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About the Journal

Founded in 2013, the Journal of Teacher Action Research (ISSN: 2332-2233) is a peer-reviewed online journal indexed with EBSCO that seeks practical research that can be implemented in Pre-Kindergarten through Post-Secondary classrooms. The primary function of this journal is to provide classroom teachers and researchers a means for sharing classroom practices.

The journal accepts articles for peer-review that describe classroom practice which positively impacts student learning. We define teacher action research as teachers (at all levels) studying their practice and/or their students' learning in a methodical way in order to inform classroom practice. Articles submitted to the journal should demonstrate an action research focus with intent to improve the author's practice.

Editorial Team

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A Special Note to JTAR Readers:

It is with mixed feelings that we write this announcement regarding the transition with the JTAR editorial team. The Journal of Teacher Action Research has grown from a simple start in 2013 into a respected international journal. Each year, we have consistently had submissions and publications from outside the United States. To further broaden our international reach as a journal, we have included reviewers from various countries outside the US and it's territories, including Australia, Canada, Philippines, Nepal, Thailand, Finland, Ireland, and Bahrain. Within the US, we have reviewers from across the United States and Puerto Rico, including many Tier 1 universities such as Pennsylvania State University, University of South Florida, California State University, Louisiana State University, University of Delaware, Vanderbilt University, Purdue University, etc..

While we have enjoyed our time as co-Editors, it is time for us to pass the reins to a new team housed at Sam Houston State University.

We would like to sincerely thank our associate editors and Texas A&M Commerce colleagues, Dr. Laura Isbell, Dr. Tami Morton, and Dr. Susan Williams, as well as all who have volunteered their service as reviewers on the Editorial Board, and all JTAR authors and potential authors who have helped the journal get to where it is today. Thanks also to Dr. Chase Young (Production Editor and Webmaster) who will remain in this role and assist his SHSU colleagues.

We are confident JTAR will continue to flourish and grow as we transition to a new editorial team. The new editors will introduce themselves and highlight updates in the next issue.

Be assured that articles previously accepted will remain in the queue for publication as we work through the transition.

We look forward to the continued success of JTAR and are grateful of the opportunity of having served the education profession through our time as co-Editors.

Take Care,

Gil Naizer, Ph.D. & April Sanders, Ph.D.
Co-Editors, the *Journal of Teacher Action Researc*h
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GETTING UP CLOSE AND CULTURAL: THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL SIMULATION ON FLES LEARNER MOTIVATION

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Abstract Individual differences (IDs) play an important role in the second language learning process and explain the varied experiences of the L2 learner. The two major IDs, language aptitude and motivation, can be primary factors in one's ultimate proficiency. While language aptitude is largely fixed, motivation is malleable and can aid in overcoming deficits in one's proficiency level. This action research study explores simulation techniques to gauge its impact on the motivation of 15 Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) students. Simulation and role play have demonstrated to be engaging techniques that enhance the learning experience in the second-language classroom; however, it remains to be seen if these techniques have an impact on L2 motivation in the FLES context, namely in regard to integrative orientation. In this mixed-methods study, FLES learner motivation was surveyed to measure change in integrative motivation and attitude toward L2 learning, the two variables in Gardner's (1985) socio-educational framework of motivation. Using a Likert scale L2 Motivation Survey, a Language Background and Perceptions questionnaire, a semi-structured interview, and instructor field notes, findings were triangulated to form a conclusion surrounding this intervention's effectiveness. Quantitative results are conflicting: raw descriptive statistics show a promising correlation; however, they are mostly lacking in statistical significance. Despite this, when findings are combined with qualitative results, there is a concluded benefit for including cultural simulation in the FLES classroom.

Keywords: teacher action research, foreign language learning, foreign language in the elementary school, motivation

Introduction

Individual differences play an important role in the second language (L2) learning process in terms of the learner experience in the classroom and ultimate proficiency attained. With these individual differences in mind, we noticed that students at an international school in South Korea in a K-5 Spanish context were experiencing the same activity in very different ways. The younger students volunteered endlessly, loved learning about culture, and

accepted an immersion-like environment without question. Meanwhile, students in upper grades 4 and 5 showed little motivation toward cultural activities and language learning without an extrinsic reward, such as prizes or using iPads.

Purpose Statement. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact that cultural simulation had on the motivation of upper elementary Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES) students in language learning. Cultural simulation requires participants to take on a new persona in the target culture through task-based activities in which students use language to achieve a specific outcome (Sánchez, 2004). This study relied on the socio-educational framework of Gardner (1985) for determining strategies that could motivate students. In short, this framework views motivation as consisting of feelings of integrativeness with the target culture, along with attitudes toward L2 learning. To influence both attitudes toward L2 learning and integrative motivation, the following research questions were identified:

1. To what extent does task-based cultural simulation influence L2 integrative motivation in upper elementary FLES students?
2. To what extent does task-based cultural simulation influence student attitudes toward learning the L2?

This action research and its results are of use to L2 teachers, students, and the field of L2 motivation, specifically in the FLES context. Results may provide support for incorporating task-based simulation in the classroom to impact motivation in novice language students through authentic communication and culture.

Literature Review

This literature review focuses on the most crucial components relating to the proposed research questions, while ultimately seeking to tie all together to form the underpinning of this study. Therefore, the following topics are reviewed: Theoretical frameworks of motivation, cognitive characteristics of young learners, simulations, learner attitudes, and L2 tasks.

Motivation: History and current perspectives. While there are many individual differences that play a role in determining L2 attainment, a learner with high motivation can compensate and overcome more fixed traits, such as language aptitude (Dörnyei, 2005). For this reason, the study of motivation is significant to educators, students, and researchers in the L2 community. Over the years, motivation in L2 learning has passed through various phases of research, each building on previous terms and incorporating increasing degrees of integration with mainstream cognitive psychology, while remaining as a separate field of study due to unique social and cultural complexities involved in learning another language (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2012). Noting these complexities, Gardner and Lambert (1972) identified two L2 motivational influences that created a foundation for a multitude of future frameworks, known as *integrative orientation* and *instrumental orientation*. Integrative orientation is defined as “reflecting a sincere and personal interest in the people and culture

represented by the other group"; and instrumental orientation as "reflecting the practical value and advantages of learning a new language" (p. 132).

Reflecting on the cultural complexity of language, Gardner (1985) developed a socio-educational model of second language acquisition that states L2 learning motivation revolves around two groups of variables: *integrativeness* and *attitudes toward the learning situation*. Per this framework, motivation is fostered by developing positive attitudes toward the target culture, cultivating a desire to interact with or even become a member of this culture, while recognizing that attitudes toward the L2 learning environment also play a crucial role. With a wealth of empirical evidence, Gardner's framework dominated the L2 motivation field for nearly three decades, until advances in the field of cognitive psychology and the onset of Global English, a language booming for instrumental purposes, paved the way for new frameworks (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2012).

As research in cognitive psychology progressed, the field of L2 motivation moved toward process-oriented and socio-dynamic approaches, largely dominated by evolving theories of Dörnyei. The socio-dynamic period, the most current focus of research, involves a dynamic systems approach that views motivation as complex with various interconnected components. This research also views motivation as ever-changing, even within the context of a particular activity. In response to cognitive psychology advancements and the phenomenon of Global English, a language for worldwide use despite country of origin, Dörnyei proposed several new frameworks ranging from the process-oriented model, possible L2 selves, and finally leading to the most recent framework: the L2 Motivational Self System. In this framework, Dörnyei proposes that there is an *ideal-L2 self,* a vision of the L2 speaking self that one hopes to attain in the future, and an *ought-to L2 self*, what one should do in the current to achieve the ideal L2 self; the framework suggests that both selves interact to motivate a learner. As a dynamic systems model, there is a third variable that holds considerable weight in determining motivation, the L2 learning experience (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2012).

In response to the variety of frameworks now existing, many with overlapping characteristics, numerous researchers have implemented L2 motivation studies by picking and mixing various parts to suit their particular purpose or design. Even with the existence of newer frameworks, there has been a continued interest in and even reinterpretation of Gardner's socio-educational framework for motivation (Dörnyei, 2006). Indeed, Gardner (2012) has shown that integrative motivation can be reinterpreted to include Global English. In his 2012 study with 342 Polish students, integrative motivation was shown to have a significant correlation with English grades. In regard to Spanish as a second language, research is still finding a strong correlation between integrative orientation and L2 proficiency. Hernandez (2008) found that integrative orientation had a strong positive relationship with proficiency level achievement and student desire to continue studying Spanish after surveying 130 US college Spanish students.

Elementary student development and L2 motivation. Though the field of SLA often characterizes L2 motivation in terms generalizable to any age group, cognitive psychology

has specified that different age groups have distinct cognitive characteristics in their ability to distinguish amongst their experiences. According to Bandura, students 8 years or younger often see themselves as either "good" or "bad" at school as a whole, while students ages 8 to 11 are able to understand the separation of experiences in different classroom subjects, report more accurately on motivation, and more accurately self-assess (1997). Backed up by a study by Guay et. al (2010), results showed that after the age of eight, students were found to be able to differentiate in their perceptions of motivation across school subjects, and this becomes more discernible with age.

Understanding that younger learners are able to distinguish subject-specific motivation similarly to older learners, there have been several studies on L2 motivation in elementary-aged students. Cortés (2002) conducted a study on instrumental and integrative motivation with 209 elementary student participants across two schools, while also analyzing student attitudes toward the L2 learning experience. Interestingly, the two schools differed in regard to results of L2 attitude by grade. In one school, attitudes grew more positive by grade level, and in another, less positive. The author noted that from qualitative data, students had indicated that the teacher and activities were a key variable in their learning, indicating that their attitude can be greatly affected by these components.

Simulation. As both *attitude toward the L2 environment* and *integrativeness* toward the L2 culture are components of Gardner's socio-educational model of L2 motivation, there is a need for further study of pedagogical implications that can affect both simultaneously. Investigators Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) and Yu (2018) reaffirm the importance of culture in L2 motivation, and suggest including authentic language contexts as well as opportunities to interact with the L2 culture as a vehicle for increasing *integrativeness*. According to Kramsch (1995), participation in culture entails "linguistically mediated membership into a discourse community" (p. 195). In the absence of the ability to have real contact with target culture or its speakers, simulation may serve as an educational tool to bridge this gap.
Working from Jones' (1984) definition and conceptualization of simulation, Levine (2004) discusses three subcomponents characteristic to simulation: *reality of function, simulated environment,* and *structure*. *Reality of function* entails students taking on a new persona, not as play acting, but in a genuine way as though they were that person in a real situation. Levine further explains that *simulated environment* means the environment, being simulated and not real, is a safe environment for participants. Additionally, there is a *structure* defined by the organizer or teacher in which participants must function. The author further adds that there must be a briefing and debriefing phase.
Students may be placed in the simulation at various times within the learning process. Crookall et al. (2009) define three broad types of simulation, depending on the learning outcome: Knowledge-to-Action (K-A), Action-to-Knowledge (A-K), and Integrating-Action-Knowledge (I-A-K). Knowledge-to-Action, in which content is learned then applied in the simulation, followed by a light debrief for verification, was discussed to be the most commonly implemented.

In addition to discussing Jones' characteristics of simulation, Levine (2004) further states that in order for a simulation to function in an L2 classroom, it must, by definition, be task-

based. Although there are several different approaches to task-based language teaching (TBLT), created by Long (1985), Skehan (1998), and Ellis (2003), Ellis (2009) states that *authenticity*, or opportunities for natural language use, is important in all three. Ellis (2009) provides four criteria for L2 tasks: 1) meaning is the primary focus, 2) there is a need to convey information, such as an authentic problem or scenario, 3) the learner uses their own linguistic resources, and 4) there is a non-linguistic outcome. These criteria provided guidance in this study to ensure that valid language tasks are created as part of a task-based simulation.

L2 Learner Attitude. By connecting literature definitions and empirical studies, a cultural, task-based simulation may provide conditions to which both *attitude toward the L2 environment* and *integrativeness* can be impacted to see a change in L2 learner motivation. With a multitude of educational strategies shown to influence learner attitudes in education, Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) surveyed 200 English teachers in Hungry to form a narrowed list of ten macro-strategies for L2 teachers that have an impact on the L2 learning situation and hence, student attitudes. Three of the resulting macro-strategies can be found readily in simulation as an L2 learning activity: make class interesting, promote learner autonomy, and familiarize students with the target language culture. Simulation, through *reality of function*, provides students with opportunities to make choices of interest to them based on the simulation at hand. As students have choice and the teacher minimizes external control, this supports student autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Finally, the design of a simulation can be constructed to incorporate the target culture.

According to Sharifi et al. (2017), previous studies have shown numerous positive effects of simulation in L2 learning. Increased student enjoyment in autonomy, increased motivation, and improvement in L2 skills have been noted benefits. In their study with 51 female Iranian middle school participants, they measured simulation's impact on: interest, challenge, choice, and joy. Results showed that all four areas of student perception had a significant positive change post-survey in comparison with the control group. Similarly, a study by Dicks and Le Blanc (2009) used drama and simulation as learning techniques in six French classrooms. Qualitative data showed that both students and teachers in Canada found it to be a positive experience, and students took more ownership of their learning. In addition, quantitative data from this study suggests that attitude toward L2 learning increased, thus impacting motivation. These studies provide evidence that simulation can be an agent of change in student perception of language learning, and in turn, motivation.

While there has been empirical evidence showing simulation to have a positive impact on L2 learner attitude through autonomy, enjoyment and interest, under Gardner's socio-educational model of L2 motivation, there also lays another crucial *integrativeness* component. In reviewing previously carried out research, there are gaps in research on simulation's ability to impact integrative motivation. However, Pyun (2013) found a positive correlation between task-based language learning and student integrative motivation when surveying 91 Korean college students. Pyun goes on to suggest that authentic cultural materials in language tasks may promote and fulfill integrative motivation.

There is room for further investigation on instructional strategies that test both L2 learner attitude and integrativeness components of Gardner's socio-educational framework of motivation. Among elementary students, cultural perceptions and L2 learner attitude are both important components of a FLES program that can be greatly influenced by teacher activities and classroom environment. When elementary students can more effectively be reached to increase L2 attitude and integrative orientation, this can lead to greater L2 achievement as well as increased persistence, desire, and motivation for language learning as they continue through the L2 learning process. By embodying macro-strategies to impact L2 learner attitude, and characteristics of authentic cultural context and tasks, a task-based cultural simulation holds potential to be a successful agent of change in upper elementary FLES student motivation as supported by theoretical and empirical literature.

Methodology

Participants. The participants of this study consisted of fifth grade Spanish students at a Pre-K through Grade 12 international school in Seoul, South Korea. Per government regulations, international schools in South Korea must have at least 70% of the student population with at least one parent of foreign citizenship. The remaining 30% may be from families of Korean citizenship but must have lived 3 years overseas (Korea International School, n.d.). Being a private, international school, students come from a variety of backgrounds with many different cultures and worldwide experiences living or travelling abroad. While some students are native English speakers, others have learned English through immersion at school and additional ESL support. In the elementary division, the population is around 400 students, with students representing 23 different nationalities and 17 native languages. The entire pre-kindergarten to grade 12 population hovers around 1,200 students, and the school follows an American curriculum culminating with 18 Advanced Placement offerings at the high school level (Korea International School, n.d.).

All elementary students participate in a K-5 World Language program that involves both FLES and Foreign Language Elementary Experience (FLEX) courses. In kindergarten and first grade, students sample French, Spanish, and Chinese languages via a FLEX program, for a total of 10 hours of instruction per year. Starting in second grade, students pick one of the three languages to study until fifth grade via a FLES program. In this program, students receive instruction twice every six-day rotation, for 50 minutes each meeting, averaging to roughly 50 hours of instruction per school year.

There were 23 students enrolled in fifth grade Spanish at the commencement of the 2019-2020 school year, divided amongst four separate classes. The class sizes for this study ranged from four to eight students in each class. After handing out consent forms in September, 15 students returned student and parent consent allowing them to participate in the study. The participant makeup consisted of 7 female and 8 male students between the ages of 10 to 11. All students self-identified as bilingual in the Language Background Questionnaire, in addition to two students identifying as trilingual. The majority of students, 12 out of 15, spoke both Korean and English at school, home and/or with friends. Two

students were English/Spanish bilingual and had Spanish-speaking relatives, and one student had five years of English/Spanish dual-immersion instruction at a previous school.

Study Design and Intervention. The purpose of this study was to describe the impact of cultural simulation on student integrative motivation and attitude toward learning the L2. To satisfy this purpose, a mixed-methods design was implemented using a Language Background and Perspectives Questionnaire (Appendix B), a Likert-style Motivation Survey (Appendix A), field notes throughout the intervention, and a semi-structured interview post-intervention (Appendix C). Pre-intervention, students completed a 14 item Language Background and Perspectives questionnaire, as well as the 15 item L2 Motivation Survey. The L2 Motivation Survey was administered pre- and post-simulation to gauge changes in motivation throughout the intervention. An explanation of the intervention is provided below, and an example is provided in Figure 2.

The Motivation Survey and Language Background Questionnaire were administered in early September of 2019, nearing the end of the first unit, yet prior to beginning the simulation and first cultural task. Subsequently, the simulation was introduced and students completed 1-2 cultural tasks per unit followed by a debrief. After the completion of tasks for all units, the L2 Motivation Survey was administered again in February of 2020 to gauge changes in student motivation. At this time, volunteer participants sat through a semi-structured interview conducted by the teacher. Throughout the intervention, field notes were recorded to further document qualitative information related to the study.

The L2 Motivation Survey contained 15 items total: 5 items evaluating *integrativeness*, and 10 items referencing *attitudes toward L2 learning,* to quantitatively address research questions one and two regarding change in integrative motivation and attitude toward the L2 learning environment. These sections were taken from a wider L2 motivation survey by Al Khalil (2011), with modifications including clipart smileys to make the survey elementary friendly.

Throughout the intervention, a teacher-created, task-based cultural simulation dictated the learning process, materials, and procedures for the intervention. The simulation and tasks were created following criteria for tasks and simulations outlined in the literature review, and by considering realistic scenarios for the age of the participants. During three units of study (Introductions, House Vocabulary, and Descriptions of People), the intervention consisted of 5 tasks during the cultural simulation. An example can be seen in Figure 2.

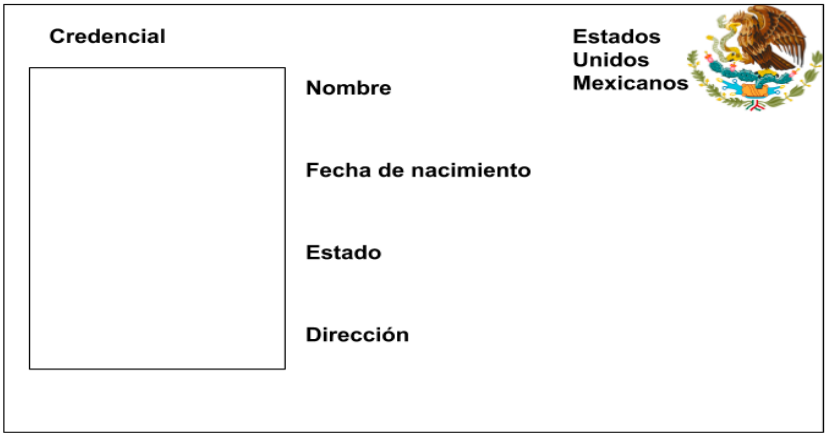

Figure 2. Instructional Material: Task 1
As you are new to the city, you and your family go to the city center to fill out any necessary documents. While there, you are given a paper to fill in information for your new ID card! Your task is to obtain this ID card by providing all necessary information.

Following the Knowledge-to-Action simulation model explained by Crookall et al. (2009), students learned the knowledge (language/vocabulary), then put it into action in a task-based simulation, followed by a short debrief.

To carry out this process and leading to the tasks, students had to establish key components of their new identity for the simulation: their name and address, including an ID card that they used throughout the study. This encompassed cultural exploration by students 1) learning about names in Spanish-speaking countries, 2) using Google Map activity to virtually "walk" through several streets of Guanajuato, Mexico to choose their "address", 3) exploring common interiors of Mexican houses through AirBNB Guanajuato, and 4) learning about their new school in Guanajuato (Escuela Luis Gonzalez Obregon).

For every subsequent class during the intervention, students entered by being called their new "name" that they had chosen in the target culture in order to solidify their new persona. In addition, the students received their ID card upon entering and described the weather forecast for Guanajuato each day in order to remind them of their new identity and city.

The present study investigated the impact of task-based cultural simulation on the motivation of upper elementary FLES students. As this study was a mixed method design, both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed to determine results. The quantitative component included 15 Likert scale items in the Motivation Survey to gather data on changes in integrative motivation and attitude toward the L2 learning experience. In order to view changes pre- and post-survey, measures of central tendency were calculated for each item in the survey, along with the standard deviation. The final calculation included a paired samples *t*-test using the mode of each item to test for statistical significance.

As participants in a motivation study are self-documenting their perceptions, the qualitative data was essential in gathering insight to further analyze findings. Comments from the

Language Background and Perspectives Questionnaire, field notes, and semi-structured interview were entered into a document to identify themes that could help explain changes in integrative motivation or attitudes toward the L2 learning experience. Inductive analysis was used to triangulate the qualitative data along with the quantitative findings. The results are summarized under each research question.

Results

Research Question 1: Cultural Simulation and Integrative Motivation. The first research question evaluated the null hypothesis that there is no change in integrative motivation due to implementation of task-based cultural simulations. A Likert-style Motivation Survey was administered pre- and post-intervention with five items pertaining to integrativeness. For each item, students selected responses on a 1-6 scale indicating how they felt about each statement, ranging from "*Not true at all"* to "*Absolutely true.*" Each response was given a corresponding number to analyze the data quantitatively: 1-Not true at all, 2-Not really, 3-Partly untrue, 4-Somewhat true, 5-Mostly true, and 6-Absolutely true. In reading the descriptive statistics, a higher score indicates higher agreement with the statement. Table 1 summarizes the pre- and post-survey mean, mode, and result of the paired *t*-test (p-value).

Table 1. Motivation Survey (integrative motivation) results

Item	**Pre-survey mean (*M*)**	**Post-survey mean (*M*)**	**Pre-survey mode**	**Post-survey mode**	**p-value *(p)***
1) Studying Spanish is important because it will allow me to make good friends among speakers of Spanish.	4	5	4	5	.046
2) In some ways, I want to become more similar to speakers of Spanish.	4.07	4.73	4	6	.065
3) Studying Spanish is important because it will allow me to participate in cultural activities of another group.	4.46	4.93	4	6	.22
4) Studying Spanish is important because it will allow me to talk with more types of people.	5.33	5.53	6	6	.458
5) Study Spanish is important because it will help me	4.27	4.67	5	6	.458

appreciate Hispanic life and cultures.

It can be seen that prior to the intervention, participants overall rated themselves as having positive integrative orientation toward the target culture with mean scores ranging from 4-5.33. In general, statements from the survey were perceived as *Somewhat true* or *Mostly true*. All items showed mean increases post-survey, and all except item four increased in mode.

As students self-reported their perceptions of integrative motivation on the Motivation Survey, it was important to examine qualitative data to form a holistic conclusion based on multiple data types. At the end of each unit, debriefs were conducted to engage students in conversation and self-reflection throughout the simulation. In the field notes, comments from the debriefs proved to be insightful regarding the simulation's impact on integrative motivation. Figure 3 shows student responses to the debrief question: Could you see yourself living in a Spanish-speaking country and going through this situation?

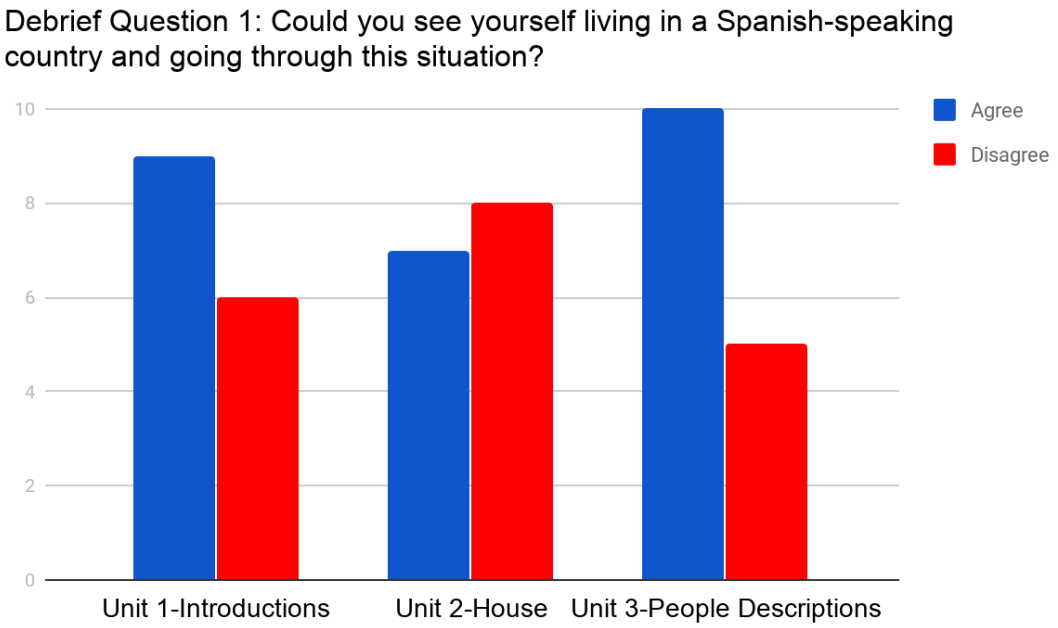

Figure 3. Debrief Question 1 responses

The Unit 2 debrief showed that a slight majority (*n*=8) disagreed with the statement, while Unit 1 and 3 debriefs show that a majority of participants felt that they could envision themselves living in a Spanish-speaking country and partaking in the task or event.

With regard to the semi-structured interview, several of the questions were written to target integrative motivation, or participant interest or desire to become a part of the target culture. These four questions were: After participating in the simulation:

- Do you want to learn more (about Mexican culture)?,
- Do you want to speak more with people in Spanish?,
- Do you want to learn Spanish more? And

- Do you have more interest in visiting Mexico or another Spanish-speaking country?

Participants were asked to answer all questions regarding their experience going through the simulation. All four questions received overwhelmingly positive responses from the 15 participants, ranging from "somewhat agree" to enthusiastic agreement, mixed with a handful of disagreeing responses. For example, one participant did not want to learn more about Mexican culture but acknowledged interest in visiting another Spanish-speaking country. Another participant cited the second task, "meeting a neighbor," as a reason for wanting to speak more with people in Spanish.

Research Question 2: Cultural Simulation and Attitude toward L2 learning. The second research question tested the null hypothesis that there is no change in student attitude toward learning the L2 after implementation of task-based cultural simulations. In order to gauge student perceptions toward L2 learning and its origins, a Language Background and Perceptions Questionnaire was administered before the start of the intervention (Appendix B). In addition to ten items about student language background, this questionnaire included four items targeting perceptions toward L2 learning in Spanish class. These four items asked students to write their favorite and least favorite activities in Spanish class, and also included two fill-in-the-blank items: *I like it when my Spanish teacher* _____, and *I wish my Spanish teacher* _____. The data was then categorized and calculated by "type of activity" for all responses. Before implementing the intervention, observations of student preferences toward games were validated by seeing it was the most highly listed response for favorite activities and the two fill-in-the-blank items, appearing as a response 21 times between the three items. In total, of the 41 responses, 52% cited games as favorite or desired activities, while 5% cited an activity related to culture, appearing only two times in this category. Among an additional 14% of cited responses, the favorite or desired activities were getting treats and prizes. Participants responded that their least favorite activity was reviewing vocabulary (40%), while another 40% responded that they did not have a least favorite activity. As a baseline, it can be seen that cultural activities are mostly considered neutral activities to students, neither contributing nor taking away from their attitude toward L2 learning.

In the Motivation Survey administered pre- and post-intervention, there were ten items pertaining to student attitudes toward L2 learning. For seven of the items, students selected responses on a 1-6 range indicating how they felt about each statement, ranging from "*Not true at all"* to "*Absolutely true*". The last three items on the survey were formed as questions rather than statements. As such, for items 13-15, students selected similar responses in a 1-6 range, with each item corresponding to the following numbers for quantitative analysis: 1-Not at all, 2-Not so much, 3-So-so, 4-A little, 5-Quite a lot, and 6-Very much. Following the same pattern as the previous items, a higher score indicates a more positive response to each item. Table 2 summarizes the pre- and post-survey mean, mode, and result of the paired *t*-test (p-value).

Table 2. Motivation Survey (attitude toward L2 learning) results

Item	Pre-survey mean (*M*)	Post-survey mean (*M*)	Pre-survey mode	Post-survey mode	p-value *(p)*
6) Learning Spanish is really great.	5.13	5.47	5	6	.096
7) I always look forward to Spanish class.	5	5.2	5	5	.384
8) I plan to learn as much Spanish as possible.	5.2	5.2	5	6	1
9) I find learning Spanish really interesting.	4.73	4.8	5	5	.719
10) Learning Spanish is one of the most important things for me as I grow as a person.	3.67	4.33	4	4	.086
11) I like the atmosphere of my Spanish class.	5.13	5	5	6	.433
12) I really enjoy learning Spanish.	4.87	5.4	5	6	.104
13) How much do you like Spanish?	5.07	5.27	5	6	.119
14) Would you like to have more Spanish lessons?	4.53	4.93	6	6	.229
15) Do you think time passes quickly while you are practicing Spanish?	4.33	4.47	5	5	.498

As seen in Table 2, participants reported quite positive pre-survey responses for all items except number ten. For all other items, the pre-intervention mean ranged between 4.33-5.2, and showed a mode of 5 or 6. On the post-survey, most items showed a mean increase, although in some items this increase was small (items 7, 9, 13, 15). While these scores are positive, the p-value does not show statistical significance and thus suggest higher probability that results are due to chance rather than correlation.

With many marginal mean increases, the mode and range were more telling of changes in participant perceptions pre- and post-intervention. In five of the ten items, the mode increased, and in four items the range of scores decreased due to more students selecting

responses in the positive range post-survey. Figure 4 shows the distribution of pre- and post-survey responses for item 14.

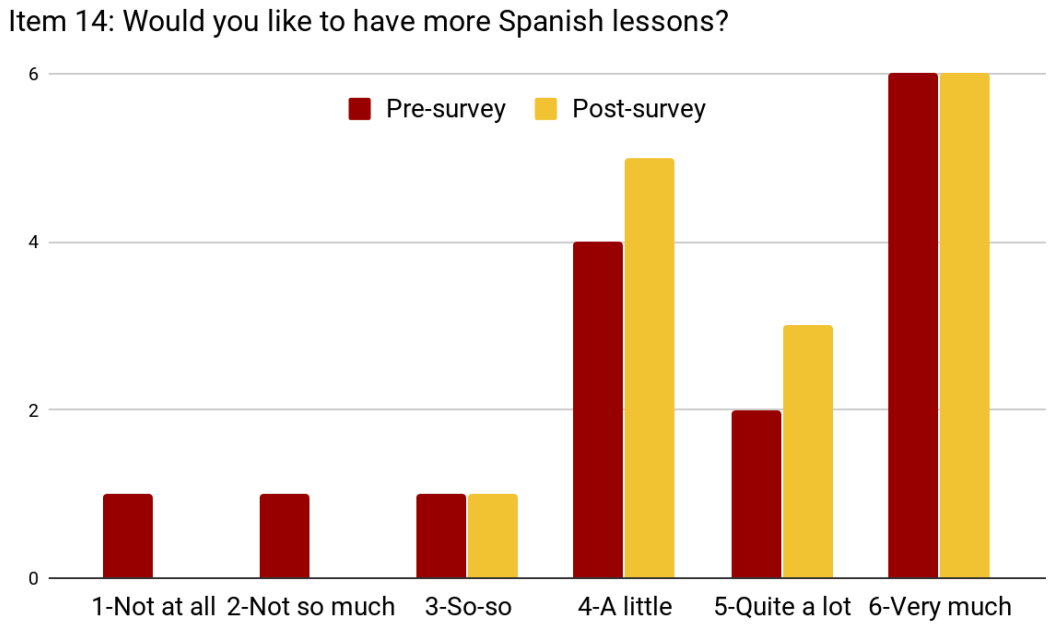

Figure 4. Motivation survey pre- to post-responses, Item 14

As students are self-reporting their perceptions, it was important to analyze qualitative data to provide a more complete picture of the effectiveness of the intervention. During the intervention, student comments were recorded pertaining to student attitudes and engagement during the simulation for qualitative analysis. The data revealed that students held both positive and negative perceptions toward L2 learning during the period covering the intervention. For example, toward the end of the intervention, one student commented, "Can we play games? All we do is work in this class." Positive comments and engagement were far more prevalent than comments pointing to negative feelings or boredom. It was noted that as students were able to choose their name, address, and house, and meet their neighbor, they were very engaged and on-task. When students chose their new class names, they were excited, and it was the primary topic of discussion with other language students that day. When participants were introduced to the simulation and the city of Guanajuato, one excitedly remarked, "Can we go there?" Upon "meeting their neighbor" through a video recording, students wanted to know many more details about her and if she would respond to their answers and questions in Spanish. Nonetheless, when participants were shown their new school during Unit 3, students seemed interested in seeing what a school looked like in Mexico, although not as invested as when they could have a choice in their new identity.

Similarities were found between student in-class comments and responses during the post-intervention interview. During the semi-structured interview, four of the eight questions targeted student attitudes toward L2 learning in response to the simulation. The questions were: 1) What did you think of acting as someone from a Spanish-speaking country? 2) What parts of the simulation did you like and what parts did you not like? 3) Did you enjoy

having more choices for parts of your identity (choosing name, house, address, interior) in comparison to our normal class activities? And 4) Did you find the activities enjoyable, such as when you found your house or met your neighbor?

While there were responses on both ends of the engagement spectrum, data from student comments revealed overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward L2 learning during the simulation, indicating that they found the activities "fun" and "enjoyable" in most cases. Several students cited specific cultural tasks that they enjoyed as their "favorite," including "making videos to send," "creating an ID," "exploring the city on Google Maps," and "choosing a house." While many participants agreed with these statements, there were a few remarks of disagreement. One participant stated that the least favorite portion of the intervention was "going to school in Mexico," while another commented that the least favorite activity was "having to write." One student further said that the simulation "didn't feel that real." Amongst all participants, a common agreement was that they favored having more "choice" in each task, such as picking their own name, house, address, or house interior.

The qualitative data showed that the majority perception was that the cultural simulation was fun, enjoyable, and participants appreciated the amount of "choice" they had within the tasks. While students also found games, incentives, and prizes enjoyable, these activities generally do not provide a cultural component.

Discussion

Results from this study suggest that it is possible to include task-based cultural simulation as part of a FLES curriculum. While statistical analysis suggests that implementation neither harms nor impacts student L2 motivation (which may have been the result of a smaller sample size), qualitative findings combined with raw descriptive data provide a convincing argument that it may add value to the L2 learning experience for upper elementary students by aiding to increase integrative orientation and attitude toward L2 learning. As Gardner's socio-educational framework of L2 learning includes both components, this is promising for L2 educators seeking to increase L2 motivation.

Empirical evidence has shown that FLES programs have potential to impact a student's desire and motivation to continue studying a second language (Kennedy et al., 2000). As discussed by Cortés (2002), elementary students may exhibit increased or decreased motivation depending on attitude toward the L2 learning environment, which underscores the need for engaging activities that promote positive attitude toward L2 learning. Noting the multifaceted complexity of L2 learning, Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) reported that three of ten macro-strategies to influence L2 learner attitude are: make class interesting, promote learner autonomy, and familiarize students with the target language culture; these strategies are readily found in task-based cultural simulation.

While participants largely found games and incentives to be the most engaging activities pre-intervention, these activities generally lack a cultural focus and do not promote

integrativeness. Over the course of the cultural simulation, students experienced enjoyment in making choices that interest them, having autonomy in their new persona, and learning about the target language culture, as evidenced by the qualitative findings. Findings were in tandem with previous simulation studies which have found student enjoyment in increased autonomy, choice, interest, and motivation as a result of the intervention (Sharifi et al., 2017).

Previous studies found simulation to promote positive attitudes toward L2 learning; nevertheless, empirical evidence was lacking in connecting simulation to integrativeness, especially at the elementary level. Referenced previously as a macro-strategy connected to L2 learner attitude, Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) and Yu (2018) also reaffirmed the importance of culture and suggested including authentic language contexts and cultural interactions as a vehicle for increasing *integrativeness*.

Qualitative feedback suggests that change in student integrative orientation can be attributed to the intervention. Students reported wanting to learn more Spanish and more about Hispanic culture, as well as an increased desire to visit a Spanish-speaking country and interact with a native Spanish speaker. These findings were comparable to Pyun (2013), who found a positive correlation between task-based language learning and student integrative motivation. This provides support for incorporating tasks in the L2 classroom per Pyun's study, or cultural simulation for those wishing to provide a more connected and authentic cultural experience for students.

Global simulation models have the benefit of a well-established set of criteria and examples, but these are suggested for intermediate to advanced learners (Levine, 2004). While reviewing previous simulation and role play interventions, many are lacking in frameworks that could be easily replicated in a novice-level class; other novice level educators may have previously found simulation to be inaccessible for similar reasons. This study may help to bridge this gap for educators seeking to incorporate a simulation framework for the novice or FLES classroom.

In addition, relevant research has focused on role play, simulation, or global simulation in reference to L2 confidence and proficiency gains, and has found correlating benefits in this area (Sharifi et al., 2017; Mills & Perón, 2008; Yilmaz & Dollar, 2017). Although this was not evaluated in this study, anecdotal evidence from participant debriefs revealed a high degree of confidence and feelings of success after using the target language during tasks. Indeed, higher integrative orientation has been found to correlate with higher proficiency level and desire to continue studying a language (Hernandez, 2008). Additionally, while excitement is hard to quantify, the students' enthusiasm about wanting to interact with native speakers and visit a Spanish-speaking country was promising that this intervention could make a positive impact in this regard.

On a larger scale, this study aids to provide a base in the less studied concept of task-based simulation as an agent of change in both attitude toward L2 learning and integrative motivation. Due to the small sample size, the premise of correlation between task-based

simulation and integrative motivation would benefit from more or larger studies of a similar nature to garner a stronger set of quantitative findings. In a small study, a limitation is that outliers have the potential to impact the study to a higher degree, which is a significant limitation in the reliability of the results from this study. It would also be beneficial to see results of the study implemented with different demographics of students, i.e. students outside of a private, international school or with populations that are not already bilingual.

Conclusion

One final limitation presented as the need to choose one motivational framework due to age and developmental level of students and taking into consideration the available resources for pre-validated motivational surveys. In a wider study, it would be beneficial to assess multiple types of motivation, such as in Al Khalil's study (2011). Many surveys targeting the L2 Motivational Self System present constructs better suited for older participants, e.g., *I can imagine myself writing Spanish e-mails easily*. With students being at the elementary age, 15 items relating to Gardner's socio-educational framework that seemed applicable to the developmental level of the participants were chosen. In addition to further testing to validate results with the present survey, educators may find benefit to more extensive surveys with items targeting constructs from multiple motivational frameworks, as has been done in previous studies with more mature participants.
In conclusion, this action research project has provided the opportunity to understand the importance of motivation more deeply in L2 learning. Previous research has asserted that motivation along with language aptitude are the two major factors in determining L2 proficiency, with motivation being the more malleable factor (Dörnyei, 2005). While historically the field of motivation has been less frequented in SLA studies, motivation strategies should be considered by educators for the benefit of all stakeholders in the language learning process. While there are many sound strategies that educators can employ for proficiency gains, motivation is at the root of L2 learning by promoting engagement and stamina throughout the learning process, which is a years-long endeavor. Taking an unbiased look at L2 learner motivation in each program may be the starting point to foster engaged second language students with long-term commitment, beginning even in our youngest learners.

About the Authors

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Appendix A: Likert-style Motivational Survey (Pre-, Mid-, Post-intervention)

Student L2 Motivation Survey

Mark the "face" that agrees with your feelings about each statement.

The "faces" mean:

Absolutely true	Mostly true	Somewhat true	Partly untrue	Not really	Not true at all
					

1. Studying Spanish is important because it will allow me to make good friends among speakers of Spanish.
2. In some ways, I want to become more similar to speakers of Spanish.
3. Studying Spanish is important because it will allow me to participate in cultural activities of another group.
4. Studying Spanish is important because it will allow me to talk with more types of people.
5. Studying Spanish is important because it will help me appreciate Hispanic life and cultures.

Attitude toward learning the L2

6. Learning Spanish is really great.
7. I always look forward to my Spanish class.
8. I plan to learn as much Spanish as possible.
9. I find learning Spanish really interesting.
10. Learning Spanish is one of the most important things for me as I grow as a person.
11. I like the atmosphere of my Spanish class. (atmosphere- think of the teacher, activities, students, how you interact, how you feel)
12. I really enjoy learning Spanish.
13. How much do you like Spanish?
14. Would you like to have more Spanish lessons?
15. Do you think time passes quickly while you are practicing Spanish?

Appendix B: Language Background and Perceptions Questionnaire

Language Background

Please answer the questions about languages that you know or use:

1. Do you know any other languages than English? _____ yes _____ no

2. If yes, how many languages do you know well, besides English? _____

(think of any languages that you know as well as English, almost as well, or even better than English!)

3. If you speak more than one language well, list the languages that you know best to languages you know the least:

Best #1	Second best #2	#3	#4	#5

4. What language(s) do you speak at home, or with your parents?

5. What language(s) do you speak with friends?

Spanish Background

Please answer the questions about your experience with Spanish:

1. For how many years have you studied Spanish at KIS? _____

2. Have you studied Spanish at another school (not KIS)? (check "yes" or "no")

_____ yes _____no

- If you answered "yes", please describe what that was like in the space below:

3. Have you ever travelled to a Spanish-speaking country?

_____ yes _____no

- If you answered "yes", please describe where/what that was like:

4. Have you ever lived in a Spanish-speaking country?

_____ yes _____no

If you answered "yes", please describe where/how many years/what that was like:

5. Do you have family members that speak Spanish as a native/main language?

_____ yes _____no

If you answered “yes”, please describe who and how often you see them. Do you speak Spanish with them? Do you listen to them speak Spanish?

Language Learning Experience Perceptions

1. What are your favorite activities to do in Spanish class? Why?

2. What are your least favorite activities to do in Spanish class? Why?

3. Fill in the blank:

   - I like it when my Spanish teacher

_____

4. Fill in the blank:

   - I wish my Spanish teacher

_____

Appendix C: Semi-structured Interview Questions

1. What did you think of acting as someone from a Spanish-speaking country?
2. What parts of the simulation did you like and what parts did you not like?
3. Did you enjoy having more choices for parts of your identity (choosing name, house, address, interior) in comparison to our normal class activities?
4. Did you find the activities enjoyable, such as when you found your house or met your neighbor?
5. After participating in the simulation, do you feel you know more about Mexican culture? Do you want to learn more?
6. After participating in the simulation, do you want to speak more with people in Spanish?
7. After participating in the simulation, do you want to learn Spanish more?
8. After participating, do you have more interest in visiting Mexico or another Spanish-speaking country?

IMPLEMENTING WRITERS' WORKSHOP INTO THE SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM

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Abstract Writers' Workshop has developed prominence as a method towards providing authentic writing experiences. The purpose of this study was to determine what happens to student perceptions and quantity of writing when Writers' Workshop is implemented into a special education setting. This study took place in a self-contained special education classroom of third-, fourth-, and fifth-graders. Data was collected through focus group interviews with the teachers, focus groups with two students from every grade, perception surveys, and writing samples. Surveys and focus group interviews were completed before and after the implementation. Writing samples were collected at the beginning, middle, and end of implementation. The constant comparative method, with initial coding followed by creating hierarchies or categories and supporting codes (Hubbard & Power, 2003), was used to analyze data. Through data collection and analysis three major themes emerged from this research: struggles in writing, attitudes about methods used, and understanding writing practices.

Keywords: teacher action research, Writing, Writers' Workshop, Special Education, Authentic Writing, Process Approach, Elementary Writing

Introduction

Multiple hands were raised, and every journal had three words in it, the same three words we had written as a prompt the few seconds prior, this weekend I____. It was then that I realized something had to change. How would I help every student at one time, and how does one help when nothing is written? It occurred to me in this moment that trying to find prompts that would be relatable and get these students to enjoy writing, were causing more chaos than anticipated. So now what? What do you do when writing seems contrived and inauthentic? Where is the passion that children have? Why is it not in their writing? This is the moment where every teacher begins asking themselves a series of questions. What do I do now? We have tried this for too long, and it just doesn't feel right. I have heard of things such as Writers' Workshop, but is it effective, and how do I start?

Literature Review

Clippard and Nicaise (1998) describe typical writing instruction as reductionism. They describe reductionism as writing being divided out into its own category or subject. It is then further divided by breaking the writing into segments of skills to learn at one time through daily or weekly lessons. A Writers' Workshop method differs from this significantly. Students spend around 15-20 minutes with the teacher doing a mini-lesson over a specific writing skill each day. After the mini-lesson, students are then released into an independent writing time with teacher conferencing. The skills of writing such as revising, editing, details, introductions etc. are not reduced to being taught at specific times during the year, rather they are focused on in student writing year-round and may even be revisited during a mini-lesson if needed. The mini-lesson is part of what helps to create the process approach to writing that is seen in Writers' Workshop. Clippard and Nicaise (1998) examined the Writers' Workshop approach by promoting the writing skills and self-efficacy of small groups of students with writing deficits in the fourth and fifth grade and found it to be effective. Calkins (1985) said that reductionism could be considered "inauthentic because teachers select the students' writing topics; and they focus on the product, as opposed to the writing process" (p. 3). More authentic experiences in writing would help students to focus more on the writing process as described by Calkins (1985). Clippard and Nicaise (1998) describe Writers' Workshop as a more authentic method of writing instruction that focuses more on the process rather than the product.

Specific complexities are described by Baum et al. (2012) that have been found to affect students while writing. Those complexities that affected student writers were "to clearly organize thoughts in a sequence, activate and sustain attention throughout the brainstorming and writing stages, and remember the rules of conventional writing, including word order or grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and formatting" (p. 10). These complexities were also observed within the researcher's placement classroom. The process approach used in Writers' Workshop has shown effectiveness in previous studies at addressing a few of these complexities. Schrodt et al. (2019) addressed these complexities through a study that focused on examining the impact of adding self-regulation strategies and growth mindset on writing and motivation outcomes for kindergarteners, through a Writers' Workshop approach in which Schrodt et al. (2019) describe as, allowing space for children to explore writing both individually and collaboratively in both approximations and conventional formats. When Schrodt et al. (2019) conducted this study they found the following:

> As the intervention progressed, students did not ask for assistance from the researcher and became more independent in their ability to spell words as they began to learn and employ spelling strategies. (p. 436)

Another instance where Writers' Workshop was found to be effective in addressing the previously discussed complexities was in a study done by Gericke and Salmon (2014) addressing the use of mentor texts often used within Writers' Workshop. Gericke and Salmon (2014) found "after reading the mentor texts aloud, students were more productive and motivated during the mini-lesson and independent writing time" (p. 8). Another implementation of Writers' Workshop was done by Isom (2014) when she used illustrations to support the development of her kindergarten students' writing. This was an inquiry-

based method of learning in Writers' Workshop where mentor texts were used to support students in creating their own picture books. Interestingly, Isom (2014) also describes these mentor texts used within Writers' Workshop as being effective because students would actually "try out" new ideas noticed in the mentor texts when it came to writing/drawing. A benefit within Writers' Workshop is the conferring with students that happens. Hawkins (2016) stated that during this time students are "taking ownership of their own ideas, advocating for their own learning, expressing their own desires, and conversing with their teachers as partners" (p. 9).

Only a couple of studies have examined the use of Writers' Workshop with students with disabilities. Clippard and Nicaise (1998) pulled students with writing deficits from general education classrooms to create a sample of participants and found that students in a Writers' Workshop model scored higher on direct writing samples. Additionally, Sturm (2012) specifically looked at Writers' Workshop in a special education classroom when he took a sample of students with developmental disabilities and then implemented an Enriched Writers' Workshop model. The Enriched Writers' Workshop model combined a differentiated writing process instruction with social communication and cognitive strategy instruction for students with complex writing needs across a wide range of ages.

Methodology

To begin the methods section, participants are described along with data collection and how that data is analyzed using hierarchical coding during the research. This study was conducted through a yearlong clinical teaching position, so the students and teachers were comfortable giving their honest opinions about Writers' Workshop given the prior relationships established.

Purpose. In this study, what happens after a Writers' Workshop model is implemented during writing time in a special education classroom is examined. When one researches using Writers' Workshop as an intervention, in many cases it improved writing for students of all ages. There was substantial research on Writers' Workshop being used as a form of intervention; however, there was very little research on its use in special education settings specifically. The few studies involving special education did not implement a Writers' Workshop into a special education classroom; rather, they pulled a group of these students for a participant pool. A self-contained special education classroom context is very different from general education or even pull-out special education. For example, students within a self-contained room are all considered to have a disability and are in the classroom all day with a certified special education teacher. As a result, curriculum is condensed, instruction must include more visuals and modeling, and there are typically more instances of work refusal along with many other behavioral challenges. For this reason, researching the implementation of Writers' Workshop within an actual self-contained special education classroom can contribute to the knowledge of its potential to be used in various settings with similarities to the challenges discussed in the future making the study beneficial to research.

Writers' Workshop is an approach in which freedom and time is given to students to write authentically and independently on their own chosen topics. There are four elements to this workshop model. The elements are the following: mini-lessons, direct teaching on various writing skills and strategies, independent writing time with conferencing, and then a share time (Schrodt et al., 2019, p. 428). The main purpose of this research was to figure out what happens to student and teacher perceptions, as well as the quantity of writing when Writers' Workshop is implemented into a self-contained special education setting. My research questions were as follows:

> **Research Question:** What happens when a Writers' Workshop is implemented in a special education classroom during writing time?
>
> - **Sub question 1:** Does the model increase the amount of writing by the students?
> - **Sub question 2:** What are the students' and teacher's perceptions of writing before and after the workshop is implemented?

When this study was conducted, the researcher was a graduate student conducting action research in a clinical placement classroom. This was a self-contained classroom that consisted of special education students all ranging from third to fifth grade. A co-teaching model was used for this placement at Burnett Elementary School (all names are pseudonyms) in Longhorn, Texas. The school was associated with the Longhorn ISD school district. The researcher and classroom teacher were responsible for planning instruction that was divided out equally through all subjects. During the study, all writing lessons were planned and implemented by the researcher, and the classroom teacher helped individuals throughout the room during independent writing time. The aides supported students in small groups if they needed more structured assistance. Writers' Workshop was the model implemented. This model started with a 10-15 minute mini-lesson teaching a writing skill such as editing, revising, adding details, creating introductions and much more. These skills were selected by the researcher based upon the steps to writing and publishing a piece of work, or areas of need for multiple students the researcher noticed during the independent writing time. The students were then released into an independent writing time where they would continue a piece of writing or start a new one. Students worked through the process of creating a piece of writing over several days. They would implement skills learned in the mini lessons when their writing required it until their piece could be published. Although, during the research we did not get to it; normally the teacher will pull aside students for individual conferencing over their writing during this independent writing time as well. Previously, writing was taught by giving students a sentence stem such as "This weekend I…" If students needed assistance with spelling, grammar, punctuation, or capitalization then they would raise their hand and it would be addressed on a case by case basis. The context of the classroom was unique in that we had multiple adults able to assist in this way.

Participant Selection. The participants in the study consisted of students in the third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade PALS (Practical Academics and Living Skills) or otherwise known as a self-contained special education classroom. There were 13 total students. The student demographics were as follows: 30% African American, 31% Caucasian, 23% Hispanic, 8%

Philippine, and 8% mixed race. Of the 13 students, four were girls and nine were boys. Other participants included two teachers' aides and the teacher of the classroom. All 13 students who consented and turned in an assent form were chosen to participate in the study. A parent letter with a consent form for parents to sign was also sent home and returned for those who took part in the research. The teacher and aides also completed a consent form before taking part in the research. The teacher and aides were chosen as participants intentionally, because they worked closely with most of the participating students in the study for a year or more and offered a good perspective.

Data Collection. The data collection used was focus group interviews, student artifacts in the form of writing samples, and student surveys. The students served in this classroom were in a self- contained special education classroom. The Writers' Workshop was implemented for four weeks. Focus group interviews took place with six students (two from each grade) and the teacher with the two aides at the beginning and end of implementation. The two students from each grade were chosen with purposive sampling (Patton, 1990). Students in grade levels with more than two students were chosen based on the survey results to select diverse attitudes toward writing. Focus group interviews with the students lasted about ten minutes. The teacher and aide focus group interviews lasted for about 20-30 minutes. All of the focus group interviews were semi-structured, with ten pre-planned but open-ended questions (Hendricks, 2017). The artifacts consisted of one writing sample per student which were collected before the model was implemented, two or three weeks after the model was implemented, and then again at the end of implementation. The student surveys also took place before and after the implementation of Writers' Workshop. These surveys consisted of smiley faces on a Likert scale. There was a total of ten questions on student surveys. The researcher wanted to collect data in a way that established credibility. She did this by looking to the words of Hendricks (2017) when he states, "credibility, dependability, and confirmability can be established through triangulation, a process in which multiple forms of data are collected and analyzed" (p.71).

Data Analysis. Data was analyzed with mixed methods. The constant comparative method, with initial coding followed by creating hierarchies or categories and supporting codes (Hubbard & Power, 2003). For transcribed data such as the interviews and surveys, 15 to 20 level 1 codes that emerged in the first 20% of the data were used to code the remaining 80% of the data (Tracy, 2013). Then the researcher developed three to five level 2 codes. The level 1 and 2 codes were important and recurring themes found within the data. These codes are displayed in a codebook (see Appendix A), that provides a color-coded list, definition, and example of corresponding data within the text. The themes that appeared from the coding of the data determined what additional data was collected. Memos were written for all level two codes. This method was how the focus group interviews and student surveys were analyzed.

Student artifacts were analyzed based on the quantity (number of words minus any excessive repetition of words) written. Writing artifacts were taken before, during, and after implementation. Each artifact was given a total number of words written. The samples for all students during each of the three samples were averaged to get an idea of the average

number of words written by the class as a whole. The researcher also took an average of the artifacts taken before implementation and samples during and after so that I could compare numbers before implementation against during and after. The Writers' Workshop survey was analyzed through a Likert scale. Each question was rated one through four and then students were given a total number at the end. The higher the total number, the more positive perception of writing students had. The lower the total number reflected a more negative perception of writing.

Results and Discussion

Through data collection and analysis three major themes emerged from this research: struggles in writing, attitudes about methods used during writing, and understanding writing practices. These major themes were developed using focus group interviews with the teachers/aides and the students, student artifacts, and student survey responses. There were two aides, one teacher and me, the researcher in the study. Since both aides took part in many teaching activities they are referred to as teachers in the following findings and implications.

Struggles in Writing. During the before implementation focus group interviews with both teachers and students, the researcher found many struggles in writing mentioned. A few struggles mentioned by teachers, were a reliance on adults for editing, handwriting or spelling barriers, struggles in punctuation, stuck on a thought frequently, and some dependency displayed through not using environmental print. The students described many of these same struggles in writing as well. One similar struggle was a will to learn handwriting. Teachers stated that students "struggled a little bit more with just the letters." Students also made their own statements regarding the issue. When asked what they had to get help with during writing, one student stated "numbers" and another said "the letters." Another common struggle addressed by teachers and students was punctuation. An example of this struggle being portrayed was when a teacher stated, "I think they get stuck on punctuation" when asked why students seemed to just be being stuck in general. Students were able to identify this as a struggle as well. When asked what was hard about writing and what they needed help with, one student responded "periods." Another student gave an example of this specific theme when she described liking the new method of learning punctuation because it was easier, meaning that it was hard at some point before implementation.

The last struggle observed from the research was that students disliked productive struggle. This was hard to find because the theme hid itself in comments from students about teachers being mean, not giving them help right away, or teachers yelling at them and making faces. Students made these comments frequently, so naturally the researcher had to figure out why. With much reflection, the researcher was able to determine that many of the instances students were speaking of were dramatized events in which teachers were pushing a little bit more of a productive struggle model for students. When students had to work harder at spelling by using environmental print or other resources, they became frustrated and assumed teachers were being mean. A few of these statements were as

follows: “Mr. Holland doesn’t help me sometimes when I need help”, “Mr. Holland be like ya’ll try to do it ya’ll selves”, “He tries to make us sound it out.” Overall, you would think we are just fire and brimstone in this classroom, but after reflection of these moments an underlying theme appeared of students seeing our push towards the zone of proximal development as mean. This was one of the most eye opening, and interesting codes found in the data. Students were being required to work more independently on their writing, and they in turn took it as teachers being “mean”.

When interviewed after the implementation, many of these struggles were no longer mentioned by teachers or students. One specific struggle addressed by both teachers and students afterward was getting stuck on a thought. The teachers discussed how drawing pictures and having an idea preplanned to write about seemed to help the students not get to writing time and just be stuck. A benefit of Writers’ Workshop was the fact that students had next steps ready to go when they did get stuck. For example, when they were done drafting there was a step of revising, then they were to edit and so on. Students did not have to feel stuck because the Writers’ Workshop model gave them scaffolding and ideas of where to go next in their writing. Students hardly mentioned at all being stuck and that being an issue for them after the implementation, and teachers stated it was happening less. Students still got stuck here and there; however, redirecting them became much easier than previously. The struggle of handwriting and wanting to learn it specifically did not present itself much after implementing Writers’ Workshop either. My thoughts are that students, and teachers both viewed writing as much more than words on paper, but rather saw it as a multifaceted craft in which the handwriting itself is just one small piece of that craft.

Students still needed help with going through the writing process steps. This could have resolved itself with more time practicing the workshop model. This answers the research question of what happens when a Writers’ Workshop is implemented in a special education classroom during writing time, by showing us that their struggles in writing were addressed to some extent. This code is prevalent throughout the data; however, what it was specifically addressing seemed to have changed after Writers’ Workshop was implemented. This leads me to believe that struggles previously mentioned are no longer as much of an endeavor to students as present difficulties, such as mindset that still present in the after-implementation interviews.

This theme of struggles in writing is significant to the study because it gets at the heart of teaching. We collect data to figure out where students are struggling and then, in turn, create a model that addresses their struggles. We wanted to know what happened if we implemented the model of Writers’ Workshop, and now we know. This model had the ability to address specific struggles that students presented in their interviews before implementation of Writers’ Workshop. The model appears to lend itself well to being able to address struggles, because it included a minilesson before students begin writing. In this minilesson teachers can target these specific struggles in precise ways. It even gave the opportunity for students to see it done in the teacher’s writing before they tried practicing it

on their own. This scaffolding is what I believed to be helpful in addressing these struggles as the Writers' Workshop was implemented.

Attitudes About Methods Used During Writing. Students' attitudes about Writers' Workshop developed as a strong theme in the data. Much of the data used for this specific theme was found throughout interviews and surveys. As the after-implementation data was indexed and read through, it was found that students and teachers had many opinions on different methods or techniques used during the implementation of Writers' Workshop.

The students and teachers did, however, describe thoughts about methods that could be tried or were valued in the before and after implementation interviews. Teachers stated, "It helps dividing it up, and it's giving them this little part to do and then you move on to the next little part." Another teacher gave opinions about the methods used when he stated, "You can work more at your own pace. So, like you said it's been good. I agree I like it." It was also mentioned by a teacher, "They like the sticky notes. They like doing that." Students described their attitudes towards methods used in the implementation as well. Students liked using special publishing paper. One specific student stated, "When we color paper" when asked, what was fun about writing? Another stated, "We needed to have our own folders." In referencing their writing folders where they had personal word walls.

The surveys showed that students had a slightly more positive outlook on fixing writing mistakes, planning writing, topics they get to write about, and displaying writing for others to see. These were all questions on the survey that addressed different methods used during the implementation of Writers' Workshop (see Appendix B). Methods used before implementation consisted of drawing after writing, reading writing to the class, using a sentence stem or prompt, and use of computers to do some editing every now and then. Methods that had many perceptions about them during the after-implementation interviews included the use of groups or flexible grouping, displaying work, drawing before writing, and even simple things like the use of sticky notes for revising and checklists for editing. When discussed, all of these methods were viewed with a positive perception. Students seemed to participate in and enjoy editing more when they had sticky notes. Another preferable method that was discussed earlier was drawing before writing. Many students took more ownership and got into the mindset of planning their stories and breaking down each step of the writing process, in turn aiding them from getting stuck as mentioned earlier. One teacher even discussed, "Um, like Dylan and Travis and several others have drawn the picture, and they have been able to explain more."

Another favored method used in the after-implementation interviews was the ability to choose where students could sit and the ability to have flexible groupings. Due to there only being four weeks, students were scaffolded by starting out in groups with a teacher for writing before moving onto independently working in an area of the room. They then began moving into being able to choose what teacher they worked with and whether they needed to work with a teacher. Having choice of where to sit did present some moderate behavior of wandering and not writing because of the loose structure. With more time to fully set up each step of Writers' Workshop and work out the kinks for the individuals in this classroom,

this behavior could have been resolved to some extent. These choices during writing time to me seemed to encourage slight misbehavior in work avoidance but encouraged almost every student to write more than previously, because they had nothing to argue with in a way. They chose where they were going to work, they chose what they would write about, and this resolved more work avoidance than it encouraged at times. All in all, many of the methods used in this Writers' Workshop model centered around choice, and they seemed to be beneficial.

Publishing, which occurred as part of Writers' Workshop, was positively received by students. The questions on the surveys also received more positive views than previously when asked about showing their work. The method used to display work in Writers' Workshop was colorful notebook paper and making a big deal about publishing a piece. It was hung on the wall; students were asked if they wanted it shown on the board after writing. Finishing a piece of writing was overall valued highly.

The major research question in this study was, what happened when Writers' Workshop was implemented. One of the sub-questions inquired about exactly what perceptions were before and after implementation. This theme answered the sub-question directly by showing us how teachers and students felt about the methods and strategies used throughout writing before and after implementing Writers' Workshop. An example of perceptions from students can be seen in Figure 1 of perceptions before and after Writers' Workshop with a survey. A higher number indicates more positive views. To find a further breakdown of the survey see Appendix C.

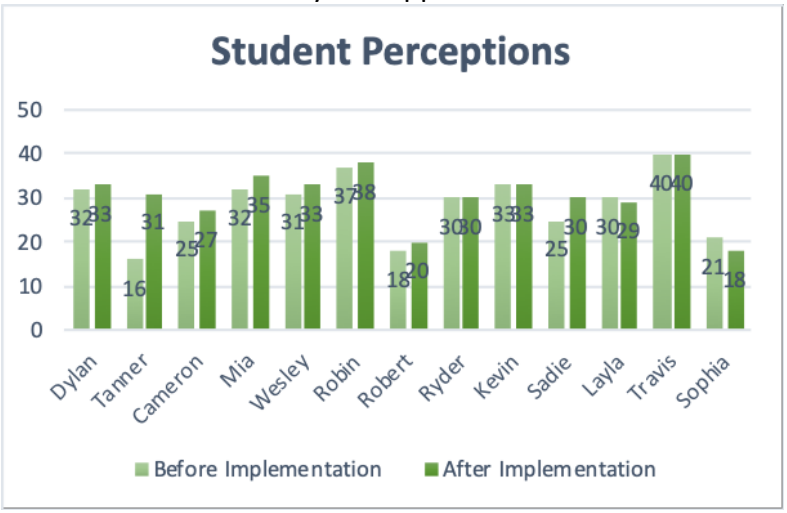

Figure 1. Survey results of student perceptions before and after implementing Writers' Workshop

As you can see in Figure 1 students generally perceived this model with more positive feelings than the previous model. By following this theme throughout the data, the researcher was able to determine the following perceptions: how writing was done before, what students and teachers would like writing to consist of, and even how new methods were seen by students and teachers. The main idea with this theme was to show how versatile Writers' Workshop makes writing. There are multitudes of methods that can be implemented because of the design of Writers' Workshop. It is flexible, and it easily incorporates what students and teachers need at different times.

Understanding Writing Practices. This describes what it takes to go through the process of writing in the classroom. This is what writing gets at, what writing was, and what it became. This is where many of the actual writing artifacts came into play, and the questions regarding writing itself in the interviews with students and teachers. The table in Appendix D shows the number of words produced by students and averages of the entire class on production of words before, during, and after implementation.

When implemented, students walked through their first story together as a class, and in the last sample of writing students were doing more writing processes on their own. Students at various points in the workshop were all at very different stages of writing. Therefore, the averages of the quantity of words produced needed to be provided so that it compared to journal prompts a little more fairly.

When the researcher references "writing practices" they are discussing the quality and depth of the actual writing from students, how much work teachers are having to commit towards writing time either before or during, the quantity of how much students are writing, and even what students are choosing to write about. For example, the theme of quality and depth of writing was discussed by a teacher when she stated, "Before we would get like one word out of him; this time it's more of a flow of thought." An example of the amount of work teachers had to commit towards writing is displayed by the following quote: "It is very time consuming, especially when you have three or four students wanting to know how to spell this or this word or that word, different words at one time."

Before implementation, students wrote about any number of prompts given to them. Many times, they would just finish the sentence stem and be done, so there was not much depth in their writing. Before implementing Writers' Workshop, teachers discussed how the time or work put in before writing was minimal; however, during writing time the amount of labor and time was significant as stated in the above quote regarding the time it took to commit towards actual writing time. The average number of words written before implementing Writers' Workshop was around ten to eleven (see Appendix D for exact percentages).

During and after implementing Writers' Workshop these writing practices changed. The quality and depth of the writing was deeper. Teachers discussed how before implementation we might get two or three words from a particular student. After implementation, we got more in-depth stories rather than a few words. Students told us the beginning, middle, and ends with some explanation in between making their stories deeper. As far as the amount of work and time put into writing, that changed slightly. There was a little more time required to plan for writing beforehand as compared to the previous model of journal prompts. Many of the teachers discussed students still needing help. What they needed help with seemed to change though. Students were needing more help with revising or editing and just minimal amounts of spelling. For example, a teacher stated, "They know it's supposed to be there. They know it goes somewhere, yeah. They are just still trying to figure out where, where does it go." This comment was about students using punctuation.

Students attempted their own spelling more frequently than before, but they still needed more guidance on what to revise or edit. Again, if the Writers' Workshop was implemented even longer, maybe students would get the hang of what to look for regarding revising or editing.

The quantity of writing changed significantly. Before implementing Writers' Workshop students were writing on average ten to eleven words. During and after implementation that average increased to around thirty-five words (see appendix D for exact percentages). The overall amount students were writing increased which I feel in turn helped students to write with better quality and depth. During after implementation interviews with teachers, it was discussed that students enjoyed choosing what to write about and wrote at deeper levels when it was something familiar to them. As stated in the before implementation interviews, many comments mentioned that the writing of these students was tied to their experiences, and this finding supports those statements.

This theme specifically addresses the research sub-question of does the model increase the amount of writing by students? It also even goes deeper into that question by answering what helped the students write more, and what the quality of that writing actually was. This theme relates to the research question about perceptions because in many instances, teachers discussed their perceptions about the students' physical writing as well as factors like time or choice that enhanced that writing in different aspects. This theme is one of the most significant to the study, because we found in the data that students' quality and quantity of writing seemed to have increased.

Implications

This model of writing has a lot of moving pieces, and it can be very flexible. The researcher was initially drawn to this model because of students' enthusiasm she had seen in previous placements while using it. The researcher also tried to think of ways to address the students' struggles that were noticed such as punctuation, spacing, depth, details, and much more. This model gave a chance to address these specific struggles while fostering a love for writing and "becoming authors" of their own.

When researching Writers' Workshop being used in special education, little research was found regarding the topic. The lack of research in this area leads the researcher to want to research this for herself and others to use in the future, because this model is not limited to a general education classroom.

Something the students and the researcher learned from this research project was that they all love the ability to choose what they write or even where they do their work. Being able to choose what they wanted to write about presented less disruptive behavior during writing; students had no grounds to disagree with what was being written, because they are the ones who made the initial choice of what they personally wanted. When researching anchor charts or different Writers' Workshop lessons it can be overwhelming. Just do it though, start the model with a short minilesson over a writing skill, do independent writing

if the students can, and then share good work. You do not have to do everything you see out there right away for any of this to work. Another major component of Writers' Workshop is to do conferencing with students. The researcher only got to do this at a very surface level, and the results of the research still showed a lot of growth.

The findings found in this study were that the model addressed many specific struggles students had such as getting stuck on a thought, focusing on learning handwriting to become a better writer, and even some punctuation struggles. Students and teachers were all found to like a variety of methods used in the Writers' Workshop model such as choice in groups, drawing before writing, and use of materials such as punctuation checklists or sticky notes for revising and editing. Other findings included more depth and quality in the writing and increased quantity of words written. Teachers discussed how Writers' Workshop was about the same amount of work in some ways, but easier in others. They stated that the work was more worth it though. Discussion from before implementation interviews found that students' writing seemed to be related to their language and experiences. This research showed us this to be a possibility, because when we gave them a choice in what to write about, they did reflect deeper thoughts and more quality in their writing.

Many conclusions can be drawn from this research, and one interesting conclusion is that students spent more time writing, but they did not seem to notice that their time requirement had lengthened. It can be concluded that this was because they were more engaged and less focused on what they had to do and rather what they were getting to participate in. The ability to teach specific writing skills with a minilesson before students write independently also helped them to focus on deeper aspects of writing such as details, structure, and getting their story across effectively. It seemed to help students and teachers focus less on getting something on paper and more about communicating their story in more effective ways. The reason why students and teachers liked many methods in the Writers' Workshop was because it gave students choice and power over their own writing. In the before implementation interviews students mentioned needing a lot of help and how they were frustrated when they did not get it. With Writers' Workshop they had to learn to self-regulate a little more and gained a sense of empowerment.

A few questions resulted from this research and would hopefully lead to further research in the future. One question would be what relationship does Writers' Workshop have with a growth mindset? Another would be to figure out whether students take more ownership with their writing in Writers' Workshop. My last question that resulted from this research is does an increase in writing quantity improve students' dexterity or does it cause them to be more frustrated?

Limitations

The limitations of this study were that it was only about four weeks long. This population and model typically need a lot of time to set up procedures, classroom management, and create a view of students becoming writers themselves. Another limitation would be that this was the researchers first time planning and implementing a Writers' Workshop from the

very beginning. Other limitations included the following: the sheer difference of the journal prompts used before implementation as well as the actual time spent doing writing changed significantly.

Conclusion

Overall, this study uncovered many foreseen and unexpected findings within writing time. The most unexpected finding was how students presented disliking a productive struggle and a lack of growth mindset as teachers pushed toward the zone of proximal development, requiring students to be more independent in their writing. The focus on handwriting seemed to disappear in after implementation interviews. Students, and teachers both viewed writing as much more than words on paper, but rather saw it as a multifaceted craft in which the handwriting itself is just one small piece of that craft. The ability to have minilessons helped the researcher to target specific struggles seen in students' writing. Teachers and students both valued choice in what to write about and flexibility in groupings or where to sit. They also valued multiple methods used during Writers' Workshop, such as publishing paper, editing checklists, writing folders with personal word walls, and even sticky notes for adding details. When disaggregated to just words on paper, students produced more words than in the previous model of using journal prompts. Students also produced writing with greater depth.

About the Author

Taylor Oliver is a special education teacher and graduate from Abilene Christian University. She received her bachelor's in science in 2019 and went on to complete her M.Ed. in teaching and learning in 2020. Taylor has a family dedicated to teaching all learners. While student teaching Taylor recognized an area of need and began researching possible solutions. This is where the research Implementing Writer's Workshop started. Taylor is a continual learner and searches for best practices to use in her classroom to further learning. Email: tdoliver232@gmail.com

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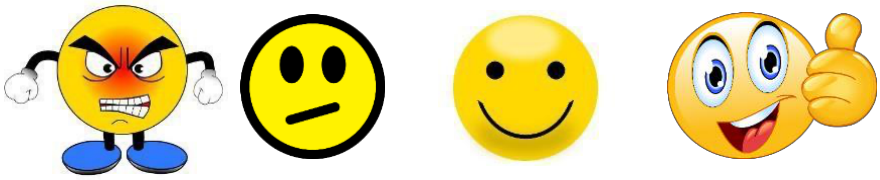
Appendix A: Codebook

CODEBOOK				
Color Code:	Level 2 Codes:	Level 1 Codes:	Definition of The Code:	Example of The Code:
_____	Struggles in Writing:		Referencing difficulties during writing time.	"Like they didn't know how to spell a word or they didn't have an idea and they just sit."
		Handwriting/Spelling Barrier	When physical handwriting or spelling words hinders thoughts or writing.	"Struggle a little bit more with uh just the letters…"
		Dependency Due to Not Using Environmental Print	Students rely on teachers for writing heavily due to not using words or print around them.	"Because they are not thinking of looking up there." (Pointed towards sight word wall in the room)
		Frequently Getting Stuck on A Thought	When students get a writer's block of sorts due to not being able to come up with an idea or spell a word.	"The thought they get stuck on, just a thought of what to write."
_____	Attitudes About Methods Used During Writing		References to structure, materials, or methods used in writing.	"drawn the picture and they have been able to explain more"

		Use of Various Materials/Methods Liked	The materials, practices, and methods used during writing time to teach and help students write.	"We needed to have our own folders. Yeah cause you say grab your little folder and go to your reading spot."
		Feel Good About Showing Work	The students describing how they feel about showing their finished and uncompleted work to peers or others.	"When they get to read our papers out in the hallways."
		Drawing With Writing Helpful	The Drawing of a picture for beginning, middle, and end of the story before beginning to write and how it was perceived by students and teachers.	"So, draw the pictures and you know in your stages and then do the writing. So, I think the planning part has been really good."
	Understanding Writing Practices		References to the physical writing content.	"everyone constantly needs help it's a very active…So, during writing is a lot of work."
		Quantity of Writing	Descriptions of how many words or how much students physically write.	"Uh just writing in general. I mean they used to write

				just one word."
		Writing About Familiar Things Easier (Choice)	The ability to choose what is written being well liked. Descriptions of students being able to write better work when it is familiar topics to them such as family or friends.	"Write about um if we like write about our friendships and stuff."

Appendix B: Writer's Workshop Survey



Very Angry **Upset** **Happy** **Excited**

1. How does writing make you feel?
2. How do you feel about fixing writing mistakes?
3. How do you feel when your writing is displayed for others to see?
4. How do you feel about the topics you get to write about?
5. How do you feel when you are asked to write a story?
6. How do you feel about planning a story to write?
7. How do you feel during writing time?
8. Do you feel like you get to write about what you want?
9. How do you feel about how much you learn during writing time?
10. How do you feel about reading your work to the class?

Appendix C: Writer's Workshop Perception Survey

Total Perception Score (Pre-Study)
32
16
25
32
31
37
18
30
33
25
30
40
21
Overall Score: 370

Total Perception Score (Post-Study)	
33	*
31	*
27	*
35	*
33	*
38	*
20	*
30	-
33	-
30	*
29	L

40	-
18	L
Overall Score: 397	
Red	Below 30
Yellow	30-35
Green	35 and up
*	Showed higher outlook
L	Lower outlook
-	No change

Appendix D: Writing Artifacts

Student	Writing Sample 1 (Before)	Writing Sample 2 (During)	Writing Sample 3 (After)	Sample 2 & 3 Averaged	Average Growth/Sample 1 Difference
OVERALL AVERAGES	10.77 Words	33.15 Words	37.31 Words	35.23 Words	24.50 Average Difference

- I felt it fair to provide an average of sample 2 and 3 because students received various levels of assistance during those times and were at various stages in the process of writing.
- I also felt it necessary for overall averages because the Writers' Workshop model did allow more time for writing than the first sample provided, and I felt this made the significant differences in the number of words written a little less inflated due to students solely having more time.

IMPROVING INTERIOR DESIGN WRITING THROUGH RUBRIC-GUIDED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES: AN ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine the creation and implementation of writing assignments in an interior design class while examining the application of an interior-design specific writing rubric through an action research project in the college classroom. We piloted the usefulness of the rubric in an interior design classroom through direct instruction, guided practice, and a final writing product assessed by the rubric. Participants in the study were 21 interior design undergraduate students. Analysis of student writing suggested that the rubric was effective in assessing interior design specific writing. Findings led to the adaptation of the rubric to be used in the interior design higher education classroom. This study contributes to a growing research segment of interior design-specific scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL) research and action research literature by demonstrating the development and testing of a writing specific rubric in professional and trade-specific higher education courses.

Keywords: teacher action research, rubric, interior design, writing instruction

Introduction

Writing has been increasingly included in interior design curricula as the field has sought to standardize professional preparation programs (Cross, 2001). The importance of writing is reinforced by the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA), the leading accreditation agency for interior design programs in the United States and Canada. CIDA takes into consideration the written communication skills needed to prepare students for the professional world. Standard nine in the CIDA 2018 Professional Standards requires that programs prepare graduates to be “effective communicators and are able to deliver a compelling presentation visually and verbally, as well as in writing” (CIDA, 2017, p. II-23). As a result of this focus on writing, “a body of intellectually tough, analytic, partly formalizable, partly empirical, teachable doctrine about the design process” (Simon, 1969, p.113)

emerged in the 1960's. However, despite this increased focus on writing there is still a need for more instruction on the ability to communicate effectively and professionally in interior design, which is evidenced in CIDA's increased focus on writing standards (CIDA, 2016; Lippincott, 2015).

In this action research project, we sought to extend the body of knowledge on interior design writing instruction by the creation and application of an Interior Design writing rubric that sought to transparently develop and assess descriptive writing skills. Specifically, we developed and implemented three interior design-focused, descriptive writing assignments in a sophomore level course at a southern land-grant institution (hereafter referred to as LGU; pseudonym). The significance of implementing the writing lessons was to provide a method to evaluate, communicate and apply the rubric. Additionally, we aimed to contribute to the scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL) and action research literature by demonstrating the creation and application of a field-specific writing rubric.

Literature Review

The ability to produce an error-free written document is often described as a crucial life skill, because individuals frequently encounter situations that require written explanations both professionally and personally (e.g., emails, memos, reports); yet, writing is often seen as a product with training separate from and outside of the domain of field-specific content and critical thinking instruction (Dalporto, 2013; Fulford, 2016; Spear & Fields, 2015). As a result, industry professionals and accrediting organizations have made efforts to bring writing instruction into field-specific classrooms. This has prompted many higher education institutions to create centers to assist students with learning and practicing field-specific writing skills (Fulford, 2016). For example, the Writing-Enriched Curriculum model has faculty taking a more active role in adding writing to college classrooms ("Writing-Enriched Curriculum," n.d.). Research suggests that incorporating writing across the curriculum leads to field-specific writing skills and aids in the development of higher order thinking skills, which are developed through writing assignments that challenge students to apply and communicate course content to real world examples (Fulwiler, 1987; Guerin et al., 1999; Nevid et al., 2017). In this way, writing is both a skill and a process that leads to improved preparation for the profession.

Writing-to-Learn. Writing assignments have been found to encourage the cognitive process of learning as well as content knowledge construction (Bangert-Drowns et al., 2004; Buehl, 1996; Meyer et al., 2007). Specifically, research suggests that writing assignments enhance student outcomes on lower-level exams, lead to better retention of course material, and deeper understanding of course content (Bangert-Drowns et al., 2004; Nevid et al., 2017). For example, in an assessment of a Writing Across the Curriculum assignment that incorporated writing into a life-span development course, Meyer et al. (2007) found that student perceptions of understanding and ability to apply of course content was improved. Second, writing-to-learn assignments can increase a student's ability to communicate learned course concepts, as Guerin et al. (1999) found in their quasi-experimental examination of writing-to-learn concepts in an Introduction to the Designed Environment

course. Finally, Nevid et al. (2017) found that writing assignments that required higher order thinking by applying course content to real world examples led to improved student exam performance as compared to writing assignments that required lower-level thinking skills (as defined by Bloom's Taxonomy). In sum, research suggests that writing-to-learn assignments can help students learn course content and key critical thinking skills (Fulwiler, 1987; Gingerich et al., 2014; McDermott, 2010). Additionally, writing assignments, when used as formative assessment, require all students to participate, which gives the instructor the opportunity to assess both writing and content instruction through writing and content learning (Elbow, 1993).

Writing Rubrics. Evaluating writing assignments can be time consuming, inconsistent, and subjective (Bean, 2011; Svinicki & McKeachie, 2011). Rubrics can help to mitigate some of those issues. Literature on the use of qualitative feedback in writing instruction (Alvarez et al., 2012) suggests to us that rubrics allow for a more transparent grading process. Additionally, rubrics have the potential to assist in assessment (Reddy & Andrade, 2010) and aid students in understanding the assigned task (Reddy & Andrade, 2010). According to Svinicki and McKeachie (2011), an effective rubric includes key requirements of the assignment and how those factor into the grade; an effective writing rubric specifies all of the traits desired in the response and the criteria for how it should be written (Panadero & Jonsson, 2013; Svinicki & McKeachie, 2011). Traditionally, a rubric consists of three evaluation tools: criteria, definitions, and scoring (Reddy & Andrade, 2010). The ultimate goal of rubric design is reliability and validity; in theory, all students who perform similarly should get the same grade (Svinicki & McKeachie, 2011). A rubric with thoroughly developed categories will help ensure reliability levels (Moskal & Leydens, 2000).

Writing in the Interior Design Classroom. Although interior design is a visually dominated field and curriculum, writing is a key aspect of this profession. Successful design professionals must be able to explain in written and oral communication the design concept and execution (Friedman, 2000). Yet, teachers rarely emphasize writing proficiency when teaching design (Guerin et al., 1999; Gulwadi, 2008; Kosidowski, 1996). Existing research on the inclusion of writing in interior design instruction indicates that writing can be effective in promoting content learning. For example, Gulwadi (2008) found that the addition of reflective journaling improved student comprehension of sustainable design. Further, Kosidowski (1996) reporting on the need to include reflective writing in another design field, architecture, stated that the use of a design notebook required students to "take risks, question their process, see through different ideas, define and redefine the principles behind a design" (p. 5). Finally, Guerin et al. (1999) found that the inclusion of writing-to-learn content in an interior design classroom led to increased content learning.
Initial research suggests that the inclusion of writing in the design classroom is promising for student engagement and course content learning, yet the limited research on writing in the design classroom has focused on writing-to-learn assignments that do not necessarily focus on the develop of specific writing skills. A key writing product that interior design students must learn to master are design rationales. A design rationale is one component of a design proposal; it is a written place for a designer to fill in knowledge gaps and details that a visual alone cannot capture. A successful design rationale describes the proposed project and

crafts an effective argument for the merits of the proposal and design decisions (Beecher, 2006). As writing and critical thinking skills are similarly important for interior design students, incorporating writing into their training helps students to be able to apply course content to their applied skills, which is demonstrated, in part, through written design concepts (Gingerich et al., 2014; McDermott, 2010).

We designed this study to create an interior design specific rubric to give students the tools to create a strong, well-written design document. Specifically, we developed an interior design rationale rubric and then designed classroom activities that challenged students to write design rationales that met the rubric requirements. To scaffold rubric writing, we began with in-class instruction on the rubric criteria, progressed to in-class practice with the rubric, and finished with independent writing assignments. This progression across the semester was designed to provide students guided practice in writing detailed, illustrative design rationales (Stewart et al., 2010).

Methodology

Action research is a practical, cyclical research method that typically arises from a problem in which the researcher is directly involved; action research inquiries collect and implement evidence-based interventions to respond to a problem (Casey & Evans, 2017). Frequently, action research relies on a classroom instructor to be both teacher and researcher (Kuhne & Quigley, 1997). According to Susman and Evered (1978) action research has five stages: diagnosing, action planning, taking-action, evaluation and specifying learning (see Figure 1). Action research is guided by the identification of a teaching or learning problem (Graca et al., 2018; Olesen & Myers, 1999; Swann, 2002). The college classroom is an ideal place to conduct action research, because a classroom can support the active experimentation of new curriculum and many instructors are trained researchers (Casey & Evans, 2017).

Figure 1. Action Research Cycle Model From "An Assessment of The Scientific Merits of Action Research by G. I. Susman & R. D. Evered, 1978, Administrative Science Quarterly, 23(4), p. 588.

In this action research study, we explored the implementation of an interior design-specific writing rubric through writing assignments in LGU's (pseudonym) interior design program. Although LGU's interior design program was a CIDA accredited program and therefore subject to CIDA standards, writing had often only been included in the curriculum using design rationales. Design rationales are a written statement that document the design process and any design decisions. In the LGU program, design rationales were often assigned as a part of upper-level class projects (e.g., health care and residential design), yet there was limited direct instruction on how to write design rationales and limited inclusion of writing in the curriculum. To better meet CIDA standards on writing, we followed Susman and Evered's (1978) five-stage model of action research to test the effectiveness of the design and implementation of a writing rubric in a lower-level design classroom. Stage 1: Diagnosis: We began by diagnosing the program guided by Abbi-Storm's personal experiences within the interior design classroom at LGU helped identify the problem as a need for a writing specific rubric. Stage 2: Action Plan: We consulted the literature to identify methods to improve field-specific writing skills. As a result, we identified the need for a design rationale rubric with specific instructional methods to help students develop their writing skills. Stage 2 guided the development of our research question: "How does the development and use of a design-focused rubric inform student writing in a sophomore interior design course? Stage 3: Taking-action: We created a rubric and implemented the rubric in classroom writing activities and assessments. Stage 4: Evaluation: We evaluated the development of student writing across the semester using the rubric. Stage 5: Specifying Learning: Finally, we reflected on the effectiveness of the rubric and associated classroom activities to identify areas for improvement. Revisiting the literature, we began the action research cycle anew and revised the rubric to better guide and assess student writing.

Stage 3: Rubric Development. After consulting generic writing rubrics to understand the basic structure of effective rubrics (e.g., Bean, 2011) and reviewing the LGU interior design e-portfolio rubric, Abbi-Storm developed a foundational rubric. That existing rubric outlined the grading levels used in the design rational rubric: Novice, Developing, and Professional. Laura reviewed the draft and provided guidance and suggestions at each stage of the rubric development process. After the foundational rubric was established, Abbi-Storm met with the associate director of LGU's campus-writing center. Guided by a list of desired skills that should be evident in an effective design rationale, the associate director and Abbi-Storm revised the first draft of the rubric and formalized the four interior design specific categories included in the final rubric: Professional Terminology, Clarity of Descriptions, Audience, and Justification of Rationale.

Professional terminology. Using interior design specific language is a way for students to describe their work through writing while demonstrating their professional knowledge. As students develop as designers, they should simultaneously develop their professional language skills. The use of appropriate professional terminology demonstrates the student understands design principles and is an important aspect of professional design (Gulwadi, 2008).

Clarity of descriptions. A clear design description should include the specifics of the design and be understood without question by a reader. Design descriptions should logically flow from one aspect to another and explain the concept of the design using design terminology in a way that is understood by a non-technical audience (McKeachie, 2014).

Audience. Effective writing considers the audience in tone (Long, 1980). In a design rationale, students should avoid the use of jargon while clearly communicating their designs to industry professionals and non-interior design individuals.

Justification of rationale. Building on the previous categories, a strong Justification of Rationale is assessed using descriptive, imaginative language that creates a clear picture of the design. A design rationale should clearly describe the reasoning behind the selection of each element of the design; students should describe all the complexities and limitations of the design. See Table 1 for the first draft of the rubric.

Table 1: Interior Design Writing Specific Rubric

	Novice (Minimal Evidence) Grade: C	Developing (Moderate Evidence) Grade: B	Professional (Substantial Evidence) Grade: A
Audience	Demonstrates minimal attention to context as it relates to the audience and to the assigned tasks(s).	Demonstrates awareness of context as it relates to the audience and to the assigned tasks(s). (e.g., begins to show awareness of audience's perceptions and assumptions).	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context as it relates to the audience and is responsive to the assigned task(s).
Professional Terminology	Uses appropriate and relevant terminology to develop simple principles of design ideas in some parts of the work.	Uses appropriate and relevant terminology to develop and explore principles of design ideas through most of the work.	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling terminology to illustrate mastery of principles of design, conveying the writer's understanding, and shaping the whole work.
Clarity of Description	Uses language that sometimes impedes clarity because of errors in usage.	Uses language that generally conveys description to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors.	Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates description to readers with clarity and fluency and is virtually error- free.
Justification of Rationale	Design rationale is stated but is simplistic and obvious.	Design rationale takes into account the complexities of the design. Limited description of the complexities.	Design rationale is imaginative, taking into account the complexities of the design. Limits of the design are acknowledged.

*Stage 3: Procedures***.** The study sample consisted of the interior design sophomore students in a face-to-face color theory class. All participants were 19 years of age or older, and only students enrolled in the color theory class Spring 2018 semester participated. The class had a total of 31 students; only 21 students chose to participate in the study, so the sample size for this study was 21 students. The IRB Board approved this study. We strove to protect the anonymity of participants by removing any identifying information from writing samples and reporting data in the aggregate. Finally, when students were asked to participate and told more about the study, Abbi-Storm ensured that students knew that their participation was not linked, in any way, to the course grade.

Positionality. Abbi-Storm was a doctoral student in a human science program at LGU. She began this action research project as a course requirement for a certificate in university teaching. Laura was an assistant professor in the Higher Education Administration program and taught the practicum course that this action research project was assigned. Abbi-Storm and Laura discussed the framework of this study including design, collection, and analysis. Abbi-Storm conducted the study, analyzed the data, and wrote the first draft of this manuscript. Laura provided editing and feedback at each stage of the writing process.

Classroom Activities and Assignments. Throughout the semester all students participated in three writing lessons that focused on descriptive writing and peer feedback techniques. Only the work of students who opted to participate in the study were analyzed as a part of this manuscript. The design rationale rubric guided the development of each lesson and was used to assess the final writing assignment for a grade. By providing an opportunity for students to develop their writing skills throughout the semester, we anticipated overall quality of writing in the final assignment to be positively impacted. We discussed each writing lesson, followed by an analysis of the rubric as a grading tool.

Lesson one. During the first lesson, Abbi-Storm began class with a brief lecture on descriptive language, the five senses, and how they connect. Students then created a list of words or feelings that came to mind while listening to an audio clip of ocean waves. The listening exercise informed a class discussion using student examples from the listening exercise on how the five senses could enhance the description of the beach or ocean. After this discussion, the class divided into five groups; each group was given an image of an interior space ranging from a mid-century kitchen to stone bathroom built in a cave and instructed to write a description of that particular interior space using their five senses. At the end of class, each group gave a quick oral presentation of their written description of the assigned room. After each group's oral presentation, the class discussed the descriptions

adding and arguing any other descriptive words related to the particular room. Students used words such as strong, cool, grandma, and showy to describe the various rooms shown.

Lesson two. Lesson two occurred two days later in a lecture-style lesson. Abbi-Storm lectured on peer feedback and criticism techniques, specifically two stars and a wish, which is a peer feedback method that requires the peer reviewer to note two things the writer did well and one that could be improved when providing feedback. Students also learned praise, question, polish (PQP), another feedback method. Abbi-Storm then read the design rationale rubric to the class while projecting the rubric on the board for students to see. Finally, Abbi-Storm presented writing examples, written by herself, on the board. Students practiced giving feedback on the samples and using the rubric; each student had an opportunity to critique a writing sample.

Lesson three. The third writing lesson asked students to read "Citrus Punch" in *Interior Design Homes* magazine, an article that followed Dutch-born designer Ghislaine Vinas design process in a Montauk, New York home. Students were given five minutes to write a summary of the article, paying specific attention to design details and the decision process leading to the design in the article. Each student then had three minutes to provide feedback on a peer's summary. This "freewriting" technique is called inkshedding, developed by Russ Hunt and Jim Reither in the 1980s (Lang, 2008). Previously in the semester, students had completed a modular home design project compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). At the conclusion of the lesson, students were tasked with writing a design rationale explaining their modular home design and the decisions that guided it. Knowing the rubric would be used in grading, students were given a copy of the rubric as a writing tool and had five days to complete the assignment. The final writing assignment completed after lesson three had students write a complete design rationale for a modular home they had designed.

Discussion questions. In addition to the writing lessons, students also participated in weekly, online discussion posts (see Table 2). Similar to the writing lessons, the discussion questions provided another opportunity for students to develop their writing skills. These discussion questions were meant to prompt student thinking and provide an opportunity to write descriptively. Students responded to each discussion post and provided constructive feedback responses via the discussion board to two peers. Discussion prompts were posted on Wednesdays, students had until Friday to post their own response and given the weekend to provide feedback for their peers. The feedback response ensured that students were not only writing their own response but reading peer responses as well.

Table 2: Discussion Questions

Date	Discussion Question
February 14th	Why do you want to be an interior designer?

February 21st	Share your opinion: What is a design trend you like or a trend you think has been overdone. Describe the trend and give reasons why you have that opinion.
February 28th	Provide three interior designers or architects you love and reasons why you chose them.
March 7th	Consider these questions and respond – What is a design process? What's your design process? How do you think designers decide on their design process?
March 21st	Describe common misconceptions of designers and why you think those exist.
March 28th	Research interviews from magazines or papers. Find and list 10 interview questions that you might be asked in an interior design interview.

Data Analysis. Written assignments were submitted in an online Learning Management System (LMS). Separate from the grading process, blinded papers were assessed using the design rationale rubric. Abbi-Storm read each submitted design rationale twice to carefully consider each rubric category. After the rationales were assessed, the course supervisor separated the consented rubrics from the non-consented rubrics. Only those rubrics consented for use by the student were used in the analysis of the assignment. Next, we describe how each category was assessed by looking at student examples from the final writing assignment.

Results

Audience. This category asked students to demonstrate a complete understanding of the topic and the audience that would be reading the document. Students were instructed that Abbi-Storm had limited interior design knowledge and did not know what 'symmetrical balance' was or how it reflected the 'calmness' of the space. One student started her rationale by explaining her design process; "when designing anything, one has to put themselves in the perspective of the people that will be using it." This sentence demonstrated how the writer started the particular design process and indicated an awareness of the audience. Second, a rationale read: "The floor was covered in a wood patterned LVT and the walls have a regular grade paint covering." While this sentence gave some details of the room, it used interior design jargon like 'LVT.' This sentence would keep a student from scoring Professional in Audience because an average reader might not know what 'LVT' flooring describes. Finally, a rationale read: "An important part of my space planning process was to ensure that my Clayton Homes was ADA, meaning completely accessible for anyone in a wheelchair." This sentence also used an abbreviation but explained what ADA meant as a designer. This student understood the reader might not know what ADA meant and explained how this impacted the design, which resulted in a ranking of Professional in the Audience category.

Clarity of description. This category asked students to use descriptive language, while keeping their design explanation clear and error-free: a reader should be able to picture the spacing of furniture around the modular home with ease. This student example, "the master bedroom allows the space for the turning radius of a wheelchair next to the bed and a wheelchair turning radius in front of the master bathroom toilet and shower as well as inside the shower," was scored as Professional in clarity of description because the language was clear, error-free, and painted a picture of the space. Another rationale read: "To make this challenge even more difficult, hallways and door openings and walkways all have to be at least 3 feet to compensate for wheelchairs." In this example, the student paraphrased the assignment instructions and gave the parameters of the design but did not describe the designed space. This resulted in a score of novice; a novice score in clarity of description has errors that could impede clarity.

Justification of rationale. To receive a high score in Justification, the rubric asked students to be imaginative but realistic about the limits of physically designing a space. For example, one rationale read: "Blue and grey tones are featured as the main colors of the space, keeping the design natural and rustic." This is a student writing sample from a rationale that received a novice score; while the student described the room, they did not divulge the reasoning behind those design elements. In contrast, this student example, "I let my color palette be influenced by the surrounding nature I see when I am driving down Gulf Shore Drive to my favorite beach spot," is a clearer example of why design colors were chosen for a space. Finally, one rationale read: "I had to make sacrifices in some parts of the design in order to make other parts how I wanted them." The Professional level in the rubric stated that the writer should acknowledge the limits of the design. While this student used their own taste as a justification, they did not go into details about how those sacrifices affected the design, so they did not achieve a Professional rating.

Professional terminology. To score Professional in this category, student writing should use interior design specific language in a way that is still accessible for those outside of design fields, such as future customers. For example, one rational read: "This would maintain a balanced space, while not being too overpowering and implementing variety." This student used the interior design specific language appropriately, but because it did not make the language accessible, it was scored as Developing. In contrast, another rationale read: "In order to create a balanced layout, it takes strategic planning. The marriage line, where the two halves of the building connect, is very important." This student used interior design specific information in a way that was accessible to someone without a design background and was scored as Professional.

Stage 4: Evaluation. The main purpose of this action research project was to explore the use of a writing-focused, interior design rubric and rubric-focused writing course activities to develop the writing skills of sophomore interior design students. Analysis of observational data suggested that during the semester, student attitudes towards descriptive writing became more welcoming as they worked on individual and group writing assignments. Analysis of the final writing assignment and rubric data indicated that the rubric informed,

at least in part, completion of the assignment based on the high number of professional and developing scores.

Student Scores. Five students achieved professional marks on all four categories; the remaining students had varied ratings (see Table 3). Students performed best at "Audience" with twelve students achieving professional and nine achieved developing marks. "Clarity of Description" had the next highest marks; twelve students achieved professional marks, eight achieved developing, and one student scored novice. The category with the most novice marks was "Justification of Rationale" with seven scores, followed by "Professional Terminology" with six.

Table 3: Frequency of Scores

	Novice (Minimal Evidence) Grade: C	Developing (Moderate Evidence) Grade: B	Professional (Substantial Evidence) Grade: A
Audience		9	12
Professional Terminology	6	8	7
Clarity of Description	1	8	12
Justification of Rationale	7	7	7

When analyzing the frequency table, "Audience" and "Clarity of Description" occurred most frequently. However, six students received a Novice score in "Professional Terminology," which suggests that students had not learned to use Professional Terminology in their design rationales. Further, "Justification of Rationale" was the lowest score overall. It was the only grading category that sought to judge student writing as whole. As a result, when other scores are low, Justification of Rationale should also be low. Finally, while 12 students achieved professional marks on "Clarity of Description," nine students scored lower and can still use improvement. Although grammar cannot be taught in every college class, this suggests that instructors can encourage students to use on-campus resources dedicated to

improving writing. By improving the scores in these two categories, overall scores in "Justification of Rationale" would also improve.

Stage 5: Specifying Learning. After reviewing student scores, we determined that the rubric was effective in assessing student writing. The grading categories provided essential assessment guidelines that led to reliable cross-student grading and clearly directed student writing. However, based on the results, there are several areas where the rubric can be improved. First, student grammar and conventions influenced each rubric category yet was not reflected in the rubric. We suggest that overall writing competency will be better reflected in rubric scores if a fifth grading category was added to the rubric. A writing competency category would give students and instructors guidelines on writing quality as a whole and would elevate the effectiveness of the rubric as a grading tool. Second, the rubric only used letter grades; future rubrics should also include a numerical scale to help with distributing total grades and exploring nuances within grade levels. The revised rubric (see Table 4) considers the suggestions learned throughout the current study to present a final design rationale rubric. This revised rubric represents the final stage of one action research cycle and the first stage of the next. Future research will explore the usefulness of this rubric in directing and developing student writing skills. In the next stage of research and in the use of this rubric, we suggest that providing a written example for each category would be helpful to direct student writing. Research shows that a rubric is a reliable assessment tool; by conducting future action research projects implementing the rubric, the action research cycle will be complete; this will ultimately help strengthen the rubric as an assessment tool.

Table 4: Revise Interior Design Writing Specific Rubric

	Novice (Minimal Evidence) Grade: C 70-79	Developing (Moderate Evidence) Grade: B 80-89	Professional (Substantial Evidence) Grade: A 90-100
Audience	Demonstrates minimal attention to context as it relates to the audience and to the assigned tasks(s).	Demonstrates awareness of context as it relates to the audience and to the assigned tasks(s). (e.g., begins to show awareness of audience's perceptions and assumptions).	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of context as it relates to the audience and is responsive to the assigned task(s).
Professional Terminology	Uses appropriate and relevant terminology to develop simple principles of design ideas in some parts of the work.	Uses appropriate and relevant terminology to develop and explore principles of design ideas through most of the work.	Uses appropriate, relevant, and compelling terminology to illustrate mastery of principles of design, conveying the writer's understanding, and shaping the whole work.
Clarity of Description	Uses language that sometimes impedes clarity because of errors in usage.	Uses language that generally conveys description to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors.	Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates description to readers with clarity and fluency and is virtually error- free.

Justification of Rationale	Design rationale is stated but is simplistic and obvious.	Design rationale takes into account the complexities of the design. Limited description of the complexities.	Design rationale is imaginative, taking into account the complexities of the design. Limits of the design are acknowledged.
Overall Writing Competency	Design rationale fails to address the four rubric categories with significant errors in grammar and cognition.	Design rationale demonstrates some but not all aspects of the four rubric categories, with grammatic and cognitive errors.	All four rubric categories are demonstrated within the design rationale in a well thought out, deliberate and grammar free document.

Discussion

When looking further at student performance, it is possible that scores in Justification of Rationale were lowest because of the grade level of student. Student participants had only been studying interior design for two years and were still developing their design philosophy; it may have been difficult to write in an inspiring way when learning how to apply foundational knowledge. We interpreted the lower scores in Professional Terminology similarly; to achieve a professional score in Professional Terminology, students needed to use relevant and compelling terminology. However, they may not have developed industry-specific language at this point in their education. Significantly, these writing assignments, while designed to help students learn design-specific writing skills, could also help students learn design terminology and concepts more deeply as seen in previous research that linked writing to critical thinking skills (Bangert-Drowns et al., 2004; Nevid et al., 2017). Finally, writing should become a larger part of interior design courses, and instruction should start in the first interior design courses of a plan of study. These findings echo the larger body of literature that emphasizes the importance of incorporating writing into field- and major-specific courses to improve overall writing (Fulwiler, 1987; Guerin et al., 1999; Nevid et al., 2017)

Limitations

This particular action research project was the first of its kind for the interior design department at LGU; for that reason, this study lacked a baseline assessment of writing skills. A thorough analysis of writing skills is limiting without a baseline of writing skills of the study participants. Further, the writing assignments reviewed in this study were not written into the course syllabus. This may have negatively impacted student motivation to complete the writing assignments. Putting assignments into the syllabus creates a contract between teacher and student, which could have positive effects on assignment submission rates.

Further, students in interior design often have several projects going at once. Spacing out writing assignments according to the projects due in other courses could also have a positive impact on student motivation and engagement in the writing assignment. Literature suggests that qualitative feedback can make the grading process more transparent (Alvarez et al., 2012); we anticipated that students performed better knowing the grading categories before writing. However, in future studies writing assignments should be frequently administered, and the rubric should be used in earlier in the grading process, giving students an opportunity to learn what exactly is expected in their work. Further, prior research has found that frequent low-stake writing assignments help students improve their high-stakes writing (Svinicki & McKeachie, 2014). The weekly discussion posts served as low-stakes writing assignments throughout the course of the semester. While determining causal relationships between teaching methods and student performance was not the purpose of this study, we did see an overall improvement in student writing skills across the semester. However, it cannot be concluded that the writing exercises in this course led to this improvement in writing.

Conclusion

In summary, the current action research project contributed to interior design education in three ways. First, we suggest that when working with busy interior design students, the best way to introduce writing assignments is to include them into the syllabus and review them at the beginning of the semester. Second, interior design writing research is limited; by taking on this project we hope to encourage other interior design educators to not only add more writing into their course, but to share that information with other researchers. Lastly, we have identified an interior design, descriptive writing rubric that could be used across interior design courses. This is a major contribution from this study. A rubric can help to make the assessment process transparent and create an environment that supports teaching and learning for both students and instructors; this writing rubric is a pedagogical tool that can be used for many interior design writing projects. Finally, throughout the process of this research project it became evident that little interior design, writing-focused teaching research exists (Guerin et al., 1999; Gulwadi, 2008; Kosidowski, 1996). This study contributes to the small but growing body of knowledge about the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Interior Design.

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LANGUAGE MATTERS TO NEWCOMER ELLS: POSITIVE RESULTS VIA A SIMPLE, MODIFIED DUAL LANGUAGE APPROACH TO MATHEMATICS INSTRUCTION

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Abstract This article discusses one ESL teacher's efforts to creatively support his students' mathematics learning via a simple, modified dual language approach. The study examined quarterly test data from Hispanic newcomer English Learners (ELLs) enrolled in grades 4 and 5 at the same school—the treatment group received mathematics instruction almost entirely in Spanish while the comparison group was taught in English. Empirical data revealed that the treatment group exhibited higher gains (7%) than the comparison group (<3%). As the ELL population continues to grow, these findings may offer an alternative to those interested in closing academic opportunity/achievement gaps.

Keywords: teacher action research, dual language, English language learners, newcomers, alternative ESL program

Introduction

Jose` is an ESL teacher at an urban elementary school. Throughout his 25-year teaching and administrative career, he has taught elementary, middle, and adult English Language Learners (ELLs). As a former ELL himself, Jose` is aware of the challenges such students face and he is passionate about working on possible solutions to help build bridges, especially for newcomers.

Like so many others across the country, Jose's school experienced an unprecedented influx of immigrant school-age children from Central American countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras in the last few years—a trend predicted to continue nationally (Chishti & Hipsman, 2016). And, like so many others, Jose's school was not prepared to effectively support these ELLs—who, in most cases, also present gaps in their educational background. Jose` knew of a couple transitional newcomer programs, but his district continued to rely on standard, English-based 'pullout' ESL models only—approaches often

described as expensive, most commonly used, and least effective in closing academic achievement gaps (Short & Boyson, 2012; Thomas & Collier, 2012).
Feeling frustrated, Jose` approached his principal with a simple request. Instead of his 4th and 5th grade newcomer ELLs sitting through Mathematics class taught in English every day, could he readjust his role a little, take them as a group, and teach them Mathematics content in their first language (Spanish) instead? His goal was to provide access to core curriculum standards without requiring additional funding (except for a set of bilingual mathematics books). His principal agreed but only if Jose` first agreed to try and measure the effectiveness of this simple, modified, one-way dual language approach throughout the year. Would his students experience greater mathematics academic achievement than a similar population of students who did not receive such native language support? And, if so, to what extent would such Hispanic newcomer ELLs improve their mathematics scores in district and state tests as compared to ELLs who received mathematics instruction in English only? Jose` set out to find out.

Literature Review

Dual-language, which falls under the umbrella of a more general term of bilingual education, can be defined as an instructional model that uses two languages to teach students literacy and content (U.S. Department of Education, 2015; Center for Applied Linguistics, 2022). Two main variations exist within this definition, including (a) One-way dual-language, which refers to one group of native speakers learning academic content in two languages and (b) Two-way dual-language (or two-way immersion), which consists mainly of providing instruction in both a content area and language to students of other languages as well as English-speaking students in the same classroom, using two languages (Christian et al., 2010). Another variation typical in structured dual-language models involves the time students stay in the program. In a typical 'early-exit' program (or transitional bilingual education), ELLs can stay for up to three years "with transition to English completed in second or third grade," and for all their elementary school years in the 'late-exit' model (Slavin, et al., 2011, p. 4).

Language acquisition theories were used to ground this research. Krashen's (1981, 2003) comprehensible input and affective filter as well as Cummins' (1981) Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) substantiate the positive effects that exist when students' first language is used as support for learning content and a second language. Specifically, Krashen (1981) argued that ELLs learn best when instruction (i.e., the input) received in a low-anxiety setting (i.e., low affective filter) is understandable to them. Such a notion stresses the importance of creating (1) a low-anxiety setting within the classroom (e.g., when ELLs are allowed to speak their language, they feel more at home and anxiety is reduced), and (2) accessibility to the new language by slowing down speech and using visuals and cognates or words that are very similar in both languages (e.g., adult-adulto, car-carro, library-libreria). Cummins (1981) went a few steps further, suggesting that ELLs may benefit when they are allowed to develop conceptual knowledge and cognitive skills in their first language—skills that will eventually and successfully transfer to the new language. Several empirical studies

have provided evidence on such a link (Marian, Shook & Schroeder, 2013; Maxwell, 2015; Valentino & Reardon, 2015).

Dual-language approaches are not always viewed favorably. English-only or English immersion (the opposite of dual-language) proponents argue that the more exposed ELLs are to the second language (i.e., English), the more quickly they learn the language and the better they perform (Baker, 1998; Porter, 1996). Several empirical studies do indeed validate this notion, demonstrating that ELLs enrolled in English-only classes outperform ELLs enrolled in dual-language programs in the early grades (Marian et al., 2013). Yet, the fact that the benefits of English-only programs are limited to the early grades, presents a challenge to the efforts of closing academic achievement gaps in the upper grades (Goldenberg, 2008; Rolstad, et al., 2005; Thomas & Collier, 2012).

Methodology

Participants. During the 2017-18 school year, Jose` served a group of 15 newcomer ELL students who met the following criteria:

(1) were enrolled in U.S. schools for no more than three years;
(2) scored no higher than 3.5 overall in the latest state-identified English language proficiency test (e.g., ACCESS), indicating beginning-intermediate levels of English proficiency;
(3) spoke Spanish as their first language;
(4) were literate in reading and writing in Spanish, but demonstrated clear academic gaps in that language (e.g., reading below-level based on reading assessment in Spanish);
(5) qualified for reduced and free lunch; and
(6) were not enrolled in other programs such as Exceptional Education (EC) or Academically Intellectually Gifted (AIG).

Additionally, Jose's ELL students were divided by grade level, helping him to (1) cover content specific to that grade level and (2) keep the groups small. Jose's strategy was implemented yearlong during a one-hour mathematics block where he taught his lessons in Spanish and English was used at a minimum. For extra support, Jose's students continued to receive their regular ESL services focused on English language arts. All of the participants came from Latin American countries. Was Jose` right? Would his students do better? If so, how would he know?

To investigate the effects of his simple, modified dual language approach, Jose` decided to compare assessment results between his students and a group of students who were comparable. More specifically, he reviewed 2017-2018 quarterly mathematics assessment data on his newcomer ELLs who received mathematics instruction almost entirely in Spanish against secondary archival data from the prior three years (2014 through 2017) for cohorts of students at the same Title 1 school, with similar backgrounds, but who had received mathematics instruction in English only. Note that the curriculum was identical for both the treatment and the comparison groups, but the actual pedagogy varied according to teacher

style. Four different instructors taught 4th and 5th grade mathematics at this school between 2014 and 2018.

Descriptive statistics in Table 1 reveal how the participant population was divided in two groups. The 48 students in the comparison group included three subgroups of ELLs enrolled in grades 4 and 5 during the 2014-2017 school years, while the treatment group (i.e., Jose's 15 students) included those enrolled in the 2017-2018 school year. This table reports the frequency and the percentage of participant characteristics overall, indicating that despite the differences—e.g., a younger comparison group (67% were in grade 4 versus 47% in the treatment group) and more newly-arrived ELLs in the comparison group than the treatment group (29% versus 20%, respectively, with < 1 year in a U.S. school)—in general the distribution was highly consistent between the two groups. Such commonality in the population's characteristics, as well as the fact that all cohorts came from the same school and scored equivalently on initial English proficiency tests, added a level of validity to Jose's study by reducing both the margin of error and the possibility of other external validity threats.

Table 1. Demographics by Group: Comparison vs. Treatment

	Comparison Group 2014-2017		Treatment Group 2017-2018	
	n = 48		n = 15	
Descriptor of ELLs	Frequency	Percentages	Frequency	Percentages
Boys	24	50%	7	47%
Girls	24	50%	8	53%
Enrolled in grade 4	32	67%	7	47%
Enrolled in grade 5	16	33%	8	53%
< 1 year in U.S. schools	14	29%	3	20%
Free/Reduced Lunch	48	100%	15	100%
English Proficiency				
ACCESS Score of 1 – 1.5	20	42%	7	47%
ACCESS Score of 1.5 – 2	12	25%	4	27%
ACCESS Score of 2 – 2.5	7	15%	2	13%
ACCESS Score of 2.5 – 3	6	12%	1	7%
ACCESS Score of 3 – 3.5	3	6%	1	7%

Once he established a comparison group, Jose` dug into the data. To track growth, Jose` chose the diagnostic computer adaptive I-Ready test—one of the school's main quarterly benchmarks that assesses students' progress in mathematics by matching the level of difficulty to each students' ability. The first step consisted of calculating I-Ready pretest and posttest mean (i.e., mean average) scale scores in mathematics within each group. Second,

the difference between the pretest to posttest mean scale scores was computed, providing a mean scale score point difference (gain or loss) in a six-month period for each group. Third, to validate mean differences and to evaluate magnitude of treatment effect, standard effect size between means were evaluated by using Cohen's *d* test—i.e., the mean difference divided by the standard deviation SD (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2013). An effect size of 0.2 represents a small effect, 0.5 a medium effect, and 0.8 or higher a large effect. The final analysis involved conducting independent *t*-tests between groups. To test Jose's hypotheses, a confidence level of 95% was kept on all of these calculations and a resulting *t* value at or greater than 0.05 would represent significant difference in the means.

Results

Jose` discovered that overall mean scale scores attained by ELLs who received mathematics instruction in their first language (Spanish) were significantly higher than mean scale scores attained by ELLs receiving mathematics instruction in a second language only (English) [Cohen's *d* effect of .84, $t(61) = 3.58$, $p<0.05$, effect size large and significant]. Specifically, data indicated that ELLs enrolled in the 2014-2015 school year grew in mathematics competency from a pretest mean scale score of 403.7 points to a posttest mean scale score of 414 points in the September to February period, for a total 10.4-point gain. Similarly, the 2015-2016 cohort started the year with an average scale score of 393.5 and ended with a scale score mean of 396.9, for a total gain of 3.4 points; the 2016-2017 cohort started the year with a mean score of 414 and ended at 430.2, for a total gain of 16.2 points. When averaging the three years of the comparison population, it resulted in 10.4 points of pretest to posttest growth (405.4 to 415.8). While both groups grew in mathematics competency, Jose's treatment group experienced a wider gain, increasing their mathematics achievement from a mean scale score of 420.8 to 448.9 (during the same six-month time frame of September to February) resulting in 28.1 points of pretest to posttest growth as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Mathematics Academic Achievement Growth for Students in the Two Groups

ELL newcomers in grades 4 and 5 receiving mathematics instruction in English n = 48			ELL newcomers in grades 4 and 5 receiving mathematics instruction in Spanish n = 15		
	Mean	SD		Mean	SD
Pretest - September, 2014	403.7	32.2	Pretest - September, 2017	420.8	31.5
Posttest - February, 2015	414.0	25.7	Posttest - February, 2018	448.9	27.1
Pretest - September, 2015	393.5	41.3			

Posttest –February, 2016	396.9	45.3
Pretest - September, 2016	414.0	34.9
Posttest -February, 2017	430.2	22.8
Pretest - All three years	405.4	36.8
Posttest - All three years	415.8	34.6

Jose` was thrilled but he decided to dig a little deeper in an effort to convince his principal. When reviewing the results, data indicated that the comparison group grew at comparable percentage rates across the three years (i.e., 3% in year one; 1% in year two; and 4% in year three). This contrasted the results for his treatment group who experienced pretest to posttest mathematics academic gains of 7% over a similar period of time (see Figure 1).

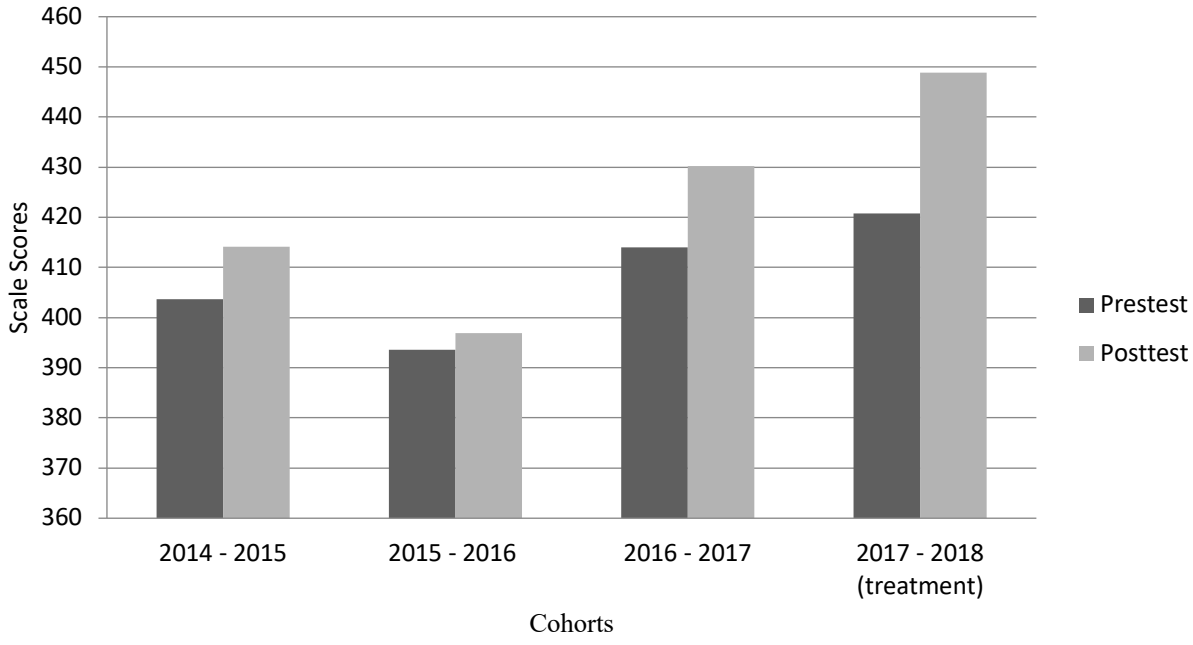

Figure 1. Average Pretest—Posttest Gain by Cohort

Limitations

Jose` knew that answering the broader question of whether this type of instruction can close achievement gaps for ELLs may require that the time of treatment be expanded to three years or more for optimizing results (Thomas & Collier, 2012). The short period this intervention was given, as well as other limitations such as the small number of ELL participants, use of only one testing instrument, limited number of grades included, multiple

teaching styles, and limited subject areas used may have contributed to the results that Jose` found. Additionally, he wondered …Was the positive treatment effect attributable to the fact that his ELL students received mathematics instruction in Spanish, or was it due to the cultural congruence of him as the instructor, researcher, and former ELL himself? Jose` reasoned that it might be some combination of both and that he would need to admit that to his principal.

Conclusion

Language matters to ELLs. Consistent with major research on dual-language, empirical statistical data found in Jose's study demonstrate that ELLs who receive mathematics instruction in Spanish (first language) perform higher than those ELLs receiving mathematics instruction in English only, confirming a positive treatment effect. These findings have valid and important practice implications for elementary schools with similar settings. Arguably, one unique feature of this approach was the simplicity of program implementation as it targeted the population with the greatest academic needs—newcomers. As such, these findings may provide an option for those interested in closing academic achievement gaps for their newcomer ELLs without having to 1) restructure their traditional schools to costly, hard-to-implement dual-language programs, and/or 2) segregate ELLs completely from native English speakers via separate setting Newcomer Centers. Jose's approach presents an easy compromise and a unique contribution to the literature. His results confirm that children with limited English proficiency who are taught using at least some of their native language can strengthen their content knowledge and perform significantly better on standardized tests than similar children (Cummins, 2000).

As research has consistently shown positive correlations in academic achievement and bilingual education (Collier & Thomas, 2020), support for these types of instructional models has predictably increased. However, bilingual teacher shortage, program design, accountability issues, and the like are implementation challenges (Lindholm-Leary, 2012) that may keep some from exploring such programs. The approach examined in this study—grounded on language transfer literature—addresses some of those challenges by (1) reducing the number of teachers needed by narrowing the population served and the subjects taught and (2) lowering implementation costs by reassigning the role of an ESL teacher.

About the Authors

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USING PODCASTS AS A MEANS TO INCREASE SECONDARY ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS' MOTIVATION TO CONVERSE IN THE TARGET LANGUAGE

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Abstract This article reports on an action research project conducted in the Netherlands that encourages English language learners to converse in the target language thus increasing oral fluency. The data collection revealed that students, aged 17–19, were lacking an appropriate motive to use English which, in turn, impeded their ability to speak fluently. Based on initial data collection and literature review, it was concluded that students would benefit from an intervention activity that was authentic, interactive, and learner-centred. The designed intervention activity assisted students in the development and production of movie review podcasts and placed communicative skills and oral fluency at the forefront. The intervention activity was then evaluated using teacher interviews, student focus group interviews and a student questionnaire. The results showed that the intervention activity was successful in eliciting spontaneous speech from students while consequently increasing oral fluency. Moreover, students felt self-determined and motivated due to their increased level of autonomy.

Keywords: teacher action research, English as a foreign language, conversation skills, oral fluency, communicative language teaching, motivation, podcasts

Introduction

Being able to speak and communicate in the target language is the fundamental objective of most language learners. Conversing in the target language may, however, be hindered by various reasons, such as lack of skills, anxiety, or demotivation. This article reports on a study conducted with secondary school English learners in the Netherlands who lacked motivation to speak English in class. The students studied international business in a vocational school and were aged between 17 and 19. Dutch was the first language of all students; however, they had all achieved an intermediate level of English (= B1 in the Common European Framework or Reference for Languages [CEFR] levels). Therefore, the underlying problem was not the students' ability to converse in the target language but the

fundamental motivation to do so, which in turn, impeded their ability to speak fluently. Additionally, problems arose regarding group dynamics and the exchange of information; students predominately worked on individual assignments, thus hampering student-talking-time. Author 1 worked as an intern in the case study school at the time of the research. The study is an action research project in which preliminary data were collected and literature consulted. Based on this information, an intervention activity was created to address the abovementioned issue to increase students' motivation to speak in English. The intervention activity was then implemented and evaluated by collecting additional data both from the teachers and students. The overarching research question for this study is:

How can secondary school English learners who lack motivation to speak English be encouraged to converse in the target language thus increasing oral fluency?

Literature Review

When encouraging students to converse in a target language, there is not a single best method that meets the goals and needs of all learners; however, it is generally agreed upon that all students need to be actively engaged (Brandl, 2008). Language teaching has undergone vast changes in the last few decades and practices such as communicative language teaching (CLT) and task-based instruction are now highly regarded among teachers world-wide. These instructional approaches are based on the theoretical underpinning that the primary function of language use is communication, and the primary goal of language education is for learners to develop communicative competence (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004). Within the broad umbrella of CLT, there are various methodologies used by teachers and educators in the classroom. These methodologies have evolved from the more traditional approaches, such as the grammar-translation method, the audiolingual method, and the direct (Berlitz) method, to a more student-centred, task-based, and interactive approach. Although these former methods were met with relative success, they excluded one of the most fundamental aspects of CLT: fluency (Richards, 2001). Moreover, a recent meta-analysis indicates that task-based language teaching is more effective regarding second or foreign language (L2) learning than more traditional approaches (Bryfonski & McKay, 2019).

According to Brandl (2008), the primary function of language use is communication; or put more specifically, the goal of CLT "is to make use of real-life situations that necessitate communication" (p. 5). By encouraging students to converse in the target language through authentic, real-life situations, learners will be actively involved in the learning process thus interpreting and enacting appropriate social behaviours. For this to occur, however, there must already be a certain level of linguistic competence among the learners; for example, students must have the ability and knowhow to: converse appropriately according to the situation (*sociolinguistic competence*), converse in a consistent and coherent manner (*discourse competence*) and converse efficiently and effectively during a breakdown in communication (*strategic competence*) (Brandl, 2008).

Furthermore, regarding effective learning strategies, CLT does not adhere to one specific method. It draws theories from a range of areas such as cognitive science, educational

psychology, and second language acquisition (SLA); this allows for different learner needs and preferences to be catered for (Brandl, 2008). Wesche and Skehan (2002) conclude that for communicative language teaching to be effective, it must adhere to the following qualities: 1) interaction; activities that encourage students to share and exchange information, 2) authenticity; use of original materials linked to 'real-world' contexts and 3) student-centred; allow learners to have elements of creativity and control.

Another relevant theoretical concept in the present research is motivation. Ryan and Deci (2000) have, in their seminal *Self-Determination Theory*, roughly divided motivation into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The former refers to the type of motivation that is defined as the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence (Deci & Ryan, 2010). The latter, in turn, means doing something for an outcome, for instance a reward (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Moreover, Deci and Ryan (2010) claim that for people to feel intrinsically motivated, their innate psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness must be satisfied. Intrinsic motivation has emerged as an important phenomenon for educators that results in high-quality learning and creativity. With older students, intrinsically motivated activities provide satisfaction of the innate psychological needs mentioned above (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Therefore, discussing with students what these physiological drives are can lead to a more productive, creative, and rewarding learning experience. Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET) (see Deci & Ryan, 1985) is a sub-theory of SDT; this specifies that feelings of competence will enhance intrinsic motivation only if they are accompanied by a sense of autonomy. This can be achieved by providing students with certain levels of creative control. What is more, providing positive performance feedback (from both teacher and peers) will enhance intrinsic motivation, whereas negative performance feedback diminishes it (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Regarding second language acquisition, Brandl (2008) concludes that learners need as much exposure to the target language as possible for acquisition to occur. Therefore, it is important to actively engage students in speaking the target language. Different students cite different reasons for not conversing in L2, therefore discovering students' reasoning (or lack thereof) for not doing this is fundamental in developing their full potential. Although it is generally believed that there is no one single best method that meets the goals and needs of all learners (Brandl, 2008), they need to be actively engaged in the target language. Teachers can do this by maximizing the time spent by producing authentic activities that enhance intrinsic motivation. Ur (2012) claims that communicative tasks alone are not enough to properly motivate students; activities must be engaging and relatable in order to maintain interest, for instance, by making use of game-based learning or modern technology.

Methodology

The participants of the initial data collection were three teachers working at the target school and 24 students of the school. The data were collected using several instruments: student focus group interviews, a student questionnaire, and teacher observations and interviews (see Appendix 1). All data were collected by Author 1. These methods were

chosen because, according to Wilson (2017), it is important to use a variety of methods when adopting a research strategy. Therefore, to increase the reliability and validity of the study, a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods were used to ensure a clear sense of logic and purpose while researching and developing the intervention activity. The questionnaire data were analyzed statistically whereas the interviews and observation notes were subjected to qualitative content analysis.

Six secondary students volunteered to participate in the student focus group interviews to discuss their target language use. The focus group was created to consult their points of view and interpretation and meaning of the phenomenon under study (Wilson, 2017), which for this research project was to encourage secondary school English learners to converse in the target language. To establish trust among the students of the focus group, a few broad preliminary questions were asked which then developed into more specific, detailed questions. According to Wilson (2017), in both individual interviews and focus groups interviews, it is important to establish trust and build confidence at the outset, and this can be done by reassuring the interviewees that their views are important. 24 students took part in the questionnaire. To ensure that all students understood the questions, language was kept as concise and unambiguous as possible.

Additionally, three teachers were observed and interviewed. The interviews focused on the students' unwillingness to use the target language. All questions were kept unambiguous, while simultaneously ensuring that respondents were not led or encouraged to give specific answers. For the observations, a form was used that contained the following six categories: safe and encouraging learning climate, efficiency of class organization, clear and structured instruction, intensive and activating class, bringing instruction and processing in line with differences and teaching learning strategies. Each category contained several statements that were ranked on a scale from 0 to 3. According to Wilson (2017), there are advantages and disadvantages to observing and interviewing teachers while conducting data collection. By observing teachers, an immediate and actual account of what is happening is available to the person observing. Furthermore, a clear outlook of the room and the teachers' techniques can be viewed. Conversely, the actual accounts and techniques may be superficial or unreliable due to the presence of the observer; however, this overall perspective gives a thorough interpretation of classroom opinion, structure, and dynamics. Observation was nevertheless chosen as a method of data collection in the present study to ensure triangulation and to add another perspective to the data collection. Classroom observations allowed the researcher to see the phenomenon studied in the natural classroom setting. Moreover, the researcher was able to pay attention to any possible discrepancies between the teachers' testimonies in the interviews and actual practices witnessed during the observations.

Results and Discussion

Results from the student focus group interviews revealed that students are not apprehensive about speaking English in lessons. However, it was discovered in the interviews that they are unmotivated and require some external motivation to converse in

the target language. Additionally, given the age of the students (i.e., 17–19), they specified a desire for autonomy and self-determination and a step away from more conventional teaching methods. Students in the focus group admitted that they enjoy speaking English with friends, provided the topic of conversation is interesting. Humorous, current topics were preferred, and students admitted that they need an incentive to speak English, claiming that if the surrounding conversation is taking place in Dutch (i.e., the common language of instruction), then that is the language that they will converse in. Additionally, students in the focus group concluded that interactive discussions about movies or podcasts were likely to increase their motivation to converse in the target language. They claimed that in the surroundings of the regular classroom, being taught conventional curriculum material, students were much more inclined to slip back into the mother tongue. However, if they were presented with interactive, authentic material in a more convivial setting, they would feel substantially more motivated to converse in the target language.

The student questionnaires revealed that approximately 80 percent of the participants admitted that they enjoyed speaking English in lessons. Furthermore, when asked what their preferred learning style was, approximately 46 percent of students revealed that they preferred kinesthetic learning, approximately 29 percent preferred visual learning, while 25 percent preferred auditory learning. This figure of 46 percent is consistent with the response from the student focus group where students revealed that more interactive activities would encourage more target language use. Almost 60 percent of students revealed that they would like to see more games used in lessons. More specifically, 75 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that interactive games and discussions would motivate them to speak more English. This corresponds with the findings of the student focus group where students revealed that interactive games and discussions would motivate them to converse in the target language. Additionally, approximately 42 percent of students strongly agreed or agreed that student-talking-time would encourage more use of the target language. Moreover, almost 80 percent of the participants revealed that when it comes to discussions, students should choose their own topics. Ted (Technology, Entertainment, Design) Talk discussions proved to be another motivational tool for students with roughly 63 percent of students strongly agreeing or agreeing that either watching or giving Ted Talks is a good way of encouraging more use of English in lessons. The use of comedy or humor was an overwhelmingly positive feature for encouraging students to converse in the target language with just over 90 percent of students revealing that this is a good way to motivate them. Furthermore, current topics (regarding movies, games, and comedy) were deemed more interesting than past or out of date topics (regarding news or current affairs) with over two-thirds (i.e., 66.7%) of students strongly agreeing or agreeing with this statement.

With regard to the teacher interviews, Teacher 1 explained how they required students to speak English in the classroom at all times. This was a prerequisite that was established at the beginning of the school year, and students were informed that to be an accepted part of the group, students must adhere to this expectation. They stated that this guideline worked very well –the only exception being that in the case of an emergency, students may revert back to their mother tongues. While observing this teacher, it was noted that they took a draconian approach to teaching that students did not wholly appreciate. However, the

method did appear to be effective with students conversing broadly in the target language throughout the lesson.

Teacher 2 explained that they used a technique where they displayed post-it notes at various spots around the classroom. Written on the notes were various phrases, expressions, and idioms that students must blend into the conversation throughout the lesson. In the interview, the teacher explained that this was beneficial for a number of reasons. Firstly, it piqued students' interests as to what messages the newly written notes might convey each day. Furthermore, it prompted students to talk about a subject-specific topic in the target language. Prompts and cues are particularly useful in setting the stage for behaviors that must occur at a specific time (Woolfolk et al., 2008). While observing this teacher, it was noted that students were enthusiastic and curious as to what new statements were written upon the notes. These prompts gave students a foundation on which to base the conversation which in turn built the scaffolding to converge into the lesson topic.

Teacher 3 disclosed that they dedicated 20 to 30 minutes of every lesson to "Student Talk Time (STT)". They explained that as a 'reward' for desirable behavior, students would get to choose from a variety of topics (movies, music, podcasts) to casually discuss; they were then formatively assessed, evaluated, and given positive feedback. Surface-processing learners tend to be motivated by rewards, grades, external standards, and the desire to be evaluated positively by others (Woolfolk et al., 2008). The teacher mentioned that a stipulation of 'STT' was that during this period, the target language must be used. If a student did not use the target language, they were excluded from the activity. The observations revealed that this method proved extremely effective and popular among students with all members of 'STT' participating in various games in the target language. Additionally, anticipation of this section of the lesson motivated students to work effectively during the preceding part of the lesson.

The intervention activity. An intervention activity (i.e., podcast) was designed based on the literature review and data collection. The goal of the podcast was to increase oral fluency thus enhancing intrinsic motivation and self-determination among students. The choice of podcasts was further substantiated by prior evidence that using podcasts in a language learning classroom can motivate students (e.g., McMinn, 2008). During this intervention activity, students were asked to produce a series of podcasts entitled Mad About Movies; this topic was chosen because movies were revealed to be a recurring theme during the data collection. A user manual, which gave a detailed and thorough account of how the intervention activity should be implemented, was provided to the teachers. The intervention activity and manual contained innovative and attractive information relating to the development and production of the podcasts. Additionally, the manual contained the assessment criteria required for the successful completion of the podcasts, namely: 1) the hook (something that grabs the listeners attention), 2) name of film, genre, director, cast, 3) elements of fiction: characters, plot, setting, point-of-view, theme, 4) Freytag's pyramid, 5) relevance of movie in today's society and 6) rating of movie. Freytag's pyramid refers to a five-part structure that stories often have (i.e., background, rising action, climax, falling

action, resolution) (see e.g., Tsai-Yun et al., 2013). The manual also contained a teacher rubric, based on the CEFR levels (see Council of Europe, n.d.) (see Appendix 2). The podcasts were ICT based using digital techniques and students were given the option of using a number of digital platforms. Initially, it was presented to students that they produce a live podcast during lesson time; however, further feedback revealed that all students would prefer to pre-record their podcasts, and the intervention activity was revised accordingly.

To ensure the reliability of the grading, the assessor was able to tick off the relevant criterion as it was discussed throughout the podcast. Additionally, the assessor could make notes which were then discussed in the subsequent lessons where students received positive performance feedback. As mentioned above, all podcasts were pre-recorded; therefore, all material could be played back and discussed with students, at a time of choosing.

Additionally, the manual contained examples from various websites and reviews all pertaining to movies; students could find inspiration to discuss all the various criteria. The principles of CLT were applied throughout as students were asked to discuss authentic, real-life situations, thus being actively involved in the learning process (see Brandl, 2008). Furthermore, students were producing their podcasts in pairs or groups of three, ensuring interaction between students.

The rubric consisted of six categories: fluency, understanding, opinion, interaction, vocabulary, and grammar. These criteria were based on the CEFR level B2 (= intermediate) (see Council of Europe, n.d.); however, they were adapted according to the fundamental requirements set out in the user manual. For example, the intervention activity focused on fluency over accuracy; this was evident in the assessment form and rubric where students were awarded a maximum of six points in this category, compared to a maximum of three points on the other categories. The intervention activity and manual were designed so that they could be used repeatedly with a number of classes. Furthermore, aspects could be adjusted according to the objectives of the teacher; for example, the assessor was able to choose vocabulary as the main focus and subsequently change the scoring system of the rubric.

The students had previously obtained a level of B1 (= intermediate) according to the CEFR speaking framework; therefore, the basis for assessing them during the podcast was B2. According to Staatsen and Heebing (2015), it is preferable to assess students at appropriate or slightly higher level. This coincides with Krashen's (1986) well-known i+1 which assumes that students should be exposed to language that is slightly above their current level. Additionally, the length of the podcasts – maximum of ten minutes – is the required time that students must speak for during their third-year speaking exams. Therefore, the purpose of this formative assessment was not only to encourage students to converse in the target language to increase oral fluency, but also prepare students for their upcoming summative assessments. Once all podcasts were recorded, students were given the opportunity to upload their work to a shared platform where they could download, listen to, and critique

each other's work. This enabled students to partake in a subsequent feedback session where they use communicative methods while reviewing each other's material.

Evaluation of the intervention activity. The intervention activity was evaluated by collecting data from the teachers and students. The data collection was carried out via four separate methods during a two-week period. The methods used were a) teacher interview, b) pilot podcasts, c) student focus group interviews and d) student questionnaire (see Appendix 1). Students from the class that participated in the student focus group interviews in the initial data collection were asked to produce pilot podcasts so that information could be gathered and evaluated to further develop the intervention activity.

Two teachers were interviewed; both stated that the intervention activity and the accompanying manual were functional, valid and reliable. During the interviews, it was concluded that the podcast manual was both user friendly and appealing. It was agreed that the layout was clear and concise, with images and examples of various websites and reviews on each page. However, it was advised that it is beneficial for students to view example podcasts for inspiration; therefore, additional links of sample podcasts were added. Students (n=6) from the focus group revealed that they enjoyed producing the pilot podcasts, and in particular, enjoyed the autonomy and trust that was shown to them (see Deci & Ryan, 2010). The original idea that was conceived asked students to produce the podcasts in real-time during lessons; however, this notion was rescinded, and students were given the autonomy to pre-record the podcast in their own time. This gave the students ample time to prepare and discuss strategies with their respective partners. Furthermore, for the pilot podcasts, students were given the choice between two online platforms to produce their podcasts; however, feedback revealed that it is more valid to give students the opportunity to use other platforms according to their personal preference.

Additionally, students of the focus group expressed a keen interest in listening to and discussing each other's podcasts; therefore, it was concluded that a feedback session be held where students listen to and discuss each other's products. On account of this, students were provided with a link where they could upload their products and subsequently critique, review and rate each other's podcasts.

Once the above minor adjustments were made to the user manual, an additional 13 second-year students were asked to produce pilot podcasts from an online platform of their choosing. To ensure consistency of measure, the 19 students who produced pilot podcasts completed a survey that was analyzed in accordance with the topics discussed during the teacher interviews and student focus group interviews. The questionnaire consisted of yes/no, Likert scale, as well as short and long form questions (see Appendix 1).

The results from the yes/no questions revealed that overall, students enjoyed the experience with approximately 85 percent confirming that they enjoyed producing their podcasts; this corresponded with the results from the focus group interviews, during which all 6 students asserted that they had a positive experience. Furthermore, a subsequent discussion with all 19 respondents revealed that a minority of students (i.e., 15.8%) felt

dissatisfied with any assignment that did not result in a summative grade. However, almost 80 percent of students revealed that they would like to produce another podcast in the future. Just over half of respondents revealed that they thought the podcast was too short and would like the podcasts to be over 10 minutes in length. The main results of the yes/no questions are set out in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' (n=19) answers to the yes/no evaluation questions.

Question	Yes	%	No	%
Did you enjoy making the podcast?	16	84.2%	3	15.8%
Would you have liked more time to discuss the criteria during the podcast?	10	52.6%	9	47.4%
Would you like to make another movie podcast?	14	73.7%	5	26.3%
Would you like to make another podcast on a topic of your choosing?	15	78.9%	4	21.1%

What is more, the short and long form questions revealed that the majority of students had fun making their podcasts. Additionally, the private setting that they were provided offered freedom, relief, and confidence to a number of students. Furthermore, students liked how divergent the assignment was from regular tasks, welcoming the creativity, autonomy, and interaction that came with it. Only one respondent found cooperation with their partner challenging.

Regarding the manual, the majority of the students found it user friendly and appealing with approximately 78 and 67 percent of the participants strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statements respectively (see Table 2). Short and long form questions further revealed that

the experience could be improved by presenting the manual sooner thus giving students more time to prepare. Additionally, a number of respondents revealed their desire to create their own topics and manual; therefore, making and producing a podcast of their choosing and consequently supporting even greater autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2010). Other points mentioned included simplifying the manual with a list of basic bullet points, thus providing less facts and more freedom. Overall, however, short and long form responses revealed students found the manual clear, unambiguous, and user friendly.

Table 2. Students' (n=19) answers to the Likert scale evaluation questions.

Statement	Strongly agree	%	Agree	%	Neutral	%	Disagree	%	Strongly disagree	%
The manual was user friendly.	4	22.2 %	11	55.6 %	4	22.2 %	0	0%	0	0 %
The manual was appealing.	4	22.2 %	9	44.4 %	5	27.8 %	1	5.6 %	0	0 %

Conclusion

From the data collection and analysis presented above, it was concluded that the intervention activity and user manual fundamentally encouraged secondary students to converse in the target language. These conclusions were evident from the corresponding measured responses of the various data collection methods. Students revealed that they particularly enjoyed the freedom, autonomy, and creativity involved in the production of their podcasts which is in line with Ryan and Deci's (2000) SDT. Additionally, students emphasized the self-confidence they received because of the intimate nature that producing a podcast brings. Some recommended changes to the manual were brought about, such as: incorporating example movie review websites, links to example podcasts, recommendations for a variety of podcast-producing-platforms, and a link to upload produced podcasts. With regard to preparation, it was revealed that students did not have adequate time to discuss the production of their podcasts; this led to some students feeling rushed into choosing an unsuitable partner, thus resulting in an unsatisfactory experience.

Therefore, a teacher lesson plan was added to the manual which instructs and encourages students to plan their entire production meticulously.

The assessment criteria and rubric were agreed by the English teachers as being fundamentally in line with the criteria which students will encounter during their third-year speaking exams and act as significant scaffolding to prepare students for this. To ensure reliability – and by presenting the students with a formative grade - the intervention activity was adapted to correspond with objectives laid out in the CEFR and balance on a line between B2 (=intermediate) and C1 (=advanced). A minority of students lacked motivation during the production of their pilot podcasts, citing the absence of a summative grade; therefore, this is a factor that will be taken into consideration moving forward into future academic years.

Despite the suggested improvements, it seemed that using podcasts was a successful way to increase students' motivation to converse in the target language. Podcasts are relatable, appealing and closer to students' life than traditional textbooks, and they are also easy to use in differentiation as students can produce them according to their individual abilities. Moreover, podcasts have proven to be an effective tool to focus on the main principles of CLT, namely interaction, authenticity, and student-centeredness (Brandl, 2008; Wesche & Skehan, 2002). In conclusion, the results of this study suggest that through podcasting, students are motivated to converse in the target language, and it is encouraged that teachers use these techniques in their foreign language teaching. Depending on the instructions and the type of podcast, they can be used to practice specific language features in addition to overall fluency.

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Appendix A: Data Collection Methods

Data instruments used in the initial data collection

Student focus group

Preliminary questions:

- How old are you?

- How long have you been speaking English?

- Do you enjoy speaking English?

- Do you speak English outside of school?

- Do you watch English language movies or shows with or without subtitles?

Main questions:

- Why do you think some students are not willing to converse in the target language?

- What activities could the teacher introduce to encourage students to speak more English (be specific)?

- What topics could the teacher introduce to encourage students to speak more English (be specific)?

- Any other ideas on how to encourage students to converse in the target language?

Student survey

Questionnaire Y/N:

- Do you enjoy speaking English with friends?

- Do you speak a lot of English outside of school?

- Do you watch English language movies or shows with subtitles?

Likert Scale (1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neutral, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree):

- I like speaking English in lessons.

- Playing games would encourage me to speak more English in lessons.

- I feel 'forced' to speak English in lessons.

- Student debates would encourage me to speak more English in lessons.

- Ted Talk discussions are a good way to encourage English speaking in lessons.

- I am apprehensive (uneasy) about speaking English in lessons.

- Comedy/humor is a good way to encourage English speaking in lessons.

- Current topics are more interesting than old topics.

- Role-play/drama activities are a good way to encourage English speaking in lessons.

- Students should choose their own debate topics.

Multiple choice:

- Which type of learner are you? a) visual (by seeing), b) auditory (by hearing), c) kinesthetic (by doing).

- In class, I would like to see more… a) debates, b) reading, c) board games, d) writing.

Teacher interview

- What teacher techniques do you use to encourage students to converse in the target language?

Teacher observation form

Observation tool for the pedagogical and educational practices of students (PEDAC)

Teacher	Date	Number of learners	Observers	Assessment (on a scale of 1 to

Observation of lecturer's behavior:

0 = predominantly weak; 1 = weak rather than strong; 2 = strong rather than weak; 3 = predominantly strong

Data instruments used in the evaluation of the intervention activity

Teacher interviews

- Is the manual user friendly and appealing for both students and teachers?

- Is the material appropriate for the level of the students and can it be suitably used as scaffolding for the preparation for oral speaking exams at C1?

- What changes would you make to the product and/or manual?

Student focus group

- How did students find the experience of producing the Podcasts?

Student questionnaire

A mixture of yes/no, Likert scale, short and long form questions:

- Would you have liked more time to discuss the criteria during the podcast?

- Did you enjoy making the podcast?

- Would you like to make another movie podcast?

- Would you like to make another podcast on a topic of your choosing?

- How could the podcast experience be improved?

- What did you like about the podcast experience?

- What tips can you give to make the manual more user friendly and appealing?

- The manual was user friendly (1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neutral, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree).

- The manual was appealing (1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neutral, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree).

- Would you like to make another movie podcast?

- Would you like to make another podcast with a topic of your choosing?

- Did you enjoy making the podcast?

- Would you have liked more time to discuss the criteria during the podcast?

Appendix B: Assessment Criteria and Rubric

Students' names		Result/grade	24 points to be earned
Date		Level required: B2	Signature assessor(s)
Assessment criteria to be discussed		Notes	Yes/No
1. Hook that grabs the listeners attention			
2. Name of film, Genre, Director, Cast			
3. Elements of Fiction: Characters, Plot, Setting, Point-of-View, Theme			
4. Story mountain (Freytag's Pyramid)			
5. Relevance of movie in today's society			
6. Rating of movie			
Assessment criteria level rubric		Notes	Grade
a. Fluency			0 2 4 6
b. Understanding			0 1 2 3
c. Opinion			0 1 2 3
d. Interaction			0 1 2 3
e. Grammar			0 1 2 3
f. Vocabulary			0 1 2 3
g. Excellence			0 1 2 3

	Insufficient (0 points)	Sufficient (2 point)	Good (4 points)	Very good/excellent (6 points)
Fluency	Student pauses for long periods and uses short utterances. Student is difficult to understand	Student pauses frequently; some false starts and rewording; student is understandable.	Student pauses occasionally, uses a combination of short and long utterances. Some false starts but hardly effects understanding.	Student hardly ever pauses. False starts are rare and makes student easy to understand.
	Insufficient (0 points)	Sufficient (1 point)	Good (2 points)	Very good/excellent (3 points)
Understanding	Student has trouble understand the topic and at times stirs the conversation off topic.	Student shows an understanding of the topic and stays on topic for a lot of the time.	Student shows a good understanding of the topic.	Student shows a very good understanding of the topic.
Opinion	Student did not give their opinion sufficiently.	Student expressed their opinion sufficiently using short utterances and simple connectors.	Student expressed their opinion well while using Quantifiers such as: 'many', 'much', 'a little', 'any'	Student expressed their opinion very well while using Quantifiers such as: 'some say', 'many think'

Interaction	Student frequently ignored their partner. Used very short utterances to answer questions.	Student interacted with their partner sufficiently and asked some questions.	Student interacted with their partner well. Asked questions, gave long answers, and responded to what their partner said.	Student interacted with their partner very well. Asked relevant questions, gave extended answers, and responded to what their partner said.
Grammar	Uses very basic structures, telegram style sentences.	Uses simple structures correctly, makes some mistakes. Links groups of words and some clauses with simple connectors: 'and', 'but', 'because'. Some errors occur when using articles and quantifiers.	Uses simple structures correctly, makes very few mistakes. Links groups of words well and some clauses with simple connectors: 'and', 'but', 'because'. Very few errors occur when using articles and quantifiers.	Uses a variety of structures correctly, makes hardly any mistakes. Links groups of words effectively and some clauses with complex connectors: 'additionally' 'however' Hardly any errors occur when using articles and quantifiers.
Vocabulary	Student has limited vocabulary, hardly any content related words are used.	Student uses a range of vocabulary and some content related vocabulary is used correctly.	Student uses a wide range of vocabulary and incorporates content related vocabulary correctly.	Student uses a very wide range of vocabulary effectively with hardly any hesitation. Incorporates content related vocabulary very effectively.