EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF VOLUNTEER TEACHERS AND THEIR ADULT
REFUGEE ELL STUDENTS

BY

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THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Volunteer-based ESL classes for refugees, although prevalent, often exist without professional support for volunteer teachers or adequate standards of effective instruction. This qualitative case study examines a community-based, volunteer-led ESL program that serves adult refugee language learners in light of the experiences of six volunteer teachers of adult refugee ELLs, their perceptions of student needs, their own teaching, and the program in which they volunteer. This study also examines the perceptions the adult ELLs have of their own needs, their teachers, and the program itself. This study concludes with recommendations for improvements the program can make in light of their students and volunteers' needs.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem/ Significance of the Topic

Volunteer programs that teach ESL to recent immigrants and refugees are quite common across the United States (US). From church basements to community centers, these programs are run with the best of intentions to welcome people to the US and give them the skills and language necessary to begin to live and work in a new country. While there are some who work tirelessly to keep these programs running, these programs are rarely evaluated to determine if they really are meeting the needs of the community they were designed to help. Often a lack of time, resources, or awareness prevents these needs analyses and evaluations from occurring. In order to truly help the immigrant and refugee communities learn a language, the quality of teaching, materials, and overall education must be taken into consideration and evaluated on a regular basis for these centers to continue effectively.

Introduction of the Program

The researcher chose to examine a faith-based, non-profit ESL center in Orange County California that focuses on assisting refugee families, mostly from the Middle East. Founded in 2009, this ESL program began by collecting donations of furniture and household items for the families. They would pick refugee families up from the airport, take them to their apartment provided by a refugee resettlement agency, and deliver the donated items. This went on for a few years until the organization grew and decided to begin offering ESL classes. These classes were taught by native speaker volunteers. As the program grew, they relocated to a church building that had formerly housed a school. In this new building, they could continue assisting families with donated items as well as host ESL classes as the new building had space for four classrooms, a childcare facility, a storage room for furniture, and an office. The program is still

at this central location, less than a mile from the apartment complexes where most of the refugee families live.
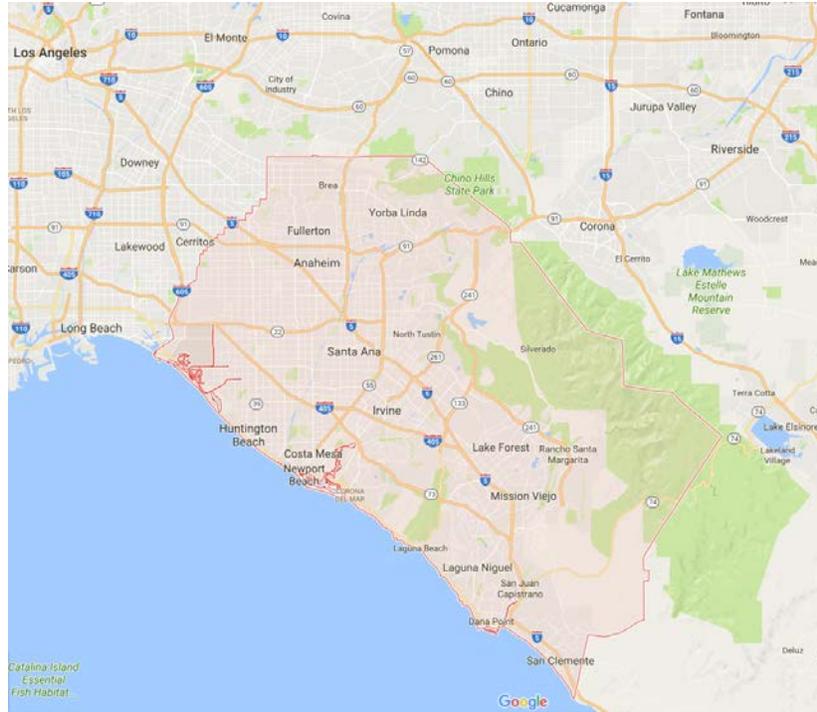
Figure 1- Orange County California (Google)

Currently, the ESL program continues to provide services such as furniture donations, airport pickups, and job placement. They also have four ESL classes that utilize the Step Forward curriculum from Cambridge University Press. The classes, taught by volunteers, are divided into four levels: Introductory, Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced. In addition to the year-round ESL program, the center also hosts a summer program for school-age children during June and July, which includes tutoring and a soccer clinic. Transportation is provided to the ESL program from the two apartment complexes in the community in which most newly arrived refugees reside. Many families utilize this service, especially mothers with young children and the elderly.

Research Purpose

Specifically, in the state of California, refugees receiving financial assistance in Orange County are not permitted to count hours spent in a ESL class that is taught by volunteers towards the ESL hours required for their assistance program. This has led some non-profit organizations to hire one professional teacher to teach one or two multi-level classes each week instead of offering smaller class sizes and different levels. This has also caused many students to stop seeking services from volunteer-based programs altogether. Gaining insight into what a volunteer-led classroom looks like and learning about volunteer teachers and their teaching practices would allow non-profit organizations and the local government to make better-informed decisions about what would and would not benefit the ever-growing refugee community. Focusing specifically on the perceptions and experiences of volunteer ESL teachers and their students, this study will provide insight into volunteer-led ESL programs and how they can be made more effective.

Scope of the Study

There is a lack of research of adult ESL educators as a whole, but especially on volunteer educators. As Henrichsen (2010) stated, volunteer-based instruction is not phasing out anytime soon, so the need for these studies is as relevant as ever. Perry (2013) concludes that while community-based programs cannot necessarily afford to require that their teachers be certified, they can work towards recruiting pre-qualified instructors and tutors or they can support instructors in specific ways:

- Encourage ongoing professional development (workshops, courses, modules, continuing training)
- Encourage professional relationships- mentors from local experts

- Provide access to and facilitate sharing of materials (written materials, real-world materials, and games/activities)

- Require self-reflection and evaluation periodically

  Perry (2013) further proposes that future research into how programs can foster meaningful reflection in their volunteer instructors would be beneficial to the field of adult education and for community-based language programs.

This study provides insight into a specific community-based, volunteer-led ESL program in light of ESL program recommendations found in the literature. However, determining if a program, a teacher, or a class is effective is no easy task. There are generally two approaches to measuring effectiveness: through student scores and student opinions. In spite of how common these measures are, there remain significant issues with their use in adult education, especially with adult refugees. Crandall, et al. (1984) cite several issues with these measures in their large-scale study of adult education programs across the US. Teachers in the programs Crandall et al. (1984) evaluated do not trust the opinions of the students as they are typically devoted to the program and will only speak favorably about their teachers due to their loyalty to the program. Additionally, students in adult education or ESL programs tend to have little experience with education and perform at varying levels of proficiency, especially on written exams. Student performance is affected by more than effective or ineffective teaching practices. There are other external factors influencing students' performance, including sporadic attendance, family issues, culture shock, health problems, and schedule conflicts. One goal of this study was to explore non-traditional means of program evaluation from the perspective of the volunteer teachers and students.

In 2011, I began volunteering with the center in question rather reluctantly as an ESL teacher. At that time, there were no materials and I was placed in a classroom with ten adults with very limited proficiency in English. They were unable to read and write in English and several were illiterate in their native language, too. I was given a whiteboard propped up on a chair and one marker and told to teach. Needless to say, this experience challenged me greatly. I had only briefly taught ESL prior to this experience and I had not formally studied education. I was incredibly unprepared to teach this group of learners. In spite of these challenges, however, I was able to overcome and teach the students something. They became more confident in communicating with one another and with other teachers outside of our class. I grew in my confidence as a teacher.

Figure 2-The Researcher in 2011

After three years of volunteering with this program, I got a job teaching high school ESL a few miles down the road. As sad as I was to leave the ESL program, I knew the time I spent there had shaped me as a teacher and prepared me to handle almost any situation I would face

while teaching in a more structured environment. From these experiences, I know the struggle that volunteer teachers have of wanting to help their students improve but not knowing what to do to help them. I knew that a big-picture study of this program would benefit not only the students, but also the administration and the volunteer teachers. Through this study, my hope is that the recommendations based on my observational analysis will help the teachers gain confidence, know steps to take to improve, and in turn, aid the teachers in teaching more effectively.

Research Questions

- What are volunteer teachers and students in volunteer-based community ESL programs like?

- What are the primary challenges facing volunteer teachers?

- What are the primary challenges facing students in volunteer taught programs?

- How can these volunteer-based community programs be improved according to students and teachers?

- How can these volunteer-based community programs improve how they support volunteer teachers?

Definitions of Terms

Refugee: someone who flees his or her country due to fear of persecution and is unable to return. In the US, refugees are recognized and supported by the government (UNHCR, 2017).

Asylum seeker: someone who flees his or her country due to fear of persecution. In the US, asylum seekers gain entry through a student or tourist visa and must apply to the government for

status as an asylum seeker. Once approved, they retain the same rights as a refugee (UNHCR, 2017).

Volunteer-based programs: programs which provide all instruction through volunteers. Originally this followed a one-to-one model, but because of the increased need, the model shifted to small-group (1-15 students) instruction model. Most volunteer programs emphasize oral skills, but also work some with literacy (Schlusberg & Mueller, 1995).

Refugee Resettlement Agency: a voluntary agency that works with ORR to greet refugees at the airport, settle them in an apartment with basic household furnishings, connect them with social services to receive benefits, and provide orientation to life in the US. These organizations often connect refugees with ESL classes and employment services (World Relief , 2017).

Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR): a part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that provides benefits and services to refugees and asylum seekers among other eligible groups (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2017).

Organization of the Study

Chapter 2 will continue to provide background information for this study, focusing primarily on refugees and the resettlement process. Chapter 3 will contain a review of the literature in regard to adult education, successful adult ESL programs, volunteer-based ESL programs, teaching adult ELLs, and refugees and language learning. Chapter 4 will focus on the research methodology and restate the research questions. Chapter 5 will present the findings of the study and include a discussion of common themes including a presentation of connections to the literature. Finally, Chapter 6 will propose recommendations based on the researcher and the participants' suggestions.

CHAPTER 2 REFUGEES AND RESETTLEMENT: STUDY BACKGROUND

While the concept of a refugee is not a new one, the recent headlines covering the refugee crisis in Europe and the controversy of admitting Syrian refugees to the US have brought up several issues concerning refugees and their resettlement process. Due to the fear and stigmatization often induced by media coverage, many people are still unaware of who refugees are and the issues that receiving communities face during the resettlement process. According to the 1951 Refugee Convention published on the website for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR):

> A refugee is someone who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. (UNHCR)

History of Refugee/Asylum Seeker Immigration

The first refugee legislation in the history of the US was the "Displaced Persons Act of 1948 as a result of the influx of immigrants fleeing post-WWII Europe (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002). While refugees had come to the US prior to this, they were considered the same as other immigrants from a legal perspective. This was the first time refugees were recognized legally and the first time they were admitted to the US under different circumstances than voluntary immigrants. Much later, the Refugee Act of 1980 was enacted as a response to floods of people fleeing Southeast Asia. Between 1975 and 1980, more than 400,000 refugees entered the US. At the same time, many Jews were fleeing the Soviet Union and settled in the US as well. The Refugee Act of 1980 outlined procedures and a system of resettlement that ensured refugees

some guidance and structure upon their arrival. The term refugee was further defined within this act as well, distinguishing between asylum seekers and refugees (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002).

The Refugee Process

In order to enter the US as a refugee, first a person must flee their country and enter a safe nation in which they can apply for refugee status through the United Nations. Typically, those fleeing Iran or Iraq tend to spend up to three years awaiting approval in Turkey and those fleeing Afghanistan can spend years in Pakistan or other neighboring countries. The approval process is rigorous and expensive. By the time refugees actually arrive at their final destination, they are several years removed from the trauma they experienced in their home countries, but have the added trauma of years spent in fear of rejection, quickly depleting resources, and ostracization in their host communities (Allender, 1998; Lucey, et al., 2000; McDonald, 2000; Potocky-Tripodi, 2002).

The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), a part of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, is the head of development for programs that assist refugees upon their approval and arrival in the US. They develop and enforce policies and guidelines that will allow other organizations at the state level to assist refugees effectively. They are also responsible for distributing federal funds in the form of grants to state welfare departments. Typically, a state or county refugee coordinator serves as the liaison between the ORR and the local refugee resettlement agencies, such as the private agencies contracted by state welfare departments to provide specific services to refugees (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002). One such organization is World Relief, which has a significant presence in refugee communities across the nation.

Upon their arrival to the US, refugees are contacted by a refugee resettlement agency, which arranges for transportation from the airport to an apartment. Each refugee family then receives a small stipend to live on for a few months as they apply for support from the state in which they reside. Support levels vary from state to state as well as the requirements for support. Some states require several hours of ESL from an accredited institution. Refugees are the only immigrant group required to participate in employment training, including ESL classes (D. Cruz-Toro, personal communication, May 23, 2016; Potocky-Tripodi, 2002). Although many community colleges offer adult ESL classes, some adult learners prefer to attend free volunteer-run ESL programs, especially beginners. These programs typically have volunteers with no formal training, but who have an interest in the culture of the refugees or have experience learning a new language. Often, these volunteer programs can offer smaller class sizes and individualized help that community colleges cannot offer (Belzer 2006; Bentson, 1983; Brain 1968). From that point, refugees seek work or education opportunities that will allow them to function independently and without government support.

Often residents of a nation that receives refugees do not understand the process these particular immigrants go through and do not distinguish them from other groups of immigrants, documented or otherwise. Kirkwood, Goodman, McVittie, and McKinlay (2016) describe the United Kingdom's response to refugees as a delicate balance as they attempt to be selective and restrict the mass number of people fleeing peril, but also maintain race relations in the densely populated areas where refugees settle. This is true in most nations where refugees settle. The biggest factor that contributes to the fear and misunderstanding is the idea that refugees and immigrants in general "steal" jobs and cripple the economy. In fact, little research suggests that refugees are a drain on the economy or put the labor market in danger. In contrast, refugees

actually contribute to the overall economy and their local communities, both financially and overall (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002). Understanding this process and developing relationships with refugees allow native-born residents to accept these newcomers more readily which facilitates the adaptation process and hastens their ability to contribute to society.

History of Language Education Opportunities and Requirements

The biggest concern for both refugees and their receiving communities is communication. For refugees entering the US, English is a necessity, not only for survival, but also for reestablishing themselves permanently in terms of education and work (Kirkwood et al., 2016). Historically, ESL classes were a way to integrate immigrant children into the school system in the United States. Currently, ESL classes have extended to adults; however, these classes do not encourage full assimilation. Instead, they teach language and culture in comparison to the home culture of the students, encouraging them to maintain their own identity (Berry & Williams, 2004; Buttaro & King, 2001). While this is an improvement on what refugee education was in the past, refugee education needs refinement in terms of standards and effectiveness.

Education specific to adult refugees received much attention in the 1970s and 1980s as refugees from Southeast Asia came to the US in large numbers. In this context, many refugees received English language and American cultural training in refugee camps set up by the US government. In this way, many refugees were prepared for labor and service jobs as they had sufficient English to perform that kind of work. In addition, many community organizations, both ethnic and religious, provided night classes for refugees upon their arrival (Ranard & Pfleger, 1995). During this point in history, the system was well prepared for the influx of refugees coming in and was able to effectively provide sufficient opportunity for their success.

Now in the 21st Century, Wrigley (2007) describes the systems of adult education for immigrants as a "life boat" that provides students with the ability to merely survive, but not thrive, especially long term. She does concede that most participants in these programs, either community based or federally funded, do gain language proficiency and go on to find jobs, however many others also find jobs and improve their language abilities without this instruction. Traditionally, refugees often receive services from community organizations upon their arrival. Refugee resettlement agencies help refugee families connect with the appropriate government resources as well as connect with non-profit organizations that donate furniture, provide community support, and often host ESL classes. Wrigley (2007) contends that these community-based ESL programs and even community college ESL classes are not enough to ensure the success of refugees economically and professionally.

ESL classes are in high demand as the need for adult ESL and literacy has continued to grow since the 1980s. Programs consistently report long waiting lists and large class sizes (Nevarez, 2013). Refugees have an advantage over other immigrant groups in this case as refugees are the only immigrant group required to have formal English classes with a focus on employment. The classes are mandated by the government and are a determining factor in the distribution of cash assistance (D. Cruz-Toro, personal communication, May 23, 2016: Wrigley, 2007). According to the Office of Refugee Resettlement, refugees receiving cash assistance must be enrolled in and maintain attendance in English language classes with an emphasis on employment and job skills. They also must participate in state-funded employment workshops and be registered in an employment service. The cash assistance is temporary, and currently available for up to eight months from the date of arrival in the US (Rubenstein, 2017). Typically,

refugees qualify for medical and food assistance for much longer periods of time due to the income requirements for these programs.

Great care is taken by the US government to ensure refugees have their needs met upon their arrival to the country. Language acquisition is a major priority for refugees, and each state attempts to provide opportunities for language instruction. However, refugee language education is vastly different from adult education in first-language literacy classes, yet often the requirements for the instruction of these two groups is the same. Through a large-scale survey of 3,500 refugees in the Netherlands, Van Tubergen (2010) found significant differences between the needs of language learners and first language literacy learners. Additionally, in the US, this issue is compounded with a lack of national guidelines and under-funded ESL programs. There is a lack of support causing many ESL programs to be disjointed and unorganized (Burns, 2003; Nolan, 2001). Refugees are often encouraged to attend community college classes that are well above their level or filled with students of diverse proficiency levels. Low proficiency learners quickly become discouraged, while very high proficiency learners become bored. Additionally, in these crowded classrooms, refugees fail to connect with their instructors, which, according to Adkins, Sample, and Birman (1999), is an integral part of the acculturation process. ESL teachers play a central role in the development of not only a refugee's language, but in the state of their mental health as they transition from a traumatic situation and their own culture into a new place.

Current Language Policies Affecting Refugees in Southern California

Individual counties are held responsible for ensuring refugees receiving government assistance are enrolled in these programs and working toward economic self-sufficiency. Orange County, specifically, refers the refugees in their resettlement program to contractors hired out by

the county and to local accredited community colleges and adult education programs. In order to meet the language learning and job training needs of refugees, the county requires that refugees attend accredited or state funded programs in order to receive cash assistance. In addition to the accountability state-funded programs have, these programs also collect reliable data on refugee education and employment that the county can use to report to the state and then to the federal government (D. Cruz-Toro, personal communication, May 23, 2016).

Refugees in the Context of Current Study

Since 2002, over 60,000 refugees have resettled in Southern California primarily from Iraq, Somalia, Iran, and Afghanistan (Reese, 2017). Between 2011 and 2016, Orange County alone received 1,528 refugees (Iqbal, 2017). At the time of the study, anti-immigration and anti-refugee rhetoric was pervasive throughout the media and a source of concern for those working with refugees. In 2016, California resettled as many refugees from Syria as the rest of the US combined due to California's experience with refugee resettlement and other states' reluctance to accept Syrian refugees (Albarazi, 2016). California has been settling refugees since the 1970s rather successfully. Many cite the large Vietnamese population in Orange County as a community that benefited economically and culturally from a large refugee presence (Grad, 2017; Haire, Kpetman, & Berg, 2015).

Refugees in Southern California have access to established organizations that offer a high quality of service. Among these are the refugee resettlement agencies that serve as the refugees' first contact upon arriving in California. Refugee resettlement agencies currently operating in Orange County include Catholic Charities, East African Community of Orange County, and World Relief- Garden Grove (CDSS, 2016). These refugee agencies were created specifically to assist refugees from all over the world resettle in California. World Relief has been operating in

Southern California for over 35 years and Catholic Charities has been in Orange County for over 40 years. These organizations utilize community-based organizations to support refugees during their first several years in the US. These organizations work together to create a welcoming environment in which refugee families can feel supported and cared for. The efforts of these organizations have recently culminated in World Refugee Day that is celebrated annually in Orange County. In spite of the current anti-refugee rhetoric, there are many in California who support and encourage refugees on a daily basis and the ESL program that was the subject of this study has been an integral part of that.

CHAPTER 3 LITERATURE REVIEW

<u>Adult Education in the United States</u>

Adult education in the US functions to meet the needs of a diverse population of learners. Adult Basic Education (ABE) meets the needs of native English speakers with low literacy levels in reading, and mathematics while Adult Secondary Education (ASE) meets the needs of literate English users who are seeking their GED or high school equivalency. Adult ESL programs are often offered at the same locations as other adult education services, yet the needs of the students in each of these programs vary greatly (Chisman & Crandall, 2007). While adult education programs geared toward native speakers have existed and steadily grown over the last several years, the adult ESL population has skyrocketed causing a shortage of adult ESL programs (Chisman & Crandall, 2007; Dorman, 2010). Chisman & Crandall (2007), in their study of five community colleges across the US, found that administrations, as well as the current research, are struggling to keep up with the ESL programs and the services they are able to offer low-level ELLs.

Addressing individual learner needs is not the only issue facing adult education programs across the US. Most programs offering classes to adult learners also struggle with funding, teacher qualifications, and open-enrollment. Perry and Hart (2012) described the struggles of adult literacy programs had operating on a minimal budget, "Programs are often run on shoestring budgets by community organizations using volunteer educators who may have little (if any) professional experience or training in language acquisition theories, effective methods for teaching language and literacy, or other pedagogical content knowledge." (p.111). Chisman (2011) found that most teachers in adult education programs are not making a "living wage" and must work multiple part-time jobs in order to make ends meet. As a result, many adult education

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teachers are not motivated, nor able, to pursue further credentialing or professional development as it often comes at a great financial cost and because of the lack of funding for programs, most do not offer these opportunities to their teachers free of charge (Chisman, 2011). This problem has also led to underprepared or unqualified teachers working in adult education. Most programs require a bachelor degree in any field for their part-time teachers and a master's degree in an education-related field for their full-time faculty (Chisman, 2011; Crandall, 1994; Dorman, 2010; Perry & Hart, 2012; Sherman, 1991). In terms of adult education, Chisman & Crandall (2007) found:

> Most adult education professionals readily concede that existing quality standards are inadequate for faculty in this field. They believe that the knowledge and skills required to teach adults are very different from those needed to teach children, and that greater specialized training is necessary for all adult education teachers, including those who teach ESL. (p. 85)

Chisman (2011) recommended that programs determine the skills needed to teach ABE, ASE, and ESL and ensure their faculty have those skills before entering into employment. Perry and Hart (2012) concluded from their study of ten adult educators that regardless of a teacher's background or credentialing, they need support to be able to teach adult learners, especially low-level refugees. Finally, many adult education programs operate under an open-enrollment model, allowing students to come and go at any point during the semester. This is necessary not only to keep enrollment numbers steady for funding purposes, but also necessary for learners who have varying work and family schedules. In spite of the prevalence of open-enrollment, Chisman and Crandall (2007) found that programs with a managed-enrollment had significantly higher learning gains than programs with open-enrollment. Adult education programs continue to

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struggle with these issues as funding remains a mitigating factor in their ability to cope with teacher qualifications, pay, and student attendance and recruitment.

Successful Adult ESL Programs

The Tacoma Community House in Washington established an adult ESL program, offering services to refugees beginning in 1975 and growing their program to the point of receiving an award from the Department of Education for outstanding adult education (Tacoma Community House, 2017). Their program trained more than 6,300 volunteers and taught more than 9,000 refugees over a period of nine years. They also published a series of handbooks for volunteers outlining responsibilities and requirements for volunteers (Bell, 1991). At the time, potential volunteers needed to be culturally sensitive, be willing to commit, participate in a 10-hour training and orientation session and have patience and understanding. Volunteers were trained to create learner-centered lessons, rely on support from peers and teacher coaches, and focus on the specific program goals as well as the personal goals of their students (Bentson, 1983). The current (fourth) edition of the handbook reiterates these qualities and requirements and expands on volunteer responsibilities and instructs volunteers in adult ESL instruction (Literacy Now, 2008). The introduction page in the most recent Tacoma Community House handbook explains to volunteers, "Teaching English as a Second Language or ESL is a specialized field of teaching and it takes a lot more than just speaking English to do a good job" (Literacy Now, 2008).

The 1983 handbook was geared toward program directors and acted as a guide to begin a similar program. The audience of the 2008 handbook is the volunteers themselves and includes more information about how to become a successful ESL instructor to either a small group of students or tutoring one-on-one. While this program is one of the longest-running volunteer-led

adult ESL programs in the US, there have been similar programs across the country and the world.

Additionally, cultural sensitivity or awareness, learner-centeredness, peer teacher coaching and support, and specific program goals were cited by several programs as factors that led to their success (Auerbach, Barahona, Ballering, Zambrano, & Midy, 1993; Dorman, 2010; Elson & Krygowski, 2011; Friedman & Collier, 1993; McMurtrey, 2006; Sherman et al, 1991). Teachers and programs that had a heightened sense of cultural differences enabled students to assimilate more quickly and learn language in the context of their new culture. Refugee students, especially, need to quickly adapt to their new surroundings and were enabled to do so more readily with teachers who were sensitive to their cultural needs (Adkins et al., 1999; Bentson, 1983; Friedman and Collier, 1993; McMurtrey, 2006).

Adult ELLs typically wish to study for very specific purposes. In an ESL setting, survival English is necessary for beginning level students. Successful programs noted that their learner-centered curriculum holistically addressed real-time needs of their students and that the curriculum was often guided by students themselves (McMurtrey, 2006; Elson & Krygowski, 2011). Friedman and Collier (1993) noted that learner needs should play the biggest role in curriculum development in their handbook for nonprofessional ESL teachers. McMurtrey (2006) noted:

> A holistic approach to teaching English is one of the best examples of an organization catering to the needs of its clients. These programs recognized that students have a wide variety of motivations and goals that affects their willingness to adapt to their new environment. Most organizations support their students' cultural, affective, and

motivational needs by offering cultural classes, providing child care services during

classes, and providing other services of interest to the students… Furthermore, a holistic

approach is much less coercive to the students than the more traditional model of Anglo-

conformity. (p. 84)

Learner-centered curriculums require attention to detail and long-term planning on the part of the

teacher as he or she must spend time allowing students to express their needs and identify

common issues (Chisman & Crandall, 2007).

In her case study of underprepared Adult ESL instructors, Dorman (2010) found that

these teachers from four different institutions had very little administrative support. McMurtrey

(2006) also found that the programs in his case study were often "improvised" and that teachers

were constantly adapting to changing classroom dynamics (p.68). While his study did not

examine the support teachers received, he noted that the programs themselves relied heavily

upon one another to exchange materials, testing supplies, and even teachers. Each program had

inadequate funding and resources, a common issue among adult ESL programs. While

acknowledging funding issues, Sherman et al. (1991) recommended peer coaching as the most

helpful resource for teachers and volunteers in adult ESL. Farrelly (2013) found that teachers

overcame feelings of isolation and voicelessness by coming together as a community to

collaborate, share resources, and engage in professional development activities such as peer

observation and study circles.

Finally, several programs emphasized the importance of specific program goals. In a

handbook published about standards for adult ESL, the authors recommended that each ESL

program should develop goals based on student needs, state assessments, and other external

requirements. Furthermore, teachers should document how each of the goals are addressed in each class and how class activities meet the objectives to reaching those goals (TESOL, 2003). McMurtrey (2006) compared several different ESL programs and found that the most successful programs "had a very specific goal in mind" (p. 82). Furthermore, Crandall et al. (1984) recommended that programs not only base their goals on learner needs, but also teaching philosophies and trends based on current research. Auerback et al. (1993) evaluated their programs based on how well students met the program goals as well as how well students felt their individual goals were being met. Successful programs tend to foster a learner community by focusing on the needs and goals of both learners and teachers.

<u>Volunteer ESL Programs</u>

As early as the 1960s, some programs were utilizing volunteers to assist newcomers with English literacy skills. Most immigrants during this time period were highly educated, but lacked literacy in English. Brain (1968) examined the role of volunteer tutors for this group of people and found that volunteers were needed because many immigrants were not able to attend formal classes due to work schedules and the limited availability of classes. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the need for ESL services increased drastically. Volunteers were needed during this time to address the influx of Southeast Asian refugees as well as the large immigrant communities needing ESL services. While at the time of Brain's (1968) study most refugees and immigrants were literate and highly educated, many of these refugees and immigrants in the 1970s and 1980s were illiterate in their own language and had varying levels of education. According to CAL (1981), volunteers were able to access refugees who lived in isolated areas, had sporadic work schedules, lacked basic education skills, or were on a waiting list. At the time, many programs were not designed for low-proficiency or illiterate students and many refugees could not benefit

from the available ESL classes. In this case, volunteers were quick to step in and provide support and guidance (Becker & Larson, 1995; CAL, 1981).

During the 1990s, many programs, in spite of the increased need, experienced budget cuts and other financial constraints which led to an increased number of volunteer ESL teachers (Schlusberg & Mueller, 1995). While statistics are not available for how many volunteer ESL teachers are utilized in the United States currently, the US Department of Labor noted that in 2015, there were 62.6 million volunteers of which 25.2% volunteers in education or youth services (US Department of Labor, 2016). Henrichsen (2010) affirmed that the number of ESL tutor or teacher volunteers is increasing and that the number of ESL professionals is not enough to meet the need for ESL services:

> In our world today, however, the reality is that many settings exist where degree-
> holding, thoroughly prepared TESOL professionals will probably never teach. The
> reasons for this are many. First, because of the fact that English is now the international
> language of communication, a huge worldwide demand exists for English language
> skills, and there are just not enough thoroughly trained teachers to meet the need.
> Furthermore, volunteers who are willing to teach in poor working conditions for
> minimal remuneration fill an important gap in the English teaching system because
> many immigrants and refugees (who need English skills the most to improve their life
> circumstances) are often the poorest members of their societies and the least able to
> afford expensive English language professionals. (p.13)

Considering the likelihood volunteer programs will continue to persist in ESL, several studies and reports have examined the disadvantages and advantages of using volunteers to teach adult

ESL and what can be done to further support them. Crandall et al. (1984) found that the least trained volunteers are often those teaching the most challenging learners and recommended that even more than trained and paid staff, volunteers need supervision, support, and professional development resources.

In spite of their prevalence, utilizing volunteers in an ESL program has many disadvantages. Volunteer turn-over is unpredictable and can cause confusion among students and create gaps in the curriculum (CAL, 1981; Becker and Larson, 1995). Additionally, due to lack of training or a reliance on intuition, volunteer teachers can cause frustration and feelings of failure in their students (Ceprano, 1995; Gilbertson, 2000). Ceprano (1995) found that the majority of the tutors used teaching strategies that caused more frustration than success for the students and based their teaching practices on how they had learned, rather than the current accepted practices. For example, tutors focused primarily on accuracy and grammar translation rather than communicative skills. She stated, "The findings suggest, however, that a large percentage of volunteer literacy tutors, regardless of good intention, utilize instructional strategies and practices that could ultimately lead to feelings of frustration and defeat for their clients" (p. 63).

On the other hand, utilizing volunteers in an ESL program benefits the program when volunteers are well-supported by the program. Becker and Larson (1995) reported that programs in the state of Illinois utilized volunteers because they were cost effective, able to serve more students who were homebound or had sporadic work schedules, and able to build personal relationships with the students. They also noted that volunteers were especially good at working with low-level students who needed extra linguistic support. Perry and Hart (2012) found that the volunteers in their study had the same level of knowledge about student needs and teaching

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methods as paid educators, but gained their knowledge from independent study and hands-on application rather than professional development workshops or courses. Perry (2013), acknowledging the complicated facets of teacher qualification, found that volunteers can become qualified over time through experience and good habits. Volunteers can serve refugees and other adult ELLs well, with proper motivation, skills, and training (Ceprano, 1995; Crandall et al. 1984; Henrichsen, 2010; Literacy Now, 2008; Perry, 2013). Furthermore, Ceprano (1995) and Perry (2013) recommend that if volunteers are utilized in adult education, they should connect with mentors and other professionals and receive training in a variety of teaching practices and approaches that are more likely to facilitate acquisition. Ceprano (1995) also recommended that volunteers learn how to assess the students' strengths and weaknesses to help them improve.

Teaching Adult ELLs

Many adult refugee ELLs in the US first need "survival English" or enough language to meet their daily needs at places such as the grocery store, post office, and bank. Survival English is defined by CAL (1981) as "language necessary for minimum daily functioning in the community." However, Wrigley (2007) called for adult ESL educators to help their students achieve their goals beyond the survival state of language learning and into a place where they feel as if they belong to their new communities. The most important way for teachers to help students avoid frustration and get past a basic level is to stay up to date on current trends and approaches in ESL instruction and constantly assess themselves and their students (Ceprano, 1995). The literature on effective teaching practice is vast, yet there are several practices that reappear in several sources.

Affirming learners' background knowledge and skills, using authentic materials, providing immediately applicable content, and focusing on language acquisition over form are

practices that appear throughout literature covering the topic of effective adult ESL instruction. First of all, adult learners bring their past experiences, skills, and talents into the classroom and need to have their expertise acknowledged (Ceprano, 1995; Friedman & Collier, 1993; Sherman et al., 1991; TESOL, 2003). Learning a language is a humbling experience for many adults, especially refugees who are often not in their new community by choice. According to Deans (2015), refugees need to talk about personal experiences, both past and present, in order to cope with the trauma of being uprooted and establishing themselves in a foreign society. Talking about their experiences helps them work through culture shock, stereotypes or misconceptions, and maintaining their cultural and familial identity while adapting to a new culture.

Another important practice that is helpful for all adult ELLs, not just refugees, is the use of authentic, real-world materials (Condelli, Wrigley, & Yoon, 2002; Louw, Derwing, & Abbott, 2010; Perry, 2013; TESOL, 2003). While many ESL textbooks are rife with recordings of unnatural or forced conversations, listening to and reading authentic material, even for lower levels, will facilitate language acquisition and give students motivation to learn. According to the standards put forth by TESOL (2003), using authentic materials allows students to learn how to authentically communicate and enables them to transfer skills from the classroom directly into the real world. One example of how ESL teachers facilitated authentic experiences for their students is Louw, Derwing, and Abbott's (2010) study in which they used video recordings of native and non-native English speakers in job interviews. Students were interviewed prior to analyzing the recorded job interviews. After watching the videos and discussing observations about pragmatics and appropriate job interview etiquette, the students showed marked pragmatic and linguistic improvement on a second job interview.

Not only are real-world materials important in the classroom, but immediately applicable content is also necessary for adult ELLs, especially refugees. TESOL (2003) encouraged adult ESL practitioners to teach content that students can use right away to increase student retention and motivation. Collaborating with students on curriculum development is one way to do this (Auerbach et al., 1993; Freire, 1972; Guth &Wrigley, 1992). Crandall et al. (1984) noted that effective instructors allow their adult students to realize the connection between what they know and what they are currently experiencing. They described one center's learner-centered philosophy:

> This philosophy puts the learner's needs as a thinking adult and community member first, and builds educational experiences around this philosophy. As a consequence learning must be directly tied to adults' life experiences and it must encourage them to apply critical thinking skills learned in their daily lives. (p. 71)

Finally, effective instruction focuses on the meaning of language over form, especially for low proficiency students (Ellis, 2014; Friedman & Collier, 1993; TESOL 2003; Wrigley, 1993). One principle of second language instruction according to Ellis (2014) is that instruction should help learners focus primarily on meaning as this allows students to communicate effectively. For refugees and other adult ELLs, they need to be able to communicate as quickly as possible and can build accuracy as they go. Ellis (2014) also mentioned that instructors should be aware of the order of acquisition and the level of language their students are ready for, especially as they correct errors and give feedback to their students. Adult ESL is unique in that learners have a high level of cognitive and experiential knowledge and are highly motivated to learn in order to survive and adapt as quickly as possible. These practices enable instructors to better serve adult ELLs.

Adult ESL instructors can implement the above practices through five approaches recommended by Peyton and Crandall (1996). One is a participatory education approach that utilizes Freire's ideology of co-constructed knowledge and allows students to participate in curriculum development. Another is a whole language approach that encourages students to use all parts of the language to communicate. This is similar to McMurtrey's (2006) description of a holistic teaching approach in which learners use language in all facets of their lives, not just in the classroom. The third approach recommended by Peyton and Crandall (1996) is a language experience approach that encourages students to have and convey experiences using their new language. While this is a common approach with higher proficiency language users, lower proficiency students benefit greatly from this approach when they realize they can interact and experience life through the use of their new language. A learner writing approach allows students to express themselves in writing and encourages development of ideas and skills such as spelling, organization, and accurate grammar. Finally, a competency-based education approach brings students to the point of competence with the language. This approach focuses on accuracy and fluency. By utilizing these approaches at various times during the learners' education, adult ESL instructors can become more effective teachers (Peyton & Crandall, 1996).

Often adult ESL program benefit students in some ways, but rarely push students towards high levels of proficiency or enable them to further their education or employment opportunities. Chisman and Crandall (2007) asserted that adult ESL programs continue to struggle with moving their students from a survival level of language to a point where they can use the language successfully to reach their long-term goals. The above recommendations are a start, but further research into the field of adult ESL is necessary to ensure more adult ELLs can succeed.

<u>Refugees and Language Learning</u>

In a large-scale survey of 3,500 refugees in the Netherlands, Van Tubergen (2010) found that there are significant differences between the needs of language learners and first language literacy learners. Refugees differ from other adult ELLs due to their status according to the US government and challenges they uniquely face. According to D. Cruz-Toro, the term "refugee" encompasses newly arrived non-citizens from Cuba and Haiti, special immigrant visa holders from Iraq and Afghanistan, and newly granted asylum seekers (personal communication, May 23, 2016). People that qualify based on these factors, are adults between the ages of 18-65 without minor children, and who seek assistance from the government are placed into a program called Refugee Cash Assistance, which requires recipients to attend ESL classes or vocational training. When available, recipients are required to attend VESL or ESL geared specifically toward job-seekers and new employees. Wrigley (2007) additionally noted that refugees are the only immigrant group in the US required to have formal ESL classes with a focus on employment. These types of classes are optional for other immigrants as well as elderly refugees or refugees caring for minor children.

Additionally, refugees differ from other adult ELLs due to unique challenges including gaps in their education, potential trauma, and issues with identity and emotional stability (Isserlis, 2001; Lucey et al., 2000; Patnaik, 2014). Younger refugees or those who lived in refugee camps for extended periods of time may have experienced gaps or delays in their formal education and struggle to acclimate to the education system in the US upon their arrival (Patnaik, 2014). Moreover, many refugees have experienced trauma depending on the situation they have fled from. Trauma leads to Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), clinical depression, or anxiety and manifests itself over time in different ways (Isserlis, 2001). Isserlis (2001) states,

"Since language learning demands control, connection, and meaning, adults experiencing effects of past or current trauma are particularly challenged in learning a new language." Victims of trauma may struggle learning a new language as they often experience a loss of concentration or memory making any kind of learning especially challenging (Isserlis, 2001; Lucey et al., 2000).

Finally, refugees often experience issues with identity and emotional stability as they adjust to their new home. According to Lucey et al. (2000) in their guide for teachers working with refugees, they explain that someone's sense of identity plays a role in their ability to acquire a language and develop new social connections that will enable them to establish themselves in a new home. They reported that several teachers have experienced students disrupting class with angry outbursts as a result of frustration, fear, and anxiety. Some issues that contribute to identity loss and resulting emotional instability include role reversal, mourning and homesickness, and misconceptions about their new home. Lucey et al. (2000) described how many refugees must rely on their children as translators and leaders in the home because children often acquire language faster. Refugees also experience more fluid gender roles than they were used to in their home countries. Some refugees also experience a deep sense of loss which often leads to a period of mourning for their lost homes, family members, and even nations. In combination with factors such as homesickness, fear for the future, and anxiety, the process of mourning can take much longer or not fully run its course to the point of acceptance (Lucey et al., 2000). Common misconceptions about the US also contribute to a refugee's frustration and anxiety. Many are told that America will be a better place, full of opportunity, but are discouraged when they find unemployment, discrimination, and few opportunities for progress right away (Lucey et al., 2000). Isserlis (2001) explains that this sustained stress and anxiety puts refugees at a higher risk

for domestic violence and health issues that do not necessarily affect other adult learners. These factors contribute to the increased sensitivity required of ESL who teach adult refugees.

ESL teachers play a unique role in refugee resettlement. According to the standards for adult ESL teachers proposed by TESOL (2003), teachers must understand the experiences and backgrounds of their students and how to create goals for their students that contribute to their identity formation and language needs. Adkins et al. (1999) noted that teachers are often a refugee's first long-term personal connection upon their arrival to the US and should be able to recognize symptoms of mental illness and inform students of resources and mental healthcare providers. Others recommended that teachers create a safe place within their classrooms to discuss personal issues, cooperate, and develop new skills. For example, teaching students the language needed to call emergency hotlines and discussing confidentiality and the importance of mental health (Isserlis, 2001; Lucey et al., 2000; Shaughnessy, 2006). When teachers create a safe space in their classrooms, they enable students to recreate their identities, form a community, and find a predictable, structured setting in which they can operate in an established routine. Lucey et al. (2000) explains that the latter is especially important for students who have experienced loss and lacked predictability and control over the events in their lives. Enabling these students to have a set schedule of classes that are predictable and stable allows them to feel safe and secure once again. Additionally, Lucey et al. (2000) state:

> Psychological, social, and language needs merge in the ESL classroom. Assessing the real life needs, challenges, goals, and expectations of ESL students is an essential step in devising meaningful strategies for the classroom. Such a needs assessment should identify specific topics or life skills to be included in a curriculum. (pp. 23-24)

By including the goals of the students, creating a safe and secure environment, and encouraging structure and organization ESL teachers can meet not only the language needs of students, but their emotional and social needs, as well.

One common way ESL practitioners have addressed refugee issues in their classrooms is by using a teaching approach called "pedagogy of the oppressed" first suggested by Paulo Freire in his seminal work (Freire, 1972). Freire argued that learners have just as much, if not more, to contribute to the classroom as their teachers and emphasizes cooperation and the co-construction of knowledge. The Tacoma Community House Handbook second edition encouraged volunteers to pose real-life problems to their students and work with them to solve potential or existing problems the students face together (Bell, 1991). The handbook continues by explaining that the students must feel understood and that they are not alone in their struggles (Shaughnessy, 2006; Bell, 1991). Isserlis (2001) recommended that teachers create space for students to share as much or as little information as they want to and show understanding when topics like family, employment, or homeland make students uncomfortable. Deans (2015) recommended focusing on issues of the present rather than the past if discussions of their homeland or family cause distress. Talking about their present situations and working through issues together in a community setting such as a classroom enables students to feel a sense of control over their lives and futures (Deans, 2015; Dorman, 2010).

Summary

The literature confirms that adult education in the US is lacking in terms of standards, funding, and requirements for educators. However, the literature also suggests that many adult ESL programs have been successful utilizing volunteer teachers who have adequate support in terms of professional development, access to resources, and teacher training. Adult refugee ELLs

are a unique group of learners with specific needs, especially regarding their adaptation to a new culture and their mental health. Effective practices that can help this group of learners include utilizing learners in the curriculum development process, creating a safe and structured classroom environment, engaging in cultural and life experience discussions with students, focusing on the meaning of language before addressing accuracy, and using authentic materials that learners will use immediately in their daily lives.

CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodology Rationale

The purpose of this study was to understand the perspectives of volunteer teachers and students in a specific community volunteer-led ESL program and in order to fully understand this particular program, a qualitative paradigm was adopted. According to Denscombe (2010), a qualitative research paradigm gathers data in the forms of words, text, and images and seeks to understand phenomenon in the real world including life experiences and perceptions. In the field of education, Condelli and Wrigley (2004) encourage real-world research and argue that while a quantitative analysis of classes and teachers is necessary, it is not sufficient to determine what is working in the classroom. Simply put, quantitative analysis confirms that a program or teacher is effective, but qualitative analysis explains why.

The nature of this study was also an ethnography in that the researcher immersed herself into the culture of the students and teachers of this particular ESL program. The role of a researcher in an ethnography is that of a participant observer. Schensul and Lecompte (2013) define participant observation as "a process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the research setting" (p. 83). In order to gather the amount of detail necessary, the researcher approached the field first as an observer, to learn and gather information, but also as a participant, to build rapport and trust among the participants.

Narrative Inquiry

The goal of narrative inquiry is to describe the lives of individuals, tell their stories, and write narratives of their experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In gathering and interpreting data, the researcher took a constructivist approach, acknowledging that the realities of the

participants are subjective and socially constructed (Denscombe, 2010). Denscombe (2010) cautions that because humans do react differently when they are aware they are being studied, their behavior during observations or answers to their questions may distort the data gathered. Narrative inquiry requires a significant amount of trust to overcome trust barriers in qualitative research and to encourage honest answers and behavior (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The role of the researcher, according to Connelly & Clandinin (1990), is to see and describe the story individuals are both living and telling since there is often a gap between the two as individuals reflect and explain their lives. This requires the researcher to interpret and reconstruct the narrative of the research when analyzing data. By sharing the perspectives and experiences of the participants of this study, the researcher aims to tell their collective story as teachers and as students in a learning community.

A Case Study

A case study, according to Zainal (2007), allows a researcher to investigate data within a specific real-life context thoroughly and in great detail. While an ethnography is descriptive of a specific culture or group, a case study tends to focus on not only a description of a particular setting or group, but also offers explanations for the events and behaviors observed. Within the field of education, case studies have been found to be particularly helpful in examining why certain practices work. In Adult ESL, a combination of methods including gathering both qualitative and quantitative data gives a researcher deep insights into the participants experiences within their specific context (Condelli & Wrigley, 2004; Hamilton, 2011). It was determined a case study approach would serve best to provide answers for the study's research questions and provide the most robust description and deepest understanding of the ESL program and its volunteers and students.

The Methodology of the Current Study

The current study blends narrative inquiry and case study methods to provide a rich description of the ESL program in question and provide recommendations for future practices on the part of the administration and the volunteer teacher participants, themselves. By incorporating elements of each volunteer teacher participants' stories and experiences into an explanation of the program and its challenges and successes, the researcher was able to use the descriptive and storytelling elements from a narrative inquiry approach and combine them with the explanatory nature of a case study.

Research Questions

- What are volunteer teachers and students in volunteer-based community ESL programs like?

- What are the primary challenges facing volunteer teachers?

- What are the primary challenges facing students in volunteer taught programs?

- How can these volunteer-based community programs be improved according to students and teachers?

- How can these volunteer-based community programs improve how they support volunteer teachers?

Setting and Participants

This case study was conducted in a community volunteer-led ESL program, henceforth referred to as, "the ESL program". Located in Orange County, California, the ESL program was founded by several individuals, many from Arabic-speaking countries, to serve refugees through furniture distribution, airport pickups, job placement, and ESL classes. The ESL program receives full support from donations made by individuals, churches, and other religious

organizations. They also recruit volunteers from these sources as well as local universities and

religious conferences. While a board of directors oversees major decisions, paid staff manage the

ESL program in day-to-day operations such as furniture pick-up and deliver, airport pickups, and

the ESL classes.

The participants in this study were six volunteer teachers, 23 students from various levels

of classes, and the ESL program volunteer coordinator. For their own privacy as well as the

privacy of the ESL Program, the volunteers named in this study are referred to with aliases and

students are not named at all.

Level	*Number of students during time of study*	*Teacher(s) during the time of the study*	*Classroom (See Figure 4)*
Introductory Level	7	1 regular teacher M-W (Tricia*)	Room A
Beginning Level	6	1 substitute teacher M&W (Valma*) 1 regular teacher team T (Doug* and Cindy*)	Room B
Intermediate Level	6	1 regular teacher M-W (Mary*)	Room C
Advanced Level	4	1 regular teacher M (Frank*) 2 substitute teachers T&W (not interviewed)	Room D

*Table 1- Participant Overview (*alias)*

The ESL program utilized volunteers during their available times. Tricia and Mary were

available to teach three days each week and ran and managed their own classes. Valma originally

volunteered as a substitute teacher, but began teaching two days each week due to a shortage of

volunteers during the summer. She shared the responsibilities of the beginning level class with

Doug and Cindy, a married couple who co-taught the class one day each week. Frank typically

taught one day each week, as well, but often volunteered to cover the classes of other teachers

the rest of the week if there was no one available. The attendance of the classes fluctuated during

the time of the study. The numbers in Table 1 reflect the number of students who participated in

the student questionnaire and group interview as a part of the study.

Teacher	First Language	Other Languages	Amount of Time Volunteering
Tricia	English	Urdu, Dari	5 months
Valma	English	-	4 months
Doug	English	Spanish	1.5 years
Cindy	English	-	1.5 years
Mary	English	-	4 years
Frank	English	-	2 years

Table 2- Teacher Volunteer Participants

There were four female volunteer teachers and two male volunteer teachers. Each volunteer

teacher spoke English as his/her first language. Only two teachers spoke languages other than

English. The amount of time the volunteers had spent at the ESL program ranged from four

months to four years.

Students	First Language	Amount of Time in the US	Time Spent Listening to English*	Time Spent Speaking English
Introductory (n=7) Female (n=6) Male (n=1)	Arabic (n=2)	Average: 2 years Minimum: 1 month Maximum: 5 years	0-5 hours (n=2) 6-10 hours (n=5)	0-5 hours (n=7) 6-10 hours (n=0)
Beginning (n=6) Female (n=5) Male (n=1)	Arabic (n=5) Farsi (n=1)	Average: 5 years Minimum: 10 months Maximum: 14 years	0-5 hours (n=3) 6-10 hours (n=1)	0-5 hours (n=4) 6-10 hours (n=2)
Intermediate (n=6) Female (n=6)	Arabic (n=6)	Average: 4 years Minimum: 1.5 years Maximum: 9.5 years	0-5 hours (n=4) 6-10 hours (n= 2)	0-5 hours (n=6) 6-10 hours (n=0)
Advanced (n=4) Female (n=4)	Arabic (n=3) Farsi (n=1)	Average: 5 years, 10 months Minimum: 4.5 years Maximum: 9 years	0-5 hours (n=2) 6-10 hours (n=2)	0-5 hours (n=3) 6-10 hours (n=1)
Total (n=23) Female (n=21) Male (n=2)	Arabic (n=21) Farsi (n=2)	Average: 4.5 years Minimum: 5 months Maximum: 14 years	0-5 hours (n=11) 6-10 hours (n=10)	0-5 hours (n=20) 6-10 hours (n=3)

Table 3- Student Participants *Not all students answered this question

The students were primarily female (n=22) and Arabic speakers (n=21) and have been in the United States from 14 years to 1 month. The average amount of time students have been in the United States was 4.5 years. Additionally, on average, students spend less than 5 hours each day speaking English and between 5-10 hours listening to English.

Instruments

Open-ended Surveys

Prior to the researcher's arrival at the ESL program, volunteer teachers were sent an open-ended, short-answer survey via email. These surveys consisted of four demographic questions and ten questions regarding the teachers' experiences, perceptions of education, and reflection on their own teaching. This survey was designed to provide background information on each teacher and serve as a guide for semi-structured interviews at a later date. The volunteer teacher survey can be found in Appendix A.

Consent Forms

Consent forms with a cover letter describing the study were given to each volunteer teacher when their written short-answer surveys were collected. Once the surveys were collected, a time for class observation and a semi-structure interview with each teacher was scheduled. At the time of class observations, students were also given a consent form with a cover letter explaining the study in simple English. The researcher felt that while verbal Arabic translation was offered, a simplified description of the study in English was necessary and useful for ensuring the students' understood their role in the study and their rights as study participants. Students and volunteer teachers were each verbally informed about the study, its purposes, and each method of data collection prior to signing the consent forms. Students were offered verbal

translation in Arabic. The consent form for volunteer teachers can be found in Appendix A and the consent forms including the cover letter can be found in Appendix B.

Student Questionnaire

The written questionnaire consisted of seven demographic questions, seven questions regarding the students' ideal teacher ranked on a four point Likert scale, and ten questions regarding the students' perceptions of their own teacher/teachers also ranked on a four point Likert scale. The demographic questions were designed to ascertain the students' amount of time spent in the United States, known languages, daily exposure to English, and their motivation for learning English. The researcher intentionally left out questions inquiring of race, nationality, or religious background due to the political climate at the time of the study. The Likert scale questionnaire was made up of statements about ideal teachers and about their own teacher. The students ranked the statements from 1- strongly disagree to 4- strongly agree. There were also three open-ended questions regarding students' perceptions of their class overall. The student questionnaire can be found in Appendix B along with the student consent form.

Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each volunteer teacher after the researcher read through their surveys and observed their class. The interviews included questions about how each volunteer teacher came to the center, felt about the class observation, and how their classes are going overall. All interviews ended with the question, "What are some things the ESL program could do to support you as a teacher?" These interviews were semi-structured in that the researcher allowed the volunteer teachers to express their own ideas, ask questions, and change the direction of the conversation as the goal was to gain insight into the perceptions and

feelings of these volunteer teachers about the ESL program. The semi-structured interview

questions can be found in Appendix A along with other instruments involving the volunteer

teachers.

Additionally, one group interview was conducted during an all-teacher meeting that

included the ESL program volunteer coordinator. This open-ended interview consisted of asking

teachers to share their teaching tips, tools, and thoughts with one another. It also involved the

research posing questions to the group regarding teaching in their specific context.

Focus Group Questions

A focus group was conducted during class time with the second and fourth level classes.

The questions were based on the student surveys and designed to create discussion. The focus

group was conducted as a class including a brief lesson on sharing opinions and having different

opinions. The discussion questions that followed explored what students believed an ideal

teacher is and their experiences at the ESL program. They were finally asked how the ESL

program could serve them better.

Research Procedures and Data Collection

The qualitative research was conducted via class observations, semi-structured

interviews, and a focus group of students. Each teacher was observed for three hours and each

interview lasted between 30-75 minutes, depending on how long the conversation went on.

While class observations were video recorded from the back of the room, without showing

students' faces, the semi-structured interviews were audio recorded both on a laptop and a cell

phone. The student focus group was conducted over the course of one hour and audio recorded

on a laptop. The quantitative data was collected via program evaluation surveys given to the students and open-ended surveys given to each volunteer teacher.

Data Analysis

In addition to the instruments above, the researcher kept detailed field notes and journal entries in keeping with the narrative inquiry approach (Connelly & Clandinin, 2011). This data was compiled, transcribed, and coded into different reoccurring themes. According to LeCompte & Schensul (1999), the process of analyzing data and identifying themes requires three steps. The first is to identify "items" or specific units of information. In this case, survey answers, interview transcriptions, and field and class observation notes are the items that have been coded. The second is to search through the items, identifying "patterns" or reoccurring ideas throughout the data. Finally, the researcher must organize these patterns into "constituents" or themes that represent the culture or a cultural phenomenon (p.9). In the case of this study, the researcher has organized patterns into themes that address the research questions through describing the culture of the ESL program and revealing information about challenges and recommendations for the program. Key themes that will be discussed later include the setting, participants' background, students' perception of education, teachers' perception of education, student program recommendations, teacher program recommendations, and researcher observations. Themes were selected based on reoccurring instances in each segment of data. This data gathered from multiple perspectives was triangulated to create a robust description of the center, students, and teachers.

Research Question	Data
What are volunteer teachers and students in volunteer-based community ESL programs like?	- Teacher surveys, personal interviews, focus group, student questionnaire, group interview, and class observations
What are the primary challenges facing volunteer teachers?	- Teacher surveys, personal interviews, group interview
What are the primary challenges facing students in volunteer taught programs?	- Student questionnaire, student focus group, class observations
How can these volunteer-based community programs be improved according to students and teachers?	- Personal interviews, group interview, student questionnaire, student focus group, class observations
How can these volunteer-based community programs improve how they support volunteer teachers?	- Personal interviews, group interview, class observations

Table 4- Data Collection Sources

Timeline

The ESL program holds classes Monday-Wednesday, from 9:00am- 1:00pm. Data was collected over the course of 2.5 weeks, from July 5- July 21, 2016 during and after class hours.

Delimitations of the Study

The researcher chose to observe classes at the center for a period of time recommended by the ESL program volunteer coordinator. Due to her familiarity with the center, she believed three weeks' worth of classes would be sufficient time to gather data and gain understanding of student and volunteer teacher perspectives. The study was limited to one ESL program in order to provide the ESL program with a model for future program evaluation. Finally, the researcher chose this particular ESL program because of her knowledge of the center, ease of access, and needs expressed by the ESL program directors for program evaluation.

Limitations of the Study

This study may have been limited by several factors, including the researcher's prior involvement, cultural differences, open enrollment, and teacher turnover. This study was conducted at a particular point in the ESL program's history and cannot account for the ESL program at any other time. However, the researcher was involved as a volunteer teacher at the ESL program from November 2011 until May 2014 and had an ongoing connection with the center, former and current students, and the volunteer coordinator. At the time of the study, the researcher knew one teacher and several students. This familiarity, while giving the researcher the opportunity to quickly build trust and rapport, may have also limited the objectivity of the researcher. Additionally, cultural differences were a challenge as students and some teachers were reluctant to relay criticisms or critiques of the program or the teachers during data collection, yet felt free to do so in unrecorded conversations. For example, Valma asked at one point to go off record to relay her concerns about the program, yet reiterated her care for the students, the volunteer coordinator, and the program itself. Doug and Cindy asked to not be recorded at all during their interview, either because they did not want to reflect badly on the program or because the researcher failed to build appropriate rapport. The open enrollment policy of the school was also a challenge in terms of research as many new students arrived in the middle of the study and were unable to participate as they could not speak to their experiences with the teachers or the center. Finally, high teacher turnover has always been a part of this ESL program and prevents the research from presenting a broad perspective of the ESL program over a long period of time.

Note from the researcher

Given my relationship with several of the students and my history with the center, I have strived to represent them fairly in order to present helpful recommendations to continue to see their success in the future.

Summary

This study was designed to answer the research questions through the analysis of a wide variety of data. Through triangulation and analysis of the surveys, observations, questionnaires, and the focus group, the challenges and needs of teachers and students in this ESL program are evident as well as a robust description of the program. These findings led to recommendations from the students, volunteer teachers, and the researcher.

CHAPTER 5 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Setting

The Center

The ESL program, founded in 2009, has grown and developed from two conversational classes to a four-level course system utilizing a textbook series and CASAS evaluations. This non-profit organization is overseen by a board of directors and, at the time of the study, was run by three full-time staff members, a summer staff member, and a part-time director. One staff member ran transportation, furniture delivery, and airport pickups. Another staff member oversaw coordinating volunteers and the ESL program. The third full-time staff member managed childcare services. Each staff member had volunteers to assist them in their duties periodically. Since August 2016, another staff member has been brought on to take over the ESL program responsibilities. Annually, the program hires a summer staff member to run a children's tutoring program for school-age children that includes a soccer/sports program and age-appropriate academic activities.

Figure 3-Short-term volunteers in the furniture storage room and the hallway (Ramli, 2016)

Throughout the year, the center utilizes long-term volunteers as well as short-term volunteer teams that assist with ESL classes, the summer children's program, childcare, building maintenance, and food distribution. In this way, the program utilizes primary volunteers to teach ESL classes and auxiliary volunteers to supplement their other services. The primary volunteers in this case are long-term and committed, while the auxiliary volunteers come for one or two weeks (Schlusberg & Mueller, 1995).
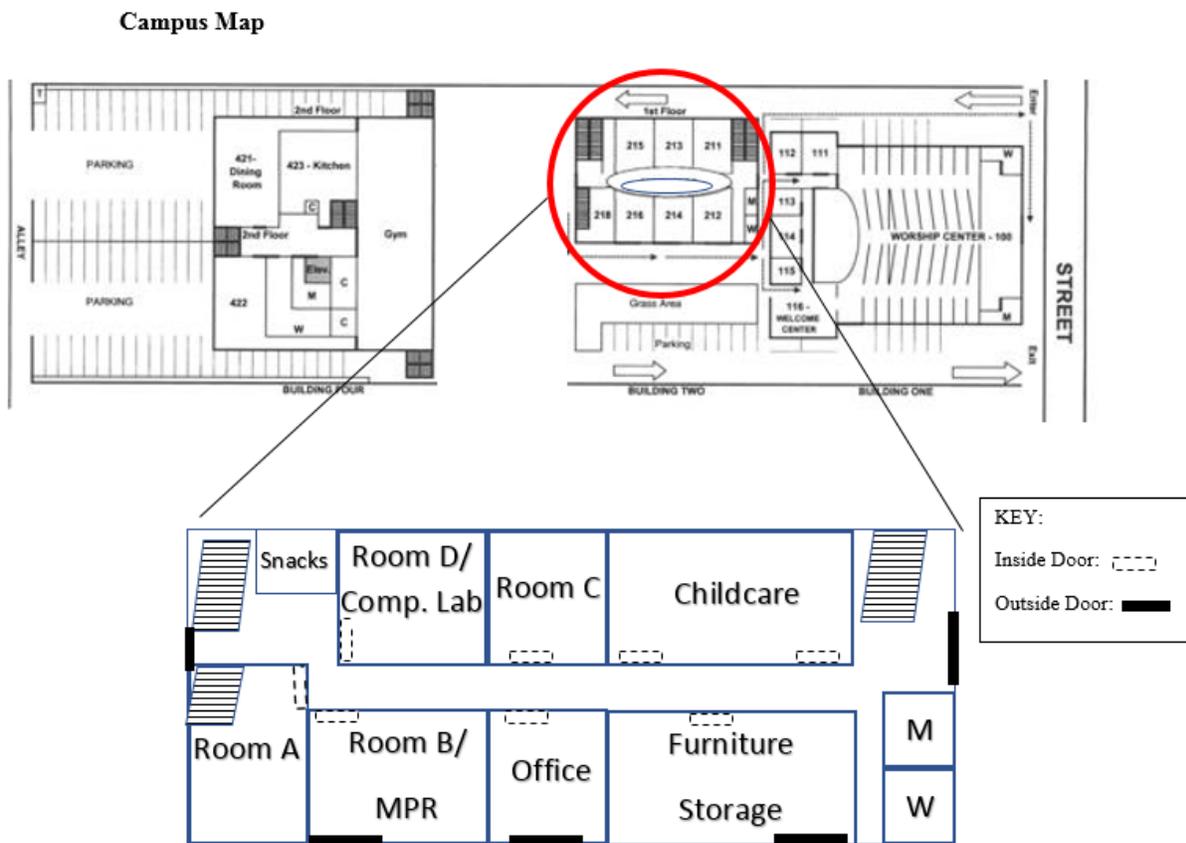
The Campus

Figure 4- Campus map

Located on the first floor of a two-story building, the ESL program rents out the first floor from August until May and both floors during June and July. There are four classrooms on the first floor as well as an office, furniture and donation storage area, childcare room, and a closet under the staircase where snacks and paper goods are stored. There are also two restrooms located on one side of the building.

Figure 5- Student in classroom B (Ramli, 2016)

Classroom B doubles as a multi-purpose room where students and teacher gather to pray at the beginning of each school day, eat lunch during the break, and distribute food once a week. One wall of this room has bulletin boards with announcements and information students may need to know. This room also has the only outside door accessible to students during the school day as the office typically remains closed to students until after school hours or during the break. Classroom D also serves as a computer lab with ten computers, however only two or three computers are in working order. Many adult ESL programs take place in a library, student homes, or other easily accessible area (Perry, 2013; Perry & Hart, 2012; Shaughnessy, 2006).

This community-based ESL program is unique in that they have a large facility in which to host classes and provide services to the refugee students and their families.

A Typical Day

Each school day (Monday-Wednesday) begins with a short prayer time in which a staff member shares a passage from the Bible and asks if students would like them to pray for anything. Muslim and Christian students participate in this voluntary activity and often make requests for family members or friends living in their home countries. Sometimes the childcare worker will join the students and play a popular Arabic song on her accordion. The prayer time is held in both English and Arabic. Class typically begins at 9:15am. Students arrive between 8:45am and 9:30am depending on their transportation. Most classes have students that come late or leave intermittently for appointments or work. Additionally, childcare is provided, but caretakers must change their own children's diapers and tend to leave class periodically for this purpose, as well. Classes break at 11:00am for a short snack or lunch time. Students bring food to share and coffee, tea, and light refreshments are usually provided. One or two students prepare the snacks and coffee each day. During the summer, the children from upstairs return to their caretakers for this break in order to get a snack or lunch and give the volunteers and staff members a break. The break is supposed to be finished at 11:30am, but often goes until 11:45am-12:00pm as students are socializing, asking office staff for help with translation, and corralling their children. Classes resume for the second part of the day after the break and end promptly at 1:00pm. The classroom used as an MPR must end 5 minutes before 11:00am and 5 minutes before 1:00pm as people begin filing into that space for their break or to meet their children or friends.

While there is a schedule in place for how the school day typically runs, each day presents its own challenges, requiring the staff and volunteers to be incredibly flexible. In practice, there is no typical day. For example, on July 19, toward the end of the study, the volunteer coordinator was out of town and put a summer volunteer in charge for the day. The childcare staff member came into the office a little after 9:30. She informed the substitute volunteer coordinator that she would lead the prayer time. He asked her to be very brief and she quickly replied she would only take five minutes. After sharing about the Bible in Arabic and singing a song with her accordion, thirty minutes had already past. Classes began that day at 10:25 instead of 9:30. Delays in the schedule like this are a part of a typical day at this ESL program. Structure for refugees is important, but social and creative activities also are valuable and necessary for refugees as they settle and cope with past trauma (Isserlis, 2001; Lucey et al., 2000). This ESL program may still be finding a balance between providing a structured setting for education and an emotional haven where refugees can benefit linguistically, socially, and emotionally.

Another element of the ESL program that creates scheduling challenges is that new refugee families arrive each week. On the day scheduled for the introductory level class observation, the center welcomed a new family with very low English proficiency. They had all tested into the introductory level class and were going to join them that day. The teacher recommended that conducting the questionnaire with her seven regular students immediately would produce the most accurate results as the new students would not be able to speak to her teaching. The survey materials were already prepared and someone in the office quickly offered to translate for the students, so the questionnaire and consent forms were conducted while the Introduction teacher spent the time gauging the level of the new students and doing a mini-lesson

with them. Due to the nature of this program, students frequently come in without much warning, so the volunteer teachers must be prepared at any point to welcome new students into their classes. While this system of open-enrollment is common in adult education, it is unnerving for some teachers and presents the challenges of recycling information, differentiated instruction, and impromptu lesson plan changes (Dorman, 2010). As Chisman and Crandall (2007) suggested, it may be beneficial for the ESL program to consider reorganizing their current system as managed-enrollment, perhaps by placing the steady flow of new students in an orientation class for newcomers before entering regular classes at the beginning of a term. That way, the classes would have less fluctuation and teachers would be able to maintain consistency.

Participants' Background

Demographics

The student questionnaire gathered demographic information regarding students' amount of time in the US, first language, and amount of time using the English language. The students in the ESL program at the time of the study were primarily females from Arabic-speaking countries. Most spend very little time speaking English as twenty of the twenty-three participants speak English less than 5 hours each day. In conversation, many students revealed that the time they spent at the school was the only time they speak English. They tend to shop at Arabic grocery stores and speak with their Arabic neighbors. Some revealed that they usually watch television in Arabic, as well. Others mentioned that they watch television and listen to music in English as well as attempting to go to stores and places of business where only English is spoken. Eleven students listen to English less than 5 hours a day and ten students shared that they listen to English between 6-10 hours each day. Additionally, from observation and discussion, it appeared students were either from Christian or Muslim backgrounds. Due to a personal

connection with former students, the researcher knew that the two Farsi-speaking students were a married couple and practiced the Baha'i faith. The researcher determined in light of the current political climate that asking students to identify themselves on paper as a specific religion would make them feel uncomfortable or distrusting and negatively affect their participation.

Information about the teachers was gathered through the teacher open-ended survey, individual interviews, and a teacher meeting with the ESL volunteer coordinator. The surveys revealed that each teacher spoke English as their first language and the other languages they spoke. Tricia spoke Urdu proficiently and Dari to a pre-intermediate level from her time spent abroad. Doug noted that he could read and write Spanish but not his proficiency level. None of the other teachers indicated that they spoke other languages. The surveys also revealed that the longest amount of time a volunteer spent at the center was four years and the shortest was four months. The average amount of time the volunteers have spent at the center is about 1.5 years. The personal interviews revealed how each volunteer heard about the center and decided to volunteer. All but Tricia heard about the ESL program through their churches. Tricia had met the volunteer coordinator at a conference.

Students' Legal Status

While the researcher, again, thought it would make students uncomfortable to inquire of their legal status, even on an anonymous survey, it was apparent that students were either American citizens, permanent residents through the refugee resettlement process, newly-arrived refugees, or asylum seekers awaiting government approval of their application. This information was gathered through conversations with students, teachers, and the ESL program volunteer coordinator. Despite some students' permanent legal standing in the US, they experience fear of

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the future for themselves, their home countries, and their loved ones. Students who are awaiting approval for asylum applications experience daily fear of their future and their ability to stay in the US beyond the typical fears other refugees have. Common stressors for both refugees and asylum seekers include uncertainty about exact events happening in their countries, unknown whereabouts of family members or friends, and watching the news (Isserlis, 2001). One student mentioned during class that whenever she watched the news about her country, she would cry for hours. Other students and her teacher sympathized with her sharing their own stories of experiencing stress and depression from watching the news.

Teachers' Teaching Experience and Motivation

Teacher	Experience Teaching	ESL Program Connection
Tricia	MA TESL, 2 years teaching ESL in Central Asia, ESL Program Director	Conference
Valma	BA Education, 38 years in public schools, 28 years as a Special Education teacher	Church
Doug	None	Church
Cindy	None	Church
Mary	Worked with children in school and church settings	Church
Frank	Took some education classes, 1 year teaching high school	Church

Table 5- Volunteer Teacher Participant Background

The volunteer teachers in this study had diverse experience levels in teaching ESL and reasons for choosing this ESL program in which to volunteer. While most teachers found out about the ESL program through their churches, they had different reasons for volunteering. Valma, Mary, Doug, and Cindy had each been on trips to the Middle East and or Africa and were interested in Middle-Eastern cultures. They each expressed a desire to travel to the Middle East again in the future and found that the ESL program was a way for them to connect with the culture without

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leaving home. Similarly, Frank heard about the ESL program through his church, but his motivation was inspired by a desire to be a supportive citizen. He had read and heard about problems going on in the Middle East and Africa as a result of religious strife and felt called to show love to people of different religions. When he heard about the ESL program and how many students were from Muslim backgrounds, he decided to first visit, and then volunteer. Tricia, on the other hand, who had run an academic ESL program in South Asia and got her master's degree in TESL, had been looking for a place where she could use her experiences gained while living overseas. Valma, Mary, and Frank also had some experience in education, although primarily with children. Frank took courses in education and taught high school for one year before becoming a designer with an engineering firm. Doug and Cindy had both also worked in the field of engineering but had no experience teaching.

While each teacher had little experience teaching adult ESL in the US prior to volunteering with the ESL program, they did list several other experiences and qualities that helped them become better ESL teachers. Tricia mentioned that she had experienced learning another language and knew "what it feels like to be 'mute'." Valma cited her experiences as a public-school teacher for 38 years in California as preparation for an ESL position as she taught in different cultural communities throughout the city. Cindy mentioned her more recent experience of observing classes at the ESL program in preparation for volunteering. Doug, Frank, and Mary each responded to the question of experience with concrete examples from their classes. Doug and Frank mentioned listening to students about their needs as experiences that helped them to become better teachers while Mary referred to using ideas from the textbook and learning from how the students respond to each activity. Mary also mentioned how group work is often well received because of the communal nature of the Middle Eastern culture. Through

these experiences, it seems that some volunteer teachers, despite a lack of certification or formal training, became more qualified to teach through their experiences at the ESL program. As Perry (2013) emphasized, "being qualified to teach is a complex matter" (p.27). Her study suggested that volunteers can become qualified through experience and good teaching practices, such as reflective teaching, peer coaching, and materials sharing. Volunteer teachers also tend to have qualities, such as cultural awareness and sensitivity, that enable them to respect their students, listen to their needs, and attempt to meet their needs in any way possible (Henrichsen, 2010).

Teachers Perceptions of Observations

While the teachers did feel their experiences were valuable in preparing them for their current roles, a few teachers expressed a lack of experience as one factor that led to their discomfort during the classroom observations that were a part of this study. Because many auxiliary volunteers are utilized in the ESL program, helpers, teaching assistants, and other visitors come to observe classes regularly. Each teacher mentioned how they had been observed before. According to Tricia, the observations as a part of the study were no different than any other classroom observation:

> We always have people coming through here who are observing us, so I, at some point, am aware of somebody if they're observing me, but most of the time I kind of blank them out because I'm concentrating on what's going on in the class.

While Tricia felt quite comfortable with classroom observations, Mary felt differently. "It makes me nervous. I think I feel like, 'Oh I don't know what I'm doing!' she said of class observations in general. Frank and Valma both expressed they felt differently during regular observations and during the observations required for the study. Frank said:

I felt like it had no impact at all on me. I do what I do all the time just with you watching and critique me or encourage me or improve me or teach me or whatever you wanted to do.

He also mentioned later it was difficult not to incorporate the researcher into the class lesson because he typically did that with those who came in to observe. He said, "I try to come up with some kind of lesson plan where they can get involved instead of sitting around. But you purposely didn't want to do that so I didn't push it." Valma's discomfort was apparent during class observations which led to the researcher asking her about how she felt and why. She replied, "It was funny because I have been observed more than most teachers and it was less comfortable for me…You know I haven't been that concerned when people have come in, except for you." She then explained why:

It's not like where I started in September and I set everything up and came in on the weekends and bought extra materials, it's not like that. I feel like there's no way you could know this is the truth, of what they've been through. I feel like there's no way you could know what's happening… I think it has to be taken into consideration what lack of consistency does. And I really actually think it is being [taken into consideration], I think that people are taking that into consideration, I think they do care.

She expressed concern that the students were not getting the best instruction possible because their class had the most teacher turn-over of all the classes and the least consistency as far as instruction. Valma felt that her classes were not exemplary of her ability as a teacher nor of the program as a whole and wanted the researcher to know that. Interestingly, the teachers' amount

of experience was not correlated in any way with their comfort level during observations or a possible evaluation of their teaching. Valma had the most experience, but was the least comfortable while Frank had very little teaching experience but seemed quite comfortable to have someone observe and even critique his teaching.

Many programs use teacher observations as a means of program evaluation (Crandall et al., 1984). The findings from the current study suggest that some teachers in this study would be uncomfortable being evaluated in this way. Perhaps if classroom observations were a regular part of the program, teachers would come to expect it and welcome the feedback they received from the volunteer coordinator or other teachers. These observations may also boost teachers' confidence in their own abilities as teachers and encourage students that their needs are being taken into consideration.

Students' Perceptions of Education

The student questionnaires and the student focus group with the beginning and advanced level students provided valuable information about the students' perceptions of education. Students were asked to describe their ideal teacher and teachers from their past that they remembered as good teachers. This information was gathered by asking students to rank statements about an ideal teacher on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). During the focus group, students were asked to elaborate on their answers they had written on the questionnaire. They also identified their own needs as learners and their preference for the use of the textbook they were required to purchase.

Teacher Qualities

Due to the small sample size, results from the student questionnaire were combined across classes for a total of 23 students. Not all students answered all questions either due to a lack of time, understanding, or another reason unknown to the researcher.

Questionnaire Prompt	*Likert Scale*	*# of Responses*
I want a teacher who is paid for their work	Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree	2 1 8 9
I want a teacher who speaks my language	Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree (_____) Strongly Agree	5 5 0 1 (3.5) 11
I want a teacher who speaks in class most of the time	Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree (_____) Strongly Agree	0 2 4 1 (3.5) 12
I want a teacher who marks my homework and returns it	Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree	0 2 5 12
I want a teacher who only uses the textbook	Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree	8 2 6 5

Table 6- Student Questionnaire Responses Regarding Teacher Qualities

Questionnaire Prompt	Likert Scale	# of Responses
I want a teacher who allows the students to speak to each other most of the time	Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree	2 2 2 16
I want a teacher who can speak more than one language	Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree	1 3 6 12

Table 6 (cont.)

The students appeared to prefer teachers who assign and check homework, allow students to speak to one another and who speaks often in class. Many also preferred a teacher who could speak more than one language, although not necessarily their own native language. The students nearly evenly split on whether they preferred a teacher who could speak their native language. A closer look at the data revealed that lower level students seemed to prefer a teacher who could speak their language while the more advanced students did not feel this was necessary. During the focus group, students shared more about their preferences for first language use in the classroom as a part of their program recommendations. Students were also quite divided on the issue of textbook use. A little over half of the students preferred a teacher who only uses a textbook, while the rest of the students preferred other resources, activities, or material in combination with a textbook.

During the focus group discussion, students expressed that they wanted a teacher "like a sister" or "like a friend". One student commented, "she's good with the students, warm with the students. Like a sister." Others mentioned that their teachers growing up were frustrating or unhelpful, but that teachers in the US were better. A student animatedly imitated a former teacher, speaking in a nasally voice while saying, "NO NO NO! I can't help you!" Another student commented that she spent so much time in school that she forgot her parents. Others

expressed their favorite teachers were caring and explained lessons well. One woman described the reason she loved her teacher, "She learn the lessons is very very, sahil, yani…easy!" In this case, other students helped her translate the Arabic word, sahil, to "easy" in English. Another student described how a teacher should move around the classroom and provide many activities for the students. She recalled a former teacher, "I was a 12 years old and my teacher is more active and lovely." It seemed that several students valued a personal connection with their teachers over their teachers' academic content knowledge or skills.

Student Needs

Through the questionnaire, the students identified some of their learning needs. While many students indicated they wanted to speak English well, others were more specific. Many introductory students commented that they wanted to learn English to be able to interact or communicate with people in the US. Two beginning level students explained that they often need to go to school or the doctor's office and must use English in those places. Several students across levels mentioned they needed English to help their children with homework assignments. One advanced level student expressed a desire to take the foreign pharmacy exam and the test to become a sub para-educator; her goal was to get a good job. Another advanced student explained her goal was to become a teacher. Several students also expressed they wanted to move to a more advanced class both in the questionnaire and in the student focus group.

Questionnaire Prompt	*Likert Scale*	*# of Responses*
The textbook helps me improve my English	Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree	0 2 2 17

Table 7- Student Questionnaire Responses Regarding Student Needs

Questionnaire Prompt	Likert Scale	# of Responses
The activities in class help me improve my English	Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree	0 0 0 21
The homework helps me improve my English	Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree	1 2 5 13

Table 7 (cont.)

Not only did students express their needs through the questionnaire, but they also described how they felt their needs could be better met. According to the Likert-scale prompts, most students felt the activities, homework, and textbook in their current classes were meeting their needs as far as helping them improve English. However, in the open-ended questions on the questionnaire, they described what could be improved upon. At least seven students referenced their displeasure that Arabic was spoken in the classroom too often. Others mentioned that students spoke too much in the class without the teacher, yet they also believed more conversation would make the class better. Several students believed more homework and more practice would help them reach their goals. During the focus group discussion, students echoed these ideas. Students mentioned that they would prefer more organized classes and class trips to real-world places. More specifically, a few students expressed that the book was not enough to help them in places like the store, hospital, or in conversation with neighbors.

The students in this study valued lessons that applied to their daily lives and materials that reflected their real-world experiences. The literature also reflects these needs in that refugee students especially need to take care of their daily needs, find work, and adjust to their new lives (Elson and Krygowski, 2011; Vinogardov, 2013; Wrigley, 2007). Perhaps the ESL program would do well to occasionally check in with students and work to apply their suggestions to the

program. While class trips may be logistically challenging, bringing people and materials in from the community may be easier. Furthermore, allowing students to role-play interactions from their daily lives and giving students more input into the curriculum may create a safer place for students to learn and create an environment of collaboration (Freire, 1972).

Teachers' Perceptions of Education

According to the teacher surveys, many teachers cited that in order to learn a language, students need a desire to learn and perseverance. Valma and Tricia both mentioned educational terms such as input, output, and exposure. Several teachers also included in their surveys that language teachers must show compassion or concern for the students as well as have an understanding of student needs. Teacher surveys and personal interviews gave insight into areas where students and teachers differed and agreed upon, especially teacher qualities, student needs, and textbook use.

Teacher Qualities

Each teacher mentioned patience and respect as qualities a teacher must possess. In addition, volunteers with more teaching experience noted that teachers need to understand levels and the capabilities of their students. Valma wrote in her survey that "sensitivity to the cultural backgrounds of the students" and "perceptiveness about individual differences" are two of the most important qualities of a language teacher. Mary, who had little prior teaching experience to volunteering, wrote, "Language teachers need to be patient and encouraging. Learning a language is a slow process and can be frustrating for both the student and teacher. Teachers need to speak slowly so students can process what they are saying." Frank echoed her ideas mentioning it is important to encourage students and to "go slow." Students and teachers seemed

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to agree that positive personal qualities, such as patience, compassion, and respect are highly valuable in teachers (Henrichsen, 2010; Perry 2013).

Another important teacher quality that was never defined explicitly is reflection. During the teacher meeting, Valma mentioned that she is committed to being a "lifelong learner" and that value was evident in her interview, as she often mentioned reflective practices she engages in. For example, during her interview, she said, "That is how I learn though, as a teacher. I'm a person who experiments every once in a while. And sometimes I find something that I'm going to keep forever because it's really good. And every one in a while it bombs like crazy and it's like, I'm not going to do that again!" Other teachers expressed learning as they taught, as well. For example, Doug and Cindy mentioned in their interview that they learned students in the Middle Eastern culture feel as if they are not supposed to ask questions. They taught themselves how to encourage students to ask questions and gauge what students know and do not know through interaction and having students write on the board. Tricia, expressing dislike for the dialogues in the textbook, mentioned that she learned how to create more meaningful dialogues with the students and gave them "power sentences" or short formulaic sentences they can use immediately in their lives. As Perry and Hart (2012) and Perry (2013) suggested, volunteers can gain valuable teaching qualities over time and become effective and "qualified" through practicing reflective teaching. Several teachers engaged in reflective teaching practices, not only individually, but by seeking help from other teachers and willingly sharing their ideas, materials, and struggles with one another (Farrell, 2008, 2011). During the study, the group teacher interview during the meeting was well received by the volunteer teachers who expressed feelings of relief that they were not the only ones struggling and that they were able to gain more ideas for their classrooms. Regular teacher meetings may contribute to teachers' confidence,

encourage reflective practices, and provide professional development opportunities for the volunteers in this study.

Student Needs

In addition to a desire and motivation to learn, teachers expressed their understanding of student needs in a variety of ways. The volunteer teachers noted that they ascertain student needs through asking questions, listening to the students, and assessing students in writing, speaking, and grammar. Teachers identified several areas of student needs including vocabulary knowledge, accuracy in grammar and pronunciation, survival skills, and independent language use.

Tricia mentioned vocabulary acquisition in her survey and personal interview. She wrote, "Students at this level need to acquire vocabulary if they want to talk. They need 'power sentences' or high frequency sentences that they can use in everyday life." Recalling her past experiences in South Asia, she said:

> But then I ran into these new language students who had only been in [the capital city] for only 4-5 months and they were amazingly able to communicate because they had flooded them with vocabulary and I mean a vocabulary flood… If you don't have words, you can't talk, and they had words and they could… We do a real disservice to these new people coming and there's only nine vocabulary words in a lesson, give me a break!

She specifically mentioned Stephen Krashen by name when discussing student needs, "Stephen Krashen, the guy got it right, they do have to have comprehensible input, however… comprehensible output is the other side of the coin… You have to have both." While at the introductory level the teacher was primarily concerned with giving students enough vocabulary,

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the advanced and beginning level teachers seemed more concerned with helping students acquire

vocabulary from the textbook or other sources. Through classroom observations, the beginning

class review vocabulary list was based on word length. Valma mentioned that she chose the

longer words because they seemed more difficult for the students. Frank also chose words

arbitrarily, highlighting low-frequency words like "lagoon," "pronouncement," "paradox," and

"woo" from various texts used in class. During his interview, he said:

> There are new words every day. You saw what I put on the board today, a flock of
>
> words. Much more than I would pick to remember in one day. I figure five or six new
>
> words a day is about all you can throw at them.

Vocabulary knowledge is paramount for language acquisition and use. Students do need

vocabulary to be able to function in their new language, however, the vocabulary must be

suitable for their level and immediately applicable in their daily lives (Krashen, 1985;

Pienemann, 1998). Additionally, according to Nation (2015), language students do need a

"vocabulary flood" as Tricia said. "Five or six new words" is not enough for learners at any

level. Nation does advocate the practice of extensive reading as a way to build vocabulary

knowledge confirming that Frank's lessons guiding the students through a book would have a

positive impact on their vocabulary. However, Nation also indicates that low-frequency words

should be given as little attention as possible, but that high-frequency words should be elaborated

upon and used in various contexts. Since there is such a range of beliefs on what vocabulary is

necessary and helpful for the students and how much vocabulary is appropriate, perhaps the

teachers in this study would benefit from a training or workshop specifically on vocabulary

acquisition and methods of vocabulary instruction. Instruction on how to use free online corpus

data should be included in this workshop.

Doug, Cindy, Frank, and Valma emphasized accuracy as a major student need. Doug and Cindy both noted on their surveys that they like to have students write on the board. In their interview, they elaborated that they want to ensure students can produce full sentences and spell correctly. While Valma did not explicitly mention accuracy in her survey or interview, she emphasized accuracy often as she was teaching. For example, she often wrote students' responses on the board with corrected grammar and pointed out the missed prepositions or the inaccurate verb tense. She also focused on accurate pronunciation as the students read aloud. Frank wrote in his survey that his goal is to focus on pronunciation, "trying to encourage students to get rid of the 'Arabic' accent and develop an 'American' accent." While accuracy is necessary and an important part of language learning, at lower levels, encouraging students to communicate and focus on meaning is more important than focusing on the form of the language (Ceprano, 1995; Friedman & Collier, 1993; Guth & Wrigley, 1992). The Tacoma Community House Handbook reminds its volunteer teachers:

> Teaching English to second language learners involves a great deal more than opening a book and learning words, phrases or grammar. Gaining a basic understanding about a student's life and needs, how adults learn language, and the importance of culture, provides new teachers with insights that will be important when they begin their ESL teaching experience. (Literacy Now, 2008, p. 1)

Again, teacher training can encourage more effective teaching practices and ensure volunteer teachers are aware of the expectations for students at each level in terms of accuracy and production.

Survival English allows students to use language in their daily lives to accomplish real-world tasks (CAL, 1981). Even though the teachers never mentioned "survival English" as a term, they expressed that their students need language to function outside of the classroom. For example, Mary wrote in her survey, "Sometime (sic) I forget I'm teaching English and think about teaching working/citizenship/shopping…" She later expressed that she enjoys teaching life skills to her group of mostly young mothers. Valma also expressed students' needs in terms of integration into their communities. She wrote:

> I supplement with materials and experiences that may already be a part of the student's current lives or a part of their past experience…I have concern that the lives of the students will be improved by better integration into the English speaking community for purposes such as job readiness, obtaining a driver's license and other life skills as well as more complete socialization into the outer community.

Tricia, Doug, and Cindy each mentioned real-life examples are important to include in the classroom. While Frank, Doug, and Cindy tended to tell personal stories and verbally express real-life situations, Tricia preferred to use puppets or dolls to make the concepts more concrete. She explained that by using dolls to express dialogue, the students are more likely to understand the interaction she is describing. Valma explained that real materials are important to use in class "such as calendars, grocery ads, phone book pages, magazine pictures, maps, etc." Mary also wrote in her survey that she uses items such as a "first aid kit [and] sale flyer for the market." While the volunteer teachers in this study are working to equip their students with enough English for daily life, Wrigley (2007) and Chisman and Crandall (2007) encouraged ESL programs to develop curriculum that can get students beyond that level and equip them for future employment and other long-term goals.

Finally, teachers seemed to be divided on the issue of first-language use in the classroom and how independently their students needed to use English. Tricia and Frank encouraged first-language use in the classroom, allowing students to translate for one another and explain class activities and vocabulary concepts. Mary allowed some first-language use in the classroom, but expressed concern that her students were using their first language too often. She wrote, "Right now we need to get away from a dependence on Arabic. Some students always want to 'help' by translating. Others don't try as hard as they should to understand English instructions." She was concerned the students were using their first language as a crutch and not trying to understand English, even when they had the proficiency to do so. Valma expressed some frustration in class as students were speaking in their first language in the middle of a lesson. Toward the beginning of class, she laughingly said, "We're going to move back into English, so I can understand. I want to know what you're talking about." However, ten minutes into the lesson, the students began chatting animatedly in Arabic seeming to ask each other about the lesson. She listened for a few minutes as the conversation was entirely in Arabic and waited for a lull. She then said in a more serious tone:

> You know one thing that's happening is that you're leaving me out. Do you realize you're leaving me out? I've never been left out since I've been here, but you're leaving me out because I don't speak Arabic. So I have no idea what you're even talking about. So if you want me to help you, I'd love to, but we're gonna have to stick to English.

Following this appeal, the students quieted and did not speak in Arabic the rest of the class. Through class observations, students in each level would interact with one another in their first language and interact with the teacher in English. They would only interact with one another in English if there was a specific dialogue they were to perform. This pattern seemed to frustrate

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some teachers and several students as is evident from student questionnaire responses. Other teachers attempted to use first language use to focus the lesson and ensure understanding. Because language and identity go hand-in-hand, first language use in the classroom is especially helpful for refugee language learners (Levine, 2009; Lucey et al., 2000; Vinogardov, 2013). Allowing students to converse in their first language allows them to acknowledge their identity and formulate ideas to share in English. Often during classroom observations, students would converse in Arabic to confirm understanding or ask about concepts being taught in the class. The volunteer teachers in this study struggled to find a balance between first and target language use, but may benefit from understanding the role of the first language in second language acquisition and assisting students in making connections between their two languages (Turnbull & Dailey O'Cain, 2009).

Textbook Use

Like many adult education programs, the curriculum for the courses consisted of only the textbook. Teachers used the textbook to measure their progress throughout the semester and were on a schedule to complete the textbook each semester. Each teacher acknowledged that they do deviate from the textbook in order to share real-life experiences, expand learning, and add real-world activities when possible. Mary mentioned a tension between needing to stay on schedule and wanting to include extra activities. She wrote:

If we need to cover 2 lessons a day in order to stay on schedule I do not deviate from the curriculum. We must stay on task in order to finish. If we only need to cover one lesson a day, I like to add different activities. I enjoy teaching about holidays, doing a craft

project or spending time talking about their personal lives. I think these activities help

them feel valued.

Tricia also expressed the tension of attempting to finish the textbook in the midst of having seven new students join her class during the last week.

During class observations, each teacher worked through activities found in the textbook except for Frank in the advanced class. He explained during his interview that the students in his class were not consistent enough to warrant the use of a textbook. At one point the advanced class switched textbooks, but students were still not consistent. Frank decided that over the summer, they would read a book together and chose a version of Peter Pan. They focused primarily on reading aloud, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Some students seemed to respond well to this curriculum change while others did not. One student was reluctant to write her opinion on her survey, but told the researcher, "I don't like this class, we just read the book, the storybook for children." Most students believed their textbook helped them learn English although students were divided on the issue of whether the textbook should be the only classroom resource. Perhaps students believed their textbooks to have value as the textbook was tangible and made them feel as though they were making progress.

Teachers and students alike did not have access to grammar instruction or vocabulary outside of the textbook. While grammar and vocabulary are necessary parts of language learning, the literature suggests refugees need to gain more from their education (Freire, 1972). There seemed to be a tension between the textbook and discussion of life experiences. Teachers expressed they needed to "get through" the lessons in the book and some students also expressed the need for either different books, more grammar, or more practice. Yet, teachers and students

valued times of sharing their experiences and learning about one other's experiences. Valma commented that she attempted to incorporate "experiences that may already be a part of the students' current lives" into her lessons. Each teacher mentioned in some way that they value hearing about their students' life experiences. As Freire (1972) suggested, it is important to allow students' experiences to shape and build the curriculum. Students need to learn what is directly applicable to their lives and often that knowledge does not come from a textbook.

Student Program Recommendations

Student program recommendations came primarily from the focus group conducted with the advanced and beginning level students. Some recommendations came from the student questionnaire, however, students made it clear that they were unwilling to commit to paper any opinions that could be perceived as negative. At first, when the researcher asked how the ESL program could be improved, the students mentioned positive elements. For example, one student said, "Anything I learn now, any speaking I learn now, the [ESL program] is responsible." Other students discussed how other schools were "money money money" but that in the ESL program, "everything is free". After much prompting, students did make some suggestions including their opinions about the structure of the program, first language use, and real-world practice.

Structure

Some students offered suggestions about different elements of the program structure. A few students commented on classroom content. For example, a student said, "Some teacher could give us more exercise or more examples. The grammar sometimes is hard so it's not enough for examples. Here it's just discussion." Another student commented on classroom content and explained that she wished the school were more organized. She said:

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For the all people say me, this is a very good place for the learn English, but I think make

the organized, in this school, this is good. On time, and start on time, and the young

teacher he or she, must active, more active. And make new plan for the class. Sometime,

I [need to write] something, and here, not learn about the writing, the writing the reading,

some teacher just speak only. We speak just teacher and the students just listen. But ask

to the students, what your opinion or what your goal about this item.

She observed as the researcher did during class observations that most interaction is between the

teachers and students individually. She also observed that the teacher tends to talk more in her

class than the students do. As Dorman (2010) found, many adult ESL programs do lack structure

and organization. In the case of this study, a lack of structure does not escape the students'

notice. By creating goals and objectives for each class and sharing those goals with the students,

the teachers and students may communicate more clearly and students may feel confident that

they will learn what they need to over the course of each semester.

First Language Use

The mention of first language use prompted discussion and some friendly disagreement

among the students. When asked about using Arabic in class, several students said it was "Bad,

yes bad!" or "Very bad!" but all responded with laughter, "yes" when asked if they speak Arabic

in class. The researcher asked the students, "What is something [the ESL program] could do to

help that?" One student responded, "Maybe write the board 'English only'." Later, another low

proficiency student brought up the topic again saying, "The teacher here helped me. The teacher

in [another ESL program] is very very good because speak Arabic and English. The teacher call

me Arabic, to help me to know. Yes, together, Arabic and English." Another student agreed,

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"Maybe Arabic, no understand English, is Arabic to help us, translate is Arabic is good."

However, several higher proficiency students disagreed. There were several instances of, "No Arabic" or "It's not good." One student commented on her previous experiences in the introductory class, "Teacher Tricia speak two languages, lets us use Arabic and English. But too much Arabic. Where all teachers is English is good." Again, this tension between first language use is a common concern among teachers and students. As the students suggested, it may be beneficial for lower-level students to use their first language more often than higher-proficiency students. It may also be beneficial for teachers to receive training in how to manage their classrooms effectively in terms of when to allow first language use and when to encourage second language practice.

Real-World Practice

Finally, students commented on their need for real-world practice. Many students shared that they use English the most with their children and as they help them with homework. One student said, "I need more practice better the book, when I go to shopping, or hospital, or talk with my neighbors, or practice conversation." On the student questionnaires, many students echoed this recommendation, writing, "going to new places" as a suggestion for making the class better. Using authentic materials in the classroom and allowing students to interact in real-world contexts facilitates learning (TESOL, 2008). The teachers in this study valued teaching students about real-world contexts, but it seems that the students desired more practice and interaction. Equipping teachers with resources that facilitate interaction and real-world practice could contribute to the overall quality of teaching at this ESL program and benefit both teacher and student participants.

Recommendations for the ESL program were collected from the teachers through personal interviews and the group teacher meeting. Some teachers were reluctant to offer suggestions for the same reasons as some of the students, especially those that feared their comments would reflect badly on the ESL program or the volunteer coordinator. At one point, a teacher asked to go off record during an interview for this reason. Teacher orientation, a mentoring system, and additional resources were three needs most teachers brought up in some way during their personal interviews or the group meeting.

Orientation

Each teacher was asked during the interview process what their orientation was like into the program and what they received as far as training. Valma, Frank, Doug, and Cindy were each allowed to sit in on classes and visit before they committed to volunteering. Valma recollected about her experience before substituting for Tricia's class for the first time:

> I was offered to go into classes at first and see from the teachers what they were doing. And that was helpful to be allowed to go in and see. I think it was kind of the transition between that and starting to sub. I came into Tricia's class and Tricia told me things. So I was really prepared with Tricia's, but Tricia is really prepared.

Mary explained that her first day was meant to be a day of class observations, but there was a teaching missing. They asked her to fill in and she has been teaching ever since. Other teachers used phrases like, "Go for it!" and "I was thrown in" to describe their similar experiences. Perry and Hart (2012) found that the teachers involved in their study entitled, "I'm Just Kind of Winging It: Preparing and Supporting Educators of Adult Refugee Learners" had similar

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experiences to the teachers in the current study. While teachers may never feel fully prepared to take on the challenges of teaching adult refugee learners, the ESL program can take steps, such as providing an orientation with clear program goals and objectives, to support and prepare volunteer teachers for their teaching endeavors.

Tricia was the most vocal in expressing the need for an orientation for volunteers. During her interview, she said that teachers "need some kind of orientation, they really do." Mary expanded on the issue of orientation with her own experiences and said:

> Well I think the training is a good idea. You know, like I said I never had any training to do it. So basically what I do, all I know to do, is to go through the book. Which it has a lot of ideas, you know, I mean I use all the stuff in the teachers' part so I don't just read through what's there. And you know I play some games, but I don't know many games.

The volunteer coordinator confirmed that ideally, teachers spend 3-4 days observing and getting familiar with the ESL program before beginning to teach, but that often does not happen due to the immediacy of the need and sometimes new volunteers are asked to teach on their first day. Although teachers can gain valuable experience simply from being on the job and working with students, a structured orientation would seem to be of great benefit for teacher confidence and effectiveness according to the teachers' recommendations.

Mentoring System

Several teachers mentioned the need for a head teacher or a mentor teacher. Again, Tricia was most vocal in expressing this need. She noted that the volunteer coordinator was overworked and being pulled in multiple directions each day. Referring to the volunteer coordinator, she said:

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Take that monkey off this young man's back. I call responsibility a monkey, so that

instead of all going through one, instead of all the water going through this pipe, you can

say if you have a question about where the tests are if there's any other resources, go ask

Tricia, go ask Mary, on Monday go ask so and so.

Valma named the need for a mentor teacher referencing her experience in the public school

system. Referring to Tricia, she said:

I viewed her as a mentoring teacher. In the school system, you usually have a mentoring

teacher, that's one of the first things they do, is they give you a mentor… I've been

mentored in every school district, they always mentor.

Valma also mentioned how a mentoring teacher system would take pressure off the

administration and give the teachers answers to their questions more quickly and readily. She

recalled her experiences during her first weeks:

I didn't know there was an extra drawer with tests and with uh extra work and I was

maybe here two weeks before I knew that. And I didn't know exactly how I could get to

the books the fastest, how could I get in, how early could I get in. They were very basic

sorts of things, and I don't think anybody has ever refused to answer anything. But one

thing that does happen sometimes is Ryan is really the volunteer coordinator and he is

like a super busy guy. And he has answered questions, but then you need to know how to

formulate them. And so it is a little bit different because, in teaching, we start out with

meetings. And before you teach for the year, you are told kind of this is where this is, this

is where that is, this is what we expect, this is what we're doing this year. So you kind of

have a whole bunch of information when the children walk in. But you see the

information does come here. It just has to kind of come when you are available and the

other person is available and you figured out the question and you know who has the

answer.

She later expressed how Frank was a valuable social resource for her as he knew where the

coffee and the restrooms were as well as knowing the schedule. She explained that she developed

a close connection with Tricia and often ate lunch with her. Tricia has served as a mentor for her

to help her understand what the ESL program administration wants. She explained this is

necessary so the volunteer coordinator does not need to be consulted at every turn and

experience interruptions in his other responsibilities. Furthermore, as Perry (2013) mentioned, a

mentoring relationship could benefit volunteer teachers by allowing them to learn from one

another and benefit from the experiences of other teachers.

Additional Resources

Linked to the mentoring teacher recommendation is the need for resources and

knowledge of where resources are available. Mary, during her four years at the ESL program,

had access to a teacher's book and several other resources while Doug and Cindy expressed a

lack of access. For example, they mentioned during their interview that they knew there was an

audio CD with the textbook for dialogues, but had no way of accessing one. They made up the

dialogues to go with the listening activities in the book or they skipped them. They suggested

spending a day with the volunteer coordinator or a mentor teacher to show them how to use the

materials and where to find them. During the teachers' meeting, Mary and Tricia shared that they

use a multi-level activity book provided with their curriculum as well as having back-up plans

for when there is extra class time or new students arrive suddenly. The teachers expressed how

helpful the meeting was for sharing these ideas and they looked forward to implementing them in their future classes. While resources can be made known during an orientation time, regular teacher meetings may also contribute to the volunteer teachers' access to and knowledge of resources available at the center and online.

<u>Other Observations</u>

In addition to class observations, the researcher took extensive field notes and daily journals recording conversations and other interactions as well as general observations. While teachers and students explicitly stated their program recommendations and noted their feelings and attitudes towards education, other topics came up in discussions and through observations made by the researcher including personal connections between teachers and students, the social function of the ESL program, the learning environment, the effects of open enrollment, and program evaluation.

Personal Connections

Many teachers and students alike expressed how they valued the personal connection they shared with each other. Sharing about culture and building friendships were commonly mentioned by teachers. During the time of the study, Tricia had seven new students join her class. As she was reviewing the entire book for her existing students, she found out that it was the birthday of one of the newly arrived students. During the break, she asked some of the existing students to help her find a cake in the food distribution truck and bring it to class after the break. This young man had arrived in the country only two days before but already had a birthday celebration with a classroom full of new friends and a caring teacher. Mary expressed her desire to connect with the students, "I also think about ways to build a friendship with them. I

want to have a relationship with them." The administration also encourages these connections by urging volunteers to visit students in their homes and invite students to their homes. These relationships often facilitate cultural exchange. Frank often used music in his classroom and enjoyed teaching the students songs. He recalled:

> I taught students to sing 'Let Me Call You Sweetheart' explaining it was a tradition to sing to the bride and groom at weddings while the bride and groom danced as the wedding guests joined hands singing and circling around the bride and groom. It was fun...and to my surprise, the students rose from their seats and danced with each other while singing.

Frank was describing a dance very common in the Middle East called "dabke" in which the dancers join hands and dance in a circle. As a result of sharing his culture, he was able to learn about the Middle Eastern culture.

Not only do the personal connections benefit the teachers in terms of cultural experience and friendships, but they benefit students, as well. Tricia spoke of the need for more full time teachers, "because the students would profit by it, and being here is more than about learning language we know there's a lot of social and psychological support here for these women. And I think that's really valuable." On the student questionnaire, most students who answered the open-ended question, "What do you like about this class?" cited their teacher as the reason they liked the class. These findings seem to align with Adkins' et al. (1999) observation that for refugees, their ESL teacher is often their first contact in their new country and plays a vital role in how refugees are able to adjust emotionally and culturally to their new community.

Not only is the connection with their ESL teacher important for students, but students' connections with each other seemed to be just as important. Several students and teachers noted that the ESL program often felt like family. Students referred to their classmates in the student questionnaire as their "friends". Many of the students are of retirement age and do not have much to do outside of the ESL program. The ESL program serves as a social outlet for those people as well as the mothers of young children who are often home all day with their children.

The ESL program also provides several social opportunities for the students and their families throughout the year including a Thanksgiving dinner, Christmas dinner, and summer picnics at a local park. These events are usually potlucks and are sponsored by volunteer teams that plan additional activities such as games, face painting, and childcare. These events are an opportunity for the teachers and students to socialize and share their stories and for former students to come and encourage current students.

While there are benefits to the social nature of the ESL program, many teachers expressed concern. Some students present during the current study have been coming for over five years. A few others were there during the time the researcher was a volunteer in 2011, but have come back and are in a lower level than before. Two students in particular had advanced to the intermediate level class in 2012, but during the time of the study were both in the introductory level. Some teachers are discouraged by this. Frank mentioned, "Most of them come here for the social thing. They had been through the Step Forward books five six times." Cindy wrote, "There are one or two students that are not that interested in class. We do not allow them to hold up the class." During class, students arriving late would often interrupt the class by greeting everyone in turn and saying hello. This happened more than once during class

observations for both the beginning and intermediate classes. While teachers are sometimes frustrated at the students' relaxed attitudes, most seemed to understand the value in the social element of the center and acknowledged that they would attempt to help those serious about their studies while allowing the others to learn what they wanted to.

Learning Environment

During classroom observations, the researcher noticed that the classrooms that had the most traffic-flow and interruptions were also the classrooms with the highest teacher-turnover and the least consistency as far as student attendance. While causation cannot be implied, it was interesting to see the different experiences the teachers had. The introductory and intermediate level teachers each had classrooms that were isolated from the rest of the school and were not interrupted by anyone other than their own students. However, the beginning and advanced level teachers had classrooms that were areas of high traffic. The beginning level class was held in the multi-purpose room and had the only accessible outside door, so the class was often interrupted by students coming in and out, visitors, and students coming early to eat their lunch or to leave. The advanced level class was held in the computer-lab and was next to the snack area. Often other students would come in to use the computers or chat loudly outside the door as they got refreshments during class-time. Frank described his classroom, "Other classrooms are a little bit classier looking, they don't have all this junk laying around, computers that don't work, this stuff laying here, that stuff laying over there: a catchall place that doesn't really look like a classroom."

The beginning level class typically had a different teacher each day of the week, with Valma teaching on Mondays, another teacher teaching on Tuesdays, and Cindy and Doug

teaching on Wednesdays. Similarly, the advanced level class had Frank on Mondays while other teachers taught Tuesdays and Wednesdays. During the time of the study, some teachers were out on vacation, so Valma and Frank were both substituting on Tuesdays, as well. Valma, Doug, and Cindy each expressed concern that the beginning level students had a different teacher each day. It bothered Valma, especially that they were unable to offer their best to the students because of the inconsistency. While the ESL program cannot prevent teacher turnover caused by life circumstances, they can ensure that the volunteer teachers they have are adequately supported and equipped to teach by meeting their basic needs, such as a relatively quiet classroom, a structured class schedule, and opportunities for professional development.

Open Enrollment Effects

Valma summarized the nature of the ESL program perfectly:

This is such a flexible place and it has to be, when you have refugees or people coming from different countries walking in and you didn't think they were going to. And then you have students walking in and there are more of them than maybe you thought were coming…the variables are enormous here.

Due to the flexible nature of the ESL program, an open-enrollment policy allows for immediate accommodation for newly-arrived refugee families. The ESL program is often their first contact outside of the refugee resettlement agency and serves as a stepping stone to other pursuits such as community college or employment. However, open enrollment does present a challenge for both teachers and students. Frank commented:

The students in the classroom varies so much each day. It's almost impossible to get on a class schedule and say this is what we'll cover today this is what we'll cover yesterday.

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Will move on to lesson eight. In fact, if somebody wasn't here yesterday, half the class wasn't here yesterday! So that's why I and some of the other teachers did the same thing, sometime (sic) they'd come here there'd be one student, happened to me too… But it just didn't lend itself to a structured textbook thing…the in and out of different students everyday it really isn't a classroom.

During class observations, teachers seemed to constantly review material and answer questions from students who had missed class for various reasons. Students who consistently attended received recycling and exposure to the same concepts and ideas, but students who sporadically attended often interrupted class to ask questions that had been previously answered. For example, a student in the advanced class asked about the word "lagoon". Frank responded, "We went over that last week" and did not explain until she asked again several minutes later when it came up again in the text. Students in the beginning level class panicked at the thought of taking a test they had not prepared for. One student mentioned that her daughter was sick and she had to miss the entire unit to care for her. Another student explained she had had surgery and missed several classes. Valma explained that taking the unit test would help them on their final test they would take the next week. She acknowledged the students had lives outside of the ESL program and encouraged them to do their best. In the intermediate class, several students had missed the final examination from the CASAS test. I noticed that three of the four the students who had missed the test were Muslim and the ones who had taken the test the week before were not. Many Muslim families celebrated the end of a month of fasting the week prior to the study and many students missed classes that week. Those students missed the first week of their new course because of the testing and the teacher had to spend time getting them back on schedule. The ESL program remains flexible to account for student absences for family, work-related, and

cultural reasons. However, the teachers struggle to provide consistent teaching and keep a

regular schedule in terms of curriculum and assessment (Crandall et al., 1984; Dorman, 2010;

Henrichsen, 2010).

Program Evaluation

One area the research hoped to address was program evaluation. Currently, the ESL

program does not have a system for evaluation for teachers or the program itself. One desired

outcome of the study was to provide resources for the volunteer coordinator to develop a

program evaluation. In that vein, the researcher developed and used student questionnaires.

These questionnaires were designed to provide feedback on the teachers and the program.

However, the researcher found that the students, especially at the lower levels, collaborated on

the anonymous questionnaire and encouraged one another to give only positive feedback in spite

of encouragement for them to be honest. The questionnaire was designed with both positive and

negative prompts in order to encourage thoughtful responses and to avoid students circling all the

same number. This strategy helped, but still the students provided mostly positive feedback.

During the personal teacher interviews, the researcher asked the volunteer teacher with

the most ESL experience her thoughts on program evaluation and student feedback. Tricia

responded:

> Well you know indirect feedback? I think… if they want us to know, if they want to give
>
> feedback, say like on a certain teacher, they'll go tell [the volunteer who speaks Arabic].
>
> So to us it seems like: 'Oh my gosh! They're gossiping. Why don't they come and tell me
>
> directly?' … besides if they don't like you they stop coming, which… at that point
>
> they've already gone…I think that is one thing. You can listen to the feedback from other

teachers… Maybe we could give a little rating to people… at the end of a lesson. I used

to do this with my students overseas and at the beginning it was, 'oh I wouldn't change a

thing! You're the best teacher in the word! I'm so fortunate to be in this class!' And it was

because it was harder than nails to get in our center. But after they had been there over a

year, then they started to loosen up and tell us really what they thought. Frame it in a

way that "What has helped you the most" and maybe "What has not been as helpful?"

Instead of putting the spotlight on the teacher.

In light of her advice, the researcher decided to conduct a focus group with some of the students

in order to gather their program recommendations. This activity proved more fruitful than the

feedback gathered from the student questionnaires and is a possible non-traditional solution to

program evaluation in this type of ESL setting.

CHAPTER 6 RECOMMENDATIONS AND FINAL THOUGHTS

The ultimate goal of this study was to examine this specific ESL program from the perspectives of the volunteer teachers and students and to develop useful recommendations for the ESL program volunteer coordinator and the board of directors. The recommendations provided include personal reflections from the researcher, possible ways to implement participants' recommendations and further recommendations from the researcher including policy and local government recommendations. Finally this section will conclude with recommendations for further research both for outside researchers and from within the ESL program itself.

Personal Reflections

As a researcher, there are a few things I would have chosen to do differently in light of the nature of the ESL program and various constraints on the study. First, I would have spent a longer period of time at the ESL program. Due to financial and time constraints, I was unable to do so. I would have also chosen a different time during the semester to visit. At the time of my visit, the Islamic month of Ramadan had just ended and many students had been absent for a period of time celebrating the end of that holiday with friends and family. Additionally, the classes were in a state of transition as they were finishing the textbooks and in a testing stage to determine which students would move to the next level. Moreover, I would have selected a smaller sample of students to conduct a focus group with. The focus group in the current study consisted of ten students who tended to speak over one another. When I went back to listen to the recording, much of the conversation was indecipherable. Retrospectively, increasing the number of interviews to include more students, but only three to four at a time from different levels might have enabled students to share more. It would have also given me more opportunity to

record their thoughts and ideas in a more in depth manner. Finally, I would have increased efforts to interview members of the board of directors. Due to time constraints and a lack of connection, the board members were not easily accessible. However, when I asked the volunteer coordinator about speaking with some of them, he mentioned that many were out of town for the summer.

While there are a few things I would change about the study, there are also several things I will continue to do as a result of this study. First, I will continue to connect with the volunteer coordinator and the volunteer teachers in this study via email and Skype meetings periodically. The volunteer coordinator has asked me to share resources and my own recommendations with the program directors and the volunteer teachers. In addition, the relationships built with the volunteer teachers over the course of this study have been valuable to me on a personal and professional level as we continue to engage in information and resource sharing regarding the teaching of adult refugee ELLs. Furthermore, I will strive to visit the ESL program more often when time and finances allow. While I currently live more than 2,000 miles away, I visit Southern California regularly and I can make time to visit the center and spend time encouraging the volunteer teachers and ESL program staff. Finally, in the current political environment more than ever, refugee adult ELLs in the US need support as they learn to navigate a new culture and seek to support themselves financially. I will continue to work with this population in my current place of residence and hopefully, wherever I end up in the future, my efforts will enable refugees to achieve the quality of life they desire. I will also encourage others to be aware of this refugee population, the value refugees contribute to their communities, and what community members can do to help refugees reach their goals.

<u>Implementing Recommendations from the Participants</u>

        The participants shared several program recommendations they believed would help the ESL program serve and support them better, both as students and teachers. The students primarily shared how they would like to see improvement in the structure and organization of the ESL program, limit in first language use in the classroom, and engage in more real-world practice. Teachers shared how they would benefit from an orientation process, a teacher mentoring system, and access to additional resources such as games, review activities, and supplemental materials. While there are many ways these recommendations can be implemented, below are a few suggestions for how this specific ESL program can best implement them. These are suggestions for the ESL program's specific context, however, the general ideas are important considerations for similar programs.

Student Recommendations

        A few students in this study recommended that the program improve the structure and organization of their classes. One way to do this is by adhering to the schedule designed for the courses and encouraging teachers to enforce the start and end times for each class. Consistency and predictability will benefit students in the long run as they learn to operate within a new culture (Lucey et al., 2000). While teachers should not penalize adult students for being late, students will understand that they will miss content and learning opportunities if they are late to classes that start on time. Additionally, setting attainable goals for each class and sharing those goals with the students will facilitate student collaboration and their investment in the courses. The ESL program can assist teachers in creating goals, but teachers can also ask their students what they want to learn and set a schedule based on student input combined with overarching program goals.

While some students wanted first language support in their classrooms, most students agreed that there was too much first language use during the school day. Many also expressed that their hours spent at school were the only times during the week they spoke English at all. The lower level teachers may benefit from the knowledge that their students need to be able to express themselves in their first language before they can shift into explaining themselves in a second language. Higher level teachers can encourage their students to express themselves in the second language more frequently while still allowing for the occasional translation or explanation in the first language when necessary. Classroom management training would benefit the teachers to help them distinguish between students helping one another and students having side conversations. For example, teachers could learn different strategies for encouraging students to ask the teacher first before turning to their classmates for help. They could also practice an incentive method, such as giving out small prizes for the most English used during class time or allowing students to call each other out when they are using their first language for purposes other than translation or explanation. In light of Freirean philosophy, teachers should also acknowledge students' skill in their first language and encourage them in their pursuit of a second language, acknowledging the struggles and challenges the students face each day. Culturally sensitive teachers who have also learned a second language are especially equipped to engage students in this way (Adkins, Sample, & Birman, 1999; Bentson, 1983; Friedman and Collier, 1993).

Finally, students asked for more real-world practice. To address this need, the ESL program and the individual teachers must first assess what the students need to accomplish in their daily lives (Auerbach et al., 1993; TESOL, 2003; Wrigley, 2007). For example, several students commented they use English to help their children with homework and to have

conversations with their neighbors. The needs of students seeking work are very different than those of stay-at-home mothers and elderly individuals and the center serves all of these populations. Perhaps dividing classes based on needs and skills, such as a job-preparation class or conversation class may be more beneficial than dividing the courses by level. For instance, the ESL program can have a class that prepares students who have school-age children to meet teachers during student-teacher conferences, help their children with homework, and understanding permission forms. Another class could focus on job interviews, workplace etiquette, and workers' rights.

Teacher Recommendations

The first and most pressing need for volunteer teachers is some form of teacher orientation. The current orientation system is not always implemented consistently nor is it standardized. A program orientation for new volunteer teachers can include the introduction of volunteers and staff members and their roles, the mission and purpose of the ESL program as a whole, the goals and objectives of each level of the ESL program classes, and a handbook or guide including information about the program, teaching resources, and volunteer roles and responsibilities. Equipping and informing volunteers from their first day is vital to creating a cohesive and well-organized program. At the time of the study, the ESL program was working on creating a handbook for volunteers and seemed to be well on their way towards taking these steps to support their volunteer teachers (Crandall et al., 1984; (Literacy Now, 2008).

Another need the teachers expressed was having a mentoring teacher. They described a mentor as someone who knew the goals and objectives of the program, the location of resources, and the schedule of classes. Currently, the person who answers volunteer teachers' questions is

the volunteer coordinator, who also has several other responsibilities throughout the school day including visiting or greeting new refugee families, recruiting new volunteers, and ensuring the center is secure and running smoothly. In addition, a collaborative relationship among the teachers can encourage more effective teaching practices and further investment in the program. This type of support could prevent teacher turnover in the future if volunteers have deeper personal connections within the program. A mentoring teacher could easily create a learning community among the teachers if he or she is able to organize brief teacher meetings, the sharing of resources and materials, and peer observations, if possible (Sherman et al., 1991; McMurtrey, 2006; Farrell, 2013).

Finally, teachers expressed the need for additional resources. While a structured orientation and a mentoring system can certainly help with this issue, the ESL program can take other steps to ensure teachers have access to the resources they need. Regular volunteer teacher meetings can allow teachers to share their own resources and ideas they find at the library, online, or in the community. Organizing the program's resources in a common area such as the office and clearly labeling books, supplemental materials, and assessments could also help volunteer teacher locate what they need. Finally, creating a shared online document with various online resources and tools can encourage volunteer teachers to supplement the textbook materials with authentic and real-world material.

Recommendations from the Researcher

In addition to recommendations from the participants in this study, the researcher has several recommendations based on observations and comments made by the participants in which they did not explicitly state their needs. The recommendations include a cultural liaison,

an evaluation of the learning environment, implementing a needs analysis, and organizing

program objectives and a program evaluation based on those objectives.

Cultural Liaison Staff Support

This recommendation came as a result of observation during the current study; it was

partially based on interview comments from Tricia and Valma and the researcher's past

experiences with the ESL program. Tricia and Valma both expressed in their interviews concern

for the volunteer coordinator because of the pressure he was under to cater to all of the students'

needs as well as the teachers. Tricia also mentioned how students will not go directly to their

teachers with an issue, but an inside person who could talk to those in charge. During the study,

there was a volunteer who spoke Arabic as her first language and was fluent in English. She

tutored a small group of students one to two days each week and unofficially acted as a cultural

liaison between the staff and students. Many students would come to her with their grievances.

She was a valuable source of information for the staff and teachers in terms of student needs.

Appointing someone as a staff member with this role will divide many of the responsibilities

weighing on the volunteer coordinator and allow the staff and teachers a deeper understanding of

student needs. One month after the conclusion of the study, a volunteer came to the center and

began to work in this role. From conversations with the volunteer coordinator and this new

volunteer, it seems that the ESL program is in the process of implementing this volunteer as a

cultural liaison and training her to share responsibility with the volunteer coordinator.

Learning Environment

The literature suggests that a structured and predictable learning environment is essential

to creating a safe space and a comfortable community for adult refugee language learners

(Isserlis, 2001; Lucey et al., 2000; Shaughnessy, 2006). One element of structure and predictability is the classroom environment. Classrooms A and C (see figure 4) are areas that allow for few interruptions and have had a consistent layout and use as a classroom for many years. However, Classrooms B and D (see figure 4) have several purposes, often change layouts, and have a heavier traffic flow creating more opportunity for distraction and interruption. Perhaps putting signs on the doors during class time, locking the outside door during class hours, and enforcing a strict time schedule may contribute to a more structured and stable learning environment.

Another factor in the current learning environment of the ESL program is their open enrollment policy. As the ESL program is often one of the first contacts for refugee families, they seek to immediately accommodate them into their program and offer all of the services they can, including ESL classes. However, as Chisman and Crandall (2007) found, a managed-enrollment system was correlated with higher learning gains and students benefited from starting and ending a course on schedule. One means of managing enrollment in a program like this is to have shorter semesters. For example, instead of having a 14-week semester or longer, the ESL program could develop a curriculum based on six-week semesters. To accommodate new students entering during the middle of a semester, the ESL program can have a course or series of workshops that emphasize learning strategies, American cultural practices, and information about what to expect during their first weeks in their new home. These workshops could be run by different volunteers as needed while the classes could be taught by long-term volunteers. Another option would require students to wait until the new semester started to enroll. Either way, students could be tested prior to entering a course and tested again at the end. This would not only allow for more consistency for the teachers and students, but enable the ESL program to

gather valuable data about the learning gains of their students and provide one source of information for an overall program evaluation.

Needs Analysis

One result of this study was a collection of student needs according to the students themselves and their teachers. Students revealed basic needs such as learning and practicing English, but also revealed deeper needs, such as developing community and ensuring their children's success. While several teachers were aware of the individual goals of their students, such as studying for a pharmacist exam, learning to drive, or taking the citizenship test, they were not able to adjust the curriculum to meet these very specific needs. The ESL program uses a structured curriculum in the form of a textbook series to facilitate consistency between the levels and test students to place them in the correct level. The placement test does involve an oral section in which the students explain their goals, as well. However, there is some disconnect between what the students express as immediate needs and what is delivered in the curriculum and the classroom. The ESL program overall would benefit from conducting an annual student needs analysis with an all-school survey and perhaps a series of focus groups with small groups of students from each level. From there, the ESL program could adjust the goals for each course to ensure they are working to meet students' needs. The ESL program could also equip teachers during training or orientation with strategies for incorporating alternative activities into the current curriculum that meet students' needs, such as role-play activities with community member or interaction with real-world materials.

Another element of needs analysis the ESL program could address is volunteer teacher needs analysis. Regular teacher meetings could contribute to their understanding of teacher needs

as well as individual check-in meetings as recommended by the Tacoma Community House project (Bell, 1991). Addressing the needs of volunteers is paramount to the overall productivity and effectiveness of an ESL program, especially one run primarily with volunteers. Again, offering professional development opportunities and encouraging peer-coaching and teacher mentors will contribute to addressing the immediate and long-term needs of volunteer teachers and improve the ESL program quality in general.

Program Objectives and Evaluation

As is evidenced in the literature, program objectives and goals are necessary for an organized ESL program (Auerback et al., 1993; Crandall et al., 1984; McMurtrey, 2006; TESOL, 2003). Additionally, successful programs evaluate themselves on a regular basis (Crandall et al., 1984). In order to evaluate a program, a program must first have goals and objective to meet. In the case of this ESL program, establishing specific goals for each level is a necessary step towards growth and improvement. Goals can be organized based on the four skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Each category can include expectations for level of accuracy and production or reception depending on the skill. These goals can be available to teachers and students in simplified English so that students will understand what will be expected of them at the end of the course. These goals will not only help assess student ability, but the overall effectiveness of the program and curriculum.

In addition to establishing goals and objectives, the ESL program could implement other modes of evaluation including student evaluations, volunteer evaluations, and class observations. While the student evaluations that were a part of this study were not as fruitful as expected, regularly implementing carefully worded evaluations may produce more beneficial results. For

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example, teachers can regularly give students short questionnaires following a unit or after they try new activities to get student feedback. The volunteer coordinator or another volunteer could also regularly ask students to be a part of a focus group in which they can give feedback about the program, curriculum, their teachers, and their own needs. Volunteers can also submit regular evaluations including information about how their needs are being met, how they feel their own classes are going, and what they need in the future. Finally, allowing a head teacher or the volunteer coordinator to regularly observe classes will inform the administration about the condition of the program and what can be improved. A combination of traditional and non-traditional program evaluation methods will provide a clear understanding of the state of the program and allow the administration to gather the information they need in a cost-effective and efficient manner.

Local Government Policy Recommendations

Finally, the literature and the results of this study combined suggest that the value of community-based, volunteer-led programs such as the ESL program in this study play a significant role in the lives of refugees as they adjust to their new home. As refugees continue to come to the United States, they need to be received by those who are willing not only to welcome them into their communities, but also to teach them how to accomplish daily tasks such as banking, shopping, and taking their children to school. Volunteers are especially equipped to put in the time and effort it takes to mentor and encourage refugees as they make their transition. Often, these relationships develop into long-lasting friendships.

In light of the necessity and value of community-based ESL programs, local governments should encourage refugees to connect with these programs and emphasize the value of the

relationships they can build there. Additionally, if a refugee must spend a specified number of hours learning English, these community-based ESL programs should fulfill that requirement in part. These programs are designed to complement structured learning environments such as community colleges and state-run employment programs. Working together with community-based programs will offer refugees a holistic language and culture education.

Implications for Future Research

Research regarding volunteer adult ESL educators is scarce and this study attempted to contribute to the literature. However, this study is limited in scope in that it examines one ESL program in a specific context. While some implications can carry over to similar ESL programs, more extensive studies are needed to understand the needs of volunteer ESL teachers and how they can be better supported.

Specifically, Perry (2013) called for further research into volunteer instructor qualifications and what determines a qualified teacher. As she stated, "being qualified to teach is a complex matter" (p. 27). Qualifications become even more complex when discussing requirements for volunteers and community-based programs. Further research into the motivations and effectiveness of volunteer teachers teaching or tutoring adult language learners is necessary not only for the sake of community-based programs, but more importantly for the learners and individuals they serve.

Crandall et al. (1984) and McMurtrey (2006) both investigated several adult ESL programs across the US. Crandall et al. (1984) suggested future research into standards for program effectiveness and an exploration of how adult education differs from other types of education. While several studies have been conducted on the unique nature of adult education

and even refugee learners, there is little in the way of established standards for adult education programs. McMurtrey (2006), nearly 20 years after the Crandall et al. study, also appealed for more research into the structure and organization of adult ESL programs across the US. While the current study explored one such program, further research can continue to explore the needs of programs individually and comparatively across counties, states, and regions.

Finally, the current study contributed to the understanding of the inner-workings of a volunteer-run, community-based adult ESL program geared toward refugees. This specific niche of adult ESL is unique in its' own right and can be further explored by examining individual programs, learning more about the perspectives of volunteer teachers and refugee students, and developing standards for ESL programs based on current teaching theories, methods, and practices. The above program recommendations and suggestions for future research serve as a first step toward improving the services offered to adult refugee ELLs and giving them access to the resources they need to reestablish their lives.

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APPENDIX A- VOLUNTEER TEACHER PARTICIPANT DOCUMENTS

<u>**Teacher Consent Form**</u>

University of Illinois at Urbana –Champaign
Research Information and Consent for Participation in Social Behavioral Research

Volunteer Teacher Reflective Teaching Practices and Perceptions

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form such as this one to tell you about the research, to explain that taking part is voluntary, to describe the risks and benefits of participation, and to help you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

<u>Principal Investigator Name and Title: Randall Sadler, Associate Professor, Department of Linguistics and Director, Illinois MATESL & ESL Programs</u>

<u>Address and Contact Information: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign 4080 Foreign Languages Building, MC-168 707 S. Mathews Urbana, IL 61801 USA 217 244-2734</u>

<u>**Why am I being asked?**</u>

You are being asked to be a subject in a research study about volunteer teachers who teach refugees.

You have been asked to participate in the research because you are a volunteer teacher.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future dealings with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. **If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.**

<u>Approximately 40-50 subjects may be involved in this research at Voice of Refugees.</u>

<u>**What is the purpose of this research?**</u>

In the state of California, refugees receiving financial assistance from the state are not permitted to count hours spent in an ESL program led by volunteers towards the ESL hours required for their assistance programs. This has led some non-profit organizations to hire one professional teacher to teach one or two large multi-level classes each week. This has also caused many students to stop seeking services from the non-profit organizations altogether. Gaining insight into what a volunteer-led classroom looks like and evaluating it on the basis of one quality of effective teaching (reflective practices) would allow non-profit organizations and the local government to make better-informed decisions about what would and would not benefit the ever- growing refugee community. Focusing specifically on the reflective teaching practices of volunteer ESL teachers, this study will provide insight into volunteer-led ESL programs and how they can be made more effective.

<u>**What procedures are involved?**</u>

This research will be performed at Voice of Refugees- Anaheim, CA.

You will need to come to the study site during regular class times over the next two-three weeks. The researcher will contact you to meet at specific times before or after class at your convenience. You will be asked to complete a teacher survey, a classroom observation, and two interviews during this two-three week period.

Each survey and interview will take about thirty minutes each.
The study procedures involve an open-ended survey with questions pertaining to your perceptions of language learning and your teaching practice. You will be asked to participate in scheduled interviews at the center.

Your students in their classes will evaluate you using a brief questionnaire that includes a series of Likert Scale items and some open-ended questions. (Translation will be provided if necessary) These student questionnaires will be administered during regular class time and will not take more than thirty minutes to complete. Two or three students will participate in a more in depth interview.

All interviews will take place in a private room at the center.
Class observations will be conducted for 6-10 hours in each classroom for a total of 30 hours of observation. These observations will be video recorded and selectively transcribed for research purposes.

What are the potential risks and discomforts?

To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing in for this study will have no more risk of harm or discomfort than you would experience in everyday life. Additionally, the researcher will seek to take up as little time outside of your regular volunteer commitment as possible.

Are there benefits to taking part in the research?

You may directly benefit from this study, but no benefits are guaranteed.

What other options are there?

You have the option to not participate in this study *OR* to opt out of one or more of the activities (survey, interview, class observation, or student evaluation)

Will my study-related information be kept confidential?
In general, we will not tell anyone any information about you. When this research is discussed or published, no one will know that you were in the study. However, laws and university rules might require us to disclose information about you. For example, if required by laws or University Policy, study information which identifies you and the consent form signed by you may be seen or copied by the following people or groups:
- The university committee and office that reviews and approves research studies, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Office for Protection of Research Subjects;
- University and state auditors, and Departments of the university responsible for oversight of research;

What are the costs for participating in this research?
There are no costs to you for participating in this research.

Will I be reimbursed for any of my expenses or paid for my participation in this research?

You will not be offered payment for being in this study.

Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?

If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time. The Researchers also have the right to stop your participation in this study without your consent if:

→ *They believe it is in your best interests;*

→ *You were to object to any future changes that may be made in the study plan;*

Who should I contact if I have questions?

Contact Kallie-Jo Ho at 217-853-1489 or kwolf23@illinois.edu
- if you have any questions about this study or your part in it,
- if you have questions, concerns or complaints about the research.

What are my rights as a research subject?

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or if you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, including questions, concerns, complaints, or to offer input, you may call the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS) at 217-333-2670 or e-mail OPRS at irb@illinois.edu

Remember:

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.
You must be 18 years of age or older to participate.

I have read (or someone has read to me) the above information. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research. I will be given a copy of this signed and dated form.

_____   _____

Signature   Date

_____

Printed Name

_____   _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date (must be same as subject's)

_____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Volunteer Teacher Survey

Teacher Survey:

Name: Amount of time at VOR:

First language: Other languages (if any and how fluent):

Please answer the questions below to the best of your ability:

1. In your opinion, what does it take to learn a language?

2. What are the most important qualities of a language teacher?

3. What experiences have you had that have helped you become a better ESL teacher?

4. What do you do to prepare for each lesson?

5. How frequently do you deviate from the curriculum? How helpful is this for your students?

6. What do you think about while you are teaching?

7. Describe one technique you like to use in the classroom and why.

8. How do you determine your students' needs? What are some of the biggest needs of your current students?

9. How do you ensure that each student gets something out of the class?

10. Describe a lesson or activity that went really well and one that went poorly.

Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Volunteer Teachers

1. How did you learn about the center? Tell me more about why you decided to volunteer here.

2. How do you feel your classes are going?

3. What is one thing that went well today during your class that I observed?

4. What is one thing you might change?

5. How did you feel being observed?

6. If you could ask your students anything and receive and honest answer, what would you like to ask the students?

7. What is one thing the ESL program could do to better support you as a teacher?

APPENDIX B- STUDENT PARTICIPANT DOCUMENTS

<u>Student Consent Cover Letter and Consent Form</u>

Teacher Study at VOR

You can help us help you!

VOR will be a part of a University Study for the month of July. Kallie is a student at the university and a former volunteer at VOR.

She will:

- Video record classes

    - Only your back will appear on camera. The videos will not be published or shown to anyone other than Kallie and your teacher.

    - If you choose not to participate, you will be seated in a section of the classroom away from the camera.

- Give a survey to students

    - After your class is observed, Kallie will spend 30 minutes with your class. You will get a survey in English asking questions about the class and your feelings on language learning. Please let us know if you need someone to translate.

    - Do not write your name on the survey. The surveys will ***not*** be shown to your teacher directly. Your teachers ***will*** see a typed version of the total results.

    - If you choose not to participate, you may leave class during the survey.

How you can help:

- **Please participate and attend classes normally during your class observation. (Don't be nervous or try to talk to the camera!)**
- **Please attend on the day of the class survey. Be sure to answer honestly so that we can know how you feel and help you better.**
- **Ask questions if you are unsure or do not want to participate. You do not have to participate in this study if you do not want to.**

Remember:

* You must be 18 or older to participate

* You do not have to participate

* You must sign the form to participate

* Your name and any information about you will be kept private

University of Illinois at Urbana -Champaign
Research Information and Consent for Participation in Social Behavioral Research

Volunteer Teacher Reflective Teaching Practices and Perceptions

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form

such as this one to tell you about the research, to explain that taking part is voluntary, to describe the risks and benefits of participation, and to help you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

Principal Investigator Name and Title: Randall Sadler, Associate Professor, Department of Linguistics and Director, Illinois MATESL & ESL Programs

Address and Contact Information: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign 4080 Foreign Languages Building, MC-168 707 S. Mathews Urbana, IL 61801 USA 217 244-2734

Why am I being asked?

You are being asked to be a subject in a research study about volunteer teachers who teach refugees.

You have been asked to participate in the research because you are a student at Voice of Refugees (VOR).

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future dealings with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. **If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.**

Approximately 40-50 subjects may be involved in this research at Voice of Refugees.

What is the purpose of this research?

In the state of California, refugees receiving financial assistance from the state are not permitted to count hours spent in an ESL program led by volunteers towards the ESL hours required for their assistance programs. This has led some non-profit organizations to hire one professional teacher to teach one or two large multi-level classes each week. This has also caused many students to stop seeking services from the non-profit organizations altogether. Gaining insight into what a volunteer-led classroom looks like and evaluating it on the basis of one quality of effective teaching (reflective practices) would allow non-profit organizations and the local government to make better-informed decisions about what would and would not benefit the ever- growing refugee community. Focusing specifically on the reflective teaching practices of volunteer ESL teachers, this study will provide insight into volunteer-led ESL programs and how they can be made more effective.

What procedures are involved?

This research will be performed at Voice of Refugees- Anaheim, CA.

You will need to come to the study site during regular class times over the next two-three weeks. The researcher may contact you to meet at specific times before or after class at your convenience. You will be asked to complete a teacher evaluation and your classroom will be observed.

The teacher evaluation will be given in class and take about thirty minutes. Ifyou are asked to take part in an interview, the interview will take between thirty and sixty minutes.

The study procedures involve a teacher evaluation that includes a series of scale questions and open-ended questions. (Verbal translation will be provided if necessary) Two or three students will be asked to take part in an interview that last no more than an hour. All interviews will take place in a private room at the center. Class observations will be conducted for 10 hours in your classroom. These observations will be video recorded and selectively transcribed for research purposes. The video recording will focus only on the teacher and the camera will be placed in the back of the room, behind you and your classmates.

What are the potential risks and discomforts?

To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing in for this study will have no more risk of harm or discomfort than you would experience in everyday life. Additionally, the researcher will seek to take up as little time outside of your regular classes as possible.

Are there benefits to taking part in the research?

You may directly benefit from this study, but no benefits are guaranteed.

What other options are there?

You have the option to not participate in this study **OR** to opt out of one or more of the activities (class observation, or student evaluation)

Will my study-related information be kept confidential?

In general, we will not tell anyone any information about you. When this research is discussed or published, no one will know that you were in the study. However, laws and university rules might require us to disclose information about you. For example, if required by laws or University Policy, study information which identifies you and the consent form signed by you may be seen or copied by the following people or groups:
- The university committee and office that reviews and approves research studies, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Office for Protection of Research Subjects;
- University and state auditors, and Departments of the university responsible for oversight of research;

What are the costs for participating in this research?

There are no costs to you for participating in this research.

Will I be reimbursed for any of my expenses or paid for my participation in this research?

You will not be offered payment for being in this study.

Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?

If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
The Researchers also have the right to stop your participation in this study without your consent if:
They believe it is in your best interests;

You were to object to any future changes that may be made in the study plan;

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Remember:
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You must be 18 years of age or older to participate.

I have read (or someone has read to me) the above information. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research. I will be given a copy of this signed and dated form.

_____   _____

Signature   Date

_____

Printed Name

_____   _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date (must be same as subject's)

_____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

<u>**Student Participant Questionnaire**</u>

Please answer the questions below. Do NOT write your name.

When did you arrive to the US? _____

What is your first language? _____

What other language(s) do you know? _____

How many hours a day do you speak English?

        0-5   6-10   11-15   15+

How many hours a day do you listen to English?

        0-5   6-10   11-15   15+

Why do you want to learn English?

What do you want to be able to do by the end of this class?

Please circle the numbers below to show if you (4)- strongly agree, (3)- agree, (2)- disagree, or (1)- strongly disagree with the statements below.

I want a teacher:

who is paid for their work	1	2	3	4
who speaks my language	1	2	3	4
who speaks in class most of the time	1	2	3	4
who marks my homework and returns it to me	1	2	3	4
who only uses the textbook	1	2	3	4

who allows the students to speak to each other most of the time	1 ✗	2	3	4 ✓
who can speak more than one language	1 ✗	2	3	4 ✓

Please circle the numbers below to show if you (4)- strongly agree, (3)- agree, (2)- disagree, or (1)- strongly disagree with the statements below about your ESL class right now.

1. The textbook helps me improve my English.	1 ✗	2	3	4 ✓
2. The activities in class help me improve my English.	1 ✗	2	3	4 ✓
3. The teacher does not check my homework.	1 ✗	2	3	4 ✓
4. There is too much homework in this class.	1 ✗	2	3	4 ✓
5. The teacher uses the textbook.	1 ✗	2	3	4 ✓
6. I don't understand my teacher most of the time.	1 ✗	2	3	4 ✓
7. The teacher answers my questions well.	1	2	3	4

	✗			✓
8. The teacher's directions are easy to understand.	1	2	3	4
	✗			✓
9. This class is too easy. I am bored.	1	2	3	4
	✗			✓
10. The homework helps me improve my English.	1	2	3	4
	✗			✓

Please answer the questions below:
What do you like about this class?

What do you dislike about this class?

What would make this class better?