certain words.” On the other hand, Bhoomika’s daughter is too young to help her. However, she recalls the same story when she had to take help
from a nurse to figure out the problem when she and her husband could not understand their daughter’s first utterances. She smiled and said, “My daughter was born in the US... she will have a perfect American accent ... she can’t help me now but maybe in future ....” This statement shows that Bhoomika’s investment in learning English is also associated with her future dream where she sees her daughter helping her improve her English.

**Investment and participation: Enacting communication strategies.** One of the common themes that recurred in the stories my participants shared was their use of different communication strategies to make themselves understood on different occasions. Some strategies that I observed in the data are repetition, elaboration, and explanation, which will be addressed in the following discussion. Although the participants went through a silent period in the beginning despite knowing some English, over time all of them invested in communication through different modes. The interview data show that they had all co-constructed their participation and investment on different occasions. Shakuntala recalled an incident when she went to her Chinese neighbor to give him some fresh vegetables that she had grown in her garden. The excerpt below shows how she made him understand that she was not selling the vegetables to him:

I took some leafy vegetables, some pieces of pumpkin, a couple of cucumbers... went to the neighbor next door ... I had talked to his wife a couple times ... knocked at his door because you know in Nepal, we always share the fruits and vegetables that we grow in our field ... he opened the door [laughs]... and I said to him, “I have brought some fresh vegetables from my garden” He said, “no no we don’t want to buy them” [laughs] I again said, “no no not selling ... just giving ...” the man looked at me as if I was going to ask him for something in return... I continued ... I have a garden and there are lots of vegetables ... this is fresh... no pesticides... [laughs] but he was too adamant to accept them ... [laughs] only after sometime he took the vegetables ... bowed down his head and thanked me. I had to repeat the same sentences so many times ... I was worried if he would bring something to me in return which I did not want him to do ... [laughs]

This excerpt indicates that Shakuntala was highly invested in making her neighbors understand that she was just sharing the vegetables she had grown and they were a gift. She could have left after her first and second attempts but she kept on explaining to the man the reason she had brought the vegetables to him. To further explain this issue to me, Shakuntala said, “You know it maybe because of cultural difference ... when I give YOU something from my garden you just thank me and I don’t have to explain because we are from the same culture.” She had offered me vegetables and tasty dishes every time I went to her home. Her use of the stress on the word ‘you’ shows that she was explaining to me the difference between her and her neighbor’s culture. Her use of repetition and elaboration led her to succeed in communication, to make the neighbor understand her. The more interesting aspect is that following that incident,
Shakuntala did not have to explain the gift giving gesture to the man ever again. He or his wife would take the vegetables and thank her.

In a similar vein, Ranjeeta’s investment in improving her English is connected with her being able to communicate with the parents of her children’s classmates and friends. She said that since her son and daughter attended high school and pre-school respectively, she had different sorts of motivation to interact with them. In the excerpt from an interview below, she noted:

With the parents of my daughter’s friends, I would feel more comfortable since I had a lot to talk to them, for example, her playing behaviors, what she likes to eat and do, her mischievous behaviors and so on. However, with the parents of my son’s friends, I would not feel that comfortable since they would talk about the project works their children were involved in, their extra-curricular activities, their colleges for future, the disciplines they were interested in and so on. I felt so dumb … but I also wanted to share with them that my son has been good in his study and even in his extra-curricular participation … then, I started asking my son more about what he is doing at school, his aim for future, his strengths … and everything… my son wants to join the police force … serve the people … after talking to him so many times I came to know about his passion for joining the police … next time I met the parents of my son’s friends at school functions and parent teacher meetings, I proudly told them about my son… they appreciated it… I was so touched.

The above excerpt from my interview with Ranjeeta can be analyzed and interpreted from different angles. First, she was so motivated and invested in her son’s study and future plans. The motive behind that was her willingness to participate in the parent-teacher meetings. She wanted to be an insider in the group rather than a mere listener. Her expression “I felt so dumb” indicates how she was prompted to learn more about the subject matter and academic community of practice so that she could no longer find herself dumb. Second, her investment is also associated with her awareness of two different target groups (parents of high school students and parents of pre-school students). On the one hand, her confidence level is high enough to interact with the parents of pre-school children because they would talk more about the children’s playing, and eating behaviors. On the other hand, she has to invest some time and energy to learn about some aspects of her son’s life and his age group so that she could be a part of the discussion group. Her investment here is not only to communicate in English but also to learn something first and then communicate that through English.

All the above excerpts and examples support the fact that the participants were motivated and dedicated to convey the message they wanted to share with others. Bhoomika’s communication with her employer and co-worker; Shakuntala’s communication with her Chinese neighbor; and Ranjeeta’s communication with the parents of her high school and pre-school children led them to succeed in communication in those particular contexts.
Translingual Practices

Research Question 2: What translingual practices are these women involved in and how are these practices related to their learning of English for daily communication?

The data collected from different sources: interview, observation, and diary entries show some instances of translingual practices adopted by the three participants. The notion of translingual practices in itself is open to interpretation from different perspectives. Most of the translingual practice studies take into account the natural interactions taking place between interlocutors and study the collected data from conversational analysis, pragmatic analysis, and other frameworks. However, since I did not record the naturally occurring conversations between my participants and other ESL learners or native speakers, my analysis of the translingual practices of my participants is mainly based on what I elicited from them during interview sessions. Their diary entries about their experiences of particular incidents related to their use of English also provided me with some translingual practices they adopted. Likewise, there were several instances during my “A day in the life of X” observations that I found the participants making use of different types of negotiation strategies among other non-native speakers of English. I had made the field notes of those incidents. To make the data analysis related to translingual practices easier, I used one of four translingual negotiation strategies presented by Canagarajah (2013). Among the four strategies he has mentioned: envoicing, recontextualization, interactional, and extextualization, I have used “interactional” strategy to see how the participants made use of different reciprocal and collaborative strategies in different contexts for the sake of intelligibility and communicative success (Canagarajah, 2013).

Second language learners bring with them different linguistic and cultural resources. When they engage in an interaction with other non-native speakers, they try their best to negotiate so that their interlocutors understand them. Generally, a native speaker model of a language is regarded as the norm of accuracy and appropriateness of language use. However, the study of translingual practices goes beyond that norm of correctness and digs deep into how the second language learners make use of their multiple resources to communicate in the target language. In her diary entry, Bhoomika described how she achieved communicative success through negotiation with another non-native speaker of English. That woman was from Malawi, and Bhoomika had invited her to her apartment for dinner. In the following excerpt, Bhoomika recalls what happened after dinner:

She used to live next door … was a new international student … she liked the Nepali dinner I had prepared … she had also brought something typical of Malawi with her … after the dinner, she said that she would come back again whenever her food was finished … I was confused… what did she mean by her food was finished? ... I asked her if she did not have food at her apartment and offered her to go for grocery with us on Fridays … she smiled and said, “No, no I have food now, I will come here and request you to make extra food for me too because you cook very good … I understood
that she liked my food but still did not understand about her finished food … I continued … you have food now but when you finish that you can go with us for grocery ok? … she replied, “Thank you, but if there is no food before Friday … I will come here … then I understood that maybe she was talking about the situation when she runs out of food … I also did not know the expression “run out of food” at that time … but I understood her and she understood me … both of us were not English people … so it took both of us to understand the situation.

In this excerpt from Bhoomika’s diary, the translingual practice of negotiation is achieved through both parties’ strategies. On the one hand, Bhoomika told her that she could give a ride to the Malawi woman if she needed to go to the grocery store on Fridays. When the woman said that she had gotten food for that day, Bhoomika repeated the phrase “you have food now” as an indicator of a confirmation check to make sure that she had understood what the Malawi woman wanted to say. She further used a comprehension check “you can go with us for grocery, ok?” at the end when the woman used the term “if there is no food before Friday” to clarify to Bhoomika with the anticipation that she could help her if she ran out of food before Friday. Though none of them used the Standard English expression “running out of food” to express what they wanted to convey, they could make each other understand by using other linguistic means. As the translingual practices are regarded as the use of linguistic and other semiotic resources the interlocutors use to achieve the communicative aim in a specific situation, the above example shows how both the interlocutors translanguage for meaning making in that situation.

Shakuntala had also experienced a similar situation where she and her interlocutor had to optimize their disfluency and lack of knowledge of the exact English word but could achieve communicative success. This incident occurred during her interaction with a Saudi lady at her house, where Shakuntala was working as a nanny. According to her, the landlady was always a very calm and patient type of woman. She had to go to her restaurant to help her husband and other co-workers early in the morning and used to come back in the evening. So, Shakuntala had to be at the Saudi lady’s house from around 7 am to 6 pm six days a week. One day, the lady came home in the late afternoon to take some rest as she was not feeling well. Shakuntala was watching news on TV after she had finished her work and after feeding and putting the baby to sleep. The following excerpt from an interview with Shakuntala shows what happened after that and how both of them were engaged in a translingual practice:

She came home … I gave her a glass of water… she looked so tired … then I turned off the TV … because I thought that it would disturb her… but she said, “you can leave it open.”… I said, “Actually I had finished all my work so started watching the news and the baby is also sleeping … It will disturb you … you need some rest … so I closed it.” She lied on the couch, closed her eyes and continued, “you know I have to stand up the whole day, run here and there even inside the restaurant … sometimes to
the workers, sometimes to the counter… to the customers… I just get tired… but you can turn the TV.” I said, “Yes I turned the TV… now you can take a nap for sometime.” She said again to turn the TV and I said, “should I open it again?” she nodded her head and I opened the TV again. We both listened to the news … I came home and told my son about it and he said that we do not say close/open. Instead, we say turn off/on the TV. Anyway, I and the lady understood each other that day… from that day I don’t use the words open and close…. Turn is turn but what makes the difference is off and on [laughs].

The above excerpt shows how the lack of the correct term “turn on/off” in both the interlocutors’ repertoire did not impact their conversation. Instead, through a couple more exchanges of the conversation, both of them could make it a successful conversation. Shakuntala’s use of the expression “should I open it again?” helped the Arabian lady understand that she was being asked for a confirmation. The literature on translanguaging shows that the interlocutors can make use of other semiotic devices in addition to the linguistic cues to make meaning in a particular context. In the above example, the Saudi lady’s nodding of her head added to the intelligibility of the conversation and as a result, Shakuntala turned the TV on. Shakuntala could recall this incident only after I asked her if she remembered any incident where she and her interlocutor both did not know a Standard English word or structure. She used some fillers and paused for a while and then she recalled the above incident and linked it with her son’s telling her the correct words. When the second language learners translanguage, their use of the target language may be influenced by their first language or their interlanguage. In the above case, Shakuntala translated the words “banda garnu and kholnu”, which are translated as “close and open” respectively. In Nepali, the same verb “banda garnu” is used to mean “close the door” and “turn off the TV”. Similarly, the verb “kholnu” is used to mean “open the door” and “turn on the TV”. On the other hand, the Saudi lady’s use of the expression “turn the TV” without the particle “off/on” may be a feature of her interlanguage. Despite the differences in their linguistic repertoires, they could communicate successfully through negotiation strategies within their contact zone.

Ranjeeta has a different negotiation strategy in her translingual practice with other non-native speakers of English. In my “A day in the life of Ranjeeta”, I observed that she mostly used gestures to make herself understood. She had also invited a classmate of hers from the community college for lunch. Her husband had left for work. Her son and elder daughter were watching some comedy program on a laptop in her son’s room because they had already eaten lunch as they were hungry and could not wait until Ranjeeta’s friend came for lunch. It was almost 2 pm. On the dinner table, when Ranjeeta, her friend and I were about to start eating our lunch, Ranjeeta asked her friend if she wanted the soup in a separate bowl. This is a tradition in Nepal that the hosts are supposed to give each variety of food prepared in different small plates and bowls. She had already given me the soup in a different bowl. When she asked her friend about it, the guest used a comprehension question, “in a ball?” Ranjeeta started explaining the
tradition and that lady was staring at Ranjeeta with her mouth open. She asked Ranjeeta how it could be possible to give the soup in a “ball”. She showed the gesture and asked again, “You mean ball”? Ranjeeta said, “Yes, ball… B-O-W-L ball… do you want the soup in that? [Pointing to the bowl of soup kept in front of me]. The lady thanked Ranjeeta for spelling the word for her. Both of them experienced a problem understanding each other because of their different pronunciation of the same word. I was surprised when I was later reviewing my field notes. Ranjeeta could have shown her the bowl immediately after she saw the sign of non-understanding from her interlocutor, which she did only at the end. Instead, she spelled the word “bowl” for her interlocutor, which is one of the speaker-initiated strategies (Kirkpatrick, 2010) for making his/her listener understand him/her. What is more interesting is that when I asked Ranjeeta about this incident in my interview with her in our next visit, she said that she did not do that very often. It was her instantaneous decision to spell the word for her interlocutor. It shows that when the interlocutors translanguage, they do not have a fixed set of tools to use for different situations. Instead, they make use of different strategies in different communicative situations and even the same person may use different strategies from the options she/he has at his/her disposal.

Affinity to other transnational groups. One interesting theme related to translanguaging that was found in the data collected from all three participants was their attitude towards other non-native speakers. They thought that they had the sense of solidarity with other non-native speakers of English because of their perception that both groups always lack something no matter how proficient they are. Recalling an international gathering at the community center where she lived, Bhoomika said to me in an interview:

*Bichara haru* [poor they], they are also like us … leaving behind their home, families, *afno mato* [own earth] … and *sabbhanda pani* [above all] with their incompetent English knowledge. There might be some more proficient speakers than others but still… we all are the same.

The use of the expression “*Bichara haru*” in Nepali shows one’s emotional feelings, like empathy towards others. Bhoomika’s use of this expression indicates that she feels bad for them for leaving their home country and coming to the US. She feels closer to them as she regards them to be like her and her feeling of proximity to them is due to the perceived incompetency of herself and that of those other international non-native speakers of English. Similarly, Shakuntala also expressed her opinion about other non-native speakers of English and said, “*Hami sabai eutai dyang ka mula hau* [laughs] [we are all in the same boat].” Like Bhoomika, she also admits that some of them are certainly highly proficient. On the other hand, Shakuntala has a slightly different way of looking at other non-native speakers of English. She thinks that they come from different cultural, religious, social, and economic backgrounds. However, her opinion towards them regarding the competency in English also makes her feel that it is the matter of who is in power. She said, “If Nepali was like English, then we would also feel the
same … *jasko Shakti usko bhakti* [surrender to the powerful]…rest of all are the same.” Her expression “*jasko Shakti usko bhakti*” indicates that she thinks that the status of English makes its speakers more privileged than others and therefore, the speakers of all other languages belong to the same category, with less power. All the above thoughts are connected to the idea of belonging to a group no matter what linguistic and cultural backgrounds people are from. If they are not proficient in English, they create a different group but find ways to build solidarity and establish successful communication within the group.

**Conclusion**

On the basis of data analyses and results, it can be concluded that the participants are invested in improving their proficiency in English and are also engaged in several translilngual practices. The participants’ access to education and English was influenced by their instrumental motivation while they were in Nepal. However, there was a shift in their motivation from only instrumental to both instrumental and integrative. Their desire to achieve the required level of English to gain admission in the formal education system in the US, and their desire to work are related to their instrumental motivation, whereas being a part of the English speech community and getting the recognition of good language users prompted them to put their effort and time in improving their English, especially their conversational skills. They were not only motivated to achieve their target but also invested in doing so. However, the extent of their investment varied. More importantly, it was not static in all contexts. The level and nature of their investment was found to be fluid and context specific. It went beyond their desire to use language for utilitarian purposes. Instead, they believed that they were reshaping their identity and maintaining it simultaneously by preserving their linguistic and cultural values. They thought that every time they faced instances of intelligibility or unintelligibility, they experienced their dynamic and changing identity, which either encouraged them to perform better or left them with frustration. However, success and failure were evaluated by the participants in particular speech events only. This notion is in line with the idea of investment described by Norton (2013) where she states that “investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner’s own identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space” (pp. 50-51). The participants narrated several stories about how their household life and the social and religious beliefs influenced their quantity and quality of investment. They frequently referred back to their situation in Nepal and associated their present investment with their initial self of their gendered identity and the present situation. Looking at the investment in relation to the clothes they wore, the time when they ate food, the assistance they got from other members in the family in the household work, their ability to drive to work and several other related factors, the participants described their complex and dynamic identity. This finding corroborated the research on investment by Skilton-Sylvester (2002) which noted that investigating a woman’s investment is not complete without looking into her domestic and professional identities.

The participants’ use of different negotiation strategies indicated that their main aim was not to achieve the highest proficiency in the English language. Instead, their target was to satisfy
some specific communicative goals in different contact zones. In spite of their limited linguistic resources, they collaborated with their interlocutors to achieve intelligibility and communicative success. Each communicative situation was tied to their aim to understand and be understood. This phenomenon is in line with Canagarajah’s (2013) study of Siva, a vegetable seller and a native Tamil speaker, who was successful in translanguaging with an English speaker. He felt proud to have learned a few English words and structures through that translanguaging incident. However, he was “not aiming to develop competence in English” (p. 42). Similarly, the participants’ felt that all non-native speakers of English belong to the same group. Their use of the Nepali proverb “eutai dyang ka mula” [in the same boat] indicated that they identified more with the outer group of non-native speakers than with the native speakers despite being highly motivated and invested. This finding is consistent with the notion of non-native solidarity described by Canagarajah (2013), where non-native speakers strive to make use of different negotiation strategies to bridge a gap created among them due to diversity. The participants’ use of the expression “jasko Shakti usko bhakti” [surrender to the powerful] clearly demonstrates that they feel less powerful due to their lack of proficiency in English.

Finally, the participants’ use of several different Nepali proverbs helped them express their feelings and emotions. On the one hand, they believed that English had helped them empower themselves and reshape their identity. Therefore, they attempted to invest more in improving their English. On the other hand, they felt greater affinity with other non-native speakers due to their feeling of solidarity with them. This phenomenon illustrates the complex feelings and emotions often associated with language learning.

**Significance of the Study**

Although this study was conducted under certain limitations, it bears some pedagogical significance mainly for ESL teachers and for the people who are directly or indirectly related to adult ESL population. These people could be ESL program coordinators, curriculum designers, and even people who work in the immigration offices. The reason is that findings of this study provide insights into what varied backgrounds immigrants and ESL speakers represent. This will help the teachers and other concerned people in four main ways. First, immigrants and ESL learners may have different motives to learn the target language. Despite being motivated, they may not be invested in learning the language due to several restrictions such as their perceptions toward the target language speakers and other ESL speakers, their emotional feelings regarding their success and failure in achieving communicative success in a particular speech event, and their perceived attitudes of others toward themselves. Knowledge of their motivation for learning the language, and what types of investments they are employing to achieve success are of paramount importance for ESL teachers to help such learners.

Second, although the immigrants and ESL learners may come with a low level of competence in the target language, they have varied linguistic and other semiotic resources at their disposal, which they can mobilize in a particular speech event while interacting with other non-native speakers of English. Making use of the multiple resources the learners possess can
help both ESL teachers and learners. This study also presents the findings related to different negotiation strategies that the participants employ to bridge the gap caused by the lack of proficiency among other transnational groups. Finding out such strategies used by relatively successful ESL learners is beneficial as this could guide ESL teachers in formulating strategy training such as teaching learners how to solve problems of communication breakdowns. Fourth, the study showed that immigrants encounter different types of communicative situations in their daily lives such as communication in the hospital, at a supermarket, at their children’s schools, in their neighborhood, and so on, which is completely different from formal academic settings. This new knowledge can guide the designing of the ESL curriculum for the immigrants and the teaching topics can be tailored to their immediate and day-to-day communicative needs. In sum, the in-depth data collected from the immigrants and ESL learners about their background, their emotions and affective factors, motivation and investment, their transnational identity and translingual practices provide a clear picture of their multiple, varied, and dynamic identities which could enhance the design and implementation of an ESL curriculum.

References


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Students’ Motivational Characteristics and Their Perceptions and Reactions to Written Corrective Feedback

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Research on written corrective feedback (WCF) in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) has been giving its feedback on this practice for more than 30 years now. The topic has been extensively researched and there is a better understanding of the issue than before; however, it continues to be debated (see Evans et al., 2010; Ferris, 2006; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Goldstein, 2005; Lee, 2004; Montgomery & Baker, 2007; Saito, 1994; Schulz, 1996). One of the main reasons for the controversial findings concerning feedback is the lack of attention to individual differences among learners (Zamel, 1985). Although the effects of written feedback have been investigated on students collectively, taking individual learner differences into account could help in developing a better understanding of the issue. While the relationship between feedback and individual learner differences remains underexplored, Hyland (1998) found that many of the teachers who participated in her qualitative work did, indeed, consider individual students when they gave their feedback. If many teachers give their students individual feedback on their papers, why not consider that in research?

One of the rarely studied individual differences in second language writing is language learning motivation. The current study is based on the assumption that learners’ different learning behaviors, including their perceptions of and reactions to feedback, could have roots in learners’ fundamental motivational characteristics (Papi & Teimouri, 2014). Although many scholars have attested to its importance, motivation has been ignored in research on corrective feedback. Hyland (1998) argued that motivation is an important factor in feedback because writing is so personal, stating that “writing is an intensely personal activity, and students’ motivation and confidence in themselves as writers may be adversely affected by the feedback they receive” (p. 279). Goldstein (2005) argued that lack of motivation is one reason students may not be paying attention to feedback. If motivation can play such a role in relation to corrective feedback, considering the motivational characteristics of learners in research in the area of corrective feedback can help us understand how feedback can be given more effectively. The present study, therefore, aims to take the initiative and research the topic of corrective feedback from the point of view of second language learners with different motivational orientations.
Individual Learner Differences in Relation to Corrective Feedback

There has been a substantial number of studies on students’ perceptions of and reactions to written feedback (e.g., Cardelle & Corno, 1981; Cohen, 1987; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Enginarlar, 1993; Ferris, 1995; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996; Leki, 1991; Montgomery & Baker, 2007; Radecki & Swales, 1988; Saito, 1994). These studies have been focusing on how students perceive written feedback. Over the course of time, these surveys evolved from just a two-item questionnaire (Cardelle & Corno, 1981) to multi-item surveys on both teacher and students’ perceptions (Montgomery & Baker, 2007). As these surveys became more in-depth along the way, they seem to have lost focus on individual learners.

One of the first surveys on students’ perception of feedback was administered by Cardelle and Corno (1981). They studied the effects of feedback framing on eleven homework assignments written by 80 beginning and intermediate Spanish students at Stanford University. The students were divided into four groups and given one of four types of feedback: one group was given praise (“You chose the right form of the verb for this kind of sentence”), a second group received criticism (“You chose the wrong form of the verb in this sentence. It should be…”), a third group was given both criticism plus praise (“You chose the right pronoun, but the form of the verb is wrong”), and the control group received no feedback. A pre-test was given to measure the students’ knowledge of Spanish vocabulary, grammar and structure, and translation. The students were then given a two-item survey. The first item asked the students to evaluate if the feedback they received increased their motivation to study, improved their performance, or both. The second item asked what type of feedback they preferred: praise, criticism, both, or grades only. The findings showed that 75% of the students felt the feedback improved both their motivation and final performance. Most of the students (88%) of the total sample of students preferred a combination of praise and criticism, and of the group that received only criticism, 13% preferred criticism only. Interestingly, some students felt that receiving no feedback was more motivating and improved their performance better than praise or criticism alone. The students were also categorized into high, middle and low performers according to their posttest scores. The researchers found that the higher performing students preferred feedback compared to the lower performers. Additionally, the higher performers liked both criticism and praise more than the lower performers. Overall, the authors confirmed that feedback can help improve students’ motivation and performance, but it is more effective when it contains not only praise, but some criticism on specific errors.

Cohen (1987) gave a survey to 217 English as a Second Language (ESL) and foreign language (FL) learners at New York State University at Binghamton, asking about their preferences for WCF. These were students who were receiving some type of written feedback in their classes. The ESL students were in basic and advanced writing courses. The FL students were studying French, German, or Hebrew. The one page questionnaire asked them to reflect on the last paper they received from their teachers. The survey asked the students if they read over a teacher’s comments, what type of feedback teachers were giving, what strategies students used for reading a teacher’s comments, and how much of the teachers’ comments they understood.
The students also had to self-rate what kind of learner they were. Nineteen percent of the students rated themselves as “excellent learners,” 70% as “good learners,” and 11% as “fair learners. None of the students rated themselves as poor learners. Based on the self-ratings, Cohen categorized his participants into better learners and poorer learners in order to analyze the data. He found that 81% of students looked over almost all of the comments given by their teachers. Most of the better-rated learners were more likely to read through a paper with feedback and pay attention to comments by their teachers on vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. The students who rated themselves lower, on the other hand, were more likely to ignore their teacher’s comments and they paid less attention to comments on their grammar. Cohen found that students generally have few strategies for processing feedback, especially the poorer-rated learners. One of the most popular strategies was making a mental note of the feedback, which most better-rated learners did. Cohen speculated that this was because they were either good writers and they were learning from the mental notes they made, or they were already good writers who did not really need teachers’ comments in order to improve.

Radecki and Swales (1988) surveyed 59 learners in four ESL classes at the University of Michigan on their attitudes toward feedback. After they were surveyed, the researchers chose eight students to interview. The 18-item questionnaire focused on the students’ opinions of feedback and instruction, the usefulness of teachers’ comments, and responsibility for error correction. The students were classified into three categories according to their openness to feedback: Receptors (46%), semi-resisters (41%), and resisters (13%). The receptors and semi-resisters preferred comments on content and grammar whereas the resisters preferred short adjectives and a grade. Receptors saw the correction of errors as the responsibility of both the instructor and the students; resisters viewed it as just the teacher’s job only. Revision was welcomed by the receptors but seen as punishment by the resisters. Lastly, receptors and semi-resisters felt an obligation to use their teacher’s feedback while resisters did not care. Radecki and Swales suggested “typology of behaviors that characterizes student attitudes to teacher feedback” (p. 363) is one way of learning more about feedback.

Leki (1991) examined students’ opinions in a four-part survey on 100 ESL students in freshman composition classes at the University of Tennessee. In the first part of the survey, students were asked about the importance of accuracy, which they felt was important not only to them (91%) but for their English teachers as well (82%). As for English teachers pointing out grammar errors, 93% of students felt it was very important. Leki explained that it is easier for both students and teachers to attend to grammar errors compared to content; thus, when they correct these errors, they feel like they are able to master the language more concretely. In the second part of the survey, students were asked the types of errors they look at most frequently when a paper is returned to them. Although students said they wanted grammar corrections, only 53% of students said they looked carefully at comments on grammar. On the other hand, 74% and 65% claimed that they looked more carefully at comments on organization and ideas, respectfully. In the third part of the survey, 70% of students preferred that all errors, major and minor, be marked by a teacher; whereas 19% wanted only major errors to be marked. A large
majority of students (81%) reported that their current English teachers marked all the errors on their papers. Sixty-seven percent of students wanted their teachers to give clues about how to fix their errors, and a quarter of the students wanted the teacher to write the correct answers for them. Leki argued that students like to be given clues because it gives them some satisfaction, similar to solving a puzzle. In part three, peer review, 58% of students said that peer review was the least useful in helping them correct written errors. Leki reasoned that this could be due to the fact that many of the students were new arrivals in the U.S. and thus did not have much prior experience with peer feedback; or, perhaps, the peer reviewers were really unhelpful. The last section had the students rate seven different handwritten examples of grammar feedback in which they showed favor for clues for correction. Leki suggested that teachers spend some class time to discuss with their students their perceptions of feedback and current research. As a whole, 97% of students carefully read their teacher’s comments.

Students’ preferences for feedback were also investigated in another survey by Saito (1994) at a Canadian university. The study included 39 students from two ESL intensive courses and an ESL Engineering writing class; the students’ English proficiency ranged from intermediate to the advanced level. The questionnaire had students rate different types of feedback, students’ strategies for handling feedback, and their preferences for feedback. According to the students’ responses, most of the students preferred their teachers to focus on grammar errors. Students also liked to be given clues rather than explicit WCF to prompt them to correct and revise their papers. Although the students were willing to self-correct if they knew where the error was located, they preferred teacher feedback over peer review or self-correction. Saito pointed out that this may be due to students’ not being aware of the importance of peer or self-correction. If teachers explained their usefulness, Saito argued this would have benefited the students more. Many students did not see that value in revision and did not revise their writing even when it was a homework assignment. The findings on students’ preferences seemed to vary across different classes.

Ferris (1995) surveyed 155 students at California State University in one of two levels of an ESL composition program. The purpose of this study was to see the students’ responses to feedback in multi-draft composition. The survey was an 11-item questionnaire that focused on multi-draft papers. There were also several open-ended questions with regards to strategies the students used for interpreting the feedback given. Overall, they found that most students (93.5%) thought that WCF was helpful for them to improve their writing. More relevant to the present study, they found that students remembered positive comments from their teachers for their ideas and organization. However, three students reported that “their teachers’ comments were all negative and that this fact depressed them and decreased their motivation and self-esteem” (p.46). Ferris asserted that teachers should offer not only constructive criticism, but comments with encouragement as well. On a positive note, Ferris suggested that students may indeed respect and appreciate the feedback their teachers gave.

Montgomery and Baker’s (2007) work at the English Language Center at Brigham Young University also surveyed of students’ and teachers’ perceptions of their teachers’
Students’ Motivational Characteristics and Their Perceptions and Reactions to Written Corrective Feedback

feedback. In addition, they examined the teachers’ actual written feedback. The teachers at the center were encouraged to give comments on global issues during the first drafts, and comments on local issues in later drafts. Thirteen teachers and 98 students filled out a questionnaire similar to the ones used by Cohen (1987) and Ferris (1995). Teacher feedback on the students’ compositions was also collected and coded with the frequency of feedback on: ideas and content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. The drafts of the essays were categorized into first and later drafts; they were also divided into low pass, pass, and high pass depending on the grades they were given. Overall, students seemed to think that their teachers gave a sufficient amount of feedback; however, teachers thought that they were not giving enough. Additionally, teachers underestimated the amount of feedback they gave on local issues, but overestimated the amount of feedback on global issues. Although the teachers were trained to give comments on global issues, teachers gave more local feedback. The authors also found that teachers gave different amounts of feedback to different students, and this was not connected to the proficiency level of the students. For instance, one teacher gave a student 210 comments on grammar and no comments to another student, while both of these students received the same passing grade. The researchers could not account for the difference in the amount of feedback and called for more research to be done to see the effects that different types of comments (praise or criticism) have on individual students.

In most of these studies, students, in one way or another, seem to put some didactic value on receiving feedback. Many students indicated that they did look at a teachers’ feedback (Cohen, 1987; Leki, 1991; Radecki & Swales, 1988; Saito, 1994; Ferris, 1995) and one study showed that students were content with the amount of feedback given (i.e., Montgomery and Baker, 2007). Some students seem to prefer comments on grammar more than on content, organization, and ideas (Cohen, 1987; Ferris, 1995; Leki, 1991; Saito, 1994) while others found value in their teachers’ comments on global issues (Leki, 1991; Radecki & Swales, 1988). In Leki’s (1991) study, the students said they valued comments on grammar, but then they said they looked at comments on organization and ideas more closely than the grammar comments. The types of feedback students prefer to receive also seem to differ greatly. Some students seem open to revising their essays (Cohen, 1987, Enginarlar, 1993; Ferris, 1995; Radecki & Swales, 1988) as long as they are challenged (Saito, 1994), while others saw it as punishment (Radecki & Swales, 1988). In three of the studies, students were in favor of implicit coding for marking errors (Leki, 1991; Radecki & Swales, 1988; Saito, 1994) because it motivated them to revise and they view it as puzzle solving. As for peer revision, students seem to value their teachers’ comments more than their peers’ comments (Leki, 1991; Saito, 1994).

In order to account for the individual variations in terms of students’ openness and perceptions of feedback, some of the studies reviewed above have come up with labels such as resistors, receptors, better self-rated students, and the like. These attempts have highlighted the importance of individual differences in this area that are of great value and can reflect some underlying differences among learners. However, these differences may not be well understood if we limit the focus of our investigations to the perceptions and observed behaviors. The current
study is based on the assumption that the differences in students’ perceptions of and reactions to feedback could have motivational reasons. Studying the learners reactions to feedback can be more revealing if we frame the study within a strong theoretical framework that highlight motivational differences among learners. The importance of this approach has been highlighted by Papi and Teimouri (2014), who called for research on how fundamental motivational differences result in different language learning behaviors. In order to take a step in this direction and account for motivational differences underlying learners’ different perceptions of and reaction to feedback, I will employ Dweck’s (2004) achievement goal theory and implicit theories of intelligence or mindsets.

Achievement Goal Theory and Mindsets

According to Dweck, there are two types of goals with underlying implicit theories about intelligence. In her achievement goal theory and based on the approach-avoidance perspective towards motivation, Dweck (1988) proposed that there are two different types of goals among students: learning and performance goals. “A performance goal is the goal of validating one’s ability through one’s performance, that is, the goal of looking smart and not dumb. In contrast a learning goal is the goal of increasing one’s ability, that is, the goal of getting smarter” (p. 42).

Various studies (e.g. Dweck & Sorich, 1999; Elliott & Dweck, 1988; Farrell & Dweck, 1985; Grant & Dweck, 2003; Henderson & Dweck, 1990; Mueller & Dweck, 1998) have shown that students with learning versus performance goals show different learning behaviors. Farrell and Dweck (1985), for instance, studied junior high students who were taught a challenging new unit. The students with learning goals were more likely to search for and find strategies compared with those with performance goals who were concerned with validating their ability. Grant and Dweck (2003) found that students with learning goals were more likely to be engaged with the course material, which was predictive of higher grades.

Dweck (1988) stipulated that a learner’s development of learning or performance goals has roots in what she calls the learner’s dominant implicit theory of intelligence, or their mindsets. Learning goals are held by individuals who have an incremental theory about their abilities. Individuals with an incremental theory of intelligence (or a growth mindset) see their intelligence as something that is dynamic and can be developed through effort and experience. Individuals with performance goals, on the other hand, have an entity theory (or fixed mindset) about their abilities; they believe their intelligence is fixed and unchangeable. The students who have an incremental theory of intelligence may think that they received a low test score because they did not study hard. Yet, students who hold an entity theory about their intelligence think that they failed the test because they are not smart enough (Dweck et al., 1995). According to Dweck (2004), these theories of intelligence greatly impact students’ learning behaviors:

When students believe that their intelligence is a fixed trait (an entity theory of intelligence), it becomes critical to for them to validate their fixed ability through their performance. In contrast, when students believe that their intellectual skills are something that they can increase through their efforts (an incremental theory of intelligence), they become less concerned with how their abilities might be evaluated now, and more
concerned with cultivating their abilities in the longer term (p.42).

Many studies have examined Dweck’s theories of intelligence and found strong evidence for their relevance to students’ learning and achievement (e.g. Dweck & Sorich, 1999; Elliott & Dweck, 1988; Farrell & Dweck, 1985; Grant & Dweck, 2003; Henderson & Dweck, 1990; Mueller & Dweck, 1998). Dweck and Sorich (1999) found that students over the course of their seventh and eighth grades who held an incremental theory earned higher grades in math while students with an entity theory had decreasing grades, even though all the students started with equivalent math scores. In Aronson and Good (2002), students at Stanford University who were trained in incremental theory at the beginning of the semester reported a greater enjoyment in their classes and a higher grade point average at the end of the semester. More relevant to the purpose of the present study, there have been other studies linking learners’ interest in and reaction to feedback and goal orientations (e.g. Butterfield & Mangels, 2003; VandeWalle, 1997; VandeWalle & Cummings, 1997). Butterfield and Mangels (2003), for instance, studied students’ reactions to feedback with an electroencephalography (EEG) device. The participants were asked general information questions and they were given two types of feedback: red or green lights indicating if they were correct or incorrect (performance oriented) and the correct answers to the questions (learning oriented). They found that with the learning-relevant feedback, there was more activity in the brains of the participants with an incremental theory of intelligence. Those with the fixed mindset, on the other hand, did not have any brain activity for the learning-relevant feedback, suggesting they were less motivated by the feedback. A student’s theory of intelligence could thus be an indicator of how open they are to written feedback. The present study intends to examine students’ perceptions towards WCF by looking at these motivational orientations. By examining learners’ feedback preferences through the lens of motivation, this study can also further our understanding of why corrective feedback has resulted in inconsistent findings in the literature and open new avenues of research on how we can make feedback more motivating and effective.

Research Questions:

Based on the discussion above, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. What are the relationships between English learners’ mindsets and their openness to corrective feedback on their L2 written productions?

2. What are the relationships between English learners’ mindsets and their reactions to corrective feedback on their L2 written productions?

3. What are the relationships between English learners’ mindsets and their writing motivation?

Method

Participants

The participants of this research will be recruited from a Midwestern university in the United States. The students will be international students learning English as a second language at different proficiency levels at the university. The students’ native languages typically include
Chinese, Arabic, or Portuguese. The researcher anticipates 100+ learner participants.

**Instruments**

There are three questionnaires being used in this research study with a total of 73 items concerning learners’ motivation, written feedback, and background information. The motivation questionnaire (Appendix A) includes 32 items measuring participants’ goal orientations (Elliot and McGregor, 2001), theories of general intelligence (Dweck et al., 2004), theories of writing ability, and L2 writing motivation. Items that measure goal orientations include both learning goals (“My aim is to completely master the material presented in this class”) and performance goals (“My goal is to perform better than the other students”). Theories of general intelligence include items for both incremental and entity mindsets (e.g., “You have a certain amount of intelligence, and you can’t really do much to change it”). It also includes a measure of learners’ implicit theory of English writing ability, which I developed based on Dweck’s measures (e.g., “With enough practice you will be able to write like a native speaker of English”). Five items measure the incremental and entity mindset of students and another five items measure the writing mindsets (Dweck et al., 2004).

The second part (Appendix B) contains 33 items measuring learners’ openness and reaction towards written corrective feedback. This part of the questionnaire has been developed using items used in previous WCF studies (e.g., Cardelle & Corno, 1981; Cohen, 1987; Enginarlar, 1993; Ferris, 1995; Goldstein, 2005; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996; Leki, 1991; Saito, 1994; Radecki & Swales, 1988) and some items that were specifically developed for the purpose of the present study. The items have been categorized into four classes: openness to feedback, framing of feedback, reaction to feedback, and writing motivation. Openness to feedback refers to how open students are to feedback (e.g., “Written feedback from my teacher helps me to be a better writer” or “I don’t care about receiving feedback on my papers”). Framing is the way that teachers frame their feedback (e.g., “I like when my teacher comments only on my writing strengths” or “I like when my teacher comments only on my writing weaknesses”). Reaction is the students’ reaction after they receive feedback from their teachers (e.g., “When I get my papers back, I read all of the comments carefully” or “When I do not understand my teacher’s comments, I ignore them”). Writing motivation items, which were adapted from Taguchi, Magid, and Papi (2009), include students’ intended efforts, desire, and motivational intensity for writing (“I enjoy writing in English” or “I would like to spend lots of time learning to write in English”).

For these two parts, a six-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (this doesn’t apply to me) to 6 (always) is used for each item. They have been translated and back-translated into Chinese, Arabic and Portuguese by graduate students (native speakers of the languages) in order to make the items easily understandable for students at all levels of proficiency. The last part of the questionnaire includes background information questions with regards to the students’ age, gender, native language, length of time in the U.S., length of studying English, year in college, major of study, and proficiency (Appendix C).
Procedure

The data collection for this study will take a few weeks. After securing IRB approval, teachers who are currently teaching English as a Second Language classes at the ELC will be emailed with details of the research and asked for their voluntary participation. The researcher will go to each individual class and ask students to fill out the surveys, during break time or after the class. The three parts of the survey will only take about 10-15 minutes to complete. The surveys will be anonymous.

Data Analysis

After establishing the reliability of the scales through Cronbach’s alpha analysis, the correlation analyses will be run between students’ implicit theories of intelligence and their openness and reaction to written feedback as well as their motivation for writing.

Anticipated Discussion

The study could provide preliminary evidence for the motivational underpinnings of how learners perceive and act upon teacher’s feedback. This could be a good initial attempt to open new avenues of research on how to increase students’ desire for and attention to corrective feedback through changing their detrimental but chronic mindsets, thereby improving the quality of language teaching. The study would link the motivation research to the actual processes of language learning. The introduction of the concept of the implicit theories of intelligence to the field of second language acquisition could also contribute to our understanding of lack of motivation on the part of many language learners and encourage investigation in how we can increase learner’s motivation through changing their beliefs about intelligence and setting helpful learning goals that motivate learners to put in sufficient efforts to learn a second language.

References


## Appendix A

### Language Learner Questionnaire (Part 1)

Please read each of the following statements. Circle the answer that best describes what you think. Do not leave any blank answers. Answer each one as honestly as you can. The results will not be shown to your teacher.

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<td></td>
<td>This doesn’t apply to me</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
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1. My goal is to perform better than the other students. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
2. When I see an opportunity for something I like, I get excited right away. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
3. You have a certain amount of intelligence, and you can’t really do much to change it. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
4. I am striving to avoid performing worse than others. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
5. I see myself as someone who is primarily striving to reach my “ideal self”—to fulfill my hopes, wishes, and aspirations. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
6. As an English learner, you have a limited amount of talent for developing your English writing skills, and you can’t really do much to change it. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
7. My goal is to completely master the material presented in this class. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
8. When it comes to achieving things that are important to me, I find that I don’t perform as well as I would ideally like to do. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
9. I am striving to understand the content of this course as thoroughly as possible. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
10. Your intelligence is something about you that you can’t change very much. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
11. I am striving to avoid an incomplete understanding of the course material. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
12. With enough practice you will be able to write like a native speaker of English. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
13. My goal is to learn as much as possible. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
14. I usually obeyed rules and regulations that were established by my parents. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
15. I am striving to do well compared to other students. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
16. I worry about making mistakes. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
17. You can always greatly change how intelligent you are. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
18. My goal is to avoid performing poorly compared to others. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
19. I see myself as someone who is primarily striving to become the self I “ought” to be—fulfill my duties, responsibilities and obligations. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
20. No matter who you are, you can always learn to write as well as native speakers of English. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
21. My goal is to perform well relative to other students. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
22. I feel like I have made progress toward being successful in my life. 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>You can learn new things, but you can’t really change your basic intelligence.</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>My goal is to avoid learning less than I possibly could.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>No matter how hard you try, as an English language learner you can never write like a native speaker.</td>
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<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Not being careful enough has gotten me into trouble at times.</td>
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<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>No matter how much intelligence you have, you can always change it a lot.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>My goal is to avoid learning less than it is possible to learn.</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>I frequently think about how I can prevent failures in my life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>You can improve your English writing skills, but you can’t really change your writing talent.</td>
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<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>My goal is to avoid doing worse than other students.</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>I frequently imagine how I will achieve my hopes and aspirations.</td>
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</table>
Appendix B

Written Feedback Questionnaire (Part 2)

Please read each of the following statements. Circle the answer that best describes what you think. Do not leave any blank answers. Answer each one as honestly as you can. The results will not be shown to your teacher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I enjoy writing in English.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>I like to have many opportunities to revise my writing for a grade.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>I like when my teacher comments on only my writing strengths.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>I like when my teacher only writes a grade and not comments on my paper.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>When I do not understand my teacher’s comments, I talk to him/her.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>I like to get comments on my writing like “Good job! You did it right.”</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>I like when my teacher corrects all of my mistakes (grammar, content, organization, spelling, punctuation).</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>I am making progress toward become a stronger writer in English.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>When I do not understand my teacher’s comments, I ignore them.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>I like to get comments on my writing like “Good job! You did not make any mistakes.”</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>I like when my teacher uses correction symbols to show me my mistakes.</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>When I get my papers back, I read all of the comments carefully.</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>I like to receive feedback on my writing from my classmates (peer review).</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>I really try to learn how to write English.</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>After peer review, I never look at my classmate’s comments.</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>I would like to be told only what I did wrong in my paper.</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Written feedback from my teacher helps me to be a better writer.</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>I always look forward to my writing classes in English.</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>I like to receive feedback only on my organization and development of my ideas in my writing.</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>I like when my teacher comments only on my writing weaknesses.</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>Writing in English is very important to me.</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>I revise and save my papers, even if it is not for a grade.</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>I like to get comments on my writing like “You need to work on…”</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>I like to receive feedback only on grammar, spelling, and vocabulary errors in my writing.</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>When I get my papers back, I only look at the grade.</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>I would like to be told only what I did right in my paper.</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>I remember the mistakes my teacher points out to me and I try not to make them again.</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>I would like to spend lots of time learning to write in English.</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>I like to receive feedback only on my ideas and content in my writing.</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>I actively think about what I have learned in my English writing class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>I like when my teacher writes questions on my paper to make me think about my writing and does not give me the answer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>I would like to concentrate on learning to write in English more than any other topic.</td>
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<td>33.</td>
<td>I don’t care about receiving feedback on my papers.</td>
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Appendix C

Background Information (Part 3)

1. Age: _______________________

2. Gender: □ Male □ Female

3. What is your native language? _______________________

4. How long have you been in the U.S.? Years_______ Months_______

5. How long have you been studying English? Years_______ Months_______

6. Year in college: □ Freshman □ Sophomore □ Junior □ Senior □ MA/Ph.D.

7. Major field of study: _______________________

8. Please rate on a scale of 1-6 your current ability in English writing (circle the number below).

| 1= beginner | 2= pre-intermediate | 3= intermediate | 4= upper-intermediate | 5= advanced | 6= native-like |

Please add any additional comments you may have.
Integrating Language and Content Instruction in Immersion Classrooms: Literature Review

Lisa Domke
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Introduction

Over the past 15 years, the percentage of children in the United States who speak a language other than English at home has been increasing. As of 2013, this was almost one in four children (KIDS COUNT Data Center, 2014). With the passage of No Child Left Behind in 2001, schools have felt added pressure to ensure that children learn academic content and the language of the disciplines (Koyama & Menken, 2013). With limited hours in the day, the question becomes, how does one teach content and language simultaneously? This is a question for general education classrooms with learners of English and immersion classrooms with learners of an additional language.

In this literature review, I will focus most on immersion classrooms because the integration of language and content is a central, defining feature of these programs since they teach students a second language through both content-area instruction in that language and additional language instruction (Lyster, 2007). For immersion programs to be successful, their teachers must be both language and content teachers. In order to explore how this can be accomplished, I will examine the historical and contextual influences on language-content integration in immersion education, the ways in which teachers can integrate language and content, and future directions for research.

Historical Definitions and Issues

Immersion History and Terminology

In Canada, parents initiated French language immersion programs in 1965 because of their frustrations with their children’s proficiency in existing programs. The Canadian language immersion model spread to the United States in 1971 with the first schools in Culver City, California (Genesee, 1985). Through the years, enrollment and the number of immersion programs have increased. For the 2010-2011 school year, 341,000 students enrolled in French language immersion programs in Canada (Government of Canada, 2013), and in the U.S., 448 immersion programs were self-identified in the Center for Applied Linguistics (2011) database.

Many terms describe a variety of immersion programs. Lenker and Rhodes (2007) defined one-way immersion programs as those designed for English-speaking students to learn their subjects through a second language. These programs can be classified as full, or total,
immersion in which students in kindergarten through second grade receive all instruction in the second language with subsequent grades increasing English instruction to 20-50% of the day. Partial immersion programs allocate approximately 50% of the day in the second language throughout the grades. Two-way immersion, or dual language, programs instruct both English-speakers and native speakers of the target language, and they attempt to balance the numbers of students in each group (Lenker & Rhodes, 2007; McField, 2008). However, Genesee and Lindholm-Leary (2008) also used the term “dual language” to describe any program in which English is used for instruction at least 50% of the school year with another language used for the other portion. This thereby includes transitional bilingual programs in which students in grades one and two learn mainly in their home language in order to transition into all-English classrooms by grade three.

Regardless of their name, immersion programs fall under the heading of content-based instruction (CBI), which involves learning a language through content (Lyster, 2007). To differentiate between the myriad of CBI models, Met (1999) proposed a continuum that sorted programs by the amount they focused on content learning versus language learning. Met placed immersion education on the “content-driven” end because its primary objective is content learning with language learning as secondary. On the “language-driven” end were theme-based, multidisciplinary, and foreign language in the elementary school (FLES) courses. These programs were characterized by curricula that organized language learning by themes such as immigration or shopping. To discuss these topics, other disciplines may be used such as math when calculating a shopping order or geography to discuss immigration patterns. However even though they used some content to teach language, any content learning was incidental because language learning was always the priority. Every activity chosen was to facilitate acquiring language. In 2012, Tedick and Cammarata added Europe’s version of CBI—content and language integrated learning (CLIL) programs—to Met’s continuum. These programs began in the mid-1990s and take many different forms; therefore, they fit in all sections of the continuum. In the end, the sheer magnitude of types of immersion programs and the ways in which they conceptualize content and language instruction makes immersion education a complex endeavor.

**Rationale for Immersion**

Many parents, educators, and researchers support immersion programs because students in these programs attain higher linguistic proficiency than students learning a language as a separate subject (Lyster, 2007). Content-area instruction in the second language provides meaningful, communicative contexts for children to learn language (Genesee, 1985). This is similar to first language development in that people find motivation to learn a language because they use language to understand and describe the surrounding world (Genesee, 1985; Snow, Met, & Genesee, 1989). Because the content areas require different linguistic skills, language instruction in the content areas helps students develop proficiencies in various linguistic registers (ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, 1995). In addition, teaching language through content instruction is more time-efficient than teaching them separately (Met, 1998).
Since content instruction occupies the majority of the school day, students also have more exposure to the second language in these program models.

**Issues Integrating Language and Content**

Even though immersion students tend to attain high language proficiency and can communicate their intent, studies from the 1980s found that immersion students did not perform like native speaking peers, especially in the areas of vocabulary and grammar (Genesee, 1985; Harley, Allen, Cummins, & Swain, 1987). Recent studies are inconclusive as to the reasons why. Genesee and Lindholm-Leary (2013) posited that often in immersion and other content-based instruction classes, as long as students understand the content and can communicate about it meaningfully, then “the accuracy with which they use language to communicate may go unnoticed, unchecked, and, thus, underdeveloped” (p. 22). Moreover, Genesee and Lindholm-Leary (2013) contended that especially in the United States, teachers and students are not held accountable for content and language outcomes in the second language to the degree in which they are for English. That can lead teachers to simplify their linguistic input in order to ensure students’ content mastery, since students will be tested on their content knowledge. Unfortunately, simplified input limits the complexity of students’ language competence.

Lyster (2007) posited that immersion programs do not focus specifically on language skills because, for years, many immersion teachers have viewed these programs as places where students incidentally learn a language through content instruction. Traditionally, people viewed immersion as a “two-for-one” approach, i.e. students would acquire a second language through content instruction (Snow, 1987, p. 5). Even United States government reports stated that immersion’s primary focus was academic instruction, not language learning (ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, 1995).

Lyster (1987) suggested that “immersion” was a misnomer because these students are not immersed in a culture of native speakers. Instead, they are “integrated” with other English speakers and are exposed to a language in an academic context. Lyster also questioned the idea that immersion students “acquire” the second language, since “acquisition” suggests unconsciously obtaining a language. Therefore, Lyster asserted that immersion students “learn” the second language. This is important because the previously discussed findings of immersion students’ lack of proficiency show they are not unconsciously acquiring language. Instead, they must be explicitly taught. However, the following studies seem to show continued resistance to Lyster’s assertions. It seems the idea of immersion in a second language has persisted as teachers have continued to struggle with explicitly teaching language through content.

Day and Shapson (1996) conducted what they termed an “educational ethnography” and a “case study” of twelve French-language science classrooms in British Columbia in grades 4, 7, and 10 (p. 45). They observed each class twice, inventoried science equipment, and interviewed teachers, students, and school staff. They noticed that educators focused on the curriculum and only viewed themselves as content teachers versus both content and language teachers.

Swain (1996) corroborated Day and Shapson’s (1996) conclusions with an article
proposing recommendations based on a synthesis of her own immersion classroom observations and at least two other case studies and one experimental study conducted by other researchers. Swain noted a dichotomy—that teachers provided content instruction with little attention to language and that they provided language instruction divorced from content and meaningful contexts. Swain also noted that teachers restricted the amount of input given to students, that students rarely produced extended oral discourse, and that teachers infrequently and inconsistently corrected students’ errors. In addition to recommending that educators remedy these situations, Swain wanted them to be purposeful in their integration of language and content. However, to do this, immersion teachers need to reconceptualize their classrooms as places where students learn versus acquire a language, as Lyster (1987) advocated.

Lyster (2007) echoed Swain’s 1996 findings that teachers did not integrate language instruction in the content areas and instead taught language in decontextualized ways. He lamented that “[o]veremphasizing decontextualized language lessons at the expense of systematically drawing attention to language in the context of subject-matter instruction falls short of tapping the full potential of content-based classrooms” (p. 40). Not only were teachers not integrating language and content, but research left this topic largely unexplored (Fortune, Tedick, & Walker, 2008; Walker & Tedick, 2000). This is generally unsurprising given the variety of content-based instructional models and the persistent idea of immersion as promoting language acquisition versus learning.

Walker and Tedick (2000) lamented that immersion research had focused on the product of immersion (students’ proficiency) but not the process (how educators enacted it). Therefore, they conducted a qualitative study based on focus group meetings and interviews of six elementary immersion teachers, a sample evenly divided between upper and lower elementary and between native English and native Spanish speakers. The teachers identified issues they faced, and all addressed the importance of systematically focusing instruction on the second language. However, while teachers demonstrated verbal understanding of this, Walker and Tedick did not observe classrooms to see if teachers practiced their beliefs. Fortune et al.’s (2008) multiple case study addressed this omission. They interviewed five U.S. Spanish immersion teachers, videotaped four classroom lessons, analyzed teachers’ reflections of the lessons, and conducted a final focus group meeting to probe teachers’ understandings and guiding beliefs of integrating language and content. While the teachers thought they always taught language, an evaluation of their videotaped lessons showed the contrary.

Cammarata and Tedick’s (2012) phenomenological study of three immersion teachers at elementary, middle, and high schools noted that these educators saw themselves as both language and content teachers. However, the authors observed the persistence of the idea of immersion as a “two-for-one” model because these teachers still saw language instruction as an add-on. They lamented how their colleagues did not understand the extra work they did—that they taught the same content information but with an additional language focus, which made it hard to keep pace with their non-immersion colleagues. It also led to feelings of isolation.
From these conclusions and other observations, researchers have stressed the need to integrate language and content instruction. Swain (1988) explained that even in meaning-focused, communicative contexts like immersion classrooms, students have to attend to form in order to express their intended meaning or understand someone else’s. In an activity manual for immersion math and science teachers, Lorenz and Met (1990) called for language-content integration, stating that “[s]tudents' ability to understand concepts and develop skills is dependent on their skills in the immersion language” (p. 10). Therefore, language and content learning have a synergistic relationship. Met (1999) agreed because she believed students must learn discourse styles to help them be successful in their content learning. They must also increase their communicative range beyond subject-specific dialogues, which helps them develop social language skills not taught or learned through content areas. Therefore, while researchers established that teachers must purposefully address language and content skills, the question remains of how to accomplish this.

Focusing on Form: A Counterbalanced Approach

In order to integrate content and language, Lyster (2007) advocated for what he called a “counterbalanced approach.” This approach moves immersion programs away from solely a meaning-oriented direction toward a more form-oriented direction to balance the two foci. To accomplish this, Lyster advocated that teachers encourage students to “engage with language” so that “language permeates instructional activities across the curriculum” (p. 133). Instruction should integrate both experiential and analytic language activities. Therefore, teachers should not only expose students to language so that students experience and gain meaning from it, but they should also help students analyze the language and focus on its form during content lessons. Teachers should help students notice specific linguistic features and help them pay attention to the linguistic forms they produce. This emphasis on form, in addition to content, enacts Lyster’s counterbalanced approach.

Specifically, Lyster recommended that teachers provide comprehensible input through the subject matter and enhance that input through noticing and awareness tasks. Then students should have opportunities for production that focus on both linguistic practice and content understanding. Finally, teachers and students should participate in meaning negotiation that scaffolds content and language understanding and provides linguistic feedback. Through counterbalanced instruction, neither language nor content learning is sacrificed. However, successful implementation requires that educators not only see themselves as both language and content teachers, but that they also purposefully integrate the two as Swain (1996) advocated—something easier said than done.

Contextualizing the Counterbalanced Approach

The counterbalanced approach and the ideas of language-content integration in immersion education are similar to sheltered instruction in English as a second language (ESL) programs. Echevarria (2010) described sheltered instruction as making subject information understandable while helping students develop English proficiency. She explained that sheltered
instruction is typically associated with learning English, but sheltered instruction techniques, such as those in the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model, can be used in immersion programs too. The SIOP Model has 30 instructional features divided into eight components: Preparation, Building Background, Comprehensible Input, Strategies, Interaction, Practice/Application, Lesson Delivery, and Review/Assessment (Short, 2013). However, in my analysis of the 30 features, only ten have some relation to developing students’ linguistic competence. The remaining two-thirds involve developing content knowledge. Therefore, even with forms of sheltered instruction, teachers must pay explicit attention to developing linguistic proficiency and not overemphasize content learning. Lyster’s counterbalanced approach is imperative to sheltered instruction as well.

**Applying the Counterbalanced Approach**

Teachers can put the counterbalanced approach into practice through planning the curriculum strategically, making input comprehensible and building students’ linguistic capabilities. To increase students’ linguistic proficiency, teachers can provide more opportunities for output and engage students in content learning at increasingly higher linguistic levels.

**Curricular Planning**

One of the most concrete ways by which teachers can ensure language integration across the curriculum is through writing language objectives for content-area instruction, something also advocated by the SIOP Model (Short, 2013). In Snow, Met, and Genesee’s (1989) oft-cited framework for writing language objectives, the content teacher (the content curriculum expert) works with the second/foreign language teacher (the language curriculum expert), or the single immersion teacher with knowledge of both curricula works by him/herself. Teachers combine their curricular understandings with their knowledge of students’ linguistic needs to create two types of objectives: content-obligatory and content-compatible. Content-obligatory objectives are the vocabulary and linguistic skills necessary for understanding a content lesson. Content-compatible objectives are vocabulary and linguistic skills with which students need additional practice and that naturally fit a specific content topic. For example, in a lesson about landforms and bodies of water, content-obligatory objectives may include knowing the geographic features’ names and knowing comparative and superlative linguistic forms because when describing geographic features’ characteristics, often students compare them—e.g. which one is taller or flatter or which is the biggest or steepest. In that same unit, content-compatible objectives may include practice with gender agreement. For example, in Spanish, speakers use specific forms of adjectives and the word “the” depending on the noun’s gender. Gender agreement is not critical to knowing and describing types of landforms, but it is a difficult skill for native English speakers because English does not use gender distinctions other than “he,” “she,” “him,” and “her.”

The creation of language objectives facilitates Lyster’s (2007) recommendation of including language in activities across subjects. It also takes a proactive approach to language instruction, which Lyster defined as teachers pre-planning instruction to help students notice and
use specific language features. Because students do not normally observe these features on their own, they meet Harley’s (1993) criteria for explicit instruction. Harley recommended teaching second language features that (a) differ in nonobvious or unexpected ways from the first language, (b) occur irregularly or infrequently, or (c) are used infrequently in communicative contexts. For example, immersion classrooms tend to use present tense and commands, so teachers must explicitly focus instruction on other verb tenses. These aforementioned principles can guide educators’ selection of content-compatible language objectives. When selecting specific linguistic features, Harley recommended that teachers spend the most time on features that inhibit second language understanding or that lead to confusion or negative attitudes toward the language learner in his/her communication attempts.

Met (1998) elaborated that teachers could also find content-compatible objectives in the language curriculum, observations of students’ linguistic needs, and content-obligatory language objectives from future lessons. Met (1994) recommended that educators look at their future content plans and find ways to introduce the content-obligatory language and skills earlier in the year as content-compatible objectives. For example, if teachers know students will need to distinguish between rural, suburban, and urban communities for an upcoming social studies unit, teachers can introduce some of this vocabulary in math story problems. The intent is that early instruction and exposure will facilitate and scaffold students’ language learning. Met (1994) also recommended that teachers sequence their language objectives and activities across the unit and year. Educators should try to begin with more hands-on activities to build language and content understandings before attempting more abstract activities and concepts. In addition, teachers should try to save units that require more abstract conceptual understandings and language skills for later in the year when students have increased in proficiency.

**Comprehensible Input**

Another way in which teachers can focus on language is through providing comprehensible input, which Krashen (1981) defined as language that people receive which is largely understandable. He compared comprehensible input to “caretaker speech” or the language people taking care of young children use. Because caretakers use syntactically simple speech, talk about present contexts, focus on communication and meaning-making, and speak more slowly in shorter utterances, children can understand them and acquire their first language. Krashen believed that if comprehensible input contributed to the ease of first language acquisition, it would facilitate second language acquisition.

Comprehensible input is inherent to Lyster’s (2007) counterbalanced instructional approach in that the approach requires teachers to provide comprehensible input of content information and help students notice specific linguistic features of that input. Comprehensible input is also a key component of the SIOP model (Short, 2013) as it is required in the scaffolding of content and language learning. Met’s (1994) article of strategies for second language teachers described how they can make their language and the content information comprehensible through repetition, rephrasing, slowing down their speech, using concrete materials and visuals,
engaging in experiments and demonstrations, and acting out the information. In this way, teachers make abstract information concrete and more easily understood by students. Fortune and Curtain (1997) also cited comprehensible input as a strategy of effective immersion educators. They stressed building conceptual redundancy into lessons to help students understand the information. In addition, they explained how comprehensible input is important in the first years of an immersion program (or I would also argue when introducing new concepts). However, they stated that as students progress, teachers must provide more complex input to help students develop linguistically.

Even though comprehensible input is important, Lyster (1987) argued that people frequently overestimated the amount of comprehensible input actually present in immersion classrooms because often the materials are written for native speakers. Therefore, these materials contain large amounts of “incomprehensible input” as native speakers are more linguistically proficient than immersion students of the same age (p. 704). In light of this, Met (1994) recommended that teachers create their own materials or at least be aware of the linguistic demands and implied cultural knowledge in texts written for native speakers. Lyster (1987) also cited a 1986 article by Swain and Lapkin to show further issues surrounding comprehensible input—that if immersion students’ only second language input comes from their teacher, it is not enough to acquire another language. Therefore, teachers should provide multiple sources of linguistic input about content information, such as videos, readings, and guest speakers, which additionally offer diverse perspectives to push students’ thinking (Stoller & Tedick, 2003).

**Comprehensible Output**

Lyster’s (2007) counterbalanced instructional approach also calls for opportunities for students to produce language for increased content understanding and linguistic practice. Much reasoning behind this comes from Swain’s (1985) comprehensible output hypothesis. Swain stated that students’ struggles to produce native-like speech did not come from a lack of comprehensible input, but rather from a lack of comprehensible output. She explained that comprehensible output is the opportunity to use linguistic skills in meaningful contexts. She found that not only did immersion students lack opportunities to speak/write the second language, but their linguistic abilities were also not pushed or forced to improve. Peers and teachers generally understood students’ meanings even though their language had errors. Therefore, Swain advocated that teachers push students to convey their messages “precisely, coherently, and appropriately” (p. 249). She hypothesized that by using the language, students would move from semantic to syntactic processing, where they paid attention to the form because they had to create meaningful output.

Subsequent research on comprehensible output influenced Fortune and Tedick’s (2007) list of top ten immersion teaching behaviors, which stated that effective teachers talk less and create ways for students to talk more. Met (1994) and Fortune and Curtain (1997) provided multiple strategies to extend students’ output opportunities such as offering wait time, teaching prefabricated chunks of language (such as “I don’t understand” or “How do you say ___”), and
providing students with the same tools that teachers use to make their speech comprehensible such as visuals and concrete materials.

Collaborative activities also provide more opportunities for student output. “Pair and group work not only increases air time for immersion students, it provides repeated opportunities for students to notice, retrieve and generate new language” (Met, 2008, p. 66). As Lorenz and Met (1990) noted, students have more opportunities for output during pair and group work because it is not possible for every student to have one-on-one communication with the teacher. Plus, it also has affective benefits in that the whole class is not paying attention to the student as he/she tries to use the second language.

The SIOP model calls for collaborative groupings (Short, 2013), and Swain (2001) advocated collaborative learning through her description of a study she conducted with Lapkin involving conversational analysis of pairs of middle school French immersion students working on a jigsaw and dictogloss activity, where based on an oral reading of a text at normal speed, students wrote words they heard and created a summary. Swain found that when students worked in pairs and had to produce a final oral/written product, they had many output opportunities, and they focused on linguistic form as they tried to express themselves clearly and accurately. However, Swain cautioned that teachers must be available during collaborative activities for consultation and support and must pay attention to the accuracy of the final project.

**Repeated Practice with Higher Linguistic Demands**

As Swain (1985) noted, not only must the teacher provide opportunities for student output, but they must also push students to expand their language and speak more accurately. Another of Fortune and Tedick’s (2007) top ten immersion teacher behaviors addressed this. They said that teachers should recycle content, but at higher linguistic demands. Therefore, teachers should review the content information in ways that force students to use more sophisticated, challenging linguistic structures and vocabulary.

Stoller and Tedick (2003) provided a framework for revisiting content for different linguistic purposes. They said that students can report on their learning, re-examine information (often with a different learning goal), repeat content using a different linguistic mode (such as moving from a written text to an oral role-play), reformat information using graphic organizers, and review content in preparation for a quiz, presentation, or debate. Often these tasks help students synthesize information while practicing different linguistic skills.

Kong’s (2009) case study of two language-trained and two content-trained teachers in Chinese middle school content-based instruction classrooms supported these ideas. Kong found that when teachers structured their lessons cyclically, offered many opportunities for students to talk, and taught specific linguistic structures (such as cause-effect, if-then, and others), students had more opportunities to practice the content information, had higher quality interactions with the teacher, and used more target language forms. When teacher input and student output opportunities supported in-depth exploration of content information from different perspectives, students developed complex content understandings and used more complex language.
Kong and Hoare’s (2011) analysis of three lessons taught by a Chinese teacher in an English CBI middle school reaffirmed conclusions about the importance of language objectives and engaging students in cognitively challenging content and linguistic work. They observed that the teacher fostered engagement in the lessons by first planning language and content objectives. The teacher also structured the lesson cyclically so that students continually practiced the content information, looked at it from different perspectives, and connected it to previous knowledge—all of which challenged them linguistically and academically. Students were then more engaged in these lessons than when information was common sense and presented as isolated facts with quick initiation-response practice.

**Discussion and Future Research Directions**

The integration of language and content in education is an important topic because of its broad impact. Snow et al. (1989) described how teachers can apply content-obligatory and content-compatible objectives not only to immersion classrooms, but also to classrooms in general education with English language learners, ESL, and foreign language in the elementary school (FLES). This is critical because as stated previously, most classrooms are becoming language-learning classrooms as 22% of United States children speak a language other than English at home (KIDS COUNT Data Center, 2014). Therefore, general education teachers are tasked with helping students learn both content information and English (another language)—the same job as immersion teachers. Teachers use sheltered instruction methods such as SIOP to attain this goal, but like immersion teachers, Short (2002) noted that teachers using SIOP tended to focus on content learning to the detriment of language learning. She lamented that too often ESL teachers have not been trained in the content, and conversely, many content teachers do not have backgrounds in language acquisition. Additionally, many content teachers believe their job is to teach content, not language. Cammarata and Tedick (2012) had similar findings with immersion teachers and subsequently claimed that the fact teachers are licensed based on their content specializations leads educators to see themselves as content teachers, not as content and language teachers.

All students are learning how to use a language more proficiently, whether it is their first, second, or fifth language. That is why students in the United States, regardless of their first language, take English classes through high school. Students are also learning the language of the various subjects, so every teacher needs to see themselves as a language teacher and a content teacher, and this should affect how institutions prepare teachers.

Tedick and Cammarata (2012) completed a literature review of ten years of research concerning the integration of language and content in preschool through twelfth grade immersion/content-based language classrooms. They cited studies of student outcomes, teacher-student interaction patterns, and teachers’ perspectives on implementing content-based language instruction, but they found no studies describing the actual integration of language and content in immersion classrooms. However, there have been some studies into the effectiveness of SIOP in ESL contexts (e.g. Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006). While there needs to be more research
into the pragmatics of language-content integration in immersion contexts, more research needs to bridge ESL and immersion programs.

In light of the increasing amounts of United States students who are multilingual (KIDS COUNT Data Center, 2014) and multilingualism’s benefits to individuals and the nation (such as economic and national security benefits) (García, 2009), it is important for researchers and educators to address how to foster multilingual proficiency. Additionally, each discipline has its own way of communicating ideas, its own discourse, its own language, which students need to learn. Therefore, more work needs to be done on how to emphasize and develop linguistic proficiency within the content areas. Furthermore, additional research needs to address how conclusions from ESL research can apply to immersion and how conclusions from immersion can apply to ESL. Finally, there needs to be more investigation into how to help teachers become both content and language instructors. These areas are vital in order to educate a society fluent in the disciplines and in the ways in which to communicate that information to a larger audience.

References


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L: How did you first become interested in the field and become an applied linguist?

J: That’s an excellent question. I originally started my undergrad being interested in pre-medicine at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), but prior to that I think I had always been interested in travelling abroad. At that point of my life, I lived in a city that did not provide a lot of opportunities to get exposed to a lot of people and languages but discovered the AFS (American Field Service) program and started meeting people from all around the world. I realized there were a lot of opportunities for study abroad, and I went and lived in Colombia for a year with a Rotary International program. That is when I became interested in language and became fluent in Spanish. When I went to UIUC, I started off taking a lot of pre-med courses and
math courses but just gradually took more language courses that focused more on literature because I was not really aware of many other options for content when studying language. During my first year of graduate work, I took a language teaching methodology course, and that was when I discovered other options for someone who really loves language. That was a really pivotal point for me. It was when I got to know the field of second language acquisition and applied linguistics. I went to San Diego after taking this course. I lived there for five years and worked at a private English language school and then decided to go back to grad school to study SLA. I went to UIUC and never looked back.

L: That was fascinating! What motivated your particular interest in lexical input processing research and Input-based Incremental Vocabulary Instruction?

J: I went to the program at UIUC; my dissertation director was Bill Van Patten. I have always been interested in input processing. Most of IP research has focused on sentence-level input processing for the acquisition of different types of morphosyntactic structures, but I have always been interested in vocabulary and particularly how it is the place where form meets meaning at a very basic level. I have always been drawn to getting at the basic of nuts and bolts of what language acquisition is about and how it relates to human memory/learning in general. You can really address these issues at the lexical level. People who were doing research on vocabulary at that time when I began focusing on vocabulary were not doing so from an input-processing perspective, so there was a general need and a lot of interesting questions to be explored.

L: Could you briefly describe some recent research projects that you have conducted or supervised?

J: There are several. One of them is the one I talked about earlier today (in the talk I gave for the symposium). That study, which I collaborated on with Shusaku Kida (he carried out the actual study), isolated the mapping component of vocabulary learning... This study involved homographs. L1 Japanese speakers learned L2 English “secondary meanings” of words. They were not necessarily “secondary” in any strict sense, but they were meanings that the learners had not previously acquired with regard to the L2 word forms in question. For example, “foot” on your leg versus “foot” the bill. So, even though they already knew the word form “foot” and its L2 meaning as “foot on your leg” and the meaning of “foot the bill” in Japanese, they had not learned to map the word form “foot” to the “foot the bill” meaning prior to the study. In this way we isolated the mapping component of vocabulary meaning, giving us an opportunity to test the predictions of the TOPRA (Type of Processing – Resource Allocation) model from a new angle. It is a study that I really like, not only because of the predictions that it allowed us to test but also because of how it advances a novel technique designed to isolate the mapping component of vocabulary learning.
L: Have you experienced any difficulties in applying some theoretical findings obtained from experimental settings to authentic teaching or learning contexts?

J: One thing is applying them yourself; another thing is providing them to other people in hopes that they will rethink some of the ideas that they currently hold about vocabulary learning and teaching. You know the sentence-writing task I talked about and other tasks like the word-copying task. The findings of studies on these tasks were counter-intuitive to a lot of people, but I have always tried to emphasize that the nice thing about research is that it allows us to rethink what may at first be counter-intuitive and allow it to become more intuitive. It can be challenging at times, you know. When I studied input processing in the 90s, it did not occur to me how critical it is to distinguish between word form and word meaning until I started doing research on the effects of sentence writing. It was that research that shaped my ideas in this area and led to the development of the TOPRA model. So it’s important for both researchers and teachers to be open, to embrace the counterintuitive when research indicates that it is appropriate to do so instead of resisting it.

L: As a professor and program supervisor, what advice can you give for Ph.D students to be good researchers in this field?

J: Get all of the proper training that you need while you are still completing course work. Take advantage of the years that you have in graduate school. Take whatever courses you need because once you are out, it may become more difficult for you to update your research methodologies. In particular, with regard to the different instruments that we use in SLA research, these change over time, so try to equip yourself with a good range of both well established and recently developed research tools. Certainly after you graduate you can and should still continue to educate yourself regarding new research instruments and methodologies, but I think it’s important to try to do as much as possible on this front while you are in graduate school.

L: Finally, what advice do you have for second language researchers, especially for those who are interested in quantitative research?

J: Go to it! (Laugh) Be open to learning from data as opposed to trying to view data in a way that might meet your current expectations and keep up with the new instruments in the field.
Interview with Patricia Duff

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Patricia (Patsy) Duff is a Professor and Distinguished University Scholar at the Department of Language & Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia. Her main research interests are related to language socialization across bilingual and multilingual settings; qualitative research methods in applied linguistics (especially case study and ethnography); issues in the teaching and learning of English, Mandarin, and other international languages; and sociocultural, sociolinguistic, and sociopolitical aspects of language(s) in education. She gave a keynote address at the 2015 Second Language Studies Symposium entitled *Examining Agency and Self-directed Socialization in Second Language Research*. For more information about Dr. Duff, please visit her website: [http://faculty.educ.ubc.ca/pduff/](http://faculty.educ.ubc.ca/pduff/)

**O: Would you mind telling me how you developed your interest in second language research?**

**P:** I did my Bachelor’s degree in Linguistics in Canada and one of the courses in that program was Applied Linguistics for Teachers and through that…that was the beginning of my career, further education in second language work and in- with teaching and researching and doing teacher education but I had been interested in other languages from an early age so it was building on my existing interest but then taking it professionally and to higher education.

**O:** How did you become interested in foreign languages? Was it the influence of your teachers, your parents, or… How did that happen?

**P:** Well, Canada is officially a bilingual country: English and French. So, most of us, English speakers, learn French from an early age depending on the time. My parents put me into French pretty early but that was before we had French immersion programs, the kind that are very popular right now. So, it wasn’t because my parents were particularly good at languages but my father had spent time traveling especially during the war in Europe and he really had an interest in language. He had no opportunity really to study languages formally but he certainly conveyed to me an interest in languages, and cultures, and travel, and [in] other people in parts of the world. So I think it came from there and as I said because Canada is officially bilingual so we need to learn French and then I got to know people who spoke Spanish so I wanted to learn Spanish and then subsequently other languages. So it started fairly organically but also because of our Canadian policy context.
O: You said you do a lot of work with the Chinese language and Chinese speakers. How did that interest evolve?

P: I first started learning Chinese when I was in my 20s because I was living and working in China. And one of the reasons I was there in China was because I wanted to learn Chinese. I had already learned some Korean and Japanese, which use Chinese characters, and there are some cognates and things but I had a longstanding interest in Chinese. As far as researching Chinese I had done some work looking at grammatical aspects, literally aspects of Chinese such as the perfective forms and other kinds of things and how they’re acquired by English language learners; issues of transfer, issues of salience and other kinds of things. But more recently I have been involved in other kinds of research looking at Chinese agency, identity, community and so on and other aspects of learning Chinese vocabulary and such. And then I became the director of a research center related to Chinese, so then I needed to be doing more with Chinese. So it’s partly out of personal interest, past history and then it being a pretty new area relative to English, or French, or Spanish applied linguistics that has needed more work and more exploration, more innovation I think.

O: Do you have an ongoing project right now?

P: With Chinese language learning not really, not myself, my doctoral students do and my MA student does. With Chinese learning at present we have still data from the book project that we haven’t analyzed, we have things to do with. But right now I’ve been looking at media discourses about the teaching/learning of Chinese and how that has the potential to influence policy makers, teachers, parents, and potential learners of Chinese. So, looking at how learning of Chinese is depicted in the media and how the average reader or viewer of media might then interpret the trends related to Chinese positively or negatively. We call that “hope, hype, and fear.” Other projects I’m involved in currently are more book-length projects. I just finished editing a book on English grammar and education that was for Routledge and am working on a book on ethnography, working on a new edition of my language socialization volume which I mentioned earlier. So, those are things I’m working on as opposed to doing studies right now. I have a lot of data that I haven’t looked at from other studies but I need to get some of these bigger projects out of the way before I can come back to these things.

O: So, you have a number of publications on case study research. Why is it a good design? What is the value in case studies?

P: Thanks for that question because I really do find case study research interesting personally. I also find that teachers can relate very well to it when they read cases of learners or of teachers because it’s very concrete, there’s a human side to the learning experience or teaching experience. I think there’s a trend in any event toward problem-based learning or case-based teaching and learning across many professions and schools, whether it’s medicine or nursing or business or other schools and education, too, that cases become exemplars that we can use to
understand a phenomenon. This might seem to be unrelated but I don’t think it is. If you think of Academy Awards nominees this year, most of them were about an individual: Stephen Hawking, Alan Turing and other individuals, The Sniper and others. They garnered a lot of attention and what is it? We know that cases aren’t generalizable but we still can gain insights from others’ unique experiences to understand a time and a place, a physical condition or a psychological condition and then the social policies, the laws, the macro context in which things occur. It is the same with language learning: understanding an individual’s or several individuals’ experiences of being test-takers or language learners or users of a language in a particular context I think really helps us see the process or the outcomes up close in a way that’s not always apparent with more quantitative or other sorts of approaches to the work. Having the human profile foregrounded and seen in a somewhat holistic manner I think is quite helpful. It doesn’t allow you to do everything; it can be instructive for certain kinds of studies but maybe not so much for others. It’s been quite helpful in SLA traditionally in cases of exceptionality, particularly talented learners or particularly untalented learners. There are, for example, hyperpolyglots, people who have an incredible capacity to learn, and drive to learn many-many languages, and then others who have a very difficult time even mastering the basics of another language despite the fact that they need that language in their everyday lives for their survival and their well-being. So, these exceptional experiences and challenges or opportunities have shed a lot of light on typicality. So, I think those are some of the reasons I like to do it and many of my students do it. But it’s also I think because of two other reasons: one is I’m in a Faculty of Education and there is a great emphasis on the learner, maybe more so than there would be in some other fields like psychology, although much of what we know about learning started in individual case studies in psychology or in biology and other fields, so it’s not that that hasn’t played a role in those areas but there’s a tendency to look for large sample sizes and generality rather than particularities, uniqueness in individuals. So, I guess that’s one of the factors there.

There is a very interesting chapter in the Handbook of Qualitative Research edited by Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, by Bent Flyvbjerg. He is now at Oxford. It is about case study research and he really takes to task those people who always come up with the argument that case study research is not generalizable because he claims, and others would agree, that it’s from exemplars that most of our learning really takes place. Exemplars are very important, prototypes are very important for our understanding processes and again it’s not to say that everyone acts in a certain way, in the way that we’ve observed in an individual or a small number of individuals, but it really helps us see the interaction of variables, of factors, influences, conditions of an individual in a social context. He has some very good arguments against the generalizability critique of case study research which are quite compelling.

O: What advice can you give to novice qualitative researchers?

P: Well, I think one can be told about qualitative research only so much and then you really need to try to do it. You need to know the principles and best practices but then it really helps a lot to be doing a pilot study or some other study and then try to make those decisions: how many cases,
one, four, six – how many is too many? How many is too few? How do I sample: for homogeneity or heterogeneity; for extreme cases or typical cases; or just convenience cases, whoever signs up, and whoever is available? So, all of those decisions are very abstract until you are actually presented with choices yourself that you need to make and then there is really no one answer. So, it’s a matter of saying “well, if I do this, if I select only students from one language background or cultural background, for instance, I’ll have one kind of experience which may be quite similar across those learners, maybe not. But then by sampling more heterogeneously I might have a range of different kinds of experiences and different orthographic traditions, and so on, that might also be interesting. And then gender, do I sample for gender, or for age, or for level, proficiency?” So all of those things, there’s no one right answer, it depends a lot on the questions one asks but it’s trying to come up with a rationale but it also depends on who volunteers. So, you might have a plan and those people don’t volunteer so then you think what would make sense, and how do I justify the choices I’ve made, and how do I also respond to questions like “Well, you only have men in the sample. What might be some of the implications for female readers? Or vice versa. And can you speculate on that?” Or you can’t. So there are many different things that one really gets to grapple with when dealing with an actual study. Apart from that, I think the other very helpful thing is reading other interesting studies using the kind of approach that you’re interested in to see what kinds of reports of those studies are, for you, quite helpful, quite engaging, quite compelling, quite convincing, and so that helps you think about how you might communicate your results to other readers based on your own experience as a reader of others’ work. So I think that helps to read a lot. In my doctoral seminar right now I’m having students read doctoral dissertations in the area they’re interested in, which ranges widely in our department from theater education to first language literacy education, and applied linguistics is in there too. But to read within the area and to see what have been some recent studies, ideally those studies that have been vetted and deemed very good studies, and read several of them and see what appeals to you, what’s convincing, what’s not so convincing, I think that’s very helpful. And of course methods books as kind of providing guidelines and direction but a lot of it is [a] ‘you learn on the job’ kind of thing.

O: Thank you so much for your time.

P: Oh, you’re welcome

References


Interview with Dr. Dana Ferris

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Dana Ferris is a Professor of and the Associate Director for Second Language Writing at University of California, Davis. Her research over the last twenty years has focused on response to student writing and on written corrective feedback in second language writing. Her work has been published in a range of journals including *Across the Disciplines*, *Assessing Writing, CATESOL Journal, College English, Journal of Second Language Writing, Language Teaching, Research in the Teaching of English, Studies in Second Language Acquisition, TESOL Journal, TESOL Quarterly*, and *Writing and Pedagogy*. She is the Editor in Chief of the newly launched *Journal of Response to Writing*. The interview was conducted on March 23, 2015 at the AAAL conference in Toronto, Canada after Dr. Ferris’s presentation on *Questioning Writing Placement Examinations: What if L2 Writers Could Really Self-Place?* For more information about Dr. Ferris, please visit her website: [http://writing.ucdavis.edu/faculty-staff/directory/drferris](http://writing.ucdavis.edu/faculty-staff/directory/drferris)

C: How did you first become interested in the field and become an applied linguist?

D: It was a long time ago. I had just gotten out of my undergraduate degree, which was in English literature and creative writing, and wanted to do graduate work and wanted to pursue teaching, but wasn’t interested in doing that in literature. I always enjoyed studying foreign languages and this was back in the 80’s when TESOL was still a pretty new thing but I had a friend who had done a TESOL certificate. I had heard it from her so I got into a MA TESOL program near where I lived and started pursuing that graduate degree. And I was teaching and tutoring while I was in the graduate program. I loved it instantly, loved the students. I got interested in it from a theoretical research perspective too. After I finished the master’s, I taught ESL in the community for a year and then I applied to a PhD program in applied linguistics and went from there. And that’s how that started for me. When I was in my MA TESOL program, it was interesting, almost everyone in my program except for me had already taught abroad and now were coming back to get training. Whereas I knew nothing about the field and had never taught so it was really a different frame of reference than a lot of my classmates. I felt like I was an imposter and pretending to know what I was talking about.
C: What motivated your particular interest in written corrective feedback research?

D: That goes back a while. All along my interests in TESOL have intersected with teaching writing my entire career. I was trained and started teaching in the 80’s which was very much about the process approach and Krashen: you don’t need to correct, you don’t need to teach grammar, you need to just give students a lot of natural experiences and they will figure it out. So I’m teaching and I’m finding that students weren’t figuring it out all by themselves without any help. I was teaching in programs where they would have an exit essay exam and they were failing it. A lot of the times they were failing it because of grammar. And I thought, this just isn’t matching up for me. The theory and the way I was trained in saying don’t correct, don’t teach language explicitly, just give them a nurturing, supportive, stimulating environment and it will come. It wasn’t coming and it was hurting the students. So again, from a practical standpoint I wanted to try to figure out how can I help students to be more successful in building their accuracy and linguistic repertoire, so they can pass their exams and do better in their other classes so that lead to me wanted to do some research. So I developed some classroom techniques which seemed to work pretty well. I thought maybe I’d better do some research to see what’s going on so I designed a series of research projects that I got into over the next ten years or so. A few years into developing some classroom materials and started researching them was when the big controversial article by Truscott (1996) came out and I remember one of my colleagues handing it to me going “See what you think about this.” I would tell other teachers in the program here is this guy who says you shouldn’t correct grammar at all and they would react like I punched them in the stomach. I thought that this is an important issue and controversial and we need to keep looking at it. We need answers. The students need help with this or it is going to cause problems for them sooner or later but you don’t want to waste your time and energy and stress out the students by approaching it the wrong way either. My lived experiences were not matching up with how I had been trained, so that lead me to first develop some pedagogical approaches and then research the whole phenomenon to see what was working, and what made it not work, and what makes it work better. That was twenty years ago now that I started working on that as a researcher and as a teacher even earlier than that.

C: Are you doing any current research on written corrective feedback or have you progressed on from there?

D: That’s an interesting question. One of my students, Kendon Kurzer, and I are investigating a pedagogical approach that we have in our multilingual writing series called dynamic written corrective feedback. It’s a particular technique for working with students’ language errors and giving them corrective feedback. We have been using it at our program at Davis for a couple of years. We wanted to do some research on how that particular technique is working. He is doing most of the work and I am just consulting on it. Other than that, I published a couple of books a
few years ago, my second edition of my *Treatment of Error* book. And I have a more theoretical book with John Bitchener on written corrective feedback. After we published that and I published a study in *Journal of Second Language Writing* in 2013 which was a multiple case study on how the students felt about corrective feedback, I kind of came to a point where I thought that I have done a lot with this and there are other things I want to look at. I’m not sure how much more primary research I’m going to do on this topic. Never say never. I feel like I’ve done a lot of work on this and now other people are doing it now. I don’t have to be the one. And I am interested in a lot of other things too.

C: Can you talk a little more about dynamic written corrective feedback (DWCF)?

D: That’s a technique that was developed by a couple of professors at Brigham Young University and they have published several pieces on it. It’s where you have students write regularly in class, a little short timed writing, maybe ten minutes, and give them some kind of prompt. It could be either a generic everyday kind of a prompt or it could be something related to what you are doing in class. You have them write for ten minutes, like a paragraph, and then go through it immediately, like overnight before the next class, and code their errors. You have a set of codes and return it and ask them to correct those errors. You go back and forth with them a couple of times until they get three errors or fewer and then you move on to the next one. Then you chart their errors as you go along and you do a bunch of them. The thing that it does is it allows you to work in a small, bite-sized way of issues, small, individualized, frequent. They get a lot more feedback than they would from a paper that is due every few weeks. You give them some feedback about their errors. And because it is small and short, they can do a class set of papers and code them under an hour, maybe half an hour. So you get a building sense, as the teacher, of what each individual student is making progress on or struggling with and the students themselves get really focused, consistent feedback about what they are learning and making progress in. It doesn’t substitute for learning to edit and deal with issues in a longer and more complex paper, but I think it provides a little something extra that you can’t get in more a longer more drawn out writing session. If you are going to spend class time on something, I’d rather do that than “ok here’s today’s grammar point and here is your worksheet” because we often know that students don’t know how to apply it to their own writing. So these are their own writing samples that they generated, so this is about their writing. And it’s a little artificial because it’s just ten minutes but I just observed a class last week where the teacher spent the whole time on sentence boundaries and afterwards I asked, “Do your students have a lot of problems with this?” She said, “No, not really. Maybe two or three of the students do but the rest of them once in a blue moon.” I said, “Why in the world would you spend all this class time on something that they are not having a problem with.” She said, “Well, they told me they wanted more grammar and this was a good thing so I taught them.” It was a two hour lesson on sentence boundaries and way too often teachers think their students have problems with grammar and then they think “I’d better teach more grammar.” The grammar really needs to be targeted. DWCF
actually helps everyone get individual feedback. I’d rather spend ten minutes of class having them writing and correct than wasting it on two hours of sentence boundaries.

C: What suggestions do you have for teachers to make written corrective feedback more effective?

D: It needs to be focused on individual students needs at a particular point and time as opposed to “I’m only going to correct this feature for everybody”. What if everybody doesn’t make the same kind of error? It really needs to be individualized and adaptive in the sense that as students make progress in one area you start focusing on something else so I absolutely think it is critical that students be allowed or required to revise, correct, apply feedback on a particular paper. I think you are kind of wasting your time if you give students error feedback and say next time you write a paper, remember that. Have them sit down, whether or not you actually have time make the corrections, or just do a chart, or a reflective analysis, something where you are requiring them to engage with the feedback and grapple with that. I think that is absolutely critical. I very much believe in focused feedback, meaning specific error patterns and not too much of it at any given time. If you just take a paper and write all over it students can’t see any rhyme or reason or pattern to it, again it is overwhelming and I’m not sure how much they can get out of it. But if you mark three or four error patterns and then give them a little note at the end saying here’s what I marked then you are giving them something to go on that is manageable enough for them to learn something from it and apply it in the future. I think some sort of explanation of errors [is important], whether it’s a little rule reminder in the margins or an opportunity for a conference with a teacher. By only marking things and hoping they figure it out, you can miss a lot of opportunities. Students do need a little bit of metalinguistic explanation.

C: Can you talk a little bit about the new Journal of Response to Writing that you are editor of? What are its scopes and aims?

D: It is intended to be a broad look at response. It is not just for L2 audiences, it is for response in general L1 and L2. It is certainly not just on corrective feedback. It is anything to do with response: writing centers, how faculty in the disciplines give feedback, how graduate advisers give feedback, teacher commentary on content, not just language, peer review, so anything that involves writers getting feedback. We are also doing research articles and teaching articles so if teachers want to write an article where they are describing an approach or a program but we also are accepting primary research articles both qualitative and quantitative or mixed methods because we want to be a kind of big tent. So the idea is to have a place where people who are interested in response as a kind of pedagogical focus and/or as a research focus can kind of come both to submit their own work and to view what has been published and to read new stuff. There
are a lot of journals on writing that publish work on response, but it can be a little scattered and then they have to compete with space on all the other topics on writing. I think response is an incredibly important part of teaching writing, and maybe the most important part, and we need more research on it. We need to be able to share more ideas on it. It is so important to students’ learning and it’s so time consuming and energy consuming for teachers that there is kind of an imperative that we investigate it and share ideas. Hopefully the journal will provide a way to do that.

References


Interview with Dr. Keith Folse

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Dr. Folse is Professor in Modern Languages and Literatures at University of Central Florida. He earned his M.A. in TESOL at University of Southern Mississippi and his Ph.D. in TESOL, Second Language Acquisition & Instructional Technology from University of South Florida. His research interests include ESL grammar, second language vocabulary acquisition, teacher training and best teaching practices. He has authored 55 books on reading, vocabulary, writing, grammar, speaking and listening. Dr. Folse delivered a keynote speech at the 2015 National Geographic Learning Symposium titled Grammar and the Four Skills: Exploration and Integration. For more information about Dr. Folse please visit his personal website: http://www.keithfolse.com/

M: You’ve taught all over the world. What first got you interested in teaching ESL/EFL?

K: I was a French major. I was going to teach French. I wanted to teach. That’s why I went to college. In my second semester at the university, I had a roommate from high school who moved out of the dorm, and they moved in a student from Ecuador, who was studying something called ESL, which I had never heard of. And I kept asking him, “What are you majoring in?” And he said, “ESL.” But I had no clue what that meant. But that’s how I got into it [teaching ESL/EFL]…I got into it through French.

M: What are some of the biggest challenges you’ve had with teaching over the years?

K: Well the one that comes to mind immediately was teaching at the University of South Florida. We had a group of German students one summer…and they were high school students, which meant that they were about 15 or 16 years old. Learner needs run the show. Well, I didn’t fully understand what the learner needs were. They [the German students] had English classes in the morning and then they did activities in the afternoon. The thing was, I didn’t know that they weren’t really trying to learn English. The goal was for them to have fun in English. I went to a forum and wrote, “I’ve never taught high school students from Germany.” I didn’t know what to do with these students so I posted, and the best answer that I got back right away was, “It’s not that they’re German. It’s that they’re in high school, and they’re 16 years old, and they’re on this kind of trip, and they’re in Florida. So here’s what we did: the next day, we played games that required you to say something in English…charades for example. Once we started doing those
kinds of things, it was a joy. Total turnaround. It’s an example of no matter how long you’ve taught, the best teacher figures out what cards they’ve been dealt. What is the best hand you can play given these cards? Why are they here? What are their needs? How much time do you have? Once I accepted the fact that sitting here and doing something with a native speaker of English in class for three hours…as long as there’s English being produced, it was fine.

M: How did you get involved in textbook writing?

K: Unlike the rest of my colleagues in third grade, I was really weird. I used to analyze the worksheets. I remember thinking, “This is not how you set up true/false questions…or this is not how you do matching.” I remember taking old manila folders the teacher had tossed out, go home and clean them up, and write rate builders. And that’s how I was so good in school in passing standardized tests, because I could anticipate the questions, because in my head and on paper, even in the sixth grade, I had written these questions. I know how to write, “both a and b,” or “none of the above.” I had done those myself.

In the first grad course at University of Southern Mississippi, we had to do a project. And my project was looking at a book that had been written in the audiolingual method, and I wrote a bunch of exercises to go with the first ten chapters of this book. I submitted my paper and when everybody else got their projects back, mine just had a piece of paper that said, “See me.” So I went to go see her [the professor] and she said, “We have to go get a letter to the editor forthwith.” She was talking about publishing these [exercises] into a textbook, and I had no clue. So my first book was *English Structure Practices*, University of Michigan Press (1983), and that was a workbook…now I’m up to number 61 or 62. I love writing textbook materials. That was my big research area in my dissertation…the other was on vocabulary activities.

M: What type of research are you doing now?

K: I’m more into corpus linguistics now. So within the exercises and within the lessons, in every book I write now, no sentence appears at random. If I need an example of present progressive…I need four examples…I don’t just write four things that pop into my head. I go search corpus linguistics and find out, “Well, what are the top four verbs that would occur in that verb tense?” I use COCA, and also do things like going through the Academic Word List. In a series I did with University of Michigan Press called *Clear Grammar*, almost every chapter has a vocabulary box in there. And it’s not words that appear in the story; it’s words that are 100% connected to that grammar point.
M: If you had any recommendations or advice for new teachers entering the ESL/EFL field, what would they be?

K: I think you would be very wise to go watch and observe as many teachers as you can. I don’t mean two or three; I mean spend time at a school and visit different teachers. I was lucky when I first started teaching; the place I taught in used audiolingual, and I’m happy that I actually got to see that method used a lot. I did student teaching, and my first three weeks was just watching classes. And you had to have a question that you reported back to your mentor teacher on. And the question that I had was, “How do you start the class?” So at the beginning of the class, the bell rings and now it’s 10:00. No one says—I hope—“open your book to page 45. Let’s do present perfect.” But there’s this little chit-chat thing, like, “Where’s Maria? Has anyone seen Maria?” And I didn’t know how to do that. I was at a loss. I had everything planned; I had written everything out. I really wanted to know when I watched these classes how people started the class. Another thing is that you really need to know something about the language of the students that you’re teaching. You don’t need to be fluent. For example, you should know if their language has articles or not. You should know about verb tense…if it has tenses or not. And if it does, does it come close to having our twelve verb tenses? The third thing is you have to know your own language very well. And you have to know much, much more than you’re ever going to teach. Never confuse what you know in your head with what you should turn and say to a student. That’s a skill.

References
Textbook Review: *Grammar and Beyond, 3*

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As recent years have brought with them a post-method pedagogy in language teaching where educators are recognizing the need to create a more holistic and context-driven approach to teaching a language in a given environment, so too has the need for a more communicative language teaching approach arisen where learners acquire productivity in the target language to communicate effectively, rather than simply gaining theoretical and abstract knowledge of the language (Duff, 2014; Kumaravadivelu, 2001). While Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), with information exchange, group work, and negotiation of meaning is not a mutually exclusive concept with explicit grammar teaching, teaching grammar in a communicative way, where students move beyond forms and begin to explore and experiment with meaning and use, often proves challenging and does not appear in all of textbooks or classrooms (Larsen-Freeman, 2014). *Grammar and Beyond, 3* takes on this challenge and claims to present grammar in a communicative, corpus-based way without eliminating explicit grammar instruction. In doing so, it presents grammatical forms in a contextualized way that facilitates communicative tasks, rather than simply isolated focus on form occurrences (Ellis, 2006). To make it even more applicable to students, the book uses a corpus-based approach to expose students to real world uses of the forms and then engages them in “grammaring” to create productions with the grammar that incorporates structure, semantics, and pragmatics (Larsen-Freeman, 2014).

**Overview**

The *Grammar and Beyond* series through Cambridge University Press (2012-2014) offers grammar learning materials to English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) language learners through four levels of difficulty, ranging from beginning to advanced learners, and all have accompanying student and teacher resources (Blass, Iannuzzi, Savage, & Reppen, 2012). In this particular review, I will be focusing my attention on the *Grammar and Beyond 3, Student’s Book* for intermediate high students with the Test of English as a Foreign Language Internet-based Test (TOEFL iBT) scores between 55 and 74 and the Common European Framework of Reference Levels (CEFR) from B1 to B2. While it does contain many additional resources that make it suitable for a classroom environment, the authors explain that the book can also be used as a “self-study learning tool” (p. ix).

**Format.** Each unit of *Grammar and Beyond, 3* begins with a ‘Grammar in the Real World’ activity where students are asked to notice specific grammatical forms and their uses from a text prior to an explicit explanation of such forms. For example, students may read an
article on shopping addiction that uses several adverb clauses and will be asked whether given clauses “introduce contrasting ideas” or “give a reason” (Blass et al., 2012, p. 366-367). Following this contextualization, the grammar is presented in a chart defining its varying uses and forms, after which students are asked to apply it in a variety of activities such as combining sentences and filling in blanks. This enables students to have learned rules inductively before moving on to a more deductive approach (Ellis, 2006). Each unit also includes group work activities and discussions. Units are front-loaded with the most common forms of that grammatical structure, with less common forms introduced after students have already been asked to apply the initial concepts. There were instances in later sections of some chapters that may be possible to skip or generalize, as they began to enter too complex of detail for what seemed helpful to a class at the intermediate level.

The multitude of language learning activities throughout each unit that reflect the themes while applying the grammar in different ways engage students by varying task-types and addressing all four language skills. For example, ‘Unit 21, Subject Relative Clauses’ asks students to read a passage to answer questions, and then listen to an article to fill in the blanks of sentences, and later to work with a partner, and finally ends with a writing task using subject relative clauses. All together, these activities create varied and cohesive units that allow students to practice the grammar forms while also effectively honing all four skills in a contextualized and meaningful manner (Duff, 2014).

Evaluation of Claims

Usability

The authors of Grammar and Beyond, 3 claim to present “clear and simple charts” of grammar concepts throughout each chapter that identify grammar forms, their syntactic requirements, and examples (Blass et al., 2012, p. x). While this claim is substantiated because these charts do provide clear information about given grammar points, they seem to assume that students are already acquainted with such forms prior to using this book. It is true that Level 3 is intended for high intermediate language learners, who presumably should already have been introduced to these forms (Ellis, 2006), but the language used to explain the nuances of some of these grammatical structures and their definitions may be difficult for some students to decipher independently. The metalinguistic terminology and sometimes only subtle nuances in the different explanation between different forms often require close scrutiny to decipher, which is something that can prove difficult for intermediate language learners.

That being said, the authors present these charts detailing the given grammar topics in a rational order throughout the chapter and provide all of the essential information in an organized manner, thereby indicating that many grammatical nuances are simply difficult to present to learners. Simply put, the authors do a primarily successful job of outlining complex grammar points in a logical way, and the shortcomings of this book that are described are relatively small in comparison to its highlights. This does, however, make this book’s claim to be an optional “self-study learning tool” somewhat more difficult and encourages its use within a classroom context with a teacher, instead (p. ix).
Corpus-based research

Randi Reppen, a leading researcher in corpora use in language teaching, is the corpus consultant for Grammar and Beyond, 3 (Reppen, 2010). Her expertise, coupled with the reliance on the Cambridge English Corpus, lends credibility to the series and indicates the reliability of the textbook and its associated components. Drawing on a multi-billion word corpus as a basis for organization and the creation of the entire textbook, its grammatical explanations, and its communicative activities sets students up for success by using authentic materials to present the three dimension of grammar (Cambridge University Press, 2014; Larsen-Freeman, 2014). The ‘Data from the Real World’ sections illustrate this clearly. Particularly in an EFL context, where access to authentic material is more limited, this is a valuable tool in helping students speak and write in a more target-like manner.

Curricular considerations

While Grammar and Beyond, 3 incorporates all four skills in each unit, it is first and foremost, a grammar book, which will affect its potential fit within a curriculum (Bryd & Schuemann, 2014). The book itself provides plenty of grammatical instruction and a variety of applications, but it provides very little explicit instruction in regards to the four major language skills. Even though the book does explain that it emphasizes grammar present in academic writing, it does not, nor does it claim to, actually teach many specific writing skills beyond the grammatical forms that they highlight for that context. For this reason, the book may best function as a supplement to an ESL or EFL course and could easily complement grammatical units presented in reading or writing books. If, however, it were to be used in a grammar-only course, this book would work very will with little additional supplementation necessary. It does still have some related resources that could add to its versatility.

Reflection

Grammar and Beyond, 3 and its related resources offer a wide-ranging approach to grammar that accentuates real-world applications and touches on all four language skills. This textbook can easily serve as a main textbook for a grammar course, be incorporated into a high intermediate ESL or EFL classroom, particularly in a writing classroom, or serve as a self-study tool or reference for students. Its corpus-based, three-dimensional framework approach demonstrates a clear pedagogical process of presentation and learning that can help keep students engaged with its wide variety of tasks and themes. The themes that enable students to contextualize their communication and the use of real-world data from a multibillion word corpus to authenticate the productions really underscore the communicative nature of this textbook and how the authors meet their expressed goals. Considering the plethora of challenges to a textbook that can contextualize grammar, make it meaningful and approachable to students, and still provide implicit and explicit exercises to engage students in communicative tasks, Grammar and Beyond, 3 is a textbook that meets all of these aims and still has the versatility to pull its weight as a grammar course’s main textbook, supplement another course, or simply act a quick reference book to keep nearby.
References