USING CULTURAL IMMERSION AS AN ELEMENT IN COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH TO TEACH ENGLISH TO SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL) LEARNERS.

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A Thesis
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With the rapid growth of immigrants in the United States it has become vital for this culturally diverse group of second language learners of English to competently learn English. Competence in communication is considered a platform for students to establish for themselves an equal opportunity to succeed academically and in social interaction. This study explored how special language programs, like the ESL program, utilize culture in its methods of teaching English. Culture is an element in language that stimulates discussions, thus developing communicative competence, language acquisition and develops awareness of oneself and others. This study also explored other strategies that the ESL teacher used in promoting successful communication and the barriers that inhibit students’ acquisition of English. To arrive at my findings I observed an ESL classroom of five culturally diverse students, and one ESL teacher. With my observations I gave out questionnaires to all six of my participants, and later analyzed the findings to address the intentions of the study. The findings from the study revealed that culture cannot stand as a component of its own when it comes to language teaching, but it should be utilized alongside Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) that stimulates meaningful discussions. Although the ESL teacher revealed elements of CLT in her instruction, ESL teachers still need to strategies ways of infusing CLT in their day-to-day language teaching.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Over the past four decades communicative competence (CC) has been a topic of interest to many linguists in the field of second language acquisition (Brown, 2007; Burke, 2007; Savignon, 1983, 2007). This is in direct opposite of the 1960’s and earlier when the emphasis of second language acquisition was about structural and cognitive characteristics. The implications to communicating in a second language today revolve more around mastering the social, cultural, and pragmatic characteristics of language (Brown, 2007). In the past two decades, the social aspect of language has been proven to be an essential component to cognitive development. There is empirical evidence from studies conducted in Conversation Analysis (CA), sociocultural and socicognitive frameworks stating that the social realm is an essential component of cognitive development (Mondada & Doehler, 2004). Moving forward even more socio-cultural issues within language arise and need to be addressed, since world language learning is a process of meaning creation through learners interpersonally agreeing on meaning (Hymes, 1967).

With globalization and immigration on the rise in the United States most second language learners of this generation face many difficulties when it comes to language learning. Fluent in their mother tongues and struggling to master the English language, these Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, also referred to as English Language Learners (ELL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) students — for consistency in this research I am going to use ESL — in order to learn the language faster need to be immersed in the language they are learning while also exploring diverse cultures daily (Burke, 2007; Byram & Feng, 2004). Since a large majority of the language teachers are limited to the knowledge of only one culture, usually their own, it limits the teacher’s freedom to vary techniques they could use when teaching language (Byram & Feng, 2004). Apart from a variety of methods and approaches to
second language teaching being used presently, it is important that current and future world language teachers receive the kind of professional development in methods such as communicative approaches that would allow them to address today’s rapid cultural and language changes in the world (Burke, 2007, 2011; Nieto, 2010).

The communicative approach to language teaching is essential; it encourages people to speak, which is good practice of language use and results in much faster language acquisition (Burke, 2007, 2011). Savignon (2007) explained that for a student to be considered competent there are four components that make up the construct of CC, these include grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence.

My research is important for ESL learners because it addressed the struggles they faced when learning English. By conducting this research, I hoped to inform students, teachers, administrators, parents and other researchers of the barriers that limit students from effectively learning language. As well as how teaching culture while learning English may be a tool to improve and accelerate the learning process.

**Rationale of the Study**

My personal experience as an ESL teacher, a Swahili teacher, an ESL learner, a second language researcher, and observer of second language classroom provided me with a unique framework from which to research this topic. My personal philosophy is in direct support of the research that states the importance of culture in the teaching of any given language. Culture is part and parcel of language and cannot be separated (Delpit, 1995; Jacobson, 1996; MacDonald, 1991; Nault, 2006; Nieto, 2010; Reyes & Kleyn, 2010). My experience and knowledge in the field of second language learning has led me to agree with other linguists about the important role that culture plays in the second language classroom (Nault, 2006; Nieto, 2010; Reyes &
Kleyn, 2010; Rowsell, Sztainbok, & Blaney, 2007). I do not overlook culture or separate culture from language since culture affects language proficiency. It is only recently, since the early 1900s, when Vygotsky first researched the role of culture in learning that scholars have begun to connect language and culture (Nieto, 2010; Torres-Velásquez, 2000). Nieto (2010) explains that when language learners learn a new language they tend to not only learn the language but also the cultural system so as to function and succeed in different language and cultural contexts.

**Personal Experience**

As an ESL learner, who at the age of five moved to Glasgow, United Kingdom I found myself faced with the need to learn English in order to play with the other kids in the playground. I know through experience the struggle that an ESL learner faces. I needed to work twice as hard to learn the language while at the same time perform well in school. Throughout my years of learning English, I struggled to fit in with the other students because I was constantly laughed at, students found my pronunciation to be different, “funny”, and therefore I was always pulled out of class to be taught reading by the headmistress.

Still an English learner today, I struggled to understand the difference between British English and American English. I believe I have been able to develop fluency in English by being immersed in both cultures too. At this point in my life, I was interested as a teacher to know how to best help my students when it came to teaching ESL students. Furthermore, I wanted to understand how to best educate those faced with learning a language for the first time in a classroom setting. Classrooms that are designed towards meeting the needs of students that are in the same proficiency level, where all the students start learning at the same level and pace, compared to educating a classroom of students who are learning language at completely different
levels of proficiency. Also, I wanted to understand how both scenarios can interchangeably be manipulated to teach English to ESL students.

It is important for teachers to be familiar with the needs of ESL students while acting as the tool that helps bridge the gap between the language and cultural differences between the target and first language so as to reach competency (Reyes & Kleyn, 2010). For the learners of English as a second language, ESL teachers, administrators, parents, universities, and other researchers, this study informs them of the struggles faced in ESL classrooms in the U.S. so that they may better help the ESL learners and teachers in overcoming the cultural barrier to language learning.

Statement of the Problem

In today’s U.S. classroom the number of non-English speakers increases with the number of legal and illegal immigrants entering the country, this has increased greatly since the 1940’s (Torres-Velásquez, 2000). According to Torres-Velásquez (2000), from 1951 to 1960, the U.S. received 53% of its legal immigrants from Europe, 6% from Asia, 28% from North America and 5% from the Caribbean Islands. In comparison to the time between 1991 and 1996, the highest number of immigrants came from Mexico while only 14% came from Europe, 34% came from North America, 29% from Asia and 10% from the Caribbean Islands. The shift in the country of the origin of immigrant populations has strong implications (Gimpel & Edwards, 1999). In order for the immigrants of today to succeed in the U.S. they need to be more highly skilled and educated than what was required in the early twentieth century (Torres-Velásquez, 2000).

As immigrants increase in the U.S., their need to quickly and fluently learn English also rises. Many immigrants come to the U.S. with the desire of achieving the American Dream, which is to have an equal opportunity to prosper and succeed in life. New immigrants find
themselves in competition with the native-born U.S. citizens, they struggle to learn English, to develop the required working skills and advance to an education level required by the twenty-first century (Rowsell, Sztainbok, & Blaney, 2007; Torres-Velásquez, 2000).

Despite the numerous methods and approaches that teachers employ to teach second language (Burke, 2007, 2011; Shrum & Glisan, 2009), one common barrier that keeps second language learners from reaching fluency is the cultural barrier between the learners first culture and the target culture (Nault, 2006; Rowsell, Sztainbok & Blaney, 2007). To be specific, these barriers include stereotypes and attitudes that language learners have of the target culture (Brown, 2007; Hilton & von Hippel, 1996; Jahoda, 2001; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Rhodes, 2002).

It is therefore important for ESL teachers to understand their students, and how to best to teach them (Brown, 2007; Nault, 2006; Rowsell, Sztainbok, & Blaney, 2007). Present and future ESL teachers need to possess the knowledge, skills, and tools to educate all children how to access the same knowledge and skills practiced by the successful people of the society (Sundin & Johannisson, 2005; Torres-Velásquez, 2000). ESL teachers need to be familiar with more than one culture to expand the variety of techniques that ESL teacher could use when teaching target language (Byram & Feng, 2004; Nault, 2006; Rowsell, Sztainbok, & Blaney, 2007).

**Research Questions**

This study explored how culture impacts second language learning and CC through observation and interviews with five ESL students and one ESL instructor. The purpose of this study was to understand what role culture plays in the learning of a second language as well as the barriers that culture brings to the learning of any second language. Finally, the study attempted to determine what teachers need to know so as to properly manipulate the knowledge
that the students carry from their target language to help them to properly communicate so as to reach CC. The research questions I posed to address these issues were as followed:

1. What impact does content-based instruction (teaching of culture) have on ESL students' language acquisition?

2. What strategies (if any) did this ESL teacher use to promote a successful communicative classroom?

3. What external barriers inhibit students' acquisition of target language?

Definition of Terms

The following is a list of important terms and their definitions that are used throughout this study.

**Second Language Acquisition (SLA)** – the process of learning a second language (Schulz, 1991).

**Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)** – an approach to language teaching methodology that emphasizes authenticity, interaction, student-centred learning, task-based activities, and communication for real-world meaningful purposes (Brown, 2007; Burke, 2007, 2011; Savignon, 2007).

**Culture** – the ideas, customs, skills, arts, and tools that characterize a given group of people in a given period of time (Brown, 2007; MacDonald, 1991; Nault, 2006; Nieto, 2010).

**Language acquisition device (LAD)** – an innate, metaphorical “mechanism” in young children’s brains that predisposes them to acquire language (Brown, 2007; Chomsky, 1986).

**English as a second language (ESL)** – generic term for English learners as a foreign language within the culture of an English-speaking (inner circle) country.

**Target language** – another term for foreign language, world language, or second language
**Stereotypes** - the views, notions and conceptions that people have of the world, specifically other people’s way of life through a lens that is bound to one’s own culture (Brown, 2007; Hilton & von Hippel, 1996; Rhodes, 2002).

**Interactional/Communicative Activity** – the activities that promote the development of communicative competence, through these activities the learner organizes their thoughts and experiences in turn using speech and writing to express, negotiate and interpret meaning (Burke, 2006; Mondada & Doehler, 2004; Swain, 2005).

**Competence** – one’s underlying knowledge of a system, event, or fact; the unobservable ability to perform language, but not to be consumed with performance (Brown, 2007).

**Summary of Chapters**

Chapter Two of this thesis will highlight the major theories of language learning and CC. In addition, this chapter will also explore current research about ESL classrooms and teaching strategies currently being used. Chapter Three focuses on the research questions and methodology used to conduct my research. This chapter focuses on qualitative research methods as well as the data sources and analysis procedures I followed. Chapter Four provides the reader with an in-depth picture of the ESL classroom and participants in the study. Next, it focuses on major themes and findings from the interviews and observations. Finally, Chapter Five summarizes the major themes and findings from this study. In addition, recommendations for future ESL teachers and students are provided.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter discusses a variety of components to second language teaching and learning. First, descriptions of the fundamental theories behind first language acquisition are provided with connection to why first language learning is described to be an effortless process. Next, second language theories are explained with a connection to why second language learning is described to be a more difficult task in comparison to the first language. Finally, the role that culture plays in second language learning is discussed.

Language Acquisition

Throughout the centuries, linguists have been greatly interested in how quickly people acquire competence in their native languages within the first few years of their life. However, it is still debatable how a child’s brain allows them to learn a language (Brown, 2007; Clark, 2004; Goodluck, 2011). Researchers in the second half of the twentieth century began numerous studies examining the universal aspects of language acquisition and the type of psycholinguistic process that allows human beings to gain control in language fluency (Brown, 2007). The findings showed that children acquire their native language naturally (Brown, 2007; Chater & Christiansen, 2010; Kuhl, 2004), meaning that all children learn their first language without a defined kind of teaching. Although the process of language development for each child may differ, given a natural environment the order to which they acquire language remains similar (Goodluck, 2011; Kuhl, 2004). Failure to expose children to language soon enough produces changes in a child’s ability to learn the language (Kuhl, 2004).

Beginning in the mid twentieth century, most applied linguists started to focus their studies through behavioral, nativist, and functional lenses and studied language acquisition and linguistics in an applied manner (Akhtar, 2004; Goodluck, 2011; Kuhl, 2004; O’Grady, 2008;
Perlovsky, 2009). Applied linguists who have researched about Second Language Acquisition (SLA) draw on numerous theories (Brown, 2007; Juffs, 2011; Schulz, 1991) all aiming to understand why SLA is not as easy as first language acquisition. In the last quarter of the twentieth century many researchers including Krashen (1981) have heavily contributed to the theory hypotheses of SLA (Andery, Micheletto, & Sério, 2005; Brown, 2007; Goodluck, 2011; Kuhl, 2000; Matos & de Lourdes Passos, 2010; Schulz, 1991; Skinner, 1953).

Of the many theories that explain SLA, theorists have narrowed down that language acquisition theories fall into five main categories (Schulz, 1991). Wode (1988) identifies the five categories to be the following:

1) those attempting a behavioristic explanation, emphasizing the role of condition; 2) those attempting an interactionist explanation, emphasizing communicative/social needs, purpose, and setting; 3) those attempting a cognitive explanation, emphasizing logical, intellectual processes; 4) those attempting a native or biological explanation, emphasizing inborn, genetic abilities; and 5) those emphasizing the learner and learning strategies (as cited in Schulz, 1991, p. 18).

First Language Acquisition Theories

These theories tend to explain how language and meaning develop. They also attempt at explaining why first language is such a natural process and how and why children are able to master language without formally being taught how to do so.

The behavioral approach. During the late twentieth century theorists exploring language acquisition embraced the behavioral approach (Brown, 2007; Andery, Micheletto, & Sério, 2005; Goodluck, 2011; Kuhl, 2000; Matos & de Lourdes Passos, 2010). The behavioral approach focuses on the aspect of linguistic verbal behavior being the cause of word meaning
Behaviorists further explain Skinners (1953) proposal of how a speaker produces a verbal operant without previously being taught how to do so. They elaborate that it has to do with developing an effective language behavior, this means that a listener is to make right responses to a particular stimuli (Brown, 2007; Andery, Micheletto, & Sério, 2005; Kuhl, 2000; Matos & de Lourdes Passos, 2010). The speaker, who in this case is the language instructor who could be the parent conditions the learner to make certain responses, the repetition of this action thus causes ones response to become habitual in nature. Brown (2007) gives an example, “If a child says “want milk” and a parent gives the child some milk, the operant is reinforced and, over repeated instances, is conditioned” (p. 27). Thus, the meaning that is developed by the language learner is a result of the verbal behavior being developed and enforced by the one teaching the infant the language.

The nativist approach. Also during the late twentieth century another group of theorists took a different approach from that of the behaviorists (Akhtar, 2004; Brown, 2007; Chomsky, 1986; Kuhl, 2000; O’Grady, 2008). Lead by Chomsky (1986), these theorists give their own explanation as to why children master their native language quickly without any prior knowledge of the language or to the many abstract rules found in language. Chomsky (1986) believed that culture alone was not enough to explain how a child learns language instead he believed all people are born with a language learning mechanism in their minds (Perlovsky, 2009). Nativists in support of this claim believed that language acquisition was an innate process (Akhtar, 2004; Brown, 2007; Kuhl, 2000; O’Grady, 2008). Chomsky (1986) explains that this innate knowledge of language is embodied in a black box within the brain. This black box serves as the part of the brain that acquires language, known as the Language Acquisition Device (LAD). According to Chomsky (1959) describes that the LAD has four innate abilities:
Through the LAD language learners are able to determine the difference between speech sounds and other sounds from the environment. The LAD has an ability to classify linguistic data in an order that can be refined later in time. It also has an ability to know what kind of linguistic system is possible while which other kinds are not and by using the available linguistic input it engages in a continuous evaluation of the developing linguistic system so as to construct the simplest possible system. (as cited in Brown, 2007, p. 29)

Recently additional researchers have made contributions to further explain the perception of LAD, that this device is genetically available and equip all human beings with the ability to acquire language (Brown, 2007). Furthermore, “the LAD notion posits a system of universal linguistic rules” linguistically known as Universal Grammar (UG) (p. 29). This has to some extent helped to answer how is it that all children regardless of their environment and cultural background acquire language more or less the same.

Goodluck (2011) explains “UG is effectively a blueprint for what a possible human language can be” (p. 48). It is however true that languages differ very radically at all levels of phonology, grammar, semantics and lexicon (Brown, 2007; Evans & Levinson, 2009; Goodluck, 2011) and without exceptions it is very difficult to find one specific property in structure that is shared throughout languages. Instead these unique differences are referred to as tendencies, parameters and rules of language structure (Goodluck, 2011).

**The functional approach.** Later in the 1970’s many theorists came to disagree with Chomsky’s claims that language and cognition should be separated (Karmiloff-Smith, 1981; Perlovsky, 2009). Instead the functionalists believed that language and cognition should be combined to explain creation of meanings (Perlovsky, 2009). Evans (2012) insists that it is
important to know that cognitive linguistics is not a single and narrow theory but rather it is broader since cognitive theorists have established a number of theories.

**Second Language Acquisition Theories**

Second language acquisition theories explain that acquisition and learning are the two most important factors in developing language competence. The acquisition process between first language and second language differs, the difference lies in the environment in which first and second language acquisition arise, the language learner’s characteristics and the learners cognitive process (Krashen, 1981; Lightbown & Spada, 2006). To develop language and fluency less conscious effort is needed from the learner by learning concepts through drills and consciously using grammatical rules (Krashen, 1981).

**Acquisition-learning hypothesis.** Krashen (1981) suggests that there are two different ways in which an adult develops proficiency in a second language. The first, the “acquisition” process is a subconscious means of language development, most dominant when children acquire their first language (Krashen, 1981; Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Krashen (1981) elaborates that subconscious learners are unaware of their own process of learning. However, they are aware of form and grammatical rules of the language. The second means is through “learning” this process is a conscious proficiency of a second language which is evident in formal language instruction where the learners are forced to be aware and attentive of the grammatical rules (Krashen, 1981).

In addition, Krashen (1981) states that, “fluency in second language performance is due to what we have acquired, not what we have learned” (p. 99). Furthermore, learning and acquisition should remain separate, that learning cannot become acquisition. Krashen (1981) and Delpit (1995) believe acquisition activities are needed more in the classroom than learning to
achieve communicative fluency. Conscious learning and constant follow of the rules is much more difficult for learners making a delay in communicative fluency.

**Monitor hypothesis.** Krashen (1981) introduced the monitor, a device that stores, edits, and corrects one's linguistic output. This device defines how learning and acquisition influence each other and that the main goal of learning is to monitor the learner’s output. Lightbown and Spada (2006) explain that the device is “responsible for spontaneous language use” (p. 37). The success of each language learner thus depends on how they use their monitor device. Krashen (1981) categorizes the users into three groups, the monitor over-users, under-users and optimal users. Sometimes language learners over-use grammar when the language learner has been more exposed to a grammar type of instruction more than acquisition and because it is their personality of learning (Krashen, 1981; Lightbown & Spada, 2006). The reason why learners resort to relying on their monitor more than acquisition is because they prefer to be sure of their learning process. Krashen (1981) elaborates that deliberate learning should be avoided since it inhibits acquisition. The overuse of the monitor leads to speech that is grammatically correct due to the excessive “monitoring” but still averse and deliberate. While on the other hand he explains that the limited use of the monitor leads to grammatically incorrect but spontaneous output, monitor under-users rely completely on acquisition. Krashen (1981) concludes that an ideal amount of monitoring should only be used after stabilizing fluency, thus producing optimal monitor users.

**Natural order hypothesis.** Krashen (1981) describes that the Natural Order Hypothesis claims that grammatical language structures are acquired in an orderly manner. This order does not depend on how simple the form is or how the structures are being presented by the teacher (Krashen, 1981; Lightbown & Sada, 2006). Second language acquisition is thus covered in a predictable sequence (Krashen, 1981).
**Input hypothesis.** Through the Input Hypothesis Krashen (1981) states that ‘comprehensible input is “the best way and perhaps the only way to teach speaking”’ (p. 22). He also believes that it is only when we are exposed to comprehensible input that is a little beyond our current proficiency that we acquire more language. Through the input hypothesis Krashen (1981) explains how language is acquired, that the learner moves from current competence which is that obtained from first language competence also known as “i” and needs to move to the next level of language competence “i + 1” that is from second language knowledge. Krashen (1981) elaborates that learners should not be exposed to language that is too far beyond their current proficiency but just enough that they can be challenged to make progress. He explains that most important in this hypothesis is that he recommends that speaking should not be taught very early or directly to the language learner instead speech will develop after the learner acquires enough (i + 1).

**Affective filter hypothesis.** In the Affective Filter Hypothesis Krashen (1981) claims that in order to acquire a second language, there needs to be a number of factors to facilitate acquisition, of these are high motivation, self-confidence, good relationship with fellow communicators, and low anxiety. At the same time, he thinks there are a number of other factors that should be absent to facilitate second language acquisition and these are high anxiety and defensiveness. Without a highly affective mental block/filter that keeps the positive factors in and the negative factors out affective acquisition will be inhibited (Krashen, 1981).

**Defining Culture**

Brown (2007) defines culture as the domain/context in which humans are able to interact with others, the way humans also exist and feel. Hall and Hall (1990) believe culture determines perceptions, reactions and interpersonal relations with others. Factors like history, ethnicity,
gender, language, race and social class have pulled people together to participate with each other in social and political events (Nieto, 2010), which act as the domains that allow people interact with one another and stimulates culture to rise. MacDonald (1991) and Nieto (2010) insist that it is important that culture be viewed to be what it really is. He explains that culture is not an ideal or sanitized version of what exists in real life.

On the other hand, Erickson (1985) and Nelson (1995) emphasise that culture refers to the common attributes that members in a group share. They insist that only the similar attributes should be considered since in their opinion as far as learning styles exist, cultural learning styles also exist since people are not genetically born with culture, but learn culture through socialization with family and friends (Nelson, 1995). Brown (2007) contributes that it is also our collective identity. Larson and Smalley (1972) further state that it is culture that guides our behaviors and that it is also responsible for explaining our responsibilities and reactions towards others in the society. Culture acts as the glue that binds people together through a combination of other factors such as shared religion, language, social class, history and geographic location (Nieto, 2010). Nieto (2010) emphasises that power issues influence culture not to exist all alone in a vacuum, (de Bot, Ginsberg, & Kramsch, 1991; Nault, 2006) but rather issues of power influence culture to exist in historical, social, economic and political conditions of everyday, thus culture is a way of life (de Bot, Ginsberg, & Kramsch, 1991; Brown, 2007) since each country from the power that they carry have different hopes, fears, meaning and values that they attach to culture for them (de Bot, Ginsberg, & Kramsch, 1991). Culture also includes elements that characterize a group of people within a specific period of time, the defining elements include customs, skills, art, tools, and ideas, these characteristics are what pull a group of people to be categorized of a specific group (Brown, 2007; MacDonald, 1991; Nault, 2006; Nieto, 2010).
When it comes to language teaching, Díaz-Rico and Weed (2006) explain that many language classes teach culture based on aspects of culture that limit the student understanding of content culture. Díaz-Rico and Weed (2006) expand the definition of culture as:

the explicit and implicit patterns for living, the dynamic system of commonly agreed upon symbols and meanings, knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, behaviors, traditions, and/or habits that are shared and make up the total way of life of a people, as negotiated by individuals in the process of constructing a personal identity. (p. 232-233)

Díaz-Rico and Weeds (2006) definition of culture provides an explanation of the deeper aspects of culture. Their explanation states that culture is not as simple as many teachers explain by listing the surface markers of culture, but share that culture is all the ways of life that a group of people agree upon living by.

**The Second Language Learner**

Unlike learning a first language, second language learning is not as natural a process as first language learning. Students battle with learner stereotypes, age, motivation issues, lack of support and other factors that hinder them from successfully learning a second language.

**Learner stereotypes.** Stereotypes are the views, notions and conceptions that people have of the world, specifically other people’s way of life through a lens that is bound to one’s own culture (Brown, 2007; Hilton & von Hippel, 1996; Rhodes, 2002). Hilton and von Hippel (1996) explain that stereotypes are much more than what we tend to believe of others but also our theories we develop on the reasons and methods of why we chose to categorize people in certain ways. Brown (2007) and Jahoda (2001) explain that in the process we also tend to picture peoples cultures in an oversimplified tone, exaggerating and overlooking categories, thus, forming stereotypes.
As we try to understand and make sense of the things happening around us (Rhodes, 2002) our cultural surroundings tend to influence the way we view the world (Brown, 2007). Rhodes (2002) explains that as humans it is our natural need to make sense of all the information we encounter by organizing it in a way that makes sense to us and if we do not make sense of this information the magnitude of the information will leave us confused and in a state of chaos.

There are two main theories that explain why people stereotype, one theory is that of social identity which states that people will use stereotypes if they feel a threat to their own self-esteem (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Rhodes (2002) and Brown (2007) explain that individuals will tend to stereotype with the attempt to express their own identity. If people do not recognize and understand differing worldviews, they will remain closed-minded to those views. The second theory is that of the aversive racism, Gaertner and Dovidio (1986) discussed that this is a result of the racial system and contemporary culture surrounding us (as cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2003). In this theory, even people who have a non-prejudiced self-image can justify their beliefs and act of racial prejudice against others on factors other than race (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

Banks (2003) emphasizes the importance of embracing multi-cultural education as a means of understanding other people’s cultures. Exposure to other cultures should come before judgement towards other people. Students should be provided the opportunity to learn about others before they actually decide what they think about others. Savignon (2007) shares that understanding of others can only come by experiencing other people’s cultures, which gives the learner the opportunity to view things in the other cultures perspective while sharing their own perspectives to others.

**ESL classroom learning.** The intention of the English as a Second Language (ESL) program is to provide students with language skills that enable students to succeed in school and
everyday life (Fairfield Area School District, 2005). Through the ESL program teachers are able “to nurture self-pride and self-identify in each student’s linguistic and cultural heritage,” and develop student’s proficiency level in English (Fairfield Area School District, 2005, p. 3). Students are therefore able to develop a deeper appreciation and understanding of the target culture and language. “There is an assumption, enshrined in the National Curriculum documentation, that foreign language learning should and can have beneficial effects on learners’ attitudes towards foreign people” (Wright, 1999, p. 197). There are numerous studies that define the behaviors of language teachers and how these behaviors influence student’s interaction and studies on how to use the sociocultural perspectives of language and learning to promote successful second language learning (Firth & Wagner, 1997; Hall & Verplaetse, 2000; Shusterman, 2009; Wright, 1999).

Hall and Verplaetse (2000) focus on the importance of interaction to second language learning. Their study originated from Longs (1981) study of “modifications in native speaker (NS) input to NNSs” where NNSs means non-native speakers (as cited in Hall & Verplaetse, 2000, p. 2). Ferguson (1975) discusses how researches came to determine that native speakers of a language tend to alter and modify their input whenever they interact with non-native speakers resemble to how caretakers modify how they talk to babies (as cited in Hall & Verplaetse, 2000). Freed (1980) revealed that despite both were similar syntactically, one functions to convey information while the other functions to elicit interaction respectively (as cited in Hall & Verplaetse, 2000). Long (1981) later claimed that for second language acquisition to happen, interactive modifications are more necessary than linguistic modifications (as cited in Hall & Verplaetse, 2000). Through interaction, modifications are made to negotiate meaning. Hall and Verplaetse (2000) study questioned how modifications may affect different aspects of SLA, they
suggested that “at some developmental point in the second language learner’s acquisition process, certain NS modifications become a hindrance to the NNS’s opportunities for production” (p. 2). To address this concern, Hall and Verplaetse (2000) claim that the role of the non-native speaker’s is to initiate the negotiation of meaning which in turn, “increases and ensures that the input is maximally comprehensible” (p. 3), thus making the non-native speakers role crucial to the process of language acquisition.

Also, Hall and Verplaetse (2000) share that speech and sociocultural activities are the source of children’s language development, it is their repeated participation over time with other expert participants in these activities that develops their language. In so doing, the language learners develop prototypes for action by learning to develop expectations about communicative values they obtain from these activities (Hall & Verplaetse, 2000).

For example, Arabic English as a Second Language (ESL) learners show difficulties in ESL reading comprehension, their culture-specific discourse organization tend to clash with their prior language conceptual knowledge which result from cultural expectations that the learners tend to have (Hayes-Harb, 2006). When it comes to reading, the most common problem that the ESL native Arabic speaker tends to encounter is negatively transferring the strategies used in identifying written words from Arabic to English. Arabic consonants provide the lexicon information making consonants more prominent to vowels in Arabic. This causes native Arabic ESL learners to pay less attention to vowels even when it comes to reading English. Hayes-Harb (2006) concludes that the generalization that native Arabic ESL learners make by looking at the context of the text they are reading hinders their reading competence.

There are two types of attitudes that second language learners tend to develop when it comes to learning, positive and negative attitude. The positive type of attitude increases the
learner’s interaction which in result enables learners to successfully attain proficiency (Hall & Verplaetse, 2000). ESL teachers need to be aware that their students possesses both types of attitudes within them, and be familiar with the fact that negative attitudes can be changed to positive attitudes by exposing their students to other positive aspect of the culture. Brown (2007) explains that negative attitudes are a result of learners having only indirect exposure to the target culture through means like television and books. Torres (2010) explains the frustration that some teachers have about the books being used to teach the target language and culture, some teachers use books that are specific for trade and business purposes. Using the Mexican society as an example, Torres (2010) discusses that the pedagogical value of some of the books being used to analyse some of the important cultural aspects of the Mexican society are not being presented fairly. He fears that the books might create stereotypes, biasness, generalizations and contradictions towards certain cultures because they are not anthropological or sociological texts. Torres (2010) instead emphasises that in order for culture to be represented fairly, more current and practical materials should be presented for discussion, which should vary from newspapers, editorials, magazine articles, videos and newscasts.

**Sociocultural factors.** Linguistic anthropology is primarily the foundation of language socialization but it also borrows in varying proportions from sociology, cultural psychology, sociolinguistics, and, education (Hymes, 1972; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). Since it was first researched how culture and learning interacted (Torres-Velásquez, 2000), it is only recently that scholars have begun to connect language and culture, issues that once existed in complete isolation to each other (Nieto, 2010; Torres-Velásquez, 2000).

Nault (2006) explains that for a learner to reach language proficiency in the target language, it is importance that the learner becomes familiar with the target culture. Thus,
language education depends on the connection between language and culture. Thus it is of great
ingredient to understand how culture is an essential part of learning, and how it may affect a
learner’s multicultural education (Jacobson, 1996; MacDonald, 1991; Nault, 2006; Valdes,
1986). A learner’s reaction when he/she encounters a new culture may range from anger, fright,
and curiosity to confusion. The reaction may affect language learning and needs to be removed if
language learning is to be successful (Valdes, 1986). Lantolf (2000) adds that how we tend to
react and interact with others is a result of how we are affected by the culture we encounter, thus
our understanding of language that we use to interact with others is dependant of the culture that
we are exposed to.

**Second language acquisition and culture.** Language and culture represent two sides of
the same coin (Byram & Morgan, 1994; Johnson & Swain, 1997; Kramsch, 1993; Nault, 2006).
Thus, it is important to understand what it means by cultural learning since as one learns a
second language he/she to some degree also needs to learn a second culture (Byram & Morgan,
1994; Johnson & Swain, 1997). Brown (2007) explains that this is because most of the times
students in foreign language classrooms learn the target while being exposed to very little of the
norms, patterns and overall culture of the people of the target language, thus for true proficiency
of the target language to happen one needs to have sufficient knowledge of the target culture
(Nault, 2006). Some believe culture automatically comes from learning language while others
believe that culture has more to do with the brain, that culture needs to be learned and stored
(Nault, 2006).

Nieto (2010) explains that culture is neither inherited or passed down genetically, instead
for a person to understand, encounter and experience culture they have to learn the ways of that
culture, thus it is a manner in which one creates shared meaning between represented cultures
Byram & Morgan, 1994). Nieto (2010) explains that ethnic and religious culture is specifically learned through the interaction one experiences with his/her family. These interactions are not consciously taught or learned which explains why cultural learning comes so naturally. In order to learn other element of culture we have to standing by our parents, grandparent, and other family member and listen to the conversations they have together which in result models our behaviors on their own.

As language is constantly changing as is culture (Reyes & Kleyn, 2010; Nieto, 2010). Nieto (2010) explains that when diverse groups of people come in contact with one another for political, social and other events and modifications, cultural change should always be expected. When people come together and are exposed to other cultures, depending on what cultures they come in contact with, people tend to select and reject the cultural elements that are or not convenient for them in that particular context. Nieto (2010) states that when language learners learn a new language they tend to not only learn the language but also the cultural system so as to function and succeed in different language and cultural contexts.

**Language Teaching**

Since culture and language should not be separated when teaching ESL, it is important that the language learner shift their focus from whether culture should be taught to how it should be taught (Nault, 2006; Rowsell, Sztainbok, & Blaney, 2007). The reason why any person would take their time to learn a second language outside a school environment is to develop the required communicative skills that will allow them to interact with others (Savignon, 2007). Since the 1970’s there have been attempts to reform the world language curriculum and instruction in the United States classrooms (Burke, 2007). Burke (2011) and Savignon (2007) explain that to develop students’ communicative competence (CC), Communicative Language
Teaching (CLT) teachers need to create a curriculum and instruction that specifically promotes students to develop language proficiency.

Savignon (2007) explains that for a teacher to bring students to a point of attaining CC they need to understand the sociocultural differences that exist in learning styles that will in turn allow them to select the appropriate methodologies to be used in teaching. She further explains that for a student to be considered competent there are four components that make up the construct of CC, these include grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence. CC is strictly an approach or theory that cannot be found in textbook or curriculum material, it is instead simply an approach that is to be used to develop materials and methods that can be used to appropriately teach language (Savignon, 2002; 2007).

If CC is the bottom line when it comes to English, whose culture should be presented? English does not belong to a specific nation, unlike Polish, Vietnamese, Chinese and Japanese for example. The United States and Great Britain are portrayed as where the culture of the English language can be found not considering the fact that English is a first language to other nations in the inner circle like Canada, Australia and New Zealand which makes the concept of target culture all the more complicated (Nault, 2006). ESL teachers as well as students tend to come to the classroom with unconscious assumptions about teaching and learning which leaves the teacher as well as the learner frustrated (Nelson, 1995).

Native Japanese students for example have been taught not to stick out from the rest of the class, thus they tend to be more introvert kind of learners. Since Japanese students tend to learn collaboratively as a whole, an ESL teacher with this kind of knowledge could facilitate groups in the class so as to meet the needs of the Japanese students.
Native Arabic teachers on the other hand believe in being in control of the instruction process while they focus on instilling discipline. Unlike U.S teachers who are considered the motivator and there to create a learner-cantered learning environment it becomes greatly difficult for teachers with different beliefs than the language learners to teach the target language.

**A Culturally Immersed Language Classroom**

Immersion as a teaching method is being used more widely (Johnson & Swain, 1997). Immersion programs however aim to ensure that high levels of proficiency are developed by ensuring the right quality and quantity of the target language is being used in the classroom (Canale & Swain, 1980; DeJong, 1998; Johnson & Swain, 1997). Since communication is virtually impossible without knowledge of the target language’s culture plays an essential role in reaching language proficiency (Delpit, 1995; Jacobson, 1996; Nault, 2006; Met, 1990; Nieto, 2010; Savignon, 2007). This section will discuss the characteristics of what a culturally immersed language classroom would look like.

**Communicative.** Most second language instruction and teaching materials currently used in classrooms focus on teaching the grammar where learners are taught to memorize and recite grammatical rules (Canale & Swain, 1980; Savignon, 1983). Canale and Swain (1980) elaborate that the grammatical focus is made on the phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical items of language. Research in second and foreign language learning however assumes that student discourse is a product of encoding, decoding, and modifying internal representations of the target language (Brooks & Donato, 1994). Instead cognitive and communication activity is evidence of language mastery (Swain & Lapkin, 1998).

As culture has become an essential part of language teaching, it is important to realise that culture has become an important component of CC (Byram, 1997; Savignon, 2002;
Savignon & Sysoyev, 2002). The significance of CLT is to have language learners engage in communication which in turn allows learners to develop CC (Savignon, 2002; Savignon, 2007). Savignon supports Saphonovas (1996) sociocultural approach to teaching modern languages, defining her approach as “teaching for intercultural L2 communication in a spirit of peace and a dialogue of cultures” where L2 means second language (as cited in Savignon, 2002, p. 508). Despite the fear of cultural stereotyping, it is important that language learners also be taught the target culture. Andrade, Kretschmer and Kretschmer (1993) believe that the cultural activities used in language teaching contribute to making learners more tolerant of the differences among people (as cited in DeJong, 1998). Savignon (2002) states that, “Competence is defined in terms of the expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning” (p. 1). Therefore culture remains an important component since it also allows room for expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning in the target language.

**Reading.** Research has proven that reading allows language learners to encounter words in their context which encourages vocabulary development (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Krashen, 1993; Nagy, Herman & Anderson, 1985). In the process of developing vocabulary, good story books tend to emphasise on the meaning rather than focusing entirely on the form of the words being learned (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983). In addition to vocabulary language learners also learn how to spell (Krashen, 1993). In order to promote language acquisition, the texts read by language learners should be both interesting and comprehensible (Cho & Krashen, 1994). Lightbown and Spada (2006) believe that speaking as well as writing helps the language learner gain control of their mental process by internalizing what they hear from others and what they in turn say to others. Language is therefore found to be the tool of meditation in every form of high-order mental processing (Lantolf & Appel, 1994; Wertsch, 1985, 1991). Elley and Mangubhai
(1983) explain that, “it is the child’s ability to interpret situations which makes it possible for him…to arrive at a knowledge of language” (as cited in Donaldson, 1978, p. 38).

**Time exposed to the language.** Unlike the first language, exposure to the second language is usually planned, gradual, and artificial (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Elley and Mangubhai (1983) explain that in typical South Pacific families by the end of six years of schooling the children will be exposed to around 3,000 hours of instruction in English while on the other hand exposed to over 40,000 hours of their home language. Apart from classroom learners not spending enough time in contact with the language, they are also not exposed to enough range of discourse types (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Classroom learners are also often taught formal language instead of what is used in social settings (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). More exposure to the target language will encourage language teachers to explore a variety of discourse types rather than limiting language to learning the formal aspects of language. In result, the more a second language is used the higher the proficiency developed in that language (Swain & Lapkin, 1998).

**Adapting different insightful theories.** Swain (1985, 2005) explains that the claim that Krashen (1985) made about comprehensible input being the only true cause of second language acquisition is debatable, Swain (2005) rather believes that output is just as important as input. Research elaborates that the meaning of output has shifted over time from output meaning “product” to output meaning “process” (Swain, 2005). Output hypothesis as a “process” produces second language learning through three main functions (Swain 1995; 2005).

**The noticing/triggering function.** Swain (2005) explains that in the process of producing the target language the learner may be brought to realizing that they do not know how to precisely convey what they mean. Doughty and William (1998) explain that by learners noticing
the errors that they are making they are made to notice and understand the gap they have in the target language.

**The hypothesis testing function.** Through conversation with fluent speakers of the target language the learner often received feedback of the errors they make (Mackey, 2002; Nassaji & Fotos, 2004; Swain, 2005). The type of feedback given and the setting in which it is received plays a key role to whether the learner will be open to communicate and negotiate over the errors made by them, learners tend to be more comfortable to test their errors in a familiar communicative classroom environment (Nassaji & Fotos, 2004; Swain, 2005).

**The metalinguistic (reflective) function.** The sociocultural theory elaborates that people operate with mediating tools in which speaking is one of the tools (Swain, 2005; Wertsch, 1980, 1985, 1991). Smagorinsky (1998) explains that speaking is a vehicle, “through which thinking is articulated, transformed into an artifactual form, and (as such) is then available as a source of further reflection” (p. 172). Thoughts that are delivered through speech are simply not memory retrieval, but rather a higher level of thought articulation (Smagorinsky, 1998). Therefore through joint activities, students collaboratively work together using language to overcome struggles (Swain, 2005). Eventually when students are expected to work alone on language problems the joint activities give them grounds to conduct solo mental functioning (Swain, 2005). Swain and Lapkin (1995; 1998) called the joint problem-solving dialogue process “collaborative dialogue.” Swain (2005) defines collaborative dialogue as “the dialogue in which speakers are engaged in problem solving and knowledge building—in the case of second language learners, solving linguistic problems and building knowledge about language” (p. 480).

Swain (2005) therefore suggests that verbalization plays the role of allowing the learner to notice the errors they are making, to develop skills of speaking through negotiating meaning,
and to reflect on the actual language itself through interaction activities with others. The sociocultural theory thus states that language production (speaking and writing) is conceived as a cognitive tool that constructs and deconstructs knowledge (Swain, 2005). Language learners should therefore take advantage of both the information-processing theory and the sociocultural theory since different theories afford different insights (Lantolf, 1996).

A Communicative Classroom

Burke (2007) expresses that the Expeditionary Learning philosophy and design principles should be used in language classrooms to promote a communicative language environment in language classrooms. Cousins (1998) explains the philosophy of Expeditionary Learning as follows:

Learning is an expedition into the unknown. Expeditions draw together personal experience and intellectual growth to promote self-discovery and the construction of knowledge. We believe that adults should guide students along this journey with care, compassion, and respect for their diverse learning styles, backgrounds, and needs. Addressing individual differences profoundly increases the potential for learning and creativity of each student. Given fundamental levels of health, safety, and love, all people can and want to learn. We believe Expeditionary Learning harnesses the natural passion to learn and is a powerful method for developing the curiosity, skills, knowledge, and courage needed to imagine a better world and work toward realizing it. (as cited in Burke, 2007, p. 445)

Burke (2005) expresses that the Expeditionary Learning philosophy can be used to guide teachers as they focus on communication during language lessons, they can visibly cause
positive improvement in the students learning by improving the students classroom community, language production, one-on-one interaction and motivation (as cited in in Burke, 2007).

There are ten Expeditionary Learning design principles that can be used alongside the Expeditionary Learning philosophy to promote CLT in language classrooms (Burke, 2007). Burke (2007) shares that through the Expeditionary Learning design principles teachers can guide their students to use past experiences as a building block in knowledge construction. Burke (2007) explains that, “the ten Expeditionary Learning design principles can guide teachers to use communicative language teaching methods when creating curriculum” (p. 445). Cousins (1998) shares that they are the primacy of self-discovery, the having of wonderful ideas, the responsibility for learning, intimacy and caring, success and failure, diversity and inclusivity (also referred to as inclusion), the natural world, solitude and reflection, service and compassion, and collaboration and competition (as cited in Burke, 2007).

Burke (2007) uses the 10 principles to describe what a communicative language classroom looks like (Burke, 2007):

**The primacy of self-discovery.** It is in the language classrooms that students develop their personalities, the teachers work is to help students overcome their fear in language learning and take control of their own learning process by actively participating in the process of learning (Burke, 2007). In the process, the advanced students encourage the shyer students to participate (Burke, 2007). It is essential that the teacher and students speak in the target language to create a successful communicative classroom (Burke, 2007).

**The having of wonderful ideas.** Teachers stimulate natural conversations by encouraging students to experiment with the language, which allow students to suggest activities that will aid with their language development (Burke, 2007). Students are given time to establish
understanding by allowing them time to develop their ideas, thus developing higher levels of CC (Burke, 2007).

**The responsibility of learning.** To develop a successful learning environment it is essential that learners actively participate in the learning process (Burke, 2007). Students should evaluate their own progress, be graded and rewarded for effective participation and be held accountable for poor participation (Burke, 2007).

**Intimacy and caring.** Language classrooms allow students to develop friendships with people like other students and teachers that they might not have developed outside the classroom, where familiarity of the environment allows students to feel safe, help each other, and develop personal commitment to participate in their classroom (Burke, 2007).

**Success and failure.** The language teacher is responsible for informing their students they will not always be able to effectively express themselves or understand everything when they read and listen, thus they the first language is only used when the students face difficulties in understanding, which allows their CC to develop over time (Burke, 2007). Through communicative activities, students will learn competence by negotiating, expressing and interpreting language (Burke, 2007).

**Collaboration and competition.** Teachers ensure success in language learning by encouraging students to work in collaboration with other students, which allows students to take up different roles and responsibilities in the learning process (Burke, 2007). Learning games allows the learning process to be fun and communicative, in which successful language learners are partially recognized by being able to get others to actively participate in the activities.

**Diversity and inclusivity.** Students are encouraged by the teacher to share their lives with their classmates (Burke, 2007). Successful language learners should be willing to share their
personal and cultural history with other learners (Burke, 2007). Burke (2007) shares that in the process of sharing students must understand and be appreciative of others differences as they must respect one another. Burke (2007) shares that, “students of different backgrounds can educate one another while being informed about other cultures” (p. 448).

**The natural world.** Teachers should introduce communicative activities related to practical situations that will allow students to engage in meaningful conversations (Burke, 2007). Through the use of familiar and ordinary objects and exposure to the geography and cultures associated to the target language, new vocabulary is presented to students (Burke, 2007).

**Solitude and reflection.** Students are allowed time to explore the target language through communicative activities, which allows students the opportunity to learn at their own pace by making their own connections and create their own ideas about effective communication (Burke, 2007). Burke (2007) shares that “teachers reflect on curriculum and work to make it better” (p. 449), journals are used as an effective means for the students to reflect on their own learning experience.

**Service and compassion.** Through collaborative and communicative activities students learn to respect other people’s strengths and weaknesses (Burke, 2007). Burke (2007) shares that lengthy (more than 2 years) and collaborative learning allows students to develop and sustain relationships. Students who learn a second language will then be able to serve residents and visitors that do not speak English (Burke, 2007). Burke (2007) also shares that, “learning about the world language culture will prove an invaluable resource when communicating with people from other countries for business, in school, or on vacation” (p. 450).
Summary

There are numerous theories that have developed over time to explain how easily children acquire their first language. After which even more hypotheses have developed to explain how much more a difficult process second language acquisition becomes for language learners in comparison to learning the first language. Both first language and second language approaches have greatly influenced current ESL instruction. In addition, language learners in the process of learning language cannot avoid learning culture. Additionally, stereotypes and learner negative attitudes towards culture tend to inhibit a learner from proficiently mastering language. Lastly, a second language classroom should employ CLT to address cultural issues by engaging in collaborative dialogue so as to develop CC.
CHAPTER 3: METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The number of people with limited language skills immigrating to the United States has increased drastically over the years. Limited English proficiency limits both parents and students from performing at their optimum at both work and school. To reduce the number of school drop outs and low performing students due to a language barrier, the U.S. Department of Education office for Civil Rights declared the provision of an equal education opportunity for limited proficient students (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). The research conducted in this study therefore focused on investigating the strategies that English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers use to teach English and stimulate communication in second language learners, as well as whether they incorporate culture in their teaching and if so what significant role culture plays. In addition, this study aimed to identify the external barriers that inhibit student’s acquisition of language. The research questions were:

1. What impact does content-based instruction (teaching of culture) have on ESL students' language acquisition?
2. What strategies (if any) did this ESL teacher use to promote a successful communicative classroom?
3. What external barriers inhibit students' acquisition of target language?

Research Design

The research design employed in this study was qualitative. Glesne (2010) states, “qualitative researchers often seek to make sense of actions, narratives, and the ways in which they intersect” (p. 1). This research method in particular was chosen in order to better investigate why culture should not be separated from language when teaching a class of second language or world language learners in the United States. This study was focused on one ESL class of five secondary students and their ESL teacher.
The qualitative research method being employed here is phenomenological research. Phenomenology is rooted from consciousness and experience (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). This particular type of approach is interested in understanding phenomena from the perspective of the actor, who seeks to explore, describe, and analyze the world as they experience it assuming that reality is what they perceive it to be (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2010; Patton, 1990). Patton (1990) further elaborates that the subject encounters the phenomena through, “how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others” (p. 104). This usually involves the gathering of descriptive information through qualitative methods such as interviews, participant observation, discussions with the participants and representing it from the research participants’ perspectives (Marshall & Rossman, 2010).

The most important tool for the researcher is to describe as precisely as possible rather than giving an explanation or an analysis (Husserl, 2001). In this study the phenomenon that needs to be described is the approach to ESL learning and teaching, the second language culture in the ESL classroom, and experience of the teacher and students in the ESL classroom.

Context

This study took place in a large metropolitan area challenged by de-industrialization. The school is an urban high school that was built in the early 1900’s (Speck, 2002). The students and staff of Rivers High School take great pride in their massive collegiate Gothic style designed building. Speck (2002) describes that the buildings are built in red bricks, with large windows and terra cotta tiles, almost like a medieval castle. The number of students in the ESL classroom depended on the students’ class schedule. Thus each class is comprised of students of all proficiency levels. Each ESL class was approximately fifty minutes long during a normal school
day and some students met twice per day depending on how much instruction they needed in the language. This class that this study focused on consisted of five students.

The U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, through the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act indicates that all school districts are responsible in making the appropriate positive steps in offering effective educational programs that will help rectify ESL students’ language deficiency (Mahaley, 2012; Mason City School District, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2005). The U.S. Department of Education (2005) explains that the district must first informally identify all the students whose native language or language spoken at home is not English. Once these students are identified the district must ensure that English-language development programs based on best practice are provided to the students (Mason City School District, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Despite the language barrier ESL student’s face, they are still expected to achieve high education standards just like their native-English-speaking peers (Ohio Department of Education, 2013b). Districts are therefore allowed the flexibility to decide on the language program that they see will most effectively meet the needs of their ESL students. Each school district must then monitor the programs and make any necessary modifications according to the student’s on-going needs (Ohio Department of Education, 2013a; U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

The State of Ohio and Federal law requires that as part of the registration process, every student enrolled in school is required to fill out a home language survey (Mason City School District, 2013; Ohio Department of Education, 2013a). The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) (2013a) indicates that if the parents report that the language spoken in the home is a language other than English, it is required by law that the school further assess the students English language proficiency to determine what kind of special language program that student
needs. The type of assessments administered to ESL students depends on the child’s grade level at the time of enrolment.

The type of assessment administered to the ESL students of River High School is known as the Language Assessment Scale (LAS). The LAS is a test specifically designed to measure the English language skills necessary for students to function in an academic setting (Mason City School District, 2013; Del Vecchio & Guerrero, 1995).

Since observation alone cannot be used to identify the ESL students in upper grade levels, the LAS test is instead used to measure the English proficiency of students in grade two through twelve (Mason City School District, 2013). The LAS is used to measure students in the domains of reading, writing, speaking and listening skills (Ohio Department of Education, 2013a). Both the pre-LAS and the LAS are used to screen ESL students and finally place them into the appropriate proficiency level. After the pre-LAS or LAS is scored, students fall into five different English language proficiency levels of pre-functional, beginner, intermediate, advanced, and proficient (Mason City School District, 2013). From here all students that score below the proficient level will be offered ESL services.

ODE (2013a, 2013b) elaborates all five proficiency levels in detail. Students evaluated at the level one, the pre-functional level have very limited vocabulary. They are only able to understand simple isolated words or short-phrases like directions, commands and questions, therefore relying very heavily on nonverbal cues like gestures and facial expression. In order for them to understand during conversations they require frequent repetition and rephrasing, in response students are able to provide basic information and ask one or two word questions without being aware of the structure and intonation of the questions asked.
Level two, the beginning level, the students’ school social vocabulary and oral comprehension increases. Students predominantly use formulaic patterns, phrases and verbalization they memorize by imitating others. Such generated language is characterized to be simple and marked by lack of tense while reflecting their level of syntax. Apart from being dominantly syntactically incorrect, they respond faster to pictures and their texts contain invented spelling and using patterns influenced by their native language.

Level three, the intermediate level, indicates that with some difficulty students can now communicate their own ideas and feelings in English. They are now able to spontaneously use vocabulary and simple sentences covering many daily situations, but face difficulty expressing themselves coherently and without hesitation due to restricted vocabulary, grammar and command of language structure. Consequently, they face difficulties in understanding factual information and display some weaknesses in predicting from details that are presented to them since they are limited to the parameters of their background knowledge. All of the students who participated in this study fell in this level, whereby three had moved from the beginner level and were categorized in the early/beginner stages of this level. These three students were categorized as intermediate beginner students while the remaining two were categorized as intermediate learners.

Level four, the advanced level, the students possess language skills adequate for daily communication at school and social settings. The students are expected to ask for clarification on oral information as they are gradually developing an understanding of multiple meanings of single words. They may be able to read with considerable fluency and identify specific facts from the text but face difficulties using complex structures and abstract academic concepts. Despite the persistent errors, students possess speaking, writing and reading skills similar to
those of native English speakers. They also possess knowledge of idioms and figures of speech while using context clues to understand messages.

Level five, the proficient level, is the highest level of language proficiency where students are able to speak fluent English in social and grade-level academic settings. Students are able to control and use age-appropriate syntax and vocabulary in their speech, follow complex and multi-level directions and participate in academic conversations without difficulty. In addition, students can write short expressive papers showing their points of view, position and arguments. At this level students can write using a wide range of vocabulary through which they produce correct spelling and sentence structures.

The NCLB requires that all students qualified for ESL services take a yearly state-mandated assessment (Mahaley, 2012; Ohio Department of Education, 2013c; U.S. Department of Education, 2005). The Ohio Test of English Language Acquisition (OTELA) is a K-12 annual assessment used to measure the English language proficiency growth of ESL students (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). It is important to note that the OTEL A does not take the place of either the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) or the Ohio Achievement Assessments (OAA) (Mahaley, 2012). The OTEL A is not intended to identify the ESL students from the native English speakers, but rather is used to determine whether the ESL students are progressing enough to meet the Ohio’s criteria to be reclassified to no longer need ESL services (Ohio Department of Education, 2013d).

The test scores of students who take the OTEL A are categorized in the same proficiency levels as those who take the pre-LAS and LAS placement tests. Though these proficiency levels range from a scale of 1-5 it does not mean that the five proficiency levels are linear views of
language acquisition, students might score in the same proficiency level but still exhibit varying abilities in how they perform sub skills (Lowie, de Bot & Verspoor, 2007).

As students’ transition through the final level of proficiency, for them to be exited from the special language programs the state of Ohio requires that students be able to demonstrate the ability to fully participate in the U.S. societies, meaningfully use English to participate in academic assessments and successfully perform in classroom activities where the language of instruction is English (Ohio Department of Education, 2013b). Apart from performing well in the classroom a student has to also obtain a score of five on the OTELA or a score of four while completing ESL instructions on a trial basis (Ohio Department of Education, 2013a). ODE (2013a) also explains that students in lower classes will not be allowed to exit the program before grade three.

**Participants**

Just like the immigrants that the students read about in their class text (Dunetz, 1987), and those they see on the poster on the blackboard, each of the students have a story of their own. Each student is originally from a country outside the U.S., speaks a first language other than English, and found their way to the U.S. for the opportunity to live a better life. Eight ESL students and one ESL teacher were invited to participate in this study. All eight students did not elect to participate in the study therefore this study focused on five ESL students and one ESL teacher\(^1\). This classroom was selected based on the rich ethnically diverse and urban setting. In addition, I also had prior access working at the school as a Graduate Assistant and did a number of my graduate teaching field experience assignments with this class. This allowed me to develop rapport and gain trust in the class. The student participants were at slightly different proficiency levels and from different ethnic backgrounds from each other. They included two

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\(^1\) All names of the teacher, students, school and district have been changed to protect the participants of this study.
participants from Mexico who were intermediate learners, one from Cuba who was an intermediate beginner, and two from Thailand who were also intermediate beginners. All five participants came with their families to the United States as teenagers, not in the same year, but all with the intention of making a better life for their families.

**Emilia.** Emilia is one of the Mexican intermediate students who agreed to participate in the study. Emilia is a 16-year-old female who has been in the U.S. for less than two years. She immigrated to the U.S. with her youngest sister after completing grade 10 in her home country. Her parents had decided to move to the U.S. two years before she and her sisters. Despite the little knowledge of English that her parents had, they still decided to take their children out of Mexico one at a time in search of a better life for their family. Emilia herself had only started learning English in the ninth grade before coming to the U.S., but being the oldest of three girls she was immediately enrolled into grade 11 and had to assume the role of teaching her sisters whatever she learned in school. She explained that one of the things that kept her interested in learning English despite the difficulty is using Facebook as a means of socializing with others. Emilia used Facebook as a means of making friends, expressing herself and practicing her English.

**Alicia.** Alicia is a younger sister of Emilia and like her sister she is at the intermediate level. However, unlike her sister, she was not overwhelmed with the task of learning English. She was more excited about going to the U.S. and seeing her whole family since she came to the U.S. a year after her sisters. In the year that she was separated from her family she lived with her aunt and cousins, that separation from her parents allowed her to long for the U.S. in a more positive lens than that of her sister Emilia.
Yhukon. Yhukon was in grade 12 and considered an intermediate beginner student from Thailand. Yhukon arrived in the U.S. with his sister and parents just before he finished grade nine. He, like some of his ESL classmates had started learning English in grade nine, which he explained was just enough to prepare him for the transition into an American high school. At the time of the study he was also under the pressure of graduating from high school and getting good enough grades to go on to a good college. With that reason, compared to the other participants, Yhukon was more quiet and cautious of making mistakes. He explained that he did not like trial and error and would rather get something right than guess his way through.

Phueng. Phueng, the younger sister of Yhukon, is an intermediate beginner participant from Thailand and was also in grade 12 at the time of the study. Like her brother, when Phueng arrived in the U.S. she had not finished grade nine. Phueng explained that learning in her country was very different from that of the U.S., her experience was more teacher-centred than student centred, which was a shock to her. Apart from the pressure of maintaining good grades and the continuous culture shock, she explained that the different way of teaching was why she was very shy and afraid of making mistakes. She found that learning required participation, which in her case resulted into making mistakes at times causing people to laugh at her mistakes.

Sergio. Sergio is the final intermediate beginner participant. Sergio, is from Cuba, he arrived in the U.S. at the age of 15. He was mid-way through grade nine when he had to drop everything to join his family. Through the later part of his elementary school Sergio had to live with his aunt and cousins since his parents had immigrated to the U.S. when he was only 10 years old. When he finally joined his family about five years later Sergio had to restart grade nine since he had only started learning English for four months before he left and did not know enough English to move on to grade 10. Sergio, unlike the others in his class was surrounded
with friends and family that patiently helped him with learning English. When at home Sergio spoke English with his parents and brother who had travelled to the U.S. ahead of him, when he went out he was surrounded with cousins and friends that spoke both Spanish and English, and finally at school he was part of the ESL class that comprised of more Spanish speaking students than any other language.

Miss Ines. The ESL teacher that participated in this study was Miss Ines. She was a native English language speaker who originated from Germany, and taught social studies for four years before she decided to teach ESL. The demand for social studies teachers was low causing her to spend most of her time as a substitute teacher while looking for a stable position as a social studies teacher. While she waited a friend informed her about an opening for an ESL teaching position, in which the requirements were that the applicants be bilingual and have an Ohio teacher certification. Qualified speaking English, German and some Spanish, Miss Ines decided to apply for the position. She was interviewed and later accepted for the position where she shadowed a teacher and also had to go for professional development before she finally decided to pursue a career in ESL. Miss Ines studied and received her master’s degree in ESL as well. Since then she has been an ESL teacher for the past 21 years.

Miss Ines’ experience has caused her to adopt certain teaching techniques to change the attitudes of her students. A first language is not taught in a classroom setting, but rather it is acquired in a natural environment. In order to encourage ESL students to handle English in her class as a natural learning process and not a topic, Miss Ines encourages her beginner students to always have a dictionary handy. Yhukon and Phueng both have an English – Thai dictionary while Sergio has a Spanish – English and English – Spanish dictionary. In my observation, these students make good use of their dictionaries, by flipping through them during lessons. Students
are even disciplined enough not to open them during quizzes and tests, even though they have
them on their desks.

**Data Sources and Procedures**

These are the tools and methods that a researcher used to record data in the field.

Through the questions the researcher poses and the social interactions with people, the
qualitative researcher has to play an active role in producing the data they record (Glesne, 2010).

Thus qualitative researchers depend on multiple methods to record data and to obtain rich
information about the phenomenon (Glesne, 2010).

**Student questionnaire.** Different methods were used to collect and record data for this
study. The first tool used to record data from the students was a pre-constructed open-ended
student questionnaire. The questionnaire was compiled based on research conducted by linguists
and theorists on culture (Díaz-Rico, Weed, & Nault, 2006; Nelson, 1995; Nieto, 2010; Reye &
Kleyn, 2010; Rowsell, Sztainbok, & Blaney, 2007; Savignon, 2007) and my own experience as
an ESL student, teacher and researcher.

After the first meeting where I explained the purpose of my study (Appendix A, B, and
C) with each ESL student, I handed out the student questionnaires. Students were asked to fill
out the questionnaire during their free time and bring it back during the following observation
visit so as not to disturb the class schedule of the day. The questionnaire (Appendix D) consisted
of one part with thirteen questions addressing their language learning background, their language
learning experiences and their feeling about learning English. The answer to each question
provides information about the role of culture in their language learning experience. Question
two, three, eight, and ten provides insight to my third research question of “What external
barriers inhibit students’ acquisition of language?”
**Teacher questionnaire.** The second tool used to record data from the teacher was a pre-constructed open-ended teacher questionnaire (Appendix E). The questionnaire was conducted based on research conducted by linguists and theorists on culture (Hall & Ferro, 2011; Hayes-Harb, 2006; Rowsell, Sztainbok & Blaney, 2007; Nault, 2006; Nieto, 2010) cultural acquisition and learning, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and my own experience as an ESL student, teacher and researcher.

After the first meeting with the ESL teacher, during my seventh observation visit (my third to last observation visits) the teacher was asked to fill out the questionnaire during her free time and bring it back during the following observation visit so as to not disturb her lesson plan for the day. The questionnaire consisted of one part with thirteen questions addressing their second language teaching background, their language teaching experiences and their feeling about teaching English. The answer to each question provided information about the role of culture in the language learning experience. Questions two, three, and twelve provide insight to my third research question of “What external barriers inhibit students' acquisition of language?”

**Classroom observations.** The third tool used to record data from the classroom was the observation protocol (Appendix F). Glesne (2010) defines participant observation as “a research method that involves the researcher as an interacting observer in the everyday life of research participants” (p. 282). Glesne (2010) further explains that by being part of the social setting, the researcher learns first-hand how what the participant does correspond to what they say. The researcher asks, Do the two mean one and the same things or are there hidden meanings behind everything? The observer looks at the pattern of behavior, experience the expected and unexpected while developing trust and a relationship with the participants in the field Lichtman (2006) elaborates that, “observing humans in natural settings assist in understanding the
complexity of human behavior and interrelationships among groups” (p. 139). Three different tools were used during the observations. Creswell (2012) mentions that an observation protocol is an essential tool to use when conducting observations. He explains that the observation protocol enables the researcher to take notes in an organized and thoughtful manner. This was used to record the findings on the teaching methods the ESL teacher used. The second observation tool is identified to be the analytic notes, (Glesne, 2010) which were a continuous documentation of things that happened to the researcher during observation. Glesne (2010) explains that during or after the observation the observer should take time “to write down feelings, work out problems, jot down ideas and impressions, clarify earlier interpretations, speculate about what is going on, and make flexible short- and long-term plans for the days to come” (p. 76). All these notes and revisited notes are useful information collected by the observer from observations. Glaser and Strauss (1967) further explains that these notes should be accompanied by the third observation tool ‘memos’, these are notes written to yourself so that you do not lose your train of thought in case it takes you a while before you look over your analytic notes (as cited in Glesne, 2010). The analytical notes together with ‘memos’ are a way to analyse the findings recorded from the observations, which helps a researcher to identify and understand the patterns and themes that surface in the research process. Thus a notebook and a bound memo pad were used to record the researcher’s thoughts, feelings, ideas, and speculations were recorded during and after each classroom observation.

Throughout the study fourteen of the ESL second hour classes attended by the ESL students and teacher were observed. The class was visited fourteen times over the period of one month. During each visit detailed notes on the ESL instruction taking place and interactions between the teacher, students, and the material were recorded in a notebook. The observation of
the students and teachers in the class during instruction helped to understand how culture was influencing their learning and the method the teacher used to for teaching.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Creswell (2012) describes eight procedures used to contribute to trustworthiness (as cited in Glesne, 2010). These procedures are often used in qualitative research and aim to demonstrate that the data recorded is valid. Amongst the eight that were suggested, this study used five of the procedures to enhance validity of the data recorded. One of the five procedures is to spend a long time in the field, this enables the researcher to develop trust with the participants through building rapport, to gain access that will allow researchers to develop an “insider” perspective and the opportunity to learn the culture of the people they are researching (Creswell, 2012; Glesne, 2010). This was accomplished through my time spent as a graduate assistant at Rivers High School for fall and spring semester, and through the completion of two graduate teaching courses in the ESL classroom. In both of the courses I spent a minimum of forty observation hours and collected data to meet the requirements of the courses. After which I spent additional time in the classroom to collect data for this study, thus establishing rapport and trustworthiness with the students and teacher.

The second procedure is to write rich and thick descriptions of the field, thick descriptions of the school, ESL classroom, participants, and daily instruction was presented from the data recorded, this is because the evidence needs to substantiate claims through presenting multiple perspectives that allows the reader to experience the research context without physically being there (Creswell, 2012; Glesne, 2010). Analytical notes and memos were written to keep me on track with how I conducted my research. These notes included follow up questions, repetitions, feelings, reminders, and opinions about the data collected in order to provide thicker
descriptions. For the third, Glesne (2010) shares that it is important to conduct numerous peer reviews and debriefing throughout the research process, this helps a researcher to gain input and reflection on one’s own work. Fourthly, Glesne (2010) advises researchers to allow an external audit of the data recorded, she encourages researchers to use outside people to examine the research process, and this in turn helps establish a fresh perspective in the whole data collection and research process. My thesis committee acted as my external auditors and debriefing group throughout the research process.

Lastly triangulation was used, this is the use of three or more multiple data sources to present data as reliable (Glesne, 2010). Glesne (2010) defines triangulation as, “use of multiple data-collection methods, multiple sources, multiple investigators, and/or multiple theoretical perspectives” (p. 49). The data collected in this study was triangulated through teacher questionnaires, student questionnaires, observation notes and student notes. Trustworthiness of the data collected and the procedure followed in this research study was established through the use of these procedures and techniques.

Data Analysis

The findings from the observations and responses to the questionnaires were analyzed through the method of coding (Erickson, 1985; Glesne, 2010). Glesne (2010) describes this to be using a data set to represent a characteristic, dimension, process and theme. To begin, all the information collected from the observations and questionnaires were transcribed (Erickson, 1985; Glesne, 2010). After, each transcription responses to the questionnaires were analysed to determine the main themes (Erickson, 1985; Glesne, 2010). Then, assertions that were obtained from the observation transcriptions and responses from the questionnaires were coded and explained (Erickson, 1985). Assertions are statements or premises that are true, they act as
support for the date being analysed. After, the transcriptions were read for another time from which warrants and key links were recognized to confirm the assertions. A warrant can be defined as that which confirms an assertion to be true, which can also be extracted from the data. These consist of direct quotations from the participants' questionnaires. Disconfirming data on the other hand is the data collected from observations and questionnaire responses that do not support any of the assertions or any of the other data collected.

The research focus was placed on the cultural nature of the classroom community in relation to the influence of the teacher’s instruction and students’ proficiency level. This caused me to further focus on how this influenced language learning. Through a coding process (Erickson, 1985), I was able to establish relationships between the data by creating a thematic organizational framework of data that share the same theoretical or descriptive ideas (Glesne, 2010). Vignettes describing the teacher and the nature of activities used in the class were established with supporting themes and warrants. The warrants describe culturally diverse U.S. immigrants and the language structures being introduced after every immigrant’s story. Consequently, all this carefully analysed data was used to create vignettes which are descriptions given out after analysing data that gives a deeper explanation of what the data means.

Summary

This chapter discussed the methods, procedures, research design, participants and the instruments used in conducting this study were described. Then, the process of data collection and data analysis were explained. The data collection of this study serves to explain the impacts that culture has on ESL students’ acquisition, the methods that teachers use to promote CLT and the barriers that inhibit students’ from acquiring language.
CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

With the increasing number of people immigrating to the U.S. every year, many of their children are admitted to schools with limited English skills to learn in the target language (Torres-Velásquez, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 2005). The number of English as a Second Language (ESL) students with limited English language skills in the U.S. is estimated to be 2.4 million, which often results in their failure in class and drop-out from school (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). In order to enable students to perform better academically and develop the required skills to obtain employment, students must be offered, granted, and prepared an equal opportunity to benefit from education programs like their native peers (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). I therefore aimed to understand how language program utilized content-based instruction methods to influence language acquisition, and what role communicative instruction can play in language learning (Brown, 2007; Burke, 2007, 2011; Savignon, 2007). I also aimed to understand what role the teacher and student’s culture can play in language learning. My intentions for this study were guided by the following research questions:

1. What impact does content-based instruction (teaching of culture) have on ESL students' language acquisition?
2. What strategies (if any) did this ESL teacher use to promote a successful communicative classroom?
3. What external barriers inhibit students' acquisition of target language?

Content-based Instruction Including the Teaching of Culture

Miss Ines has 21 years teaching experience in the field of ESL, her decision as she claims to keep her students experience practical through the material she introduces, the methods she selected, her personal choice of setting up the classroom, and her decision to sometimes separate
and teach her students according to their proficiency levels is a result of past experience with ESL learners. Each decision has a significant contribution to the learning pace of each student. The first thing this study aimed to explore was how content-based instruction (teaching of culture) impacts ESL students' language acquisition. Since language acquisition happens more naturally when learning a first language than it does learning a second language (Andery, Micheletto, & Sério, 2005; Goodluck, 2011; Juffs, 2011; Schulz, 1991; Skinner, 1953), a communicative approach to language teaching has proven to be most beneficial (Burke, 2007, 2011; Savignon, 2007). Savignon (2007) emphasises that there are four components to communicative competence (CC): grammar, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence. Krashen (1981) and Delpit (1995) believe that CC can be achieved through employing acquisition activities in the classroom.

Meaningful interactions are produced when students learn to develop coping strategies (Savignon, 2007). Back and forth interactions with each other encourage students to develop the needed strategies to help them negotiate meaning and thus produce conversations that are meaningful (Savignon, 2007).

Brief vignettes describing a sample of the day-to-day ESL classroom activities and the ten Expeditionary Learning design principles are provided. These vignettes provide a brief description of a sample of seven ESL activities, each showing how the teacher approached the language topics and the students through the use of culture. The vignette of Miss Ines provides a description of the personal and professional experience of the ESL teacher and how it has been used to influence her teaching. Preceding the vignettes are recurring themes, codes and categories that were extracted from the analysed observation protocols, and questionnaires.
River High context. When you enter the ESL classroom in River High School you encounter a culturally rich setting with culturally diverse students. Once inside the classroom, past three rows of desks, you face a wall with four large windows covering half of the wall from corner to corner. These large windows allow light to bounce off all the three white walls, spreading light through a room located in the basement. When you turn to your left, you face the teacher’s desk right in front of the blackboard. Stacked on top of the desk are numerous literary books and dictionaries, one of the main textbooks often used in the class is a book titled *Language development through content: Our people and their Stories* (Dunetz, 1987). The teacher uses this book to teach vocabulary and English structure to students by introducing them to stories of immigrants that once walked in similar footsteps that the students are walking in today. A plastic globe can be found facing the classroom inches beside the right wall. This globe is used by the teacher to discuss numerous cultural, geographic and other day to day academic topics. On the blackboard, facing the students, a poster with the faces of successful South American immigrants can be seen covering part of the board. On the poster there are faces of people like Cesar Chavez, Jamie Alfonso Escalante, Katherine Dávalos Ortega, and Roberto Clemente, to mention a few. The rapport that the student s have with each other and their teacher, together with the setting of the classroom makes the room inviting and comfortable to be in. Despite the many cultures represented in the classroom, students show an easy familiarity with each other.

In a normal school day this ESL class starts at 8:00 am, making it the first class of the day. The first bell rings at 7:45 am while the students loiter the corridors, talk to their friends and others enter the school doors. After five minutes the warning bell rings, this bell is to alert the student that they need to be heading to their classes. This gives the students enough time to get
their books out of their lockers and start heading to their first hour class. Emilia who always likes to wear pink usually enters the classroom first. She comes in dragging her feet as she carries her books in her arms crossed over her chest. Emilia never enters the class without saying something to Miss Ines; sometimes it would be a greeting or just a conversation about how she feels that morning. More students come in one by one, settle down at their desks and start conversations with each other. Sergio is another student that does not let the morning pass by without first talking to Miss Ines before he talks to other students in the class. There are groups talking in Spanish and English, but seldom in Thai and never in Arabic. The groups talking in English are catching up on what they did the previous day after class or what had happened that morning. While all this is happens, the teacher continues to talk to Emilia and sometimes other students while she writes the days announcements on the blackboard.

The first hour bell rings exactly at 8:00am, at this time all five students are in the classroom talking among themselves. Right after this bell the teacher heads to the door and closes it, at the same time the school announcements are being given by the principal over the intercom speakers. Miss Ines tells the students to settle down so that they can hear all the announcements and take part in saying the Pledge of Allegiance. After the announcements the teacher takes about seven minutes to address any questions that the students might have about the principal’s announcements. She then moves on to reading and explaining what she has written down on the board. The announcements usually include her informing the students to prepare and how to prepare for a vocabulary quiz they have scheduled later in the week, complete making corrections to the vocabulary test the did the previous week, completing the two units for that week before Friday, and correcting all the errors in their worksheets before collecting them at the end of the lesson.
After the announcements the teacher hands out marked quizzes and worksheets to the intermediate level students and asks them to hold on to them while one student volunteers to use the flashcards to help them study the vocabulary they recently covered. The volunteer goes to the teacher’s desk and picks up the flashcards set out by the teacher. This student then goes to the front of the class and first reads out the definition of the words for the other students to guess the words and then the student goes through the words again, this time reading out the words for the students to guess the meaning of each word. Each time a student gives out the right answer, the flashcard is given to them and a piece of candy is given to the one with the most flashcards once the activity ends. During this time Miss Ines seats two beginner level students together, she usually has them move with their desks and sit in front close to the door. She then hands out their worksheet for the day and has them work on a fun and interactive activity. The activity may either be for the teacher to use a plastic clock to teach them how to tell time, to use the bingo game to help them learn body parts, to listen to a tape cassette recorder and together work on the questions in their worksheets, or use flashcards to learn simple vocabulary. These activities last the remainder of the class for the beginner level but for the intermediate students it only last until the teacher finishes working with the beginner level students, which takes around ten to fifteen minutes.

As the beginner students go on with their activity Miss Ines works with the intermediate students, she goes over all the questions from the last exercise that most of the students got wrong. The students are prompted to go over each question together as they discuss the possible answer and the teacher explains why the answers they provide might be right or wrong. After about fifteen minutes of corrections the teacher introduces a new activity. Most of the activities come from the class text. The teacher selects a student to read the story in the unit they are
covering. Once the unit is read the teacher goes into explaining the grammatical topic being illustrated through the story. When the topic is covered the students use the remaining twenty minutes or less to work together on the new worksheet. As the students work alone the teacher usually walks from desk to desk giving individual assistance to the students that need the teachers help. Sergio and another student usually work in pairs as he takes this time to explain in Spanish most of the things that Miss Ines discussed in the class. The remainder of the class time is spent with the students working on their worksheets. When the bell rings at 8:50am, all the students quickly collect their worksheets and give them to the teacher to look over while they leave the class.

**ESL culturally-based activities.** The activities that Miss Ines employed were culturally-based. Reyes and Kleyn (2010) share that the aspects of culture can simply be listed as food, holidays, dance, and traditional clothing. They add that these aspects are not the only significant parts of culture, since students will be limited to a superficial and stereotypical knowledge about culture. Díaz-Rico and Weed (2006) simply explain that culture is the things that people agree upon sharing. Nieto (2010) elaborates that for things to be shared by people there have to be factors that pull them together. Nieto (2010) mentions these factors to be history, ethnicity, gender, language, race and social class, which bring people to participate in events of politics and society. With this said, Reye and Kleyn (2010) conclude that because culture is more than mere listable aspects, culture is “ways in which issues or problems are approached, family structures, and the roles and intersections of age, sex, class, and gender” (p. 25). Therefore when analyzing the activities in Miss Ines’ class, I analyzed them based on the deeper aspects of culture as elaborated by Reye and Kleyn (2010) and whether the activity falls under CLT as established by Burke (2007).
**Bingo day.** Self-made bingo sheets and bingo chips were handed to the students. Miss Ines then facilitated the game to review the topic on body parts. For about 15 minutes she called out each word, and had the students point out where each part could be located on their bodies while they played the game. Apart from body parts the teacher uses bingo as a means of covering other vocabulary words. In the 15 minutes reviewing vocabulary students take their time to ask and discuss with their group members what the word means in their native language, how it can be used in sentences and when and how it was used in the lesson they covered.

This activity was introduced twice out of my fourteen visits to the classroom, the activity falls in only one Expeditionary Learning design principles, “collaboration and competition,” which is focused towards allowing students to take up different roles and responsibilities in collaboratively working with each other to develop language (Burke, 2007). One student took the responsibility of reading out the words while the other students found the words on their sheets, and the teacher facilitated the learning process. Assigning each student a role and responsibility in activities allow students more active participation in the language learning development process. With only one Expeditionary Learning design principle, I would not categorize Miss Ines as using CLT approach towards teaching this activity. Krashen (1981) explains that many language teachers depend on drilling to teach grammar and language concepts. The common understanding is that the more the students go over the language concepts and rules the more they retain the knowledge. The bingo game is used interchangeably with flashcards to help students prepare for the weekly (Friday) vocabulary quiz. It is most likely that the students will forget most of the vocabulary they learned after the quiz since the bingo game was used as a tool to help drill vocabulary into the students. Drilling limits the natural acquisition of language rules and concepts (Krashen, 1981; Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Using CLT will better ensure that
students learn and retain vocabulary since they use it more frequently than one bingo game, in
the process students will develop knowledge of the context that such words can be used.

*Learn idioms through newspapers.* In this particular activity Miss Ines introduced
idioms to the class using newspapers. She used a specific newspaper known as *Elizabeth
Claire’s Easy English News* (September, 2012). The newspaper is targeted towards intermediate
immigrants and people visiting the United States, it uses elementary English to build vocabulary
and reading skills while learning about current news, civics information, survival skills for life in
the U.S., and events and holidays of the current month (Claire, 2010). On this day the teacher
reviewed with the students where they ended the previous week by asking them to quietly read
through the article, *Life in the U.S.A. When an earthquake hits.* After they read the article the
teacher selected Alicia to summarize what the article was about. Alicia managed to summarize
the article with a number of structural and grammatical mistakes, which provided the teacher
with an opportunity to correct her mistakes. Miss Ines used recast, repetition, and nonverbal
feedback to help correct Alicia’s summary.

Nicholas, Lightbown and Spada (2001) define recast as “utterances that reformulate the
whole or part of the learner’s erroneous utterance into a correct form while maintaining the
overall focus on meaning” (as cited in Nassaji & Fotos, 2010, p. 74), which does not only inform
the learner that his/her utterance is wrong but also provides them with the right form of
utterance. The teacher provides the learner with corrective feedback without changing the overall
meaning of the learners’ utterance while the learner modifies his/her original utterance by
repeating the teacher’s feedback (Nassaji & Fotos, 2010). Gass (2003) shares that this does not
guarantee that the learner has acquired the new form, learners may just be mimicking the
teacher’s feedback without enough understanding of why the teacher made those particular
changes (as cited in Nassaji & Fotos, 2010). Repetition feedback on the other hand is the partial or complete repetition of an erroneous utterance with a rising in the tone, which does not provide the learner with the correct form of utterance, but indicates to the learner that they made an error in their utterance (Nassaji & Fotos, 2010). While nonverbal feedback is defined as the feedback provided simply by using body movements such as the head, hand and finger movements and signals such as gestures and facial expressions (Nassaji & Fotos, 2010).

Throughout Miss Ines used nonverbal feedback by nodding or shaking her head to encourage Alicia to proceed and also let her know that she had made a mistake that she needed to correct. Alicia explained that “earthquakes happens without the warning,” the teacher uses recast to change Alicia’s mistakes. Miss Ines interrupts Alicia and says, “earthquakes happen without warning,” Alicia who then repeats, “without warning.” In other instances Miss Ines used repetition to correct other mistakes, Alicia in one area said “don’t try to run out an earthquake,” the teacher repeated what Alicia said and Alicia corrected her sentence by saying “don’t try to outrun an earthquake.”

She then spent about 12 minutes to introduce the new topic on idioms, she explained what idioms meant by giving examples provided in the newspaper and what they meant. The first idiom she explained was “with one hand tied behind one’s back.” She explained that this idiom meant to do something very easily. She gave an example from Claire’s Easy English News (September, 2012), “My mom can cook dinner for 12 people with one hand tied behind her back” (p. 8). Alicia then gave an example of an idiom in Spanish and explained what it meant in English. For example, Alicia explained that they have an idiom that means something very easy to do. The teacher added that in English there is the idiom, “a piece of cake”, which also means the same thing. She then distributed a language skills worksheet titled idioms and literary terms.
The worksheet consisted of a matching items section, fill in the blanks, and asked them to give the meaning of all the words with a star (*) found in the article they read without looking at the word help section found on page 12 of the newspaper.

Díaz-Rico and Weeds (2006) definition of culture suggest that common agreed upon symbols and meanings are part of culture. Idioms are agreed upon figurative meanings. This activity falls in two out of the ten Expeditionary Learning design principles, the activity meets “the natural world” design principle category by being a communicative activity that relates to practical situations (Burke, 2007). Miss Ines used this familiar object of earthquakes to introduce idioms to the students. This approach that Miss Ines used to teach idioms introduced students to idioms and how they can be used in natural settings. The concept was so familiar that Alicia was able to relate to it and provide a similar example in Spanish, which is related to the “diversity and inclusivity” Expeditionary Learning design principle where teachers encourage students to share their personal and cultural history with other language learners. However, the teacher failed to seize the opportunity to encouraged needed discussions over the article they read about Life in the U.S.A. When an earthquake hits.

Among many things Diaz-Rico and Weed (2006) define culture to be ways in which issues or problems are approached and the knowledge that is shared by people to make up their total way of life. This particular piece poses the question, “What should you do if the ground starts to move and shake under your feed?” After this question the article continues to explain how to approach this particular issue, students are taught to follow three particular steps in the events of such a problem, which is to “drop, cover, and hold on!” Through drills people in the U.S. manage to prepare and develop knowledge of what to do in the event of an actual earthquake. The students are exposed to knowledge about safety tips so that any English learner
or visitor in the U.S. who reads this newspaper will know what to do in the event of an earthquake. It is common for institutions inside the U.S. to conduct occasional safety drills to prepare people in events of actual natural and non-natural disasters like earthquakes, fires and tornadoes. Each country has their own way of handling or reacting to tragedies, making it important for people to be taught, reminded, and drilled of the procedures to follow in the event of these tragedies. This particular newspaper provides students and visitors that come to the U.S. with knowledge of how to handle earthquakes inside the U.S.

In my analytical notes, I wrote down my opinion about this activity through my observations. I wrote down that, “an in-depth discussion about natural reactions towards earthquakes or just earthquakes in general could have allowed students to compare and contrast between their prior knowledge about earthquakes and that they read about in the newspaper, which would help students understand the relevance of this particular article on Life in the U.S.A. When an earthquake hits.” The use of culture is a sure source of making learning a more practical experience, which resembles that of the first language environment where infants could easily acquire language. Teachers should be able to seize every opportunity they get at a discussion, the topic about culture could have been the perfect opportunity to talk about students’ own experience with things like earthquakes and other natural disasters. Do they follow the same drills and safety guides in their own countries? Was this information useful to them?

**Immigrant stories to learn vocabulary.** Miss Ines used the textbook *Language development through content: Our people and their Stories* (Dunetz, 1987) to share the story of the immigrant Pablo Casals to the students. The article they read was titled *Pablo Casals Musical Genius* which talked about Pablo’s life while still in his homeland, and how he became the most famous cellist of his time and how his talent made him an international star. In a section of the
article, an implicit explanation of career paying jobs in the 1880’s is provided. It explained Pablo’s fathers’ critical view towards musicians, he hoped that his son Pablo would become a carpenter instead of a musician since most musicians did not earn enough money and could not find good jobs, simply implying that music was not a good pattern of living, which is listed by Díaz-Rico and Weed (2006) as a process that people use to construct personal identity through negotiation of beliefs.

Next, the teacher introduced the use of “would, could, and can” as a display of politeness by expressing requests, desires and offers. She preceded her explanation of the meaning of all three words by giving an example, she explained that if a person wanted to offer another person to use their computer to check their e-mail they could use “would” to express politeness instead of saying, “use my computer.” Sergio, a student in the class volunteers to answer how it could be stated using “would, could, or can”. He answered, “Would you like you like to check your email on my computer?” The teacher uses “recast” as the form of correction to correct Sergio. In this case Miss Ines repeated Sergio’s answer as “Would you like TO [with added stress] check.” Sergio repeats, “Would you like to check your email on my computer?” Miss Ines gave another example asking the students to imagine they were at the front desk and needed to ask the clerk for the keys to their room. Alicia a student in the class then asked if tone can also be another determining factor of politeness, since if a person were to talk aggressively and loudly then the person would not be considered to be polite but if they were to lower their tone and speak positively then they are considered to be polite. The teacher explained that it did, she added that even facial expression can contribute to people’s expression of politeness or not. The teacher continued giving other scenarios and asked them to answer with tone and facial expression in
consideration. She gave the students a chance to discuss the answers among themselves before giving their answers.

Through the story of Pablo Casals students were provided an actual and practical example of another successful immigrant learner of English. This activity falls into one of the ten “the natural world” Expeditionary Learning design principles, through which Miss Ines was able to introduce the use of “would, could, and can” to express politeness in the English language. The “collaboration and competition,” “the having of wonderful ideas,” and “the primacy of self-discovery” design principles can also be seen in this activity. Students are seen to work in collaboration with each other to answer the questions asked by the teacher, while Miss Ines stimulates natural conversations as she encourages the students to take their time in discussing with each other before providing an answer.

**Tape cassettes to learn pronunciation.** The intermediate beginner students were directed to sit together in one corner of the class. Miss Ines then handed out four literature books to the four students and two cassette players to use between two students. Miss Ines told the students to listen carefully to the cassettes and how the words were pronounced, and even rewind if they needed to. She also explained that at the end of each chapter of the story book there were questions that they had to answer in collaboration. The students were then left for the remainder of the class to listen to the record player and to discuss among themselves.

This activity was intended for communication, it displayed six out of 10 design principles which include “the primacy of self-discovery,” “wonderful ideas,” “intimacy and caring,” “success and failure,” “collaboration and competition,” and “solitude and reflection” Expeditionary Learning design principles. Students worked together in pairs which made them raise question from the tape cassette that did not make sense. The students took their time to
listen to the cassettes and collaboratively worked together to answer the questions as they rewound the tape cassette player to develop a clear understanding of the content. Each student was responsible for their own leaning process as they asked the other pair that they were not working with, and even called the teacher when they were completely stuck. The teacher also facilitated the learning process as she insured the students that it was oaky to rewind the cassette and even ask others for help.

**Tell me the time.** This activity required one volunteer. Yhukon another student in the class stood up and was given a wooden clock and flashcards with time on them. Yhukon was instructed to first show the digital time displayed on the flashcards, allow the students to raise their hands and select one student to give the answer. The student had to say the time they saw on the flashcards and go to the front of the class and demonstrate what it would look like on the clock. The students spent 20 minutes on this activity while the teacher supervised the activity. After the activity, the teacher handed out worksheets on telling time to the intermediate beginner students and then moved on to helping the intermediate students. This activity displays none of the Expeditionary Learning design principles or any traces of cultural richness, students do not work together which limits them from developing understanding or the proper language skills.

**Experience sharing.** The teacher handed out worksheets on an activity that they did not learn about in class. They were instead instructed to use personal experience to help each other to answer the questions. The exercise required the students to give a phrase to explain an entire scenario. This particular activity as explained by Díaz-Rico and Weed (2006) in their explanation of culture targeted the knowledge, meaning, beliefs, morals, laws, customs, behaviors, traditions and habits shared and making up the total way of life of people. To help the students understand the teacher read the first scenario to them. The teacher read, “I never know what to say when a
person sneezes.” One student shouted out “sorry” while another student shouted “bless you.” The teacher explained that the response “bless you” was right, and so they should take their time to discuss and arrive at the right answer. This particular activity contains four out of ten design principles, which are “wonderful ideas,” “diversity and inclusivity,” “the natural world,” and “solitude and reflection” as its Expeditionary Learning design principles. The teacher used this activity related to practical situations they face in life to stimulate natural conversation and experimentation of the language through discussions. Students took their time to share personal experiences with each other as they tried to recall the actual answer to each question asked in relation to personal experience.

Culture Grams to learn about others. Miss Ines distributed copies of Culture Grams on the country of Chile. The teacher read to them the dressing code, eating habits, gift giving, titles, manner of punctuality, way of greeting, the meaning of yes and no, and way of giving gifts in Chile, each of which is identified by Reye and Kleyn (2010) as the deep aspects of culture, which include habits shared by people, behaviors, and the role of age and class. After explaining each cultural element, the teacher discussed with the students how they see it is done in the U.S. Yhukon shares that in his country younger people do not refer to their elders by their first name. Miss Ines elaborated that things have changed in the past 10 to 15 years, in places like banks the bank tellers used to address customers as Mr, Mrs or Miss, but these days’ seniors are referred to by their first name by the youth. She shared with her students that she found this behavior to be rude since they did not know her, and it is a business setting, she asked how they could call her by her first name. Based on Miss Ines’ explanation, she shared that 10 to 15 years ago, in places like banks it was considered unacceptable to address customers by their first name, but today, it is not strange for workers to address their customers by their first name. Miss Ines expresses her
feelings about the treatment, she shares that she finds bankers to be rude since they do not know her on a personal level and it is a business setting. She asked Yhukon if it was the same for the business settings, Yhukon replied that it was. In my analytical notes, I made a point of writing down that this particular scenario could have been an opportunity to conduct further discussions. Yhukon provided an opportunity for the teacher to make it clear if it is typical for people even outside the business setting to refer to seniors by their first name. It is typical in Thailand, but is it typical in the U.S. or Mexico too?

Culture stimulates communication and development of new insights and ideas. Through this activity Yhukon triggered room for discussion by sharing his own cultural with the class. The teacher could have used the culture infused in this activity to stimulate discussion and sharing of cultural differences among all the students. This in turn could develop CC while addressing any stereotypes the students might have. Also, in the activity “the primacy of self-discovery,” “wonderful ideas,” “diversity and inclusivity,” and “the natural world” were four out of ten of the Expeditionary Learning design principles. The teacher encouraged students to actively discuss the culture of the people in Chile and the people in the U.S. where natural conversations arose about the cultural differences between the two countries. The same could have also been done for their personal cultures if the teacher seized the opportunity to talk about the students own practical and personal experiences, which could help students to develop an understanding of others peoples differences by not opposing their opinions and culture.

Tips for doing business. As the students settled down, the teacher distributed Culture Grams from Finland, Ghana, Greece, Denmark, Australia, Iran, Fiji and Argentina to the students. She then instructed them to read the Culture Gram handed to them and write a paragraph on how to do business in the respective countries. She instructed them to give their
essays the title, “Tips for doing business in (the country they were assigned).” This activity like the “culture grams to learn about others” activity covered all the simple aspects of culture listed by Reye and Kleyn (2010) like food and clothing, and some of the deeper aspects like habit, behaviors and meanings, which included eating habits, gift giving, titles, punctuality, greetings, and giving tips in these countries. Savignon (2007) explains that culture gives students the opportunity to learn how to be more open minded towards others, the exposure allows language learners to experience and understand other cultures while giving others the opportunity to learn from them. Banks (2003) adds that embracing multi-cultural education it gives the learners and others the opportunity to learn about each other’s cultures. The teacher then went around the class providing individual help, which allowed the students a chance at one-on-one conversations, she answered the questions the students had and further elaborated how to complete the assignment. The Expeditionary Learning design principles in this activity were “the natural world,” and “solitude and reflection,” including two out of ten of the design principles. This activity was practical which allowed students time to reflect and relate to it, through which students were exposed to new vocabularies in relation to the new countries they were assigned to read about.

Each activity summarized contains its share of cultural elements, communicative entities, both, or neither of the two. The ten Expeditionary Learning design principles have helped guide me to evaluate and establish whether this ESL classroom uses CLT or not. Based on the ten principles, only the *Tape cassettes to learn pronunciation* activity (one out of the eight activities) is categorized as CLT for employing more than half of the design principles in this one activity. During the fourteen times that I visited the ESL classroom, it was only twice that the ESL teacher incorporated more than five Expeditionary Learning design principles in her lessons.
These activities displayed the teacher’s efforts to encourage collaborative and meaningful interactions among students. The activities were set up to allow students time to reflect and negotiate meaning. The teacher’s role was to facilitate the learning process as she encouraged the students to participate by actively contributing in the learning process and encouraged them to ask questions for clarity. These activities were highly communicative, which is an essential stimulator of language acquisition.

Most of the time, (nine out of fourteen), Miss Ines employed less than five of the ten Expeditionary Learning design principles. More specifically, most of her activities displayed one or two design principles, where by the most common principle was that of “the natural world.” These were the activities that related to practical situations in life. They were mostly targeted towards teaching a specific language concept, which most of the time ended up being partially a drilling activity while at the same time partially communicative. The fact that the activities were related to practical life situations gave the students something to share during the lessons allowing students to build better relationships and a better understanding of each other. The bingo day activity, learn idioms through newspapers, immigrant stories to learn vocabulary, and tips for doing business are good examples of such activities.

The remainder of the activities, (four out of the fourteen), did not employ any of the ten Expeditionary Learning design principles. These activities were entirely targeted towards drilling concepts so that the students could retain the knowledge for test purposes. Activities like flashcards to learn vocabulary and tell me the time were directed towards preparing students for the vocabulary quizzes that were administered every Friday. These activities were stimulate very little communication and negotiation of meaning. They also were not targeted towards meeting everyone’s needs, the weaker students remained quiet since they did not know the answers to the
questions, leaving only the strong and advanced students to take part in the activities, which is of no advantage to the weaker language students.

In conclusion, Burke (2007) shares that the ten Expeditionary Learning design principles are essential for CLT. Unlike the ESL classroom at Rivers High School, CLT among many things also supports that students only speak in the target language as the teacher encourages the beginner students to use whatever knowledge they have in the second language to actively participate in the classroom, which is intended towards showing the students that they can communicate in the target language better than they thought they could. Burke (2007) also shares that teachers should allow students to suggest games, activities and ways that can better help them learn language by respecting their contributions in the classroom. Students are taught to periodically evaluate their own learning progress by using journals, while the teacher rewards, motivates and grades them for their effective learning (Burke, 2007). The teacher is also responsible for distributing class responsibilities to the students, in turn students learn to take initiative and develop the feeling that they are an important component in the classroom and learning process (Burke, 2007). Burke (2007) suggests that students should experience the target community so that they can experience the target language first hand. Teachers should immerse their students in the target language community by taking them on outings to functions, museums or cultural organizations and events (Burke, 2007).

Learning Pace. The learning pace and environment of the first language is natural unlike that of the second language that is characterized as planned, gradual and artificial (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Language students spend very little time throughout their school lives speaking in the target language compared to the amount of time
they spend speaking in their first language at home (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983). A student’s pace as well as exposure to the target language tends to affect a learner’s learning progress.

**Natural learning.** Through data analysis, four main themes and numerous codes recurred to help explain what impact content-based instruction (teaching of culture) has on ESL students’ language acquisition in this classroom. A second language learner’s learning process is usually planned, gradual, and artificial (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

Second language learners are usually placed in a controlled learning environment, where learning and teaching is controlled, monitored and timed. Reyes and Kleyn (2010) explain that topics taught in class, like national holidays, lack depth in teaching about them. Reyes and Kleyn (2010) suggest that instruction should begin from a student’s own cultural background towards exposing them to cultural diversity, which can be done by focusing on deeper culture like value systems rather than surface culture like food and clothing, thus making target culture the focal point in the curriculum. Reyes and Kleyn (2010) suggest the best way of approaching this is for the teacher to be bilingual.

**Language rule retention.** Second language learners are more conscious of their learning process than they were when learning their first language. Students focused on understanding the use and rules of grammar to avoid making mistakes more than they are on subconscious language acquisition. Conscious language learning forces students to focus on learning the rules of language and retaining (usually through drill activities) these rules so as to successfully maintain knowledge of the language production. Miss Ines also encourages her students to leave behind their packets at the end of each lesson every day. She explains:

I also make sure I collect all my students’ worksheets at the end of each lesson, this is the only way to get them to carry notebooks, otherwise they will depend on the worksheets,
which they tend to lose. I have found out that they take better care of their own things².

(May 20, 2012)

According to my observation notes, students are handed their worksheets, dictionaries (if needed), literary books, culture grams, Elizabeth Claire Easy English Newspapers or other work for the day at the beginning of every class, and the teacher collects them once the class is over. Besides these materials, students take out their personal notebooks where they write down their notes. In addition to these two techniques, Miss Ines makes sure she has a vocabulary quiz once every week, according to her this helps the students revise and study all the vocabulary they accumulate over the week. The flashcards that she has them practice for 5-10 minutes every morning keeps their vocabulary fresh since they are often exposed to the words. The students use their notebooks to read through the vocabulary before the start of the flashcard exercise or quiz. The students further support this method of learning. Alicia described her learning experience in the following way:

One lesson is to learn the alphabet and another lesson is how to say the words. One thing I like about them is the way you speak it is different. I learn that when you say a hard word and you can’t say it to break it down. (May 22, 2012)

The pace at which students were exposed to learning is also described by the teacher in the following way:

Through each lesson I managed to introduce topics that were unexpected to the students. Each lesson is intended to keep the students engaged and set a level plain field for all the students to learn and help each other. I am also able to monitor my students learning process. Each lesson is accompanied with review quizzes and intensive discussions about

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² All transcripts of information are presented as was written or spoken during observations.
how things are done in their home countries, which helps build a sense of comfort among students. (May 20, 2012)

A culturally immersed classroom is structured to be as natural and as close to the actual setting as possible. The language learning environment is intended to be spontaneous and stimulate discussion. Alicia points out in her response that the lessons build up on each other. She first learned the letters of the alphabet and then how to say different words. Just like a first language learner, a child learns how to say single words before moving on to phrases and complete sentences, thus making the learning pace similar to that of a natural speed.

Through the questionnaires, I gathered that in a natural setting, language acquisition is stimulated while rules related to language acquisition help retain language learned. Alicia describes how she learned that breaking down a hard word helps her to pronounce the words easier, this is a rule that she continues to use since she started learning English.

While observing Miss Ines’ classroom I saw how she used culture to invoke discussions on various day-to-day experiences. When covering the topic of “Tips for doing business,” the teacher talked about what to do when you first meet a person in a business setting. Miss Ines engages her students in a discussion about how to shake a person’s hand in a business or formal situation.

Miss Ines: You don’t want to do it like you are holding a dead fish, and don’t squeeze the hand too hard that it hurts or too wimpy (goes around the class showing the students how to make a firm hand shake).

Why should you be careful not to make their grip too loose?

Emilia: (answers first) It’s like someone does not like you.

Sergio: (answers second) it’s rude.
Yhukon: Is it rude to shake by left hand?

Miss Ines: Yes, it is rude to shake using the left hand. (May 22, 2012)

In this particular exercise the whole class participated in the lesson and activities. The decision that the teacher made to go around the class and show each student how a normal handshake is done is more practical than simply telling the students by word how it is done. They might not be in suits or in an actual business setting, but engaging with the students by shaking their hands initiated questions and responses from both groups of students.

**Authenticity.** Burke (2007) explains the importance of using activities that are related to practical situations to teach language. In the natural world Expeditionary Learning design principle, it is emphasised that teachers introduce communicative activities that relate to practical situations to allow students to engage in meaningful conversations (Burke, 2007). Culture makes the learning experience authentic and practical (Burke, 2007).

**Mother Tongue versus Target Language.** Each lesson that Miss Ines introduces is different from the one before and in result stimulates discussion in the class. *Language development through content: Our people and their Stories* (Dunetz, 1987) introduces a new immigrant and life to the students every week. Each unique individual forces students to relate themselves to the person in some way. After covering the story of Pablo Casals students were introduced to the topic of using the present perfect progressive tense. This activity alone caused students to speak and give examples from their own lives.

Emilia: I have been speaking English from three years.

Sergio: I played piano since when I was four.

Miss Ines: Say it in the progressive form like Emilia.

Sergio: I have been playing piano from age four.
Miss Ines: (repeats) I have been playing the piano from the age of four. Don’t forget your articles. (May 22, 2012)

The nature of lessons introduced to the students should not be abstract to the students, in this particular activity the students related to both the reading and activity that followed, allowing them to share their own experiences and sometimes culture with others. The activity therefore does not limit the students, but rather it ties back to the lesson and influences students to transfer their mother tongue knowledge and language to their target language knowledge and language.

Emilia stated, “The way other Mexican people talk and say it so good encouraged me in my communication skills” (May 22, 2012). Phueng also stated, “Hearing other students talk English and reading. I remember listen to the words and how you suppose to really say it” (May 22, 2012). Both students express how their experience in the cultural setting has allowed them to be exposed to fellow second language learners, which has encouraged their learning. Emilia expresses that in the ESL class they are influenced by fellow native speakers while Phueng expresses how all students (in class and outside of class) around her influence her learning.

**Language Familiarity.** Content-based instruction, apart from providing a natural and practical learning experience, allows a student to develop familiarity with the new language. This in turn stimulates acquisition. Phueng describes, “Talking and hearing I like them both because you get use to the person talking English” (May 22, 2012). Through developing familiarity with the target language, Phueng is on his way towards fully developing the four components to CC, which include grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence (Savignon, 2007). What better way of developing familiarity than by engaging in discussions so that the students can practice using the language more. The teacher changes the seating arrangement from time to time, especially when she has group activity that she wants the
students to work on together. Students usually turn to each other and work in pairs or move desks around to work in groups of four. Either arrangement encourages students to engage with each other and practice speaking with each other under the supervision of the teacher. Otherwise learning would just be teacher centred and not as productive since the movement towards CC would be very slow if not impossible.

**Feelings.** The main motivator in this classroom is the ESL teacher who is in control of directing the class in any manner that she chooses. This is made possible through how she set up her class, how she conducts her activities and how she engages with the students. In numerous notes I wrote to myself, I point out a variety of opportunities that the teacher could have used to spark a discussion that could be useful for everyone. For example, Yhukon shared that in Thailand elders are always addressed by their surname, but the teacher only talked about how it is done in a business setting. This could have been an opportune time to explain to students how it works in the U.S. in comparison to their home countries. In another scenario the teacher was elaborating wedding rituals from the book *Jane Eyre* (Brontë, 2009). She was explaining that if a priest asks, “if anyone is against this marriage speak now or forever hold your peace” it means that if anyone has any reason that the couple should not get married then they should say before the couple are married. Sergio then asked what if a person says something after the wedding. The teacher said she did not know. This alone could have been a perfect opportunity to conduct a discussion on other student’s experiences with this issue or even talk about how weddings are conducted in their home countries.

The ESL classroom setting is in such a way that the students are always reminded that they are more than capable of succeeding. The one poster on the blackboard is of famous immigrants who came to the U.S. throughout history and made successful careers for themselves.
Pablo Casals is the story of an immigrant that many other immigrants can relate to. Pablo came from humble beginnings, had limited professional working skills and, limited knowledge of a language other than Spanish. Through Pablo and other famous immigrants students are motivated to see their situation through a lens of “possibility” other than “limitation. Each component in the classroom plays a big role in motivating or discouraging the students learning process. Emilia for example expresses that seeing other Mexican people speak English encourages her to learn the language. The fact that the ESL class is comprised of different proficiency levels allows the lower proficient level students to be encouraged and motivated by the higher proficient level students. She also expresses that her experience in the ESL class has always been helpful one, as she states, “The positive experience is that they always teach you the right way in the ESL program” (May 22, 2012). Alicia supports this when she expresses her feelings:

I feel comfortable because I try to do my best I know that I have to keep learning because I know that this can help me in the future and even when people in school talk to me I feel so happy because I can understand them with no body that have to translate. (May 22, 2012)

Alicia’s positive attitude continues:

My communication skills have progressed better than I thought. I love my reading because is something incredible because when I star to learn English I find the reading something shameful because I have scare that people laugh of my reading but well I don’t care what people say because what I do is for me no to the other people. (May 22, 2012)
Alicia expresses that she feels comfortable and safe in her learning environment. She feels safe enough to take risks and face the fear of how others might react towards her contributions. In one of the ten Expeditionary Learning design, intimacy and caring, explains that the language classroom environments allow students to develop friendships with each other and the teacher that they might not have developed outside the classroom (Burke, 2007). This helps develop familiarity with the learning environment as well as with other learning participants, allowing students to develop personal commitment towards each other and safety (Burke, 2007). Safe environments are productive learning environments.

Alicia further illustrates:

> I going to be honest sometimes I feel abnormal because I when I look around me everybody speak English and I don’t know a the meaning of a lot of words but at the same time I sit and I star to think that I’m lucky because I know 2 languages. (May 22, 2012)

Alicia expresses that the progress she has experienced from learning English has influenced her desire to keep learning English. She is happy at the fact that she can understand people without having people translate for her what is being said. In another Expeditionary Learning design principle, the primacy of self-discovery, states that language classrooms help in developing a student’s personality, while the teacher is responsible for helping students to overcome their fears (Burke, 2007). Sergio expresses how he feels about learning English:

> I been learning English from ninth grade like three years ago. I been learning English because is my second language and honestly because I get tired of depend of people that translate to me and sometimes they don’t want to help and even some people don’t translate what others are saying so well. (May 22, 2012)
Other students feel intimidated and afraid to speak English in fear of being laughed at. In Sergio’s case, this is mostly common when the students have to speak English outside the ESL class. Emilia for example states, “I feel nervous talking in school because I don’t want people to make fun of how I talk” (May 22, 2012). Yhukon too explains his concern, “When I speak English I feel like if people is going to laugh about me and some time ago people did because I didn’t say the right words and how I wanted to communicate but I couldn’t” (May 22, 2012). Emilia and Yhukon express how their fear to make mistakes limited them from wanting to communicate in English. Burke (2007) elaborates through the responsibility of learning Expeditionary Learning design principle that without fully and actively participating in the learning environment a successful learning environment will not develop (Burke, 2007).

The ESL teacher is able to use her knowledge of Spanish to help the Spanish students. In one particular class, Miss Ines was discussing the book Jane Eyre (Brontë, 2009) and she talked to the students about the meaning of curtsy. She said the word in Spanish and showed the class how a curtsy is done. She then asked Yhukon if they have the same thing in their home country, Yhukon says no and explains that they bow. Apart from that one instance the teacher usually always speaks Spanish when she goes around the class to give students personal assistance on their class work. She even sometimes makes Sergio and another student, a beginner, sit together so that when necessary he can translate to her what the teacher is saying.

Community. In this classroom I found Alicia and Emilia who are sisters and Yhukon and Phueng who are siblings. People in their first language setting tend to acquire language inside a community that they are comfortable and used to. However, this is not always the case for all ESL classes, which makes it even more important for the teacher to establish a comfortable, trustworthy and reliable community. All the students have expressed how comfortable and
motivated they are by others in their class. Each student that expressed their fear of being laughter at explains that they are afraid of being laughed at by students outside their ESL class and feel more comfortable when inside their ESL class.

The main thing that the teacher has done to make the students comfortable in class is to have the beginner students pair up with a more proficient student that will help translate to the less proficient student of what the teacher is teaching. They also do most of their work in groups so that they are more used to receiving assistance and asking for assistance instead of just keeping quiet in class, which is one of the important element in CLT. Through collaboration and communication students learn to respect the strengths and weaknesses of others ensuring success in language learning, which is evident in the collaboration and competition as well as the service and compassion Expeditionary Learning design principles (Burke, 2007). The teacher could motivate the students more by addressing their questions more often. Questions asked by students can be answered by providing follow up questions rather than leaving opportunities like the one Yhukon provided when talking about elders, Sergio provided when talking about wedding rituals and Alicia provided after summarizing about earthquakes. Unanswered questions that the students provided could be followed up on.

**Strategies the ESL teachers used to promote a successful communicative classroom.**

The second aim of this study was to explore the strategies that the ESL teacher used to promote a successful communicative classroom. The teacher usually introduced a new activity every day. Despite the fact that the students fell on different levels of the proficiency scale, the teacher introduced activities that all the students could relate to and also have something to share. Most of the activities were culture-based and not limited to a particular culture.
Burke (2007, 2011) emphasises the importance of the communicative approach in teaching language, it stimulates and promotes discussion in class that in turn stimulates language acquisition. Savignon (2007) explains that natural learning has always aimed at developing communicative skills that can help one to meet the needs of all social interaction. CLT is most recommended to engage learners into communication that will in turn develop CC (Savignon, 2007). For communicative activities to be more successful, the activities should be more student-centered while the teacher plays the role of facilitator (Burke, 2007). This particular question complimented Savignon’s (2007) assertion that there are four components that make CC:

The three components it identified were grammatical competence, or linguistic competence in the restricted sense of the term as used by Chomsky, sociolinguistic competence, or rules of usage, and strategic competence. Canale (1983) subsequently identified discourse competence as a distinct fourth component. (p. 209)

Savignon’s assertion focuses on students being able to meaningfully interact with other speakers and not just recite dialogues (as cited in Savignon, 2007). Through my observations I intended to see if the activities conducted in the classroom focused on promoting CC by falling into grammatical competence/linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence and discourse competence.

**Sociolinguistic competence.** Culture has become an important component to language teaching. Every attempt at communication is for a purpose, language is thus a tool that speakers and writers use to produce meaning (Savignon, 2007). Savignon (2007) explains that the culture presented in the process of language learning should therefore not be in isolation to other cultures. Language learners are therefore allowed the opportunity to experience other cultures,
which allows them to understand other cultures and in turn see how other they are viewed by other cultures (Savignon, 2007).

In a lesson where Miss Ines used culture grams, she introduced students to the U. S. and talked about how to behave when at a restaurant. She explained that when you are in need of help you should not whistle, snap your fingers or clap your hands at a waiter or waitress, the best thing is to make eye contact. She continued to explain that even in other countries where English was also spoken, it does not mean that things are done the same. This scenario starts out by displaying how the teacher introduced the students to the social context of restaurants in the U. S. while elaborating that things may be different in other English speaking countries. Alicia then shares that her aunt usually waves when in restaurants, something that the teacher came to explain is considered to be rude. All in one scenario the student learned about the American culture while learning how the American culture considers her aunt’s action of waving, which could be considered appropriate in Mexico. Sergio explained that he once visited Wisconsin and went out with his brother to a restaurant, when there he whistled at the waiter. He explained that the waiter walked up to his table and told him that he should not whistle. This particular act is considered rude but might be acceptable in Cuba. When language classrooms learn to employ CLT, students will have the opportunity to negotiate meaning to the point of establishing the most acceptable and appropriate meaning in language as well as culture. Alicia and Sergio’s personal contribution gave the teacher a chance to explain to the students that their prior knowledge about restaurant etiquette is not acceptable in the United States. Apart from developing meaning and developing ties with others by sharing personal experience, students are also collaboratively and actively taking part in the activity, which is essential for CC.
When the students were reading the book of *Jane Eyre* (Brontë, 2009), the teacher went over some of the questions in their worksheets for that day. The one question asked what black meant. This question in particular needed them to explain the meaning of wearing black. The teacher shared that the women in England during that time had to wear black for a whole year when their husbands passed away. In that period it was considered proper, she explained that for people like the queen, she would have to wear black all the time. Yhukon then shared that he wore a tuxedo to a funeral. The teacher then elaborated, “Do you mean you wore a black suit?” Yhukon replied yes. This particular scenario explains that Yhukon understood and took part in the ritual of wearing black but did not understand the difference between a suit and a tuxedo. Savignon (2007) describes every attempt at communication purposed towards producing meaning. It is Yhukon’s contribution about attending a funeral that allowed the teacher an opportunity to help Yhukon understand that he has the right understanding but the wrong concept of word. This allowed him and the rest of the class develop complete meaning about wearing black at a funeral and the difference between the tuxedo and the suit.

**Strategic competence.** Teachers should encourage students to take risks by developing coping strategies in language learning as a means of producing meaningful interactions (Savignon, 2007). Coping strategies are any strategies that students develop to help them negotiate meaning, which include asking for information, seeking for clarification, using circumlocution and any other that could serve the purpose of meaning negotiation (Savignon, 2007).

**Ask for information.** These are typically the questions that students can ask in the learning process in request to obtain information. In a discussion, when covering the story of the
attack on Pearl Harbor Emilia asks the teacher about the date of the bombing, the discussion proceeded as follows:

Emilia: When was the bomb?
Teacher: Do you know what happened 71 years ago?
Emilia: Twin tower bombing?
Other students: (laugh)
Yhukon: (laughing) No, that was 9/11, not 71 years ago.
Sergio: A president died.
Teacher: No! That was when the Japanese bombed the pearl harbour and lead to the Second World War.
Alicia: I didn’t know that. (May 22, 2012)

Each question posed by the student to the teacher was a means of approaching the right answer to when the bombing happened. The questions started out vague, but by the end of the lesson students asking more questions and providing more suggestions the students came to know exactly what bombing it was. It was not that of the 9/11, or a president’s death like Sergio thought, but it was that the Japanese bombed the pearl harbour that lead to the Second World War, something that Alicia expressed that she did not know.

**Ask for clarification.** One of the means through which the teacher encourages coping strategies is encouraging one-on-one conversations with the students. After Miss Ines introduces a new concept through activities, she hands out worksheets that the students use to practice the concept they learned. While each student works on their worksheets, Miss Ines moves from desk to desk to talk to the students about the exercises and provide clarification to any questions they may have. She also pairs the beginner and intermediate beginner students together so that they
can seek help from each other. Sergio when necessary translates to the beginner students to make
sure that they understand the concepts and exercises. Sergio glances at the board and sees the
word “prejudice” and asks for clarification as follows:

Sergio: What is prejudice?
Student A: Remember when we used it in class last week?
Alicia: It means judging you badly.
Sergio: Oh yea! (May 22, 2012)

In another discussion, in the middle of an essay writing activity, Emilia asks for the spelling of
potatoes:

Emilia: How to spell potatoes?
Sergio: (pronounces) PO-TA-TES
Emilia: No, that sounds wrong.
Alicia: Spell chocolate.
Phueng: (pronounces) CHO-CO-LA-TE
Alicia: (writes on a piece of paper and turns to show Emilia)
Emilia: No, that is wrong, you forgot “e”
Sergio: There is no “e”
Emilia: Yes theirs “e”! How do you spell toe?
Sergio: Aw yea, okay! (May 22, 2012)

Sergio asked this question without the teacher’s initiation, and the students were able to provide
him with an answer without the teachers help. This allowed him to remember where he heard the
word from and what it specifically meant. This particular negotiation of meaning allows a learner
to arrive at the actual meaning and remove the misconception he might have had. Emilia’s
question about how to spell “potatoes” also allowed the students to engage in a deep discussion about what the right spelling is. In the process they use rules and knowledge that they had which is tested by others in the process of seeking the right spelling. The students tried sounding out the word as they would other words, this rule does not always work because with English there are exceptions that Emilia pointed out when she asked Sergio to spell toe, just to prove that the word potatoes has an “e” with the reference to the word “toe”. CLT allows students to learn essential things from other students, students can teach and remind each other of rules and strategies to better retain knowledge they learn in class or just simply unlock knowledge about things that students never knew they had until they put them to practice.

Circumlocution. This is known as a roundabout way of speaking, one may use more words than needed to explain an answer or express an idea or feeling. Miss Ines encourages students to speak, say whatever is on their mind to get an idea across. She would then use the appropriate correction to help them rectify the mistake. The types of corrections that a teacher can use may be in the form of repetition, direct elicitation, clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, direct correction, nonverbal feedback and recast, all with the intention of reaching a negotiation of meaning (Nassaji & Fotos, 2010). Sergio shares with the class about Oprah:

Sergio: Oprah is the woman more rich in this world.

Teacher: (recasts) The richest woman.

Sergio: (rephrases) richest woman in the world. (May 22, 2012)

In this particular scenario the teacher uses recast feedback. Recast is the most common form of corrections that language teachers use, they tend to add, omit, or change utterances from the mistake initially made by the student (Nassaji & Fotos, 2010). Discussions between the teacher and the student’s causes there to be more information revealed. Through employing every
element of strategic competence students learn to negotiate meaning not only for the purpose of achieving academic success but also social success as intended by the ESL program.

When it comes to discourse competence, people’s responses towards learning a language for communication purposes differ (Savignon, 2007). Whenever two or more languages come in contact, community values and attitudes tend to also come in contact, since two or more people come into contact as a result of language interaction (Savignon, 2007). The hurdle that follows is for the people to resolve personal issues of power and identity that arise in the process of interaction (Savignon, 2007). Therefore, a learner may respond positively or negatively to their learning process. When Alicia was asked how she felt participating in the ESL program at her school she explained that, “I going to be honest sometimes I feel abnormal…” Although she thinks herself lucky for knowing two languages, she still feels out of place for not being able to speak English like her peers at school.

Grammatically Miss Ines structured the activities and lessons she introduced to the students to teach various grammatical structures through covering various social contexts and meaning. Grammar in this case is not intended for the students to pass tests but to have knowledge in grammar that they may use in the process of discerning meaning. Speaking grammatically correct English is not necessary for successful communication (MacDonald, Badger & Dasli, 2006). Throughout my analysis of the student’s questionnaires I found that the students still had a clear problem their grammar and the use of punctuation. Emilia for example, in one of her written survey responses she uses the wrong tenses, the wrong form of preposition and only one period in her whole sentence.
When I speak English I fell like if people is going to laugh about me and some time ago people did because I didn’t say the right words and now I wanted communicate but I couldn’t. (May 22, 2012)

Despite the grammatical errors, the students are still able to convey what they mean to the recipient of the information. Grammatical competence is an on-going process as is strategic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence.

External Barriers that Inhibit Students’ Acquisition of the Target Language

External barriers are the barriers that are often not addressed or overlooked when it comes to target language acquisition. Through the analysis of all the data I collected, I did not find evidence about what inhibits students’ acquisition of the target language but did find external barriers that inhibit the overall purpose of the ESL program as identified by Miss Ines, one ESL teacher. These barriers include limited knowledge of the ESL program, limited voice of ESL teachers, lack of parental/guardian support, fear and limited ESL teachers.

Lack of knowledge of the ESL program. Miss Ines explained that many teachers and administrators until this day do not know what the ESL program is about and why students need it. There are also many misconceptions about the ESL program, Miss Ines explains that other subject teachers, parents and students believe that an ESL teacher should be fluent in their child’s language for them to teach them English, some believe that because their grandparents and parents did not take ESL in their time that it is not important for the children today to take ESL, Some teachers believe that ESL is only for the Spanish speaking students, and some believe that ESL has been introduced to schools as a tool to clear out all the ESL students.

When I had first started looking for a classroom to do my graduate teaching field experience assignments I sat in a language arts classroom, I asked the teacher whether she had
any ESL students in her classroom, she responded that she doesn’t know, but she did know that she had a student in sixth hour. The student had not been doing well in her class, and when she decided to meet with the students’ parents, the parents revealed to the language arts teacher that the students was an ESL student. She expressed that she would prefer that she had been informed earlier, since she could have done something to help him sooner. I then asked her who I could see to get access and more information about the ESL students at Rivers High School. She then directed me to the counsellor’s office that should have a list of all the ESL students. While on my way to the counsellor’s office I think to myself, “how was it possible that this information is not made known to the teachers, especially the language teachers?” Once in the counsellor’s office I ask him for information about the ESL students in the senior classes. He too tells me that he does not have that information, but directs me to Miss Ines, the ESL teacher. Such information is vital for the progress of any ESL student as well as the ESL program, without which the misconceptions about the purpose of the ESL class will never be resolved and the ESL students will never fully benefit from the program. Other teachers can benefit from knowing about the ESL program and whether they have ESL students in their classes, they could better plan their lessons to meet the needs and also help these students.

**Fear.** Support encourages and motivates students to perform well and progress in their learning process. Through observational findings and questionnaires students expressed that they had a better learning experience inside the ESL class than outside the classroom. Inside the classroom, the students with the aid of Miss Ines have developed a supportive and comfortable learning community. Outside the classroom it is more different since students feared their peers’ reaction, which at many times was being laughed at. Alicia expresses that she is comfortable learning English. Phueng on the other hand explains, “I’m scare to communicate in English in
school because I think that I’m not going to say the right words or my pronunciation could be wrong.” Emilia too expresses that she becomes nervous talking in other regular classroom settings (outside the ESL classroom) because she does not want people to make fun of how she talks while Sergio expresses that he is tired of depending on people to translate to him because at times they don’t want to help them while others are unable to properly translate for him. It is not different from my observations, students to not make fun of others when they make mistakes but rather help them by providing the right answer. At times students help each other arrive at the right answer, this is evident in the scenario where Sergio sought help in understanding the word prejudice and when Emilia needed help with spelling the word potatoes.

Miss Ines explains that there were incidences where parents/guardians decided to pull their children out of the ESL classes. Even if a student takes the pre-LAS (assessment tests administered to kindergarten or first grade students) or LAS (assessment tests administered to second to twelfth grade students) test and matches the criteria of needing a special language program, the school still needs consent from the parents to place their child into the ESL program. The teachers that do not know the importance of the ESL program do not recommend it to parents/guardians, therefor causing the parents/guardians who also do not know anything about the program to demand that their children be pulled out of the ESL program. After realizing the problem the Miss Ines made efforts to speak to the parents who had pulled out their children and explain to them why their children need to be in the ESL classroom. Parents/guardians are therefore unable to encourage their children as it is important for them to be in the program. Some of these parents/guardians need translators since they cannot speak fluent English without the aid of a translator.
Understaffing of ESL Teachers and Limited voice of the ESL Teacher. Miss Ines explains that the ESL program has a limited number of teachers. She explained that there were only seven ESL teachers for the whole district. These seven teachers had to move around from school to school so as to meet the needs of all the ESL students in Toledo. In her own schedule, she had to work at Rivers High school during the day and later in the afternoon move to an elementary school. This in turn affects other students that may have only one or just a few ESL students at their school. Instead of receiving an hour of ESL they end up receiving half an hour of ESL instruction every school day.

With all the misconceptions about ESL programs, the ESL teachers are unable to say anything concerning the ESL students that are eventually pulled out of the program or those that are discouraged from joining the program. Despite these students needing this program and having only 7 to meet the needs of the whole district, the seven ESL teachers cannot do anything but hope that their complaint reach the superintendent, but this is not an guarantee that they will receive more ESL teachers.

Summary

In this chapter data was analysed to answer three research questions. A sample of about seven ESL activities were described and themes were used to support how these activities used content-based instruction (teaching of culture) impacted students’ language acquisition. Also, a brief description of the Expeditionary Learning design principles of CLT approach were provided to measure whether this ESL classroom teacher can be categorized as a CLT who employs CLT in her instruction. Through painting a picture of the cultural nature of the classroom, it was explored how the teacher strategically promoted a successful communicative
classroom. Lastly, the external barriers that inhibit the students’ acquisition of the target language were discussed as shared by the ESL teacher.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

My own experience as a second language learner of English, and later a teacher of English to students learning English as their second language motivated my desire to research the use of culture as an element in a communicative approach to language teaching. My own journey as an English learner started at the age of five in the English speaking community of Glasgow, Scotland. My own progress in English began after the head mistress pulled me out of class every school day and gave me extra assistance in learning English. English as a Second Language (ESL) programs are intended to provide an equal education opportunity to ESL students by providing them with instruction that will improve their language skill. Therefore, ESL students are allowed an equal opportunity at success like their native peers. Through the following questions I was able to conduct focused research:

1. What impact does content-based instruction (teaching of culture) have on ESL students' language acquisition?

2. What strategies (if any) did this ESL teacher use to promote a successful communicative classroom?

3. What external barriers inhibit students' acquisition of target language?

This chapter provides an elaborated discussion of the study and findings obtained through the research questions. The research questions revealed the role that culture plays in language teaching and learning, how culture can create a supportive learning community that stimulates communicative competence (CC), and how the misconceptions about the ESL program may inhibit students learning process. These findings will be discussed in relation to the research questions asked.
What impact does content-based instruction (teaching of culture) have on ESL students' language acquisition?

In order to develop the essential skills for social interaction a language student needs to master the skills of communication (Savignon, 2007). It is through interaction that students will acquire language and teachers can facilitate students to develop the appropriate language coping strategies to develop their skills in communication. Therefore, by encouraging students to engage in practical and intensive communication activities they are able to develop the appropriate strategies that will help them to negotiate meaning (Savignon, 2007), whether for education purposes or social intent.

The study has helped demonstrate that culture is an extremely important tool in the language instruction process. By exposing students to the deeper structures of culture like peoples’ approach towards issues or problems, the structure of families, and the roles of age, sex, class, and gender (Reyes & Kleyn, 2010), also the patterns for living, agreed upon symbols and meanings, knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, behaviors, traditions, shared habits, and what people agree and negotiate upon as their personal identity (Díaz-Rico & Weed, 2006). Students in the same way learn to negotiate meaning for their personal success in school and the community, like they learn from this deeper level of culture, where culture involves negotiations and agreements made by people. In all the activities that I observed from the ESL classroom, culture acts as a catalyst towards language acquisition, creates a sense of community between the learners and teacher, and develops a better understanding and appreciation in learners for others and their selves. Culture is seen to build friendship ties in this ESL classroom that is not easily built it any other grammar and drill driven language classroom. Culture also gives students a practical experience to language learning that in turn stimulates communication. Alptekin (2002)
explains the importance of being communicatively competent in the target language so as to fully participate in the target culture. The ESL teacher was able to develop such a learning environment through the implementation of activities rich in culture, adding cultural entities to her classroom setting, and encouraging discussions in the strategies that she employed in the classroom.

The students’ reactions towards ESL learning, Miss Ines’ reaction towards her experience in ESL teaching, and the observation notes that I collected demonstrated that culture helps create a natural and practical learning environment. Such environments allow the learners to develop and retain the language rules at a natural pace, something that drilling cannot achieve. Culture also helps create a sense of classroom community, which provides support and motivation for the learners’ learning process.

Apart from culture, CLT is another important component of language teaching. CLT however is more important between the two, since culture on its own limits students to developing the skill of negotiation of meaning. CLT contains ten Expeditionary Learning design principles, within which culture is a component of three of the design principles. These include the diversity and inclusivity, natural world, and service and compassion Expeditionary Learning design principles. The CLT approach provides the ESL student and learning process with a lot more than what culture alone can provide. Students are ensured of their ability to overcome fear and have a successful communicative process by gaining control over their learning process through active participation (Burke, 2007). Students are also encouraged by teachers to experiment with language thus developing higher levels of CC, while they are empowered to be responsible and accountable for their own learning process (Burke, 2007). Through communication, students develop a sense of community through the friendships they establish in
class, as they also learn competence through negotiation, expression and language interpretation (Burke, 2007). Teachers develop a sense of responsibility and collaborative learning in students, and teach them to develop appreciation for others as they learn about each other’s cultures (Burke, 2007). Through learning from familiar and practical situations students are allowed to explore the language and engage in meaningful conversations that expose students to learn new vocabularies (Burke, 2007).

I therefore propose that other ESL programs also use CLT, and that ESL programs cooperate with other subject classes like social studies and language arts to promote learning. Banks (2003) emphasizes that we should not embrace (assimilate) into other peoples cultures to the point of losing our own identity by forgetting where we came from, rather we should allow ourselves to understand others and their cultures by embracing multi-cultural education, like CLT emphasises in its ten Expeditionary Learning design principles. The ESL teacher in cooperation with other language departments and subject classes can develop and share cultural, communicative, and language teaching methods and techniques. Through cooperation, multi-cultural/global education can be developed, which will cause the school administration to be involved and familiar with the ESL program. The informed teachers and administration can help enlighten the parents of the program by clearing up all misconceptions already made.

What strategies (if any) did this ESL teacher use to promote a successful communicative classroom?

This teacher relied on culture in five out of eight of the activities illustrated in this study, as well as communication to advance her students speaking, reading and writing skills. Through culture, discussions were stimulated among students. Students were able to share personal
experience about restaurants, how they address seniors in their home countries, and the significance of a proper handshake, through which students were allowed to negotiate meaning.

The teacher also introduces numerous texts to the students like the Elizabeth Claire’s *Easy English News* (September, 2012), *Language development through content: Our people and their Stories* (Dunetz, 1987), and *Jane Eyre* (Brontë, 2009). Each text provided the students with an opportunity to read and negotiate how they understood the text through discussions, and sometimes they even wrote compositions. These compositions were written based on what they understood from topics they either discussed or read about in class like in “Tips of doing business in (the country they were assigned).” Culture provided her class with practical social experiences that the students could use to learn the appropriate interaction strategies. In the process of interaction the students developed numerous coping strategies like asking for information, seeking clarification, and using circumlocution to negotiate meaning. All five students were able to engage in discussions where they could use questions to inform their peers of misunderstandings. This allowed students to engage in back and forth discussions until they arrived at a mutual agreement on the intended meaning.

Through culture the teacher opened the students to a broader understanding of a culture other than their own, as well as giving students a platform to share who they are to their peers. This reduced the negative attitudes and stereotypes that students had about each other, thus encouraging communication in the classrooms, which in turn promoted CC. ESL teachers should welcome authenticity and practicality. Classrooms should be arranged in a way that desks face each other, which will automatically trigger the students towards communicating instead of waiting for group activities for them to talk to each other. This also allows the learning process to be more student-centred, which tends to stimulate communication. A teacher centred classroom
limits students from developing the appropriate communication skills that they individually need to reach CC.

**What external barriers inhibit students' acquisition of target language?**

The barriers that I uncovered do not address external barriers that limit students’ acquisition of the target language. However, through Miss Ines I received information about the external barriers that inhibit the purpose of the ESL program. The students shared that they feared being laughed at by their peers and were comfortable due to the support they received inside their ESL classroom. One of the main barriers that Miss Ines shared was that many people lacked knowledge of the ESL program, which included parent, teachers and administrators. The ESL teacher explained at the time of the study that there were only seven ESL teachers for all of Mountain Public Schools, she had a total of 28 ESL students at Rivers High School and other students at an elementary school that she taught at every afternoon. She explained that when the ESL programs started students were pulled out of school to attend the ESL program outside their schools. Many parents and teachers were against students being pulled out of school, especially since some had to travel great distances only to attend the ESL program. Later the program was brought to the schools and students had to be pulled out of class to attend the ESL classes. With all this movement parents and teachers have been against the ESL program, their negative feelings towards the program exceed their knowledge of the purpose of the ESL program. Unfortunately parents and teachers that lack knowledge about the program are expected to play a supportive role equal to that of the teacher.

Lack of knowledge for the program directly affects the view that the parents and teachers have about the program. Some parents until this day pull their children out of the ESL program due to lack of knowledge about the program. There are still many misconceptions about the ESL
program. These misconceptions add to the negative attitudes developed by teachers and parents. Some teachers believe that the ESL program is a program introduced to clear out the ESL students from schools, and others believe that it is a program designed only for the Spanish speaking students, among other reasons. Due to these misconceptions some teachers encourage parents to take their children out of the ESL program since they do not approve of ESL students being pulled out of their classes to spend important time in a program that they do not value. Thus, people’s reactions towards ESL programs tend to limit the overall intention of the program.

The limited number of ESL teachers is identified as another barrier. Miss Ines explains that there are only seven ESL teachers to meet the needs of all the Mountain Public Schools, because there are few teachers to go around the schools, students lack the appropriate instructional attention. The schools that have one or, few ESL students end up receiving half an hour of instruction at times instead of a full hour. These students are also deprived of the opportunity to engage and develop experience in communicative skills. Miss Ines has experienced having some students being pulled out of her class over her teaching experience. The fact that parents, teachers and the school administration have limited knowledge of the program, the teacher thus lacks the support and voice to advertise, implement, and improve the ESL program, which in turn inhibits the student’s language acquisition and competence.

Therefore, changes should be made starting at the administrative level. They, on a large scale, can assist to clear up the misconceptions made about the ESL program. Multi-cultural education will allow other classes to also learn about other people’s culture as well as sharing ones culture with others. This kind of exposure to culture will develop strong classroom communities, which will provide ESL students support inside the ESL classroom as well as
outside the ESL classroom. Multi-cultural education programs will help keep all subject teachers informed of the needs of the ESL students, in turn parents will also be informed through the teachers. Informed teachers, parents and school administration will help give the ESL teachers a voice. Once everyone is informed of the importance of the ESL program for the ESL students, together they can understand the needs of the ESL teachers, like needing more ESL teachers to meet the needs of all Mountain Public Schools ESL students.

**Recommendations**

The role of the ESL program is clear, which is to provide ESL students with an equal learning opportunity at an education by bridging the language gap between ESL students and native English speakers. The U.S. Department of Education (2005) aims to reduce failure in classes and school drop outs by providing extra language instruction to the ESL students. Culture is a tool that can be used to unite language learners, teachers to their students, subject teachers and parents to school which will increase the students’ support system. CLT is the main tool that can be employed in language teaching to effectively use culture to stimulate language development. Through CLT, culture can stimulate collaboration, meaningful conversation, competition, self-reflection and discovery, experimentation, evaluation, friendships/community, success, and a sense of responsibility in students (Burke, 2007). The study has also shown that culture helps birth language acquisition and language learning community ties.

**Further research.** More research is needed on the role that culture plays in ESL teaching, the effectiveness of CLT, and other means of implementing the communicative approach to teach English to second language learners. Given the inability to address the research question on “what external barriers inhibit students’ acquisition of target language?” and the limited depth of this study. Further work needs to be done in order to relate data to the external barriers students encounter. Will it enhance acquisition and competence in language?
More observation and even interviews of numerous students in additional classes, education settings (urban, sub-urban and rural), and education levels can be conducted to further develop the limited research on ESL instruction and methods. Administrators, educators and parents need to be more informed about the ESL program. Despite the Department of Education’s effort to reach out to ESL students by initiating equal opportunity English language programs, efforts still need to be made in addressing the misconceptions that have been created about the ESL program. ESL teachers should be granted an equal opportunity to voice their needs and concerns and for them to be addressed. ESL students should also be granted an equal opportunity to learn in a supportive and cooperative environment within the walls of their school.

My own journey of learning English began at a very early age and for more than twenty years now I continue in this path as a student of English. I used to be pulled out of class and received advanced instruction from the head mistress. The support I received from the school administration, my teachers and parents overrode the challenges that I faced from my peers. I am aware of the challenges that second language learners have to face each day while they struggle to perform well in their studies. I am personally interested in the second language learning process and extremely appreciative of equal opportunity efforts provided to non-native language learners like myself. They allow me to participate and contribute towards other second language learners learning processes.
REFERENCES


Fairfield Area School District. (2005). ESL/ELL Handbook. Retrieved from https://www.google.com/#output=search&sclient=psy-ab&q=fairfield+esl%2Fell+handbook+september+2005+reference&oq=fair&gs_l=hp.1.0.35i39l2j0i20j0.1346.8444.0.12012.4.4.0.0.0.0.2043.5258.7-1j1j13.0...0...1c.1.14.psy-ab.ElQqGrewvok&pbx=1&bav=on.2,or.r_cp.r_qf.&bvm=bv.47008514,d.aWc&fp=290c805241f20a31&biw=782&bih=318


APPENDIX A

INFORMED ASSENT FORM FOR ESL STUDENTS
Informed Assent Form for ESL Students
Bowling Green State University

Title of Project: Using Cultural Immersion As An Element in Teaching English to Second Language (ESL) Learners.
Principal Investigator: Mariam Moses Mkumbwa
Contact Information: 529 Education Building, Bowling Green, OH 43403: mmkumbwa@bgsu.edu

1. Purpose of the Study: I will be studying how the ESL high school teacher helps you learn English. I also will be studying about how learning about culture helps ESL students learn English. My big goal is to learn about how to best teach ESL students.

2. Procedure to be followed: If you agree, I would like you to answer some questions that I have about being an ESL student. It will take you 30 – 40 minutes to answer the questions. If you participate in my research project, this means it is ok that I use any of the information I learn from you and your classroom teacher.

3. Discomforts and Risks: If you do not want to be in the study, it will not affect any relationship that you may have with Bowling Green State University or the high school. Your grades will not be affected for classes. There are no risks in taking part in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. If you do not want to participate in the research there will be similar work prepared for you to do in the library. All the information collected from you will be safe. Only my university professor and I will look at the information I get from you. I will use a pretend name for you when I write about what I learn in a paper for the university. I will keep all this information I collect safe in my office and locked up.

4. Benefits: Talking to you will help me as a language teacher. It will help other language teachers, and it will help you and other language students who are learning English.

5. Duration/Time: Your participation in this study will take about two months. I will be in your class seven different times and you will have to answer some questions, the questions will take you 30 – 40 minutes to answer.

6. Statement of Confidentiality: Only my university professor and I will look at the information I get from you. I will use a pretend name for you when I write about what I learn in a paper for the university. I will keep all this information I collect safe in my office and locked up.

7. Right to Ask Questions: You have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. You can email me, Mariam Mkumbwa, with any questions at mmkumbwa@bgsu.edu or call me at 781-308-7627. Or, you can email my professor at the university, Bridg Burke, at bburke@bgsu.edu or call her at 419-372-7324. If you have questions about your son or daughter’s rights as a research participant, contact Bowling Green State University’s Human Subjects Review Board at (419) 372-7716 or hsrbo@bgsu.edu.

8. Voluntary Participation: You can stop from taking part in the study at any time by telling me. You can refuse to answer any questions. If you do not wish to participate in the research there will be similar work prepared for you that you can do in the library.
You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records if you would like one.

Participant Signature ___________________________ Date ___________________________

I, the undersigned, verify that the above information consent procedure has been followed.
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR ESL TEACHER
Informed Consent Form for ESL Teacher participant
Bowling Green State University
ESL Teacher Participant

Title of Project: Using Cultural Immersion As An Element in Teaching English to Second Language (ESL) Learners.

Principal Investigator: Mariam Moses Mkumbwa

Contact information: 529 Education Building, Bowling Green, OH 43403: mmkumbwa@bgsu.edu

1. Purpose of the Study: I will be studying the impact that teaching of culture has on ESL students' acquisition of language. With a focus on culture and the communicative approach I want to know how each promotes fluency and competency in language. I also will examine what kind of external barrier hinders students' acquisition of language. The research questions to be answered are: 1) What impact does content-based (culture) instruction have on ESL students' acquisition? 2) What strategies do ESL teachers use to promote a communicative classroom? 3) What external barriers inhibit students' acquisition of language?

2. Procedure to be followed: This study will request you to complete a questionnaire. I also will observe your ESL class seven times where I will record observation notes and collect any hand-outs provided by you.

3. Discomforts and Risks: If you do not want to be in the study, it will not affect any relationship that you may have with Bowling Green State University or the high school. There are no risks associated with this research, as a participant in this research you will not experience any risks beyond those experienced in everyday life. The results from this study will discuss my findings on the impacts that content-based instruction via the teaching of culture can have on ESL students' acquisition of language and discuss the strategies that ESL teachers use to promote a more communicative classroom. The responses collected from the participants will be kept confidential by removing names from all documents and using pseudonyms in place of their names. Any information that may identify the school that I will use to collect data will also be replaced by a pseudonym. The data collected from this study, consent and assent forms will be locked in a file cabinet in the investigator's office where only my advisor and I will have access to.

4. Benefits: By conducting this study I am hoping the findings of this study may benefit you as an ESL teacher. I am hoping to discover what impacts teaching of culture can have on ESL students' acquisition and the strategies that you can use to promote a more communicative classroom especially for learners that have so many external factors hindering them from acquiring language faster. I also hope to inform others of some of the external barriers that hinder students' acquisition of language. Every participant will receive a copy of my thesis, after it has been submitted to the university.
5. **Duration/Time:** I estimate that your initial participation in this study will take approximately two months. Your participation will involve seven different classroom observations and the completion of a questionnaire, the questionnaire will take 30 – 40 minutes to complete.

6. **Statement of Confidentiality:** Only may advisor and I will know your identity. Information from this study will not be given to identify you, your students, or your school. Names will be removed from the data and replaced with pseudonyms.

7. **Right to Ask Questions:** You have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. You can ask me questions about the research. You can contact me Marian Mkumbwa via email at mmkumb@bsu.edu or by phone at 781-308-7627 or contact my thesis advisor Brigid Burke via email at bburke@bsu.edu or by phone at 419-372-7324. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, contact Bowling Green State University’s Human Subjects Review Board at (419) 372-7716 or hrub@bsu.edu.

8. **Voluntary Participation:** Participation is voluntary. You can withdraw from the study at any time by notifying me. You can decline to answer specific questions.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for you records if you would like one.

______________________________  ______________________________
Participant Signature  Date

I, the undersigned, verify that the above information consent procedure has been followed.
APPENDIX C

PARENT CONSENT LETTER
May 10, 2012

Dear Parent:

My name is Mariam Mkumbwa and I am doing my graduate studies at Bowling Green State University. I would like to be able to work in your son/daughter’s class to do research for my classes. I will be studying about how the ESL high school teacher helps your son/daughter learn English. I also will be studying about how learning about culture helps ESL students learn English. I will visit your son/daughter’s ESL classroom seven times in May. My big goal is to learn about how to best teach ESL students.

If your son/daughter agrees, I would like him or her to answer some questions that I have about being an ESL student. The questions will take 30 – 40 minutes to answer. If you allow your son/daughter to be in my research project, this means it is okay that I use any of the information I learn from your son or daughter and his/her classroom teacher.

If you do not want your son/daughter to be in the study, it will not affect any relationship that you may have with Bowling Green State University or the high school. His/her grades will not be affected for his/her classes. There are no risks in taking part in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. If your son/daughter does not want to participate in the research there will be similar work prepared for him/her to do in the library. Talking to your son/daughter will help me as a language teacher. It will help other language teachers, and it will help your son/daughter and other language students who are learning English. All the information collected from your child will be safe. Only my university professor and I will look at the information I get from your son/daughter. I will use a pretend name for him/her when I write about what I learn in a paper for the university. I will keep all this information I collect safe in my office and locked up.

You can email me, Mariam Mkumbwa, with any questions at mmkumbwa@bgsu.edu or call me at 781-308-7627. Or, you can email my professor at the university, Brigid Burke, at bburke@bgsu.edu or call her at 419-372-7324. If you have questions about your son or daughter’s rights as a research participant, contact Bowling Green State University’s Human Subjects Review Board at (419) 372-7716 or hrsb@bgsu.edu.

Sincerely,

Mariam Mkumbwa

mmkumbwa@bgsu.edu

*****************************************************************************
___ YES, I want my child to be in this project

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date
APPENDIX D

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE
Thank you for participating in my thesis study involving the use of communicative approach and culture during the instruction of English. So that I can learn more about your experiences in learning English as an ESL student, please answer the questions below. You may use additional sheets of paper if you would like. If you have any questions, you may contact me via e-mail at mmkumbw@bgsu.edu or by phone 781-308-7627. Please return the questionnaire to your ESL Language teacher by December 12, 2012. I appreciate your time and dedication to making my thesis a success!

Your name: __________________________

Your age: __________________________

Your class/level: __________________________

What language do you use to communicate at home? __________________________

In what grade did you start learning English? __________________________

1. When and why did you come to the United States?

2. For how long have you been learning English? Explain your experience of why you have been learning English.
3. How do you feel when you have to communicate in English in school, explain why you feel that way?

4. Explain two experiences that have discouraged you as an English learner.

5. Describe two lessons that you remember learning in your class. Why did you like them? What did you learn from them?

6. Since you started learning English in what ways do you think your communication skills (speaking, reading, hearing and writing) have progressed?
7. Explain what has encouraged or encouraged your communicative skills, explain?

8. Describe two activities that you have done in class that have encouraged you to speak/communicate in English. What did you learn from the activities?

9. How have you felt participating in the ESL program at your school?
10. What positive experience have you obtained from the ESL program?

11. What has been challenging about your experience?

12. Describe two communicative activities that you used in class, why did you like them?

13. Describe two cultural activities that you believe have helped you learn English easier? What things do you remember learning from the activities?
14. What topics in culture do you find easy talking about?
APPENDIX E

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE
Thank you for participating in my thesis study involving the use of communicative approach and culture during the instruction of English. So that I can learn more about your experiences in teaching ESL, please answer the questions below. You may use additional sheets of paper if you would like. If you have any questions, you may contact me via e-mail at mnkumbw@bgsu.edu or by phone 781-308-7627. Please return the questionnaire to me by December 12, 2012. I appreciate your time and dedication to making my thesis a success!

Your name: 

Your year teaching ESL: 

Grade levels you teach: 

Number of years you have taught English: 

1. How long have you been teaching?

2. What inspired you to become an ESL teacher at Waite?

3. What benefits or advantages have you experienced as an ESL teacher?
4. What challenges have you faced as an ESL teacher?

5. What methods do you use to help your students learn English? Why?

6. Do your methods change depending on the level? Why or Why not?
7. Describe two lessons that you remember using to teach in your class this year. Why did you like them? What do you think you and your students learned from them?

8. Describe two lessons during which you focused on incorporating culture in your ESL classroom.

9. Explain why you believe the lessons in #8 helped or hindered your students’ language acquisition and learning.

10. What topics in culture do you find easy talking about with your students? Why?
11. What topics in culture do you find difficult talking about with your students? Why?

12. What common entities have you come across in this class have hindered your students from learning? Explain in brief.

13. How have you addressed these hindrances in #12?
APPENDIX F

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Observation Protocol</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time of Day:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Descriptive Notes</strong></th>
<th><strong>Reflective Notes</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Describe how the technology is working:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical classroom layout</td>
<td>Describe how the structure of the classroom might be influencing the students learning:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe the chronological presentation of the lesson by the teacher:</td>
<td>Describe the mood of the students and teacher:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe the activities being done in the class:</td>
<td>Describe the rapport in the class: Between the teacher and students:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Between the students:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe how the activities are being monitored by the teacher:</td>
<td>Describe the students responses to the activities they take part in:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw the classroom: (How the class is set that day, does it change according to activities?)</td>
<td>Describe what you sense, your impressions or questions:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>