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# Influential Factors That Affect Retention and Language Acquisition in Beginning ESL Adults Students

Luis Manuel Rodriguez-Garcia  
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Luis Manuel Rodríguez-García

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2014

Abstract

Influential Factors That Affect Retention and Language Acquisition in Beginning ESL

Adult Students

by

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MA, Florida International University, 2003

BS, Northeastern Illinois University, 2001

BS, Florida International University, 2000

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

April 2014

## Abstract

This study explored the problem of student attrition in beginning courses of an Intensive English Program (IEP) that may affect the sustainability of the IEP. The purpose of the study was to understand the perceptions of continuing students and the factors that influenced their motivation and engagement to persist studying in the IEP.

Constructivism and behavioral social learning theory guided this study. The research problem addressed the need for students to remain in IEPs and achieve second language acquisition. The research questions were designed to learn what instructional approaches motivated and engaged participants to persist in successive introductory courses. A qualitative case study design, guided by interpretive epistemology, was used to collect students' opinions, perceptions, and suggestions on their experiences in their first course. The target population was beginners in a second IEP course at a community college. A purposive sample of 16 participants took part in 2 focus groups, individual interviews, and open-ended surveys for data triangulation. Constant comparative analysis using open and axial coding was used to aggregate data themes for inquiry. The findings revealed that poor student engagement, lack of mentorship qualities in instructors, and little inclusion of technology have been persistent reasons for their dissatisfaction. The project, a collaborative professional development effort, was designed for IEP instructors to gain awareness on past and current research about the andragogical framework of student-centeredness which culminated with the cooperative elaboration of a set of best practices. The social impact of the study comes from benefits that sustainable IEP programs could offer to communities with large populations of immigrants and to international visitors to empower them to achieve immersion into English-speaking societies.



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## Dedication

To my father, Luis Augusto, who always dreamed of one day seeing my success as a Doctor of Education but who is no longer physically amongst us. To my mother, Edna Antonia, who still awaits this grand achievement.



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To my doctoral committee who have patiently guided me throughout this journey. Dr. Thomas Hadley, your mentoring inspired me to discuss transformational learning with such passion. Dr. Nancy Maldonado, your guidance in qualitative methodology has been a blessing. Dr. Bonita Wilcox, I appreciate your careful reviews and the suggestion to develop “Better Practices” during the proposal stage. To Dr. Griselle Salgado, my study-buddy, who was there for me anytime I was emotionally stressed with this cumbersome project. To the colleagues who offered me a few minutes of their valuable time to give me feedback and kept me motivated with supporting words. To my dog Mikey, who patiently sat next to me in front of my computer for endless hours.

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## Section 1: The Problem

### **Introduction**

One of the most uncomfortable experiences for immigrants upon arrival in another country with a different language is not being able to communicate their needs or feelings. Imberti (2007) explored such feelings interviewing several immigrants and stated that, “clarity of speech becomes an obsession; the need to be understood is paramount in the daily existence of the immigrants” (p.72). Immigrants who have not had the economic means to follow formal training in the needed foreign language can face a lot of disadvantages within the new cultural environment. The feeling of incompetence experienced by the foreigner who will face communication challenges ranging from social to economic everyday activities for not commanding the new language could be very stressful.

Historically, efforts to offer immigrants the possibility to study ESL may be traced back as far as 1911 in the United States. At that time, the state of Wisconsin enacted legislation to allow schoolhouses and other public places the use of their facilities for public gathering as long as it would be initiated by any organization for the development and personal growth of their citizens (Greene, 2005). This model of community involvement toward mass education influenced other American places in a post-depression era. Seubert (1995) analyzed the impact of the *lighted schoolhouses* initiated in Milwaukee that followed suit in Michigan in 1935. Consequently, creating adult educational programs sponsored by community leaders made an impact that evolved to other states. Even today, the legacy of the lighted schoolhouses still surfaces



in Wisconsin's school system (Molnar, Smith, Zahorik, Palmer, Halbach, & Ehrle, 1999).

McGlade (1976) observed that community education programs were well established in the United States during World War II. The Sloan Foundation (2008) was a pillar in granting funds for different educational programs since its inception in 1934 by Mr. Sloan, then President and CEO of General Motors of America. The Foundation with its Workplace, Workforce, and Working Families sponsored community education programs in states such as Kentucky, Vermont, and Florida. These programs still contribute to the improvement of residents of cities and rural areas in the development of second language development and workforce skills. As of 2007, there were 1,063,330 adults studying ESL in the 50 states. The largest providers of ESL for adults were California with 38% and Florida with 12%, representing 40% of ESL students in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009).

In the 1998 Annual Conference of the National Community Education Association, Director Joel Nitzberg addressed the conference on the present concept and responsibilities of Community Education (CE) as an institution within educational institutions. Nitzberg (1998) stated that CE is framed in institutional settings for a mutual relationship and collaborative efforts in bringing educational hope to the communities. Nitzberg (1998) also asserted that the relationship between the community colleges and the continuing education programs is very important in serving the professional and occupational needs of the community. He emphasized that, "Community Education is about creating a participatory learning culture that incorporates principles and practices

of respect, mutual aid, inclusiveness, lifelong learning, skill building, self-appreciation, entrepreneurship, and leadership development” (Nitzberg, 1998, p. 7). ESL programs are usually inserted within public and proprietary higher institutions with different promises for the students. For CE to be a competitive force in this market, it not only requires great planning from the institution but sustainability as a result of the collection of student fees.

Considering the importance of adults learning a second language, CE programs for the community, and the higher education institutions hosting these programs, I sought the perceptions and opinions of students engaged in ESL programs at community colleges. It will be very useful for educators to know the factors that keep beginning ESL students motivated to continue studying the new language as part of the essential process for their formal integration into the social and economic fabric of this country. This section discusses the problem of retention of beginners at a South Florida Language Center while exploring possible reasons for such retention. The rationale to conduct the study was based on the review of past research in the areas of retention, instructional methodology, and current trends in second language learning in adults. The findings of the study could impact the way in which language institutions handle their class offerings to keep students motivated and enrolled in continuous courses.

### **Definition of the Problem**

Widely publicized by the tourist industry, South Florida offers pleasant weather all year round, magical beaches, and diverse Hispanic communities. At least 65% from a total population of 2,496,435 inhabitants of Miami-Dade County is of Hispanic origin as shown in the data from the last census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). This important

demographic fact makes Miami an attractive location to learn and practice ESL for its market demand and the fierce competition among state, private, and proprietary institutions that offer ESL programs.

For example, the South Florida Campus hosts a large IEP with over 6,000 students every year. However, specific data from the IEP is not reported independently like the Adult Basic Education-English for Speakers of Other Languages (ABE-ESOL) programs do because this is required by the State of Florida who funds these programs. The disadvantage of not having sufficient data from IEPs published in college annual reports compared to other state funded programs causes IEP programs to be underestimated in spite of their importance because they are self-sustainable programs supported by participants' fees.

The IEP used for this study is located downtown Miami and is very attractive for learners from surrounding vicinities including Miami Beach, the Brickell Business District, and Central Miami. Therefore, maintaining high recruitment and retention rates can make this campus an appealing learning center for international tourists, immigrants, and local adults seeking second language acquisition and development. By offering seven Intensive English Levels, with complementary oral and writing communication skills courses, IEP used in this study is a unique program that serves many adults and generates significant funds on an annual basis. However, there are many challenges to maintaining and sustaining an ESL program. These challenges range from a lack of instructional classrooms, mostly assigned to the credit programs, to the transient nature of some students in Miami. To alleviate the lack of classrooms on campus, the IEP pays rental

fees to neighbor businesses to use their unoccupied spaces. The transient students may contribute to higher attrition in the program.

### **A Competitive Market**

A general disclosure in the advertising course catalogues for the IEP states that these courses are not financially supported by the state, though the learners will look for quality of instruction as a condition for their commitment to continue paying out of pocket for these courses. Therefore, the department is very concerned about student feedback related to issues ranging from the classroom environment to the instructor's performance. Students are empowered to communicate their level of satisfaction or concerns with the department regarding their ESL experience. The IEP is very committed to learners' concerns. Their views are taken into consideration for implementation of academic and administrative improvements leading to student service excellence. Moreover, the students enrolled in the IEP require a gradual command of the language to develop fluency as they advance from the beginning levels. These intensive courses also serve as a competitive alternative to other private local universities providing immersion language programs at a higher price. For instance, the 84-hour Intensive English courses through seven levels are offered every 8 weeks at an average cost of up to \$5.00 per instructional hour. This is relatively less expensive than any similar courses offered by other competitive institutions in the area.

Three of the most important institutions offering IEPs are the state funded Florida International University (FIU), the private University of Miami (UM), and the proprietary Kaplan International English. The English Language Institute (ELI) based at FIU is a

program designed to prepare international students in 5 to 10 weeks with the ultimate goal of passing the TOEFL exam (FIU, 2014). This exam is recognized internationally and measures the students' competency in the English language so that they could pursue undergraduate and graduate courses. The UM-IEP has a similar structure as ELI with five levels of English (University of Miami, 2014). Kaplan International English offers a similar immersion program intended for international students (Kaplan International English, 2014). These institutions are certified through the Student and Exchange Visitors Programs by the U.S. State Department for the granting of student visas to study in these programs. This advantage for international students is not available at the IEP for its courses are offered to in- and-out of-state residents, immigrants, and tourists. However, the quality of learner-centered instruction and the affordable course fees, up to 50% less than these competitors, contribute to this language center remaining a leading IEP in the Miami-Dade metropolitan area.

### **The IEP at a South Florida College**

Learners pursuing the acquisition and improvement of second language skills in noncredit courses offered at the IEP may bring some proficiency as shown on their placement exam, an admission requirement, but the majority start in a beginning course. Five basic levels of language proficiency are determined upon an initial placement exam of 75 questions. Candidates who score between 0 and 10 are considered beginners and are placed in Level 1. High beginners score between 11 and 34 points and are placed in Level 2. The intermediate candidates who receive 35 to 40 points are placed in Level 4, and the high intermediates scoring 41 to 55 points are placed in Level 5. Finally,

candidates scoring 60 points or more are considered advanced and are offered Intensive Level 6 and/or any other combination of courses including Accent Reduction, Writing, and TOEFL preparation courses. Many advanced students seek proficiency to enter undergraduate academic programs, or they simply need to improve their language skills for professional purposes.

However, this language center does not track individual student performance throughout the entire length of the IEP due to the noncredit nature of the program. No passing grades are entered in the institution's Student Information System, and only internal records are exchanged in outcome reports to the Chairperson. For example, in the Biweekly Report for the period ending on November 16, 2011 to the CE department's Chairperson, Rodriguez, L.M. (personal communication, November 15, 2011) reported there were 540 students in the IEP program while 172 had entered through placement exams. I could assume that there were 368 continuing students from the previous term, but there is no information reported about the number of students who dropped or abandoned their classes in the previous term and the reasons that motivated the attrition.

An IEP's most critical problem is beginning students' attrition in sequential or continuing courses. The vast majority of new students are motivated to begin their classes, but there are no accurate records of the number of beginners who can complete the seven levels. Every 7-week term, new beginners join the continuing students in different levels through scores from exam placements. A significant number of students entering in the ESL sequence do not continue to the second or third 7-week courses.

Hence, the goal of this study was to determine what factors influenced beginning students to continue engagement in the IEP.

### **The Problem in the Local Context**

Although beginning students identify several reasons why they do not continue, poor student engagement within their cohort groups as well as the instructor are persistent reasons for their dissatisfaction. Peña (2010) identified engagement as key indicators of student success in her research about native Spanish speaking ESL students, who, in spite of being placed in mainstream classes, were able to pass their exams to enroll in ESL courses in college. Peña (2010) asserted, “membership and an increased sense of belonging are not automatic, in spite of the institutional efforts and the four walls that enclosed students in a classroom” (p. 72). Whether Peña’s student population pursued a college degree, the importance of engagement can apply as well to noncredit students. The sense of belonging and membership into these communities can be noticeable and predominant among students, faculty, and members of social clubs and fraternities, libraries, and computer courtyards among others. These communities need the help of instructors and staff to become engaged. Engagement can not only help students to practice their second language for development, but it can also help students to acquire cultural information for better identification and integration into these communities.

The sense of belonging and membership, or learner-centeredness, is aligned with the social-constructivist theories espoused by 20th Century educators such as Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky in the United States (Barley, Cross, & Major, 2005; Gordon, 2009; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010) asserted that, “social

constructivists challenge the scientific realist assumption that reality can be reduced to its component parts” (p.7). Social constructivists support that our long-term life experiences have contributed to who we are, thus impacting the way we conduct research. As it can be noticed, post-positivism also relates to social constructivism and critical realism and also uses quantitative and qualitative designs to collect data.

Self-directed, transformational, and experiential learning complement cognition through reflection, thus allowing the teacher to become a facilitator for student engagement (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Classroom engagement success can be related to theoretical frameworks of learner-centeredness as an adult teaching approach that can be extremely successful for language courses. Learner or student-centeredness is the current approach in adult learning that detaches from traditional methodology where the teacher is the center and students must listen to extensive lectures and prove rote learning through exams. Klein-Collins (2011) affirmed that “colleges and universities are recognizing the significant size of their adult learner populations, and are realizing that the adult learner has needs and faces barriers that are different from those of the ‘traditional’ student” (p. 4). In a student-centered classroom, instructors become facilitators or mentors to the students. As a result, the students may become self-directed in their learning process while engaging with the group and the instructor in a transformative learning journey.

As learner-centeredness is positively linked to adult engagement, there are other reasons for beginner’s attrition. Conflicting work schedules and the transient nature of some students, as reflected in their comments on the Student Complaint Form they fill



out in IEP offices, negatively affect perseverance in the ESL program. When students request refunds for the class, they sometimes describe their disappointment with the instructor, but they also offer other reasons. Among the testimonials stated by students in their Student Complaint Forms, the IEP Student Refund Chart, in a given term, showed 20 students' requests for refunds or class transfer due to the following reasons in order of importance:

1. Instructor dissatisfaction due to lack of engagement.
2. Challenging language acquisition and development.
3. Relocation: Work schedule conflict or personal/family issues.
4. Instructors do not use audio visuals or technology.

Technology can play an important role in second language acquisition. The use of technology motivates the student to understand concepts and practice after audio-visual models. This is a benefit to the students' learning experience in classes running for 2 or more hours per session. Matching technology to a language class as a vital component creates a relaxing cultural environment for integration, discussion, and practice leading to language acquisition and/or immersion.

The use of technology for language learning has even transcended to the most remote areas of the world. Zamorshchikova, Egorova, and Popova (2011) explored the use of wiki projects in their ESL classroom by engaging students through Internet spaces where they can upload, edit, file, communicate, and collaborate for practice. Bahrani (2011) emphasized the use of technology as a social approach for reinforcing second language skills with an emphasis in blogging, games, social networking, and a myriad of

audio and visual practices to enhance the targeted linguistic skills. Traore (2011) stressed, “so far, technological equipment such as radio, TV, cassettes, CD-ROMs, DVDs, and communicative tools such as e-mails, chat rooms, discussion boards, and Internet conferences are being used in language classes” (p. 563). Nothing could seem to be more realistic when the usual question in educational blogs are posed by instructors on how to manage and take advantage of students texting and navigating the Internet in their classrooms through their handheld smartphones. Hence, this is a new challenge for instructors but advantage push to implement technology as part of student-centered best practices for student motivation and engagement in the ESL classroom.

Student satisfaction and retention in EIPs is vital to community colleges and other higher education institutions hosting them. For this reason, it is important to look at retention in the IEP program as a combined effort from the administrative staff and instructors in maintaining student enrollment in continuing courses. Fincher (2010) considered retention to be a problem in adult education that is not being measured properly in spite of an increasing of awareness of its importance by educational institutions. Fincher (2010) also emphasized that “nontraditional students tend to get less support to facilitate their success than do their traditional age counterparts” (p.17). Laskey and Hetzel (2011) recommended that retention strategies should include attention and support to at-risk students by creating developmental courses. Other researchers (Roman, 2010; Jamelske, 2009) corroborated that understanding student retention is a necessary ongoing process that needs attention and periodical measurement for traditional, nontraditional, or disadvantaged learners. In Continuing Education courses

such as an IEP, retention supports the continuous growth of the program to concentrate resources in recruitment.

### **The Problem in the Larger Population or Educational Situation**

At the national level, the U.S. Department of Education continues the implementation of studies for adult education as evaluation by means of commissioned reports and national surveys from adult education representatives. Since 1988, the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, the Office of the Under Secretary, Planning and Evaluation Services, and the Office of Educational Research and Improvement have overseen these studies. Through two categories, evaluating how federal programs impact communities and improving adult education as a local practice, these studies have the goals of assessing “the use of technology to improve instruction and administration, examining adult education’s role in welfare reform, and improving state and local performance and evaluation data” (Ed.gov, 2006). In the practice of English as a Second Language instruction for programs not funded by grants, as in the case of the IEP, improving local practice in adult education with the use of technology for instruction and improving local evaluation data are current needs. The latter is taken into consideration in this study.

From a business perspective, not only is it a primary goal to attract learners to the IEP but to maintain such enrollment from the beginning levels to completing the entire ESL sequence. The problem of this study is that many beginners are not continuing in the IEP sequence. One reason is that the students may not have the money to pay for additional courses. Other reasons may include a lack of bonding with the group, work

schedule conflict, family responsibilities, and poor learning progress. I suggest that the most important reason why beginning students may lose their motivation to keep engaged in continuing courses is due to the lack of student-centered approaches applied in their classes. Hence, the purpose of this study is to investigate the factors that motivate beginning students to continue to be engaged and matriculated in the Intensive English Program (IEP) program while succeeding in the acquisition and improvement of skills in English as a Second Language.

### **Rationale**

#### **Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level**

This research is important because the IEP needs students to continue from the first course to the entire program. Their continued enrollment generates revenues that support the center and the school. The center contributes up to 55% of student fees for the Department of Community Education at a college in South Florida. This information is noted in one of the latest annual school's reports (Miami Dade College, 2010, p.8). From \$10,037,446 student fees generated collegewide, \$6,103,749 (62%) was collected in Continuing Workforce Education courses. Since the IEP is not mandated to report grades, instructors assess students and recommend them to register in the continuing course, usually under their mentorship. Therefore, the IEP keeps data of instructor retention and promotion to the next level. Maintaining an average of 90 to 100% in student retention is a desirable goal to guarantee a higher population of continuing students. The department could allocate more resources for marketing to recruit new learners by achieving this goal.

One of the most successful practices instructors have adopted to help students in the IEP has been the transition from traditional teacher-centered approaches to student centeredness. Beginning with the academic year 2008-2009, the IEP established an orientation session for instructors at the beginning of every term to focus on the following objectives:

- Identify the students as the center of their own learning process.
- Identify the instructor as a facilitator for student learning and advancement through mentorship and engagement.
- Deliver language content supported by technology and related to student experiences in social and professional environments.
- Develop abilities in the students to become self-directing in their own learning process.

These objectives are prescriptive to language learners but even more so for ESL students who need security and language survival skill development. They are grounded on the developmental outcome of transformative learning theories embraced by Mezirow and Daloz (Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner, 2007). Barret, Bower, and Donovan (2007) assured that “it will take more study and a better understanding of the factors influencing instructional style to facilitate the evolution to a truly learner-centered environment” (p. 46). This is one important reason why I became motivated to undertake this study.

Since the moment that potential students contact the IEP, the staff is ready to engage with them for admission and testing. Students have the option of taking the

entrance exam daily on a walk-in basis even though placement exams are advertised on different convenient dates. Instructors, on the other hand, are trained periodically regarding student-centered methodology and mentoring skills to guide their students. The instructors' goal is to pace and monitor their learners' progress for the development of decision-making skills in their learning process.

A similar successful IEP has been developed at the South West Campus within the same higher education institution. This IEP is very similar to the one of the South Florida Campus in terms of student population and course offerings. Conducting this study at the South West Campus could also be very helpful in understanding beginning students' retention in IEP programs. As a researcher conducting the study on a different campus, I do not have ethical issues due to my duties of supervising the IEP of the South Florida Campus.

Ultimately, by conducting this study, I hoped to discover what motivates IEP beginners to continue in successive ESL courses. Course by course retention is vital for the sustainability of the IEP programs and the increase of enrollment credits for the institution. Just as important, I believe this study may offer valuable feedback on whether learner-centered methodological approaches used by instructors in the classroom can serve as a motivator for engagement and learning transformation. Students can play an important role in defining motivators to keep them engaged after a beginning course, so they can continue moving up in the ladder into more advanced courses. The ultimate goal of the students is to become more competent in the English language to face employment demands and become employment-ready, hence the social impact of the study. Students

will be more employable, which will reduce dependency on public assistance programs while supplying the labor force demand in the service industry of the South Florida communities.

### **Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature**

Traditionally, ESL programs in community colleges have been recognized as an appealing alternative to low-wage immigrants trying to learn English (Booth, 2009). Paradoxically, another perception is that noncredit courses are offered for the acquisition of occupational skills, including skills development for certification or other required professional training, as Milam (2005) stated in his “first-of-its kind study and portray of noncredit course activity”(p. 57). In noncredit courses, the adjunct faculty may have little methodological training, and programs can only be efforts by educational institutions to offer a needed service to the community but with poor quality and immeasurable outcomes (Norton Grubb, Badway, & Bell, 2003).

Nevertheless, noncredit programs are still a valuable option and a way for students to come to colleges and get motivated. IEPs can be more successful since students are highly motivated as they need to develop language skills more rapidly to improve their working conditions. On the other hand, as recommended by Harris and Cullen, (2008), the institution needs to ensure the sound use of methodology for adult education and the provision of a responsive administrative and instructional staff that can ensure the understanding of adult learning needs for support and success. Campbell (2009) stated the following:

[The current] divergent group of students has necessitated change in teaching styles and strategies. Curriculum and instructional development have included competency-based approaches, mastery approaches, holistic approaches, curriculum integration, student-centered education, learning-centered education, and an increased use of educational technology for individualized instruction. (p. 16)

These approaches can result in the growth of student-instructor relationships that will support learning as a transformational journey. Learners are also empowered to be critical of every aspect in their learning process as they are also stakeholders in this journey.

In brief, the reviewed literature suggested that this study may be effective for two major reasons. First, the IEP at the South Florida Campus is very competitive in the local market by offering a myriad of oral and written skills developmental courses. Second, it is a self-sustainable program that can generate thousands of dollars to the department yearly. This study follows the lead of other researchers that concluded the benefit of motivation and retention for second language learners due to application of student-centered instructional approaches.

### **Definitions**

The following terms and phrases used in this study are defined for better understanding.

*Andragogy*: An educational approach to teach adults contrary to pedagogy where the learner is part of an audience directed by the teacher, at the center of the classroom



universe. Henschke (2011) claimed that andragogy, although familiar to educators in the United States, is becoming a preferred engaging approach for practitioners worldwide to center the instruction on the learner. The andragogical model encourages students to be self-directed on their learning through the guidance of an instructor as facilitator and mentor.

*Community education (CE)*. The partnership from public and private educational institutions to make learning accessible to the communities for lifelong learning, training, and development. The actual trend is to consider these courses as Continuing Education or Career and Workforce Development as depicted in “Career and Education” at the Florida DOE (2012a). Deggs and Miller (2011) defined Community Education as a conglomerate of courses in adult literacy, GED, and ESL which are excluded from academic programs in higher education institutions; however, these courses fulfill lifelong learning for adults.

*General educational development (GED)*: Program offered by the state Department of Education leading to an examination towards a high school diploma. Education Information, GED, defined the purpose of this program as a preparation for individuals who have not graduated from high school in the United States to attain the skills required to pass the Official GED Tests and be awarded a state high school diploma (Florida Department of Education, 2012b). The advantage of this program is that students will be more competent to enter the workforce and or begin undergraduate programs in higher education.

*English as a second language (ESL)*: A program designed to offer acquisition and development of English language communicative skills in reading, writing, pronunciation, and grammar to students native to languages other than English (Cohen, 2008).

*Intensive english program (IEP)*: An ESL program designed to offer a large number of hours per semester for quicker acquisition and development in grammar, conversation, reading, and writing skills (Hillyard, Reppen, & Vasquez, 2007). The program design may reflect the characteristics of the institution according to the student population it serves.

*Cooperative workforce education (CWE)*: In "Career and Adult Education," the Florida DOE (2012a) defined the CWE courses as instruction offered for individuals looking for training in license renewal, certification maintenance, business and industries training, retraining of their employees, and any other nondegree seeking course for professional purposes.

*Recreation and leisure programs (R&L)*: Recreation and leisure courses offer lifelong learning in different areas such as music, dance, arts and crafts, foreign languages, sports, and others. These courses provide different opportunities for individuals to understand and utilize wide-ranging leisure skills as a potential to enhance their life (Dattilo, 2002). Students take these courses for leisure or social interaction.

*Social constructivism*: Social constructivists support that our long term life experiences have contributed to define who we are, thus impacting the way we conduct research. They also challenge the assumptions made by scientific realism stating that

reality is not a single unity that can be found only on its component parts (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtler, 2010).

*Test of english as a foreign language (TOEFL)*.: An exam offered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) composed of listening comprehension, structure, written expression, and reading comprehension. The purpose of the test is to assess the language proficiency of people for whom English is not their first language (ETS, 2014).

*Interlanguage*: Characteristics of second language learners to replace uncommon phonemes in the second language [live, /i/ as in sit] with similar ones from their native language [ live, /I/ as in bite] in which the foreign phoneme does not exist. Native speakers only have to understand and decipher a group of units of their writing system with their corresponding pronunciation which is more difficult for second language learners to do (Thompson and Brown, 2012).

*Wiki projects*: The Merriam-Webster dictionary (2012) defined wiki as “a web site that allows visitors to make changes, contributions, or corrections”(para. 1). Instructors can engage students by creating a blog or website to practice and communicate as a group project (Zamorshchikova, Egorova, & Popova, 2011).

### **Significance**

Since I strongly support the notion that *motivation* is related to *the need to know* as two of the six principles of andragogy (Hinkson, 2010), the application of different perspectives from traditional scholars can be very beneficial to the learner’s success of these intensive language courses. In cosmopolitan communities with a high influx of tourists and immigrants looking for work in the service industry, language acquisition is

very important for the improvement of their professional skills or their social interactions. Hence, the success of the language programs creates a reputable relationship with the market demands to make the institution a preferred location for repeated enrollment.

Furthermore, considering that IEPs are a strong presence in any country offering a privileged position for instructors to work worldwide, an analysis that could determine the factors influencing student retention in these programs can be a helpful tool for other institutions to adopt. Most programs offer different strategies and approaches to deliver instruction that makes them unique. From international language institutes with a long held reputation, such as Berlitz, to online instruction and IEPs in higher education institutions, findings related to the retention of beginning ESL students could be beneficial for student growth and the sustainability of these programs.

The significance of this project study at the local level is that it analyzed the opinions and perceptions of beginner students learning ESL under student-centered approaches and instructional strategies. The study also shed light on students' motivation leading to retention by engaging in a transformational approach as defined by Mezirow (2004), another pioneer in andragogical approaches. Mezirow's theory of transformational learning encourages the learner to develop self-directing study habits to become integrated and beneficial to society as he clearly stated,

There is a common recognition that the fully developed learner moves through a series of developmental forms to arrive at the highest potential for understanding the capacity to engage in transformative learning. There is also recognition that this occurs only in adulthood but not in all or even most adults. Capacity, an

unrealized potential for transformative learning, is one thing. Another is to help these adults acquire the insight, ability and disposition to realize this potential in their lives. This is the role of adult education. (Mezirow, 2004, p. 69)

I believe that the overall success of the IEP students is due to their need to become proficient in the English language for self-confidence and as well as to become competitive for employment. Some students like to resume their interrupted careers when moving to the United States. As a leader in a higher educational institution, I support modeling instruction with the use of traditional constructivist learning combined with somatic or embodied practices. Under this approach, students will develop experiential and spiritual knowledge through meaning-making to become successful candidates for current demands of the workplace. Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) claimed that “learning in the experience is immediate, physical, emotional” (p.192), and I support such a philosophy to train adult learners for the pursuit of bringing positive social change through linguistic development.

It is also my pragmatic belief that frameworks such as Social Constructivism are present in everyday educational practice. Such frameworks are necessary for the educational practitioner and researcher to become engaged with students. This engagement will help students to determine what works best to improve it or to discontinue what proves to be ineffectual. Considering the positive conditions for growth in enrollments of the IEP at the IEP with new classes beginning every 8 weeks in 3 daily sessions, these findings can contribute to other IEP programs throughout community colleges and universities, as well as similar programs in other countries.

### **Guiding/Research Question**

I believe that adults who invest time and resources in taking a language course will become more competitive at different life stages in an increasingly more diverse society. Creating an environment conducive to learning is a major responsibility for the institution and, most importantly, the instructor. Consequently, the quality in the delivery of instruction is crucial for the achievement of higher learning outcomes and the contribution of higher yields for the self-sustainable nature of continuing education and professional development programs within the community.

There is limited research describing how to improve retention in beginning ESL courses by using learner-centered approaches. Therefore, it was very helpful to understand what specific learner-centered instructional strategies engaged the beginning students to continue in the program. Researchers have also explored how the pairing of technology with instruction improves motivation and positive learning outcomes among learners. As Barret, Bower, and Donovan (2007) clearly stated, “because information is readily available to the learner, the online environment becomes an appropriate venue for the implementation of a learner-centered teaching style” (p.38). Students could be kept motivated and enrolled in language programs not only through online courses, but also in attending a traditional class in cohort with the inclusion of technology and language lab practice. In their study, Barret et al. (2007) posed similar questions for online learning as this current study does with classroom style learning. Past research has shown (Brown, 2008; Foster & Carboni, 2009; Kroeger & Phillips, 2007) that the scholarly community

has begun to develop an interest in student-centeredness as the approach to be embraced by educational institutions in this century for positive learning and engagement outcomes.

Consequently, the IEP at the South Florida Campus faces the challenge of initiating new IEP courses every 8 weeks with beginning students who bring a high level of motivation to succeed in the acquisition of a second language. Student motivation may dissipate due to many factors, including the lack of engagement of the instructional methods used by their instructors in class. The concept of a learner-centered instruction is an influential tool for the instructor to reduce attrition by engaging students in their own self-learning development. Furthermore, the idea that the learner will respond to this approach through an instructor's guidance contributed to the proposal of the following research questions for this study:

Research Question 1: What are the beginning student's perceptions about their engagement in the IEP, and what motivates them to continue taking courses in the program?

Research Question 2: What do continuing students think of the instructional practices applied in the IEP, and how do such practices led to their retention and learning success?

### **Review of the Literature**

Contrary to the foundations of *pedagogy*, in which learning is centered on passive reception from the student, the work of Malcom Knowles has been instrumental in shaping adult education theory for the last four decades (Taylor & Kroth, 2009). Knowles' recommendations are recognized as an important theoretical model to help the

learner feel comfortable, nonthreatened and become more self-directed in the learning process (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005). This concept was labeled *andragogy*, and Malcolm Knowles became its most relevant supporter in the second half of the 20th century with the publication of *Informal Adult Education (1950)*, a beginning to a prolific literary surge.

The andragogy model is based on a set of assumptions claiming that the learner, as an adult, has different needs and expectations compared to children and adolescents. To date, researchers (Abello-Contesse, 2009; Hagen, 2008; Gürsoy, 2011; Piehl, 2011) have joined the debate on the controversial critical period hypothesis (CPH). This hypothesis considers that adults have less mental capacity to learn than children and adolescents. However, research findings are relative on the support or rejection that age is not a determinant factor of second language learning. On the other hand, andragogy assumptions are the opposite of more traditional pedagogical concepts in which teachers direct the learning. Silén and Uhlin (2008) stated that during self-directing practices, “the students are encouraged to make choices and decisions, take up positions, appraise, judge and plan. The tutor is supposed to challenge students’ critical awareness in their interaction with the people involved, the subject matter and the actual learning environment”(p. 472). Andragogical supporters suggest that learning is self-directed; thus, the teacher should become a coach or a guide.

In essence, pedagogy and andragogy are two sides of a coin since they share the same assumptions only in opposite directions. Thus, the androgogy model offers students trust, respect, and the feelings that they are supported by their mentors. For these reasons,



the learner assumes an unthreatened attitude compared to the teacher-dependency of the pedagogical model (Sang, 2010). In that regard, Knowles identified *the need to know, the learners' self-concept, the role of experience, orientation to learn, readiness to learn, and motivation* as the assumptions for both models (as cited in Taylor & Kroth, 2009).

Nevertheless, the pedagogical model will leave the learner to the "submissive role of following a teacher's instructions" while andragogy promotes the sense of "self-concept" and "self-directness" in the learner as decisive issues in the learning process (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005, pp. 62-68).

The adult population served by the IEP at a South Florida community college comes from different social backgrounds and displays varying socioeconomic characteristics. Regarding professionals seeking work related training to immigrants in need of English language skills, the goal should be the same: self-directed learning. Therefore, for the purpose of this endeavor, the learners' self-concept and motivation are the two most important assumptions that rightly apply to the IEP programs. Knowles' andragogy theories are very relevant to the teaching of second languages, considering the need of second language beginners to engage in self-directing learning as a fast transformational path. Andragogy assumes that the learner's self-concept and motivation are relevant for student engagement and retention in continuing education adult education programs. At the same time, these assumptions have been revisited, adapted, and transformed by other practitioners in the last four decades (Krajnc, 2011).

### **Self-Concept Strategies for Student-Centeredness**

The instructor needs to help students acquire and develop decision-making skills

at their learning pace to develop in them the learner's self-concept. In this way, learners will develop a sense for self-direction that will guide them throughout their learning transformation. The work of Carl Rogers since the 1940s reflects the importance of creating self-centered learning environments for a more successful transformation through learning (Cornelius-White, 2008). O'Hara (2003) emphasized that Carl Rogers applied his studies of adults in therapy during the late 1960s and 1970s to demonstrate that student-centered teaching could develop "higher levels of consciousness in individuals and within larger systems" (p.65). Rogers' contribution to education relies on his so-called "emancipatory pedagogy" that has led to andragogical models of social learning and change (Blackmore, 2001).

Roger's theories on developing the individual's self-concept to facilitate less directed learning were replaced with a more active and self-directing process. By developing self-directing abilities on the learner, the transformation from being monolingual to becoming bilingual can open more social and professional opportunities in society (Freiberg & Lamb, 2009). As Valjataga & Laanper (2010) concluded, "giving students increased control over crucial instructional functions may result in self-directed individuals, who are capable of updating their knowledge and skills outside of formal educational systems" (p. 289). Carl Roger's notion of the self-concept for learning was the beginning of an awareness to realize that adult learners need to make themselves responsible for their own decisions and need others to perceive them as responsible for their improvement and success. Current practitioners value student self-concept as a determinant for successful learning outcomes (Chih-Chuan, Chen, & Cheng-Chuan,

2011; Diehl & Hay, 2011; Xiaofeng & Chengzong, 2010). It is a primary role for the instructor to help learners detach from previous directed and passive pedagogical instruction.

The notion of “self” cannot stay outside the current andragogic wave, and practitioners should understand this concept as a practical model for adult instruction. Brookfield (2000) emphasized that “it is but a short step from conceiving self-direction as a form of learning emphasizing separateness, to equating it with selfishness, with the narcissistic pursuit of private ends regardless of the consequences of this pursuit for others” (p.131). Brookfield (2000) advocated the notion that to induce teaching or learning, practitioners should detach themselves from their own centeredness and facilitate student self-direction acquisition at their own pace. To prepare the road for adult learning success, why should the institutions not facilitate the development and growth of their instructors and trainers to that end? I believe that institutions should help faculty adopt learner-centered approaches to develop the notion of self direction in their learners.

### **The Notion of Motivation and Engagement for Retention and Advancement**

The next andragogy assumption, motivation, is related to the need to know. People pursue their enrollment in different courses to acquire the knowledge in relevant subjects for the improvement of their professional skills or their social interactions. Schwarzer (2010) asserted that “when adult learners see their English class as connected and helpful to their real lives, they are more likely to invest the effort it takes to attend class and to approach their out-of-class lives as a language-learning laboratory” (p. 27). Therefore, instructors should model the importance of involving learners in social

networks to sustain the motivation in the learning process. Networking can benefit the learners individually while giving to the institution the benefit of less attrition and more student retention (Bahrani, 2011; Kim, 2011; Pilgrim & Bledsoe, 2011). Networking and the use of social media as a learning resource should begin as the student joins the program and the instructor is able to foster a motivational environment where the student sees him or herself as an intrinsic part of the class or group. This can facilitate the success of the instructor's skills as an engagement facilitator.

As part of the motivational process in Community and Continuing Education courses, students should be given the opportunity to respond to class surveys at the beginning and the end of the term. In these surveys, students can state their expectations and suggestions to make their classes more motivational and suitable to their specific needs and goals. Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) pointed out "the motivational dimension involves what influences people to participate or enter into a self-directed learning activity or task" (p.115). The need to learn will push students to reach out for courses that will nurture their skills in specific areas.

What could be the result if students find instructors lacking motivational strategies, a curriculum not developed for adult learning, or a threatening environment? It will result in the opposite of self-directed learning since the student will lose confidence and faith in the course. Some students may respond to surveys focusing on attention issues but not on teacher methods of instruction (Jiménez, & Rose, 2010). Instructors need to provide students with the attention, guidance, and mentoring in the early part of their program so that they may become more independent and self-directed through

the rest of their program. Rangachari (2010) recommended that “appropriate learning involves the harmonious interaction between good teachers and good learners in institutional settings that provide appropriate resources” (p. 132). Putting the student in charge as a role-play activity in class can result in faster acquisition of self-directing skills.

The humanist orientation embraced by Burrhus Frederic Skinner (1904-1990) stated that learning is perceived as a potential for human growth and behavior reinforcement. Both can definitely play an important role in learning outcomes, thus second language learners can become better-equipped individuals who can deal with more diverse interactions for business and social environments as defined by researchers revisiting the work on the Skinners and Carl Rogers (Adams, 2012; Dahlin, 2009; Merenda, 2010; Sommerbeck, 2011). A second language also offers learners the opportunity to acquire and understand cultural and environmental contexts to be more in tune with society. Language competence empowers individuals to defend themselves from abuse and other social oppressive behavior. To facilitate learner empowerment, instructors should become involved with their students during the language learning process. This could be done through self-initiation toward learning and the development of new attitudes as suggested by Rogers’s self-directing learning approaches. Self-evaluation follows when the learners could determine whether the learning experience is fulfilling their needs through the relationship of life and professional experiences into the knowledge acquired in this process.

As well as Skinner, Rogers was a psychologist involved in the Humanistic Orientation while he worked on his self-learning theories. To cite an application of his theories in action, Demanchick and Kirschenbaum (2008) asserted that “Carl Rogers is well known for his person-centered approach to psychotherapy and helping relationships and for his extensive array of research and writing on many topics in psychology and education” (p.27). These researchers had analyzed Rogers’ contribution to the fields of psychology and education which transcended to the political arena when the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States commissioned him to conduct ethical experiments involving suspects in collaboration with the communist parties in different parts of the world. Roger’s interviews with FBI suspects led to findings on their individual self-efficacy and self-directed learning abilities used for espionage and infiltration in different countries.

The Social Learning Theory (1977) by Banduras can play a decisive role in the adult learning process of beginning language students. His theory analyzed the interaction among cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences in the learning process. These influences can facilitate learning by observation processes to create mental states of cognition. Banduras (1977) stated, "Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action." (p.22). In second language learning, beginners can be motivated by learning from others including their peers, classmates, and mentors to cite just a few. In this

observation-modeling process, beginners can establish a system that will motivate them to read anything they see and to repeat any sounds they hear.

In Bandura's video conference about the Triadic Model of Reciprocal Causation, he explained, "there is an interplay between personal, behavioral and environmental factors (...) people are producers of the environments, not just products of it" (as cited in Davison & Davidson, 2003). Though personal motivation and life experiences are brought into the classrooms, beginning learners can become in charge of their development and growth. This motivation will keep them engaged, thus creating a network or cohort with the rest of the group for continuous learning through peer-to-peer interaction (Watanabe & Swain, 2007). This is how the Behavioral and Humanist orientations can merge with Bandura's social cognitive orientation in second language learning. The ultimate goal in the earlier stages of any language education is to create a need in the learner, through motivation and engagement, to survive the first and second courses that could ensure their retention and advancement.

### **Student-Centered Best Practices**

A successful application of the learner-centered theories can be found in a case study conducted in seven higher education institutions of New Zealand and Australia where students were surveyed upon their return to campus after their beginning course. Zepke, Leach, and Prebble (2006) concluded that "in short, our data suggest that learner-centeredness improves retention where students feel they belong in an institutional culture, where they experience good quality teaching and support for their learning and where their diverse learning preferences are catered for" (p. 598). Although their study

showed that some institutional differences may have affected its outcome and that more research should be done in this regard, it was clear that retention was a result of student-centered practices applied by the instructors and the administration. Educational programs should engage in an analysis of the current needs of the adult population during this new century. Helping adults to fulfill their need to learn requires planning, responsibility, and empathy from the instructor on a daily basis (Klein & Collins, 2011).

Campbell (2009) was able to demonstrate in her mixed-method study with 185 southern community colleges of the United States that although learner-centered approaches are increasingly being accepted, community colleges are facing a dilemma with its acceptance and implementation in their institutions. Campbell emphasized the challenges to move completely from teacher-centered instruction to learner centered instruction are due to inadequately trained part-time faculty or resistance from faculty to move away from lecture style methodologies, among other factors.

In contrast, continuing noncredit language instruction is more aligned with Bandura's self-efficacy theory of human motivation and accomplishment through social interaction. Rodrigues (2009) stated that applying a student-centered approach, such as Project-Base Learning in the ESL classroom, is a complement for learners and instructors to engage in practice and application of the four areas of language: speaking, listening, grammar and writing. In IEP instruction, instructors are encouraged not to deviate from engagement with their students. The reason is that students may travel through several months of class interaction with the same instructor, sometimes lasting through three or four levels of the IEP. Hence, it becomes a strong compromise for these instructors to



detach from traditional lecturing approaches, as they embrace the group as a unit for language skills achievement.

Another contributing theory to learner-centeredness deals with the ability of learners to be guided for the development of their critical thinking skills. The reflective learning theory best explains why adults learn for it can give learners the opportunity to apply their implicit knowledge into their practice supported by their examination of originality (Castelli, 2011). Argyris and Schön (1992) established a relationship between people's ability to explain how they convey their actions and the way they actually carry them out. This behavior was identified as *theory of actions* espoused to the *theory-in-use* which is the actual way in which the individual acted without even thinking about it or not even realizing that both theories can be incompatible.

Crawley, Curry, Dumois-Sands, Tanner, and Wyker (2008) explored the effectiveness of lecturing with guiding questions about social issues within the group for reflective thinking and conversation. Students learning a second language tend to ask different reasons why a given grammatical structure behaves in certain ways and may refer to a native speaker expecting to get the most accurate response. However, students may not get the expected result since native speakers can understand the function of the grammatical structure when speaking, but may not be able to explain its rules. In this case, the tacit knowledge of native speakers allows them to produce several examples to show the linguistic behavior in question (theories-in-use). As well, native speakers can come up with an explanation without grammatical foundation (theories of action). Instructors are a contributing factor for reinforcement and learning support; therefore, the

ability to satisfy second language beginners' interest for language structures should be linked to reflective practices.

On the other hand, the trained practitioner will not only use the research knowledge to guide the learner throughout the assimilation of the grammatical rule but will use his or her tacit knowledge to coach the student through practice of his "examination of artistry." According to Schön (1987), "artistry is an exercise of intelligence, a kind of knowing, though different in crucial respects from our standard model of professional knowledge" (p.13). The native speaker consulted by the ESL student may not be able to convince the student with an answer since he or she may lack the artistry which a trained ESL teacher has gained through research and practice. Therefore, training instructors periodically can contribute to their success in enhancing learners' content knowledge without challenging their progress and thus, contributing to the students' retention.

It is also important to consider that there is a clear contrast between nonwestern and traditional western practices applied to current educational approaches. In nonwestern practices as Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) affirmed, "identity, self-concept, and self-esteem are developed and enhanced only in relation to others" (p.237). Though, group cohesion is an inseparable aspect of the language learning process. The learning experience focuses more on the development of someone as an integral person rather than demonstrating a cognitive outcome as expected from western style learning. Moreover, the holistic part must be present with the intervention of all the human senses joined in a symbiosis of spirit, mind, and body

Furthermore, globalization is also taking a toll on education by developing consciousness in educational practitioners as people migrate or live in different locations due to business, pleasure, or political reasons. Many believe that globalization has a positive influence in second language acquisition. Jordão (2009) emphasized that understanding other culture's values and incorporating them in classroom daily activities can help students to interact with each other while applying their culture to language situations. As learners are becoming more transient in this century, this interaction or acculturation has become an important part of the learning experience in adult programs. An example of globalization in ESL programs is the European community taking numerous steps in aligning the ESL competence and levels for examination similar to what is the norm in North America (Carson, 2009).

In reference to the preferred instructional approach widely used in European language institutions, Whyte (2011) claimed that "the focus of second language teaching shifted from the teacher as the source of input and feedback to the learner, as the keeper of his own or her own language acquisition device with which to develop an individual "interlanguage" (p. 222). This is a new approach to learner-centeredness as more European students come to resume their ESL studies in the United States to pass the TOEFL exam and then transfer to American universities, and for the Common European Community Framework of Reference (CEFR), used by European universities, to adapt student-centeredness to be more in tune with their American counterparts (Whyte, 2011). Many educational institutions in the United States implement programs to acculturate international students while they are acquiring the official language to immerse in the

predominant campus culture as a psychological state called “globalized self” (Kim, 2012, p. 110).

Another characteristic of the andragogic model is that it rejects marginalization or student oppression. Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) agreed that, “postmodernity’s major contribution to adult education has been to bring to the foreground previously oppressed and marginalized groups” (p. 269). Educators should have the responsibility to ensure that their students could enjoy the same learning benefits and should be supportive of their empowerment too. Societal oppression should not be tolerated in the classroom to ensure the students’ transformational learning journey. Brookfield (2003) mentioned that the division between pedagogy and andragogy has found harsh criticism over the years considering that most adult learners are not capable of succeeding at self-directing learning. I support the belief that learners must be guided and trained in that direction since “at different times the same learner will choose to work experientially and self-directedly, or by listening to or watching experts demonstrate their knowledge or skill” (Brookfield, 2003, para. 6). I agree with Brookfield due to the growing testimonials from IEP learners through their language acquisition and integration to society. Their growth through language improvement may be the motor that propels them to pursue more advanced learning or higher education.

Through previous decades, detractors may have considered andragogy as “culture blind, neglecting to acknowledge that people with different racial identities and people who have grown up informed by different cultural traditions will find its practices alienating and demeaning” (Brookfield, 2003, para.7). Learning communities are

valuable in getting students involved with peers and faculty to integrate their language development into practice (Smith, 2010).

Another crucial need the IEP, as in any sustainable educational model, is student retention. Vincent Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure (1993) advocated for the student integration into formal and informal social systems to continue their engagement in an educational program. Other researchers (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Gerkin, 2009; Weng, Cheong, & Cheong, 2010) have extensively explored Tinto's theory and offered recommendations for the correction of such a common challenge, student attrition. Higher academic performance can be increased by the support of faculty/staff interactions systems, academic extracurricular activities and peer-group interactions with the application of Tinto's learner-centered theories into the second language classrooms.

Considering that adults realize that their engagement in such educational efforts will make them more competitive in society for the fulfillment of personal achievement at different life stages, creating an environment conducive to learning is a major responsibility for program or course developers. The instruction based on learner-centered approaches is essential for the achievement of higher learning outcomes. Although there is sufficient evidence in the literature about research related to andragogic instructional models and the retention and engagement of ESL programs, there is no sufficient information about retention and motivation of IEP beginning students. This is why this research could be a necessary step toward this exploration. It could also be an indispensable contribution of higher yields for the self-sustainable nature of Continuing and Community Education within community colleges. The literature review revealed

that the methodological approaches embraced by Knowles (2005), Rogers (1974), Mezirow (1994), and Banduras (1977), among others, emphasized that adults seek engagement in their educational efforts so that they be more productive and find personal fulfillment at different life stages. Can the instruction based on learner-centered approaches create an environment conducive to learning and retention? There is evidence in the literature supporting andragogic instructional models for adults, and there is also considerable research related to best practices in ESL programs. However, there is no sufficient research related to retaining and motivating beginning students IEP program. This study could be a step toward to understand how to retain beginning students in IEP programs. This study also can provide insights related to retaining and motivaing adult learners for various kinds of of personal enrichment course supported by Continuing and Community Education programs within community colleges.

### **Implications**

Upon my experience in managing language acquisition programs, I believe that motivation is related to the need to know. People pursue their acquisition of knowledge in different subjects for the improvement of their professional skills or their social interactions. Kytle (2004) emphasized, “perhaps educators are tempted to overestimate the impact of teaching on learning and transformation, and to underestimate the power of friendship networks and peer comparison in learning communities” (p.161). Therefore, instructors should stress the importance of involving learners in social networks to sustain their motivation in the learning process. Both learners and institutions will benefit from

networking while giving the benefit of less attrition and more student retention to the institution.

Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) pointed out “the motivational dimension involves what influences people to participate or enter into a self-directed learning activity or task” (p.115). The need to learn will push students to reach out for courses that will nurture their skills in specific areas. When instructors lack motivational strategies, a curriculum not suitable for adult learning, or a threatening environment, the result will be the opposite of self-directing learning. The learner will be completely unmotivated and will lose confidence and faith in the institution.

The findings of this study could be transferable to other programs in continuing education or regular academic programs. On one side, finding that learner-centeredness is the most appropriate approach to teach beginners in IEPs may reinforce the belief that adults need to be empowered to succeed in their transformational learning journey. At the local level, this study may help improve the ESL courses and better retention for the IEPs. It also may help other programs at other campuses within the institution and may be replicated at other institutions. The intensive training for a transition from teacher-centered approach to student-centeredness can set a path for instructors to embrace motivation and engagement in their students’ learning process. Both findings can extend to the community of adult-learner programs in the United States and abroad.

Moreover, the importance of beginning ESL students’ retention is an ongoing goal for all higher educational institutions. Increasing student retention sustains ESL programs due to the collection of course fees while ensuring learning opportunities for

student development. Second language acquisition and development in areas with density population of immigrants and refugees will provide a myriad of benefits to communities.

This study positively affects social change by offering an effective English to second language learners so they can become employment ready and more linguistic competent for the local workforce. Educational institutions offering IEP that produce more motivated and engaged beginners, will benefit communities and the economy. More adults with English language skills will use fewer social services and become productive members of the social and economic community. These communities may need bilingual personnel that can satisfy the inequalities of a trained employment force in the growing globalized service industry of this century (Graz, 2010).

### **Summary**

The purpose of this case study is to understand what factors influence beginning students to persist in the IEP at a South Florida Campus. The reason for conducting the study is the incidence of numerous beginners dropping from the program during or after the first course every semester. Some of the students have stated several reasons for dropping from the IEP that include personal and working schedule conflicts, relocation, and lack of motivation. According to the literature consulted on retention issues, methods of instruction and curriculum can have a positive or negative impact of second language instruction. This caused me to investigate whether there may be other reasons students become motivated and engaged through their exposure to appropriate learning opportunities.



The significance of the study is that the perception of the beginning IEP students could be very helpful to understand the factors that influence their persistence in the program. This retention can benefit both the student and the institution respectively. The students will gain by having the opportunity to acquire the necessary English language skills for their successful incorporation in the workforce. The benefit of offering successful IEP programs not only represent a benefit for the students, but they help maintain the growth and sustainability of the IEP programs with the increase of higher yields in tuition and credit enrollment for the institution.

I consider that student motivation influences student-instructor-peer engagement; thus it can result in language learning effectiveness. From this perspective, I decided to develop two research questions for the study. On one side, I investigated students' perception of what factors can motivate them to engage and persist in the IEP. On the other hand, I strived to learn whether the instructional strategies used in the classroom were conducive to learning. Both concerns helped me draw the questions for the data collection events.

The epistemological grounds for this qualitative study focus on student-centered instructional approaches derived from the andragogy theories of Malcolm Knowles. The literature consulted on andragogy included the transformational theories of Jack Mezirow (1994), the self-directing learning approach developed by Carl Rogers (1974), the Social Learning Theory by Banduras (1977), and the Reflective Learning Theory by Argyris and Shön (1992). The study focused on students' perceptions of how the instructional practices, derived from reflective learning, have affected students' engagement and

learning during their first course in the program. I believe that learners must be guided and trained gradually for social and professional transformation as a solution for student educational achievement and integration to society.

Successful IEP programs offer significant benefits for the students, but they also help grow and sustain IEP programs with the increase in tuition and credit enrollment for the institution. Therefore, this case study could have positive implications for higher educational institutions offering ESL programs as the findings could serve as a source of information for curriculum designers, program managers, coordinators and instructors. These findings could also serve as a point of reference to other practitioners for awareness development on the importance of retention in second language acquisition programs. Furthermore, the findings from beginning student's perceptions and beliefs about motivational factors for motivation and engagement in the IEP could be a window for more exploration. Beginning students need to have the opportunity to persist taking continuing courses as long as they are motivated and they achieve second language proficiency.

The following section describes the methodology used to execute this study. I defended how a case study served as the most appropriate qualitative design to understand beginning student's perceptions and opinions about motivational factors for motivation and engagement in IEPs. In a thick narrative style, the findings were reported according to the data collection and analysis. One of the limitations of this study is that the findings may not be transferable due to threats such as selection effects, setting effects and history effects. In that regard, Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen (2010) stated,

Although the qualitative researcher does not specify transferability, it is his or her responsibility to provide sufficient rich, detailed, thick descriptions of the context so that potential users can make the necessary comparisons and judgments about similarity and hence transferability. (p. 501)

The findings of the study uncovered some of the factors that motivate students to continue their engagement in ESL language acquisition programs. It is up to other IEP administrators to determine whether their program conditions are similar to this setting.

## Section 2: The Methodology

### **Introduction**

I conducted a qualitative case study to investigate the research study questions outlined in Section 2. First, I wanted to know what the beginning students' perceptions are of their learning in the Intensive English Program that motivates them to continue courses in the program. Secondly, I wanted to listen to their thoughts about the teaching strategies in the IEP that led to their retention and learning success.

This case study helped me understand how the constructivist/transformational paradigm relates to student motivation and engagement for second language acquisition and development. According to Merriam (1998), "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 5). The purpose of this case study was to investigate the factors that motivate beginning students to remain engaged and ultimately matriculated in the Intensive English Program (IEP) program while succeeding in the acquisition and improvement of skills in English as a Second Language. I investigated how student-centered approaches may influence the retention and success of beginning students in ESL development.

The process of investigating students' opinions and perceptions of motivational factors that encourage their learning and commitment was fundamental to understanding the reasons why they stayed enrolled in the learning program. I believe such a research study was best accomplished by using a case study methodology as the research design.

To that end, I paid careful attention regarding the thoroughness and trustworthiness of the research design, the data collection, and its analysis.

In this section I describe the methods and processes used in the study, including a discussion of the design, conceptual framework, and research methodology. This section also includes steps that I observed in data collection and analysis while describing the context of the study and its participants. Part of my role was to ensure compliance with ethical issues as explained along its timeline and process for completion. Limitations of the study are also discussed.

### **Research Design and Approach**

I believe the case study methodology was the best approach to investigate student perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes regarding the factors and instructional designs that motivate beginners to persist in courses while achieving learning success. Creswell (2008) considered case studies as an important type of qualitative research design strategy, “an objective account of the situation, typically written in the third-person point of view, reporting objectively on the information learned from participants at a field site” (p.475). A case study offered me the opportunity to gather the information directly from a small purposeful sample of students who had completed their beginning IEP course and registered for the next courses in the sequence.

After I solicited participants from a table on common college grounds on June 10, 2012, I selected a purposeful sample of 30 students who volunteered so that I could start the data collection. They were students enrolled in their second ESL course who signed their names on a list and stated their email addresses in order to participate in the study.

However, only 16 students ended up participating. This sample has been called the homogeneous sample. The first data collection event was open-ended surveys through Survey Monkey® sent to the purposeful sample, but only four participants completed the surveys. From this purposeful sample, I intended to select five participants for each of two focus groups by email invitation. However, only three consented to participate in the first focus group and five for the second focus group. Additionally, another four students from the purposeful sample consented to participate in the individual interviews although I expected to recruit five. In summary, only 16 of 20 invited participants took part. Nevertheless, I believe their responses provided me the opportunity to understand their needs, expectations, success stories, and experiences about learning ESL through engagement with their instructors and peers.

A case study was the most suitable choice because the research design I employed used in-depth responses to explanatory questions of “what” or “why” to produce a first-hand understanding of student motivation to remain engaged in the IEP. Other qualitative designs would not have been as effective because the nature of this project study sought the perceptions and opinions of a group of students that could be bounded by time and activity, which is possible only with a case study design. In such regard, Merriam (2009) well asserted, “If the phenomenon you are interested in studying is not intrinsically bounded, it is not a case” (p.41). In this study, the group was bounded by the same goal to learn English for personal or professional purposes. Moreover, the group intended to continue taking successive courses, and they were from similar demographic characterizes.

Other design types may not have been as effective because this research study does not intend to study anthropological or cultural issues as in ethnography. Nor does this study seek to understand “reality” as perceived by the participants as in a phenomenological study. Merriam (2009) stated, “The task of the phenomenologist is, then, to depict the essence or basic structure of experience. Often these studies are of intense human experience such as love, anger, betrayal, and so on (p.25).”

I was not interested in historical backgrounds as in historical research, nor was it intended to generate a new theory as in grounded theory. In this type of qualitative study, I assumed an inductive stance with the objective to find and derive meaning from the data analysis. In that regard Merriam (2009) concluded, “The end result of this type of study is a theory that emerges from, or is ‘grounded’ in, the data – hence, grounded theory” (p.29). Therefore, a case study was the most suitable design for this qualitative research study because as Glesne (2011) asserted, “You focus on the complexity within the case, on its uniqueness, and its linkages to the social context of which it is a part” (p. 22). My case study reunited a group of beginning ESL students to speak about their unique experiences as part of a cohort of students learning English in an intensive multi level program to become employment ready or pursue higher education studies.

### **Participants**

To recruit participants for the study, I set up a table on the North West Campus near the IEP classrooms with an easel sign prior to the time of class dismissal during 2 hours for 3 days beginning on June 10, 2013. This gave me an opportunity to solicit students taking their second IEP course for the case study. I spoke to students showing

interest and handed them the Participant Orientation Form (Appendix D). This form stated the scope, steps, and timeline of the study as well as the students' rights for participation. This helped the students understand that the Letter of Consent Form (Appendix E) needed to be signed prior to participating in any of the data collection events.



To take part in the study, students were required to be enrolled in the next or second IEP course in the sequence. This was the inclusion criteria for the study. Students from credit programs could have been excluded politely as the IEP is a noncredit program, but there were not requests from credit students to participate. Twenty-nine students volunteered their email addresses and telephone numbers during the first and second recruitment sessions. There were no requests for participation on the third date. As a result of my recruitment efforts, 29 students became my purposeful sample which offered me the opportunity to have a larger student population to create a homogeneous sample of 16 participants for the case study. According to Cresswell (2008), “In homogeneous sampling the researcher purposefully samples individuals or sites based on membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics” (p. 216). This was an appropriate sample to understand the beliefs and perceptions of beginning IEP students as well as their learning experiences through the online surveys, focus groups discussions, and individual interviews. This purposeful sample of 29 students shared similar characteristics. They were beginning students on their second IEP course, and their demographic characteristics showed an age range from 19 to 60 years. They were also from both genders and had similar economic backgrounds as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

*Demographic Characteristics*

Characteristics	Frequency ( <i>n</i> =16)	Percent (%)
<b>GENDER</b>		
Male	4	25.00
Female	12	75.00
<b>COUNTRY</b>		
Colombia	7	43.75
Cuba	1	6.25
Honduras	2	12.50
Perú	1	6.25
Venezuela	5	31.25
<b>ANNUAL INCOME</b>		
Less than \$10,000	3	18.75
\$10,000 - \$50,000	1	6.25
Over \$50,000	3	18.75
No Response	9	56.25
<b>WORKING</b>		
Yes	6	37.50
No	5	31.25
No Response	5	31.25
<b>AGE</b>		
Less than 21 years	2	12.50
21-30 years	6	37.50
31-40 years	4	25.00
41-50 years	3	18.75
51-60 years	1	6.25
Over 60 years	0	0.00

Before I embarked on this study, I received approval from Walden University's Internal Review Board (IRB approval number 4-11-13-0154058). At the beginning of the focus group and interview sessions, the Letter of Informed Consent was handed out to the students. I explained to the participants their rights with respect of all ethical issues disclosed in the Letter of Informed Consent they were about to sign. Participants were offered a form to disclose their demographic information (Appendix I) that was optional although I explained that their demographic information was very beneficial so that I could understand their backgrounds to help me build my overall case study. The online open-ended survey disclosed the Consent Form as a requirement to continue answering the questionnaire and disclosing the optional demographic information at the end of the survey.

During the interviews and focus groups, participants were reminded that there could not be any coercion from part of the investigator at any time, and that they could withdraw from the study if they felt uncomfortable. No such issues were present during the focus groups and the individual interviews. In every instance, the participants demonstrated a genuine desire and motivation to talk about their experiences in the interviews and focus groups. Only one participant did not answer the online survey questions, but he received his gift certificate regardless.

By selecting this small group of 16 participants for the study, I had more time for collecting the necessary information, thus allowing a deeper inquiry per participant. The interaction with this bounded system led to understanding several perceptions and opinions on how student/instructor/classmate engagement had improved their motivation

as learners to continue registered in the program. One participant of the Survey Monkey® also volunteered to attend a focus group even though I only requested that IEP students take part in one data collection event.

To avoid any appearance of a conflict of interest, I conducted my investigation at the North West Campus because I was the program coordinator at the South Florida Campus. Fortunately, the North West Campus has an IEP with a similar curriculum and methodology as the one offered at the South Florida Campus. Permissions to conduct the study were requested and granted by the Center for Institutional Research of the main institution overseeing these campuses in compliance with Walden University Institutional Review Board. Permission to access participants from selection to data collection was granted by the School Director through a “Letter of Cooperation” (Appendix C2).

To establish an ethical research-participant relationship, I had students review their signed Letter of Informed Consent with ample time during the data collection event, scheduled during the focus group session or interviews. This confirmed they were fully aware and willing to proceed with their participation in this case study. According to Glesne (2011),

Through informed consent, study participants should be made aware (1) that participation is voluntarily, (2) if there are any aspects of the research that may affect their well-being, and (3) they may freely choose to stop participation at any point in the study. (p.166)

To ensure compliance with ethical issues of confidentiality and participant protection, each participant chose a pseudonym to be identified in the study. Participants’

consent forms including their names and personal email information have been kept in a secured file on my personal computer for five years as established by IRB policies. All letters and consent forms samples have been attached to this proposal (Appendixes C-E).

### **Data Collection Methods**

I collected the data for my case study following the tradition of qualitative studies by interviewing participants. Participant data was collected using open-ended surveys, focus groups, and individual interviews. Merriam (2009) expressed that “interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them. It is also necessary to interview when we are interested in past events that are impossible to replicate” (p. 88). The questions for the open-ended surveys, interviews, and focus groups were created based on the two research questions of the study and the related literature and research presented in Section 1. I designed these questions so that participants could discuss their opinions and perceptions of their experiences in the beginning class. Participants’ responses revealed information about engagement and learning success that motivated them to continue enrolled in the IEP.

In consideration that the population of the Northwest Campus IEP is mostly composed of Hispanic students, I translated the questions for the open-ended surveys, focus groups, and interviews into Spanish. This accommodated the beginning students who could have felt less comfortable answering the questions in English. There were no participants from any other language background. The data collection events were as follows:

**Open-ended Surveys.** Once the recruitment period concluded, I sent an open-ended survey of 12 questions through Survey Monkey®. (<http://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/aboutus/>) to the 29 students via email who were recruited as my purposeful sample. There were instructions to complete it voluntarily within 7 days after June 11, 2013, the date I sent it. Participants were required to sign the Letter of Informed Consent as a preliminary step before answering the survey electronically. The last step was to complete the optional demographic information and ended up with instructions on how to receive a \$20 gift card for the campus bookstore as a token for their participation. More information about the gift certificate appears later in this section.

Since the students were on campus every day, they sought me out at the recruitment table to receive their gift card upon my verification that they had completed the online survey. Only four participants completed the survey and received their gift cards. One student did not answer the questions but received the gift card as he had signed the consent form and stated his demographic information. He mentioned having technical difficulties answering the questions but did not fill out the survey again. The participants for the open-ended survey requested to be identified by the pseudonyms. I chose four pseudonyms, Colombiano, Gela21, Kathy, and Dialexa as I reported their findings.

**Individual Interviews.** I contacted five participants from the purposeful sample and arranged to have individual interviews on Wednesday, June 12 and Tuesday, June 18 after class. Only four participants attended the first session, and no one attended the

second one. The interviews were conducted with each participant in a classroom on the North West campus in an average of 11 minutes each.

Participants were asked 12 open-ended questions eliciting answers to the two research questions guiding the study. I took notes during the interviews, and the responses were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim after the session. The audio recording helped me compare the participants' responses with my notes for accuracy. Before we started the interviews, I clarified any concerns related to the Letter of Informed Consent and Demographic Information Form that participants signed before the individual interviews began. The participants for the individual interviews requested to be identified by the pseudonyms Fiona, Sebastian, Tata, and Alex respectively.

**Focus groups.** Originally, I planned the focus groups to be the first face-to-face contact with the selected participants for an open conversation addressing topics of interest for the study related to engagement and motivation in their previous class. However, upon my invitation by phone to participants from the purposeful sample to attend the first focus group session (Focus Group A) on Monday, June 17, only three participants decided to attend. For the second focus group session (Focus Group B) scheduled for Thursday, June 20, only five participants took part. This was the final week of classes and students were not returning to campus until September. Nevertheless, I remained committed to my schedule of data collection as planned within 7 to 10 days after solicitation and recruitment. The focus group sessions lasted up to 60 minutes, and I served as moderator in a classroom of the North West Campus. I took notes and audiotape the entire event that was transcribed verbatim after the session. Creswell

(2009) asserted that “typically, notes reflect information about the document or other material as well as key ideas in the documents. (...) It is also helpful to comment on the reliability of the data source” (p.183). Audiotaping of the focus group helped me to corroborate the notes. As we the individual interviews, I clarified any concerns related to the Letter of Informed Consent and Demographic Information Form that were signed by the participants before the focus groups began before we started the focus group session. The participants for the individual interviews requested to be identified by the pseudonyms Pequitas, Mafalda, Isomol, Angie, Lilly, Jenny, Kathy, and Mary.

During each of the data collection procedures, I took notes and entered them into a research log. Review of the data from the notes and the audiotaped verbatim transcripts were incorporated into the log. In a reflecting journal, I added emerging thoughts regarding themes arising from the information provided by the participants. This information was collected to create a cataloging system by themes and categories that I used during my data analysis.

Participants were not compensated for their participation in this study. However, a \$20 gift card to be used at the campus bookstore was offered to the participants. The gift card was given after the final data collection event for which each participant contributed. To ensure all participants in the research had gotten the gift certificate, I matched the names of the participants from returned surveys and the participants of the focus groups or individual interviews to the purposeful sample list. Participants of the Survey Monkey® data collection event were able to print a coupon redeemable at the Campus Bookstore after they had submitted their survey. There were not withdrawn participants,



but one of the online surveys participants did not answer the questions although he had signed the Informed Consent Form and filled the demographic information; therefore, he was awarded the gift card. In total, 17 gift cards were awarded as one participant attended a focus group session and took the online survey as well.

### **Role of the Researcher**

My access to the participants was made possible by permission of the Director of Continuing Education of the educational institution. I believe there were no any ethical concerns since I had no direct interaction with the students of this campus in my past or present professional position overseeing the IEP at the South Florida Campus. For this reason, participants did not feel coerced, and I did not interact with them after the data collection ended and gift cards were distributed.

There is no indication that I may have been biased while reporting the findings from the interview, focus group, and the surveys because I bracketed my biases in order to report the findings accurately. One of my principal concerns was to learn the participants' perceptions about their learning experiences and how instructors motivated and facilitated their learning. Their answers added light to my understanding of how their learning journey had been from the beginning of this program. Another concern was to find out what instructional methods motivate students to persist in their IEP courses which will be discussed when reporting the findings later in this section.

As a researcher, I strived to be very objective in order to enhance credibility. Glesne (2009) defined the writer of qualitative data as an artist who can display a great discipline of sensibility and creativity when delivering the findings of a research. One of

my goals was to audiotape and later transcribe the participants' responses verbatim for more accuracy. Hancock and Algozzine (2006) stated, "Synthesizing this information means combining, integrating, and summarizing findings" (p.62). The entire process of data collection was done as timely as possible according to the Project Study Timeline while complying with current regulations of "Protecting Human Participants in Research Studies" by the National Institute of Health and that permission to do research onsite should be granted by the institution.

### **Data Analysis**

The Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) that I used for analyzing, sorting, and classifying data according to themes and codes was the ATLAS/ti (<http://www.atlasti.com/>). Kelle (as cited in Merriam, 2009) stated, "although most programs are limited to a 'hierarchical tree structure,' some, like ATLAS/ti 'support the construction of complex networks (...) and structures in the developing category scheme" (p.195). ATLAS/ti was compatible with audio sources and was a simple yet efficient way to help me analyze the data for my bounded case study.

The information obtained from the open-ended surveys, individual interviews, and focus groups were coded into five categories that emerged from 50 thematic topics. Creswell (2008) asserted that "describing and developing themes from the data consists of answering the major research questions and forming an in-depth understanding of the central phenomenon through description and thematic development" (p. 254). After I organized the themes emerging from the data collected, I created thick descriptions of the findings in a narrative form.

As a tip to analyze the data, Creswell (2009) recommended identifying “codes that are unusual, and that are, in and of themselves, of conceptual interests to the readers” (p.187). The Atlas.ti software that I used to code and analyze the data allowed me to upload the verbatim transcriptions obtained from the individual interviews and the two focus groups. I also uploaded the printout outcomes from Survey Monkey® which included total responses from participants in the open-ended surveys, their consent forms and demographic information. Then I turned all responses into quotations to develop code segments to represent common topics. These common topics were grouped as associated concepts and linked to the categories they represent. Atlas.ti helped me retrieve and browse data segments quickly and allowed me to associate the codes in family trees that helped me develop them into themes. To further analyze the data, I exported several outcome reports from Atlas.ti, which grouped the recurrent topics into five major themes, but I decided to use the term category on my report instead of using the word theme to be more representative of the associated concepts. This “conceptualization” is shown in Table 2 depicting the associated concepts found in the participants’ responses.

Table 2

*Major Themes and Concepts*

Major Categories (Themes)	Associated Concepts
Engagement	Relationships/social structures  Effectiveness, group support, instructor as a role model, cooperative, and helpful, socialization, likes and dislikes, support from administration
Mentorship	Perspectives held by participants  Instructor Affectionate-big brother, facilitator, role model, motivator, mentor with vocation, class activities, assessment, and methodology
Self	Subjects way of thinking about people and objects  Challenges, impediment to practice, preparedness, personal and professional reasons, personal achievement, self-demand, self-study
Technology/Curriculum	Activities and strategies  Need technology component, technology/mass media as important component, methodology and curriculum, assessing, evaluating and improving outcomes
Transformational	Process  Acculturation, learning outcomes, retention, personal achievement

I performed an open and axial coding to analyze the data. Ary et al. (2010) wrote, “Open coding is used to develop major core or categories with axial categories to develop

categories around the core” (p.464). In a similar case study, Smith (2010) used open axial coding to evaluate transcriptions of focus groups and interview recordings to identify the themes as codes emerged. Smith (2010) also explored a teacher’s lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity in the classroom. During open coding, I fragmented the data from the transcribed interviews line-by-line and selected concepts from participants’ responses that related to the research questions. These concepts were translated into four word codes that I attached to the quotations that I created for further analysis of similarities or dissimilarities.

Axial Coding was used to link the fragments from open coding while verifying that each one of the codes could coincide in more than one theme or category. I classified each code to an association term available in the ATLAS.ti software so that the relationship of the topic could be shown in the transcriptions. ATLAS.ti suggested terminology such as ‘is part of,’ ‘is associated with,’ ‘is cause of,’ and ‘contradicts’ to identify the relationships between the codes and the themes.

As shown in Table 2, the axial coding detected information across the themes about how quickly participants had acquired or improved their second language with the aid of technology and how their instructors kept them motivated and engaged to stay enrolled in the program. The open and axial coding process revealed five themes related to the two research questions of the study. Those major themes were engagement, mentorship, self, technology/curriculum, and transformational outcome as shown on Table 3.

Table 3

*Themes Found From Incidence of Topics by Data Collection Event*

Themes	Open-ended Surveys	Focus Group A	Focus Group B	Individual Interviews	Total
Engagement	12	35	31	22	100
Mentorship	14	46	39	29	128
Self	15	47	19	40	121
Curriculum/ Technology	2	6	4	15	27
Transformational	8	44	28	26	106
Total	51	178	121	132	482

**Validity**

In qualitative research, internal validity is considered a strength as stated by Merriam (2009): “In this type of research it is important to understand the perspectives of those involved in the phenomenon of interest, to uncover the complexities of human behavior in a contextual framework, and to present a holistic interpretation of what is happening” (214). To ensure my data collection was valid and comprehensive, I triangulated the data collection process into three different events: open-ended surveys, interviews, and focus group sessions. According to Altrichter et al. (2008), triangulation “gives a more detailed and balanced picture of the situation” (p. 147). I believe this strategy helped me ensure greater credibility and validity for the study because the three

different sources of data gave me more opportunities to verify that participants' answers were similar themes, and categories emerged through my various interactions.

To further ensure validity, I kept a reflective journal during the process of data analysis. The notes from my journal helped me reflect of any instances of researcher's bias that could have been present during the data analysis. Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen (2010) stated, "Reflexivity is the use of self-reflection to recognize one's own biases and to actively seek them out" (p.501). I recognized that I was exposed to several instances of potential bias. Those included the following:

- Expecting participants to mention technology as a major motivator. To avoid bias, I listened carefully to their frustration for not having a language lab component included with their curriculum. I concluded by accepting their response that if they did not have the lab component, their instructors used internet sites and videos in class and assigned them as homework.
- Focus Group A only had three participants. At first, I thought that this may have been a data collection event producing little information. I noted that in spite of this reduced sample, the participants were extremely eager to discuss their experiences, expectations, and accomplishments. The richness of their comments was as robust as the ones offered by the five participants in Focus Group B.
- When answering questions about challenges affecting their learning, participants' responses showed their frustration for not having accessibility to parking spaces due to a delayed remodeling of their parking facilities. I felt

compelled to explain that parking is always a challenge for any educational institution. However, I did not take any sides by justifying the institution with excuses to avoid distrust from the participants.

Data from triangulating open-ended surveys, interviews, and focus groups were processed using low-inference descriptors, verbatim, and direct quotations, during the process of combining, integrating, and summarizing the findings. Ary et al. (2010) said that “these descriptions are very detailed, helping the reader ‘see’ the setting, or if reporting themes from interviews, using the actual words of the respondents” (p. 500). This strategy can also be very valuable in demonstrating trustworthiness.

Additionally, I conducted A Negative or Discrepant Information Analysis to further ensure validity. The only discrepancy that I was able to find in this study related to my perception that it could have been possible to achieve a balanced sample of males and females. However, the sample demonstrated that there were more females available and willing to participate in the study than males. During recruitment, five males signed up from a total of 29 volunteers, but only four participated from a total participant sample of 16. Since the group was more diverse in terms of age and socioeconomic status, I decided not to alter the study in spite of this gender discrepancy.

### **Assumptions, Scope, Delimitations and Limitations**

#### **Assumptions**

The assumption to execute this case study was that other factors not related to personal problems could impede beginners to continue enrolled in the IEP. Such factors



may be related to personal or professional reasons of students in an age range from 19 to 60 + years of age and a multi-cultural socio economic environment.

### **Scope**

The overarching framework for this study was to support higher education institutions that offer continuing education courses in the implementation of successful sustainable IEPs. The study intended to support key players in the private and public educational sectors to make up-to-date choices on whether to embrace the implementation of student-centered methodological approaches as a vital measure to motivate and engage beginners for their retention in the program.

Furthermore, it provided a source of evidence on the latest research and findings from practitioners in the area of English as a Second Language. Current development, educational and technological trends, and sound recommendations stemming from this study may be advantageous for individuals and organizations offering second language acquisition programs. The study covered significant concerns related to current andragogical trends and practice of student-centeredness. These approaches could be linked to motivational factors that could encourage greater engagement and retention of beginning students for more sustainable programs. This may result in second language development success for the workforce in areas of large influx of immigrants from countries where English is not the native language.

### **Delimitations**

Participation in this study is delimited to students who (a) study a sequence of a beginning IEP courses, (b) are not enrolled in a credit program, and (c) are 18 years of

age or older. Additionally, this study does not intend to cover the factors of student retention in other courses seeking to develop specific language skills such as creative or business writing, oral communication courses or TOEFL preparation courses. These courses are designed to satisfy developmental skills for students who have already completed several IEP courses and can be considered at a higher-intermediate or advanced levels.

### **Limitations**

Limitations of the study rely upon the lack of information that participants were not willing to divulge during the individual interviews and the open-ended surveys. Their answers were short and monosyllabic for some questions, contrary to the focus groups where participants appeared more relaxed and confident. Another limitation was the gender disparity. From a sample of 29 participants, only 25% were males. Further research of this kind could focus on male students engage in IEPs. Finally, the study may not be generalizable since the sample investigated may not be considered as representative of a wider body of beginning EIP students for being composed of Spanish speakers only.

### **Findings**

The findings I present in this section are related to the topics that emerged from the open-ended surveys, the focus groups, and individual interviews through open coding. These topics were coded according to their relationship with the participants' responses, which allowed the emergence of common themes. Codes associated with concepts of relationships and social structures were grouped within the theme of engagement. Codes

associated with perspectives held by participants were grouped within the theme of mentorship since they related to the student-instructor interaction during the learning experience. Codes associated with the subjects' way of thinking about people and objects were gathered under the theme related to the student self-concept. Codes associated with activities and strategies were assembled within the curriculum and technology theme. Ultimately, codes associated with processes were gathered within the transformational outcome of students' learning journals. Some questions from the three data collection events produced responses that fell into more than one code category and that was resolved by using axial coding.

The themes were organized according to their association with the selected codes. For the purpose of this case study, I have used the term categories in reference to the themes. The categories engagement, mentorship, self-concept, curriculum/technology, and transformational outcomes are related to the research questions leading the study:

- Research Question 1: What are the beginning student's perceptions about their engagement in the IEP, and what motivates them to continue taking courses in the program?
- Research Question 2: What do continuing students think of the instructional practices applied in the IEP, and how do such practices led to their retention and learning success?

As a researcher, I found it rather surprising that five categories were present in both research questions (RQ) although engagement, mentorship, and self-concepts were

predominantly present in RQ1. On the other hand, curriculum/technology and transformational outcomes became the core categories related to RQ2.

### **Engagement**

Effectiveness, group support, instructor as a role model, being cooperative and helpful, socialization, likes and dislikes, and support from administration were the associated topics that emerged from Questions 2, 5, and 7 on the open-ended survey. It was also reflected on Questions 2 and 6 of the individual interviews and Questions 2 and 3 of the focus groups.

Participants' written responses to the open-ended survey were stated in simple language. Q.2 asked students to list three things done by the instructor which helped them to engage with the group. Kathy listed, "conversation within the group, practice of questions and answers, and dynamics and sharing experiences." Dialexa responded, "dynamics, work in groups and sharing experiences."

Q.5 asked how the instructor motivated students to register for the second course. Colombiano responded, "Because I liked the way and the form in which he taught me English and motivated me to continue." Kathy stated that her instructor always said, "that we have to continue. It is never late to learn, and we are in USA, so we must speak English." However, Dialexa wrote, "The motivation was personal because I want to learn English." These responses indicated that not only was the instructor a motivational force, but these participants too were very motivated to take this course for her own development.

Q.8, asked participants to list three class activities that made them feel comfortable and integrated with the group. Responses showed that participants were appreciative corrections made in class by their instructor. This feedback was made in a respectful way. Dialexa said, “Students are kind,” Gela21 stated, “Corrections are made in a pleasant and professional manner by the instructors,” and Colombiano wrote, “If one make a mistake that is normal. Nobody makes fun of you.”

The individual interviews offered responses were similar to the responses from the open-ended survey. However, participants showed positive and negative feedback related to their engagement due to instructor related issues. Q.2. asked about what the instructor did to help integrate students with the group. On the positive side Sebastian said, “He motivated us. He explained anything we did not understand. When we did not understand, he helped us!” On the other hand, Alex responded, “Eh, I enjoyed much to the majority of the classes because I liked the dynamics of grammar and reading! At the end of classes, I did no longer felt much support or much confidence from the professor, but I wanted to continue with the intensive English because I need it!” Tata doubted when she said, “Mmm, at the beginning of the class [emphasizing] he gave us websites and sites we could research to learn English.” Fiona said, “To make us feel safe, he had a nice system of teaching.” These results indicated a lack of total confidence on the participants about the level of engagement that the instructor was able to achieve.

In Q,6 asking about what the instructor did to motivate students to continue this second course in the IEP, Fiona mentioned, “The system he uses to teach” and Sebastian mentioned, “Motivation in order to continue and learn more” without explaining how. On

the negative side, Tata said, “Honestly, sincerely, nothing [!], but I wanted to continue because I want to learn English.” Similarly, Alex said, “Hum, the instructor did not motivate me, [sic] for nothing! What motivates me in reality is myself and my future [pause] the career I like to study, and everything!” Participants’ unfavorable views of their instructor did not reduce their great power of will to continue with self-determination for success.

Engagement was a rich topic of conversation during the focus group sessions. The following participants’ responses can corroborate to the responses from the open ended-surveys and individual interviews. In reference to Q.2, “Explain three class activities that made you part of the group,” participants were very eager to discuss them at length. Isomol liked “reading and vocabulary practice with games that turned out as something, something dynamic to break the barrier of pronunciation.” Mafalda preferred debate because it encouraged group bonding. She said, “He [the instructor] gave us a question and everyone debated about that question, and there were always interesting questions, interesting and good. He allowed us to share, to know more about the group.” Role-play with questions and answers among each other impressed Mafalda who added, “It was there when we began to interact and to know each other, visually and audibly because there are small groups that are closed: because of age, for where they come from, for knowledge, for thousands of factors, but when the teacher make us interact together, we agree to participate, we break the ice, to know each other. That is what integration is!” Mary preferred the oral presentations. She said, “Presentations on behalf of the group, about our experiences and else, so that made the group communicate more. Everyone

learned more from each other, much more!” Pequitas considered the practice with facial exercises an innovative experience. She said about the teacher, “I mean, he was definitely the first teacher that opened the doors to the language for us and made us break the nerves, the fear of studying.” Angie mentioned that conversation was a favorite because “every student expressed in the way he or she felt. The professor always corrected us, and we really saw how we were expanding our knowledge.”

Q.3 asked how the instructor helped students engage with the group. This question elicited responses about teachers’ attitudes toward their students that are perceived as positive for instructor-student-group engagement. Isomol said, “He gave us the opportunity to let us identify as a country! We identified Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, etc., in each one of us. It is like one loses the name one brings [sic] and is seen as a nationality.” She also saw vocation as one quality a teacher must have because “it is like teaching again. It is like educating old children!” For Kathy, teacher pedagogy is very important and without it, as she said, “they cannot reach the group of students and achieve their integration.” Lilly considered, “Something very important for everyone who teaches is to identify each and know each student, what students are distracted and focus on them, invite them to participate, call them and make them feel comfortable, and make them feel that we are here to learn and to make mistakes, and if we do not make mistakes, we do not need to learn and would not be here, OK? That is also important!” Engagement was a factor that participants considered very important to make up a group of beginning students who needed to advance, to grow together with the help of a mentor, their teacher.

## **Mentorship**

Being an affectionate instructor, big-brother, facilitator, instructor as a role model, and motivator are typical aspects of mentorship. On the same side, class activities, assessment, and methodology that are part of curriculum and technology were also associated topics that emerged from Questions 3 and 4 of the open-ended survey, Questions 4 and 5 of the focus groups, and Questions 3 and 4 of the individual interviews.

The open-ended survey revealed participants' appreciation for specific signs of interest offered by the instructor that would elicit their interest to learn and grow. Q.3 asked about what the instructor did or did not do to make you feel he or she was your mentor. Dialexa wrote, "Addressed concerns, taught new things, and demonstrated [his/her] preparation." Q.4 inquired about what did the instructor do when you missed or were late for classes. Gela21 responded, "empathy and help," and Colombiano wrote, "He gave me the formats [sic] or what he did the day before so I could do it and follow the [class] rhythm."

From the individual interviews, I discovered both positive and negative responses to Q.3: "Did the instructor act like a mentor? What did the instructor do in class to make you feel he or she was a mentor? Explain." Two negative responses were given by Tata and Alex:

Tata: He was not! I feel he was not a professor who did not teach us to interact in class. I mean ... he went to the classroom and gave the class [sic], but the time we had to see the class [sic] was not utilized properly.



Alex: Not...! [Alex did not offer further explanation].

Tata and Alex were not convinced that their instructor was able to motivate them when they responded to Q.6, indicating an intrinsic relationship between motivation and engagement. However, Sebastian and Fiona saw their instructors as mentors. Sebastian stated, “Yes! He planned his class well and explained to us the same classes, the homework. He was a good man.” Fiona responded, “Always, he kept us attentive to the class. He did, he did, he motivated us much in class.” Finally, Q4 asked if students were able to attend class everyday on time, and if not, what the instructor did to help. Fiona, Sebastian, and Tata had excellent records of attendance and did not have an opinion. However, Alex said, “Well, the instructor in reality did not help me, but my classmates did it, and the professor explained a little about what he taught that day! I tried to clarify by saying, “Ah, but he explained!” to which Alex responded, “Yes, but not so much in reality!” Some of the participants’ responses exposed poor impressions of their instructors as mentors that coincided with a similar impression of the same instructors as poor motivators and “engagers.”

From the focus group responses, participants indicated that they appreciated their teachers for being flexible, and being role models in punctuality. Mafalda said, “Since we knew he was so punctual, we made an effort to be punctual as well.” Likewise, participants were grateful to see their teacher checking their homework during the first half hour of class while waiting for the tardy students to arrive. Mentorship brings engagement as Kathy said, “This is the same integration we have had between teacher and students. The professor had the great majority of the student’s phone numbers. If you

did not come to class, he sent an e-mail or a text. He sent texts of ‘thanks.’ For example, he thanked everyone for class attendance.” Similarly, Mary mentioned an anecdote from her class. She said, “For example today, a student who is a medical doctor [in her country] was very grateful to the professor who had been asking for her every day in class. She had been out for a few days away, so he sent her a message, ‘what happened, what was the problem?’ And she said that she would not even come today but got motivated and finally came, because of the teacher who had rescued her personally!” The focus group participants reported only positive experiences regarding mentorship from their instructors in terms of accommodating absent or tardy students, but also for serving as role models for punctuality.

Q.5 inquired if participants felt like they were mentored by their instructor during the first course, and what the instructor did do to make participants feel so. Mentorship was perceived by the participants’ responses as a teacher who is a *big-brother*, the one who inspires and looks after his or her students’ development carefully. Angie said, “It is when you see that person as the prototype of a person to follow, as a leader that you see how far he has arrived, and the effort he has made so your everyday things, your goals, may come true.” Lilly reiterated, “Especially in the last course, he spoke about his life that inspired us. Then a classmate told him, ‘You are our mentor because based on your experiences, it is worth to admire someone.’ He is a concerned person with many academic achievements. So, we need to know that if he was able to do it, we could also learn English as well.” Mafalda added, “He reminded me of that primary school teacher that felt responsible for us. The only thing he [the previous IEP teacher] didn’t do was to

bring us an apple [laughs]. He was always attentive to us, and he motivated me to continue because he facilitated that the barrier wouldn't be so huge." Isomol reiterated, "It is that a very important aspect surfaced, and do you know what was that? [waited and responded] Respect! Despite being adults, this man treated us with all respect, and since he was like that with us, we could not fail him!" In brief, Isomol summarized what a mentor means for her, "He who sponsors me who helps me, who encourages me to continue as his student."

### **Self-concept**

Challenges, impediment to practice, preparedness, personal and professional reasons, personal achievement, self-demand, and self-study were associated topics that emerged from Questions 1, 6, and 7 of the open-ended survey, Questions 1, 7, and 8 of the individual interviews, and Questions 1, 6, and 7 of the focus groups.

The open-ended survey provided written evidence that reflected participants' interest in their growth and self-development, not only to continue professional studies in the United States but also abroad. Q.1 inquired why did participants enroll in the Intensive English Program. Colombiano stated, "I matriculated in this program because I need a required level of English to start the university in Colombia. I need to learn English because I want to be a business man." However, a common response was that English is important for being a second language. Q.6 required participants to state some challenges, personal or professional, that affected your learning or continuance in the program. Colombiano stated, "Listening to English" as a personal challenge, and Gela21

stated “discipline” as personal and “culture” as professional. Alexa and Kathy mentioned not having any challenges at all.

The individual interviews showed that participants’ main determination to learn English is to become professionals since it is the official language of the United States. In response to Q.1 to explain three reasons why they chose to study in the IEP, Tata replied, “I need to learn English before anything. OK? Second, in order to be able to communicate [sic] because I am already in an English speaking country. Third, to help my daughters with their tasks, with their homework!”. Alex stated, “...the first reason is because I arrived to the United States without knowing much English! Secondly, because I needed for the university, and [hesitation] well, we are in an English speaking country, and I did not have the capacity to understand it!” Fiona was more candid when she expressed, “One, it is very good; second, it is near my home; third, Miami has good English programs!”

In response to Q.7: “What did you like most from your class? What did you like the least? Explain,” Sebastian brought an interesting topic that deals with engagement as well. He said, “Motivation in order to continue and learn more.” Tata did not appreciate the lack of motivation as she said, “Ay! [as in disbelief] In the previous year, it was very good because we were motivated, but in the last course it was not very [pause] No, I really did not like the class.” Upon my concern, she added, “I liked him [the instructor]. Really, sincerely, I hope the professor is; he knows so much English; he is a very good teacher! Look! What happened is that I think he does not take advantage of the class time to explain what he knows so we could learn. He wasted a lot of time; OK? And spoke a

lot in English! Then that's the reason why we were not interested. Or that we spoke Spanish and we did not make a greater effort to learn more." I recognized her frustration for not being able to follow the instructor in English or not to learn faster and communicate better with him. Fiona said that she liked reading and Alex mentioned the same, "What I liked most of the class, at the beginning of the class [emphasizing] I liked there was more reading! It had more, how can I say? More motivation in reality!" However, Alex believed that the class started great, but motivation declined as it progressed.

Another question that shed information on class delivery was Q.8: "What activities were used in class that made you feel comfortable and part of the group?" For Alex, it was the websites the instructor recommended for practice while Fiona considered group engagement as she stated, "When we were talking in front of the class, and we were talking in a group, and we talked by ourselves!" Sebastian liked reading and making presentations, but Tata looked disappointed when she said, "We did not do many activities in reality, but the little [time] we practiced was about sentences, and well, this part was good." She believed the instructor should have used more practice in class. Reading and grammar seemed to be the preference of the participants. Participants liked reading and grammar because these exercises brought the students together as a group.

During the focus groups, besides the usual complaint that "work and family obligations" are always factors that present a challenge for students to pursue language development, others perceived it as a matter of self-determination as per the following

statements from Q.6: “What personal or professional reasons affect your ability to learn effectively?”

Isomol: I believe that one reason that does not allow me or affect my learning, at least at home, is the amount of homework that I have to solve. Therefore, I still have to continue being the mom of three boys. I have to continue doing too many things, and then I dedicate a little time to it.

Jenny: I think that is independent of what you are learning. It is like when you go to work. One comes to work to do the job regardless of the problems in your home. Then it is independent. I believe there are other factors, I don't know! That for some people it may be easier to talk a little more or to learn languages faster, and for others like me, learning does not happen easily. You can have some family in another place where requires that person to speak English, it could be easier because that is a way to communicate, simply, in English. However, you come here to any supermarket and they speak to you in Spanish. Then no matter how hard you try, you feel the pressure that in another place you can, but not here, [hesitantly] but then you see that it is possible and that depends on us.”

Additionally, Q.7 asked to mention three things participants liked most from their first class and three they did not like. This question shed answers that pertained not only to student self-determination to become English speakers but to the instructors' mentorship qualities and their vocation as educators. The following responses showed how the instructors' methodological abilities were very influential in the students; self-direction to complete their practices and assessments:

Mafalda: I liked the dedication from the teacher, and that we took a quiz every day that did not have a grade, but it was meaningful for everyone. That allowed us to know how we were doing. In spite that such grade wasn't going to a final qualification, it allowed us to improve every day and to how we were doing in English.

Isomol: Second, his dedication and I come back again to the vocation issue. This man was entirely devoted and cared mostly about his students, so he was dedicated. This man was so loyal to his principles and the professional ethics he had.

Mary: I think the biggest concern to have with respect to education, from those who will select who will educate or not, must be defined because I had these two experiences: one professor who only read the book and another teacher who was practically on blackboard, explaining and talking. From that second I learned a wonder, from the first one I got tired of reading the book. I desisted.

According to participants' recommendations, a helpful strategy from the program administration could be to continue the beginners with the same instructor in the following course. Isomol added on this regard, "I think that the most negative [sic] is changing the instructor because when someone starts a project that person must finish it definitely."

At this point, Q.1: "What are the reasons why you study English?" may corroborate the self-determination of the beginners expressed in this important program regardless of the challenges they may have encountered. Similar to responses from the

individual interviews, participants in the focus groups believed that studying English to continue higher education studies or becoming a professional was a primary reason students enrolled in the IEP courses. Mafalda said in this regard, “First, because in [sic] a country where the first language is English. Second, because I want to advance my studies and this is what will allow me to study at a university anywhere in this country, in English.” Isomol added, “It is to overcome the language barrier, to be able to communicate, and definitely, to achieve advancement academically [pause] and in addition, to seek [pause] job placement, and to be productive.” Angie contributed, “for any kind of work, English will always be the primordial language. Isn’t it? It is the universal language. I mean, we live in a world where marketing, the economy and everything else will be globalizing with an English [language] base. To demonstrate her high expectations toward transformational outcomes as a professional Jennie said, “I started to study English in this school because first, I want to start working soon and because I’m in a country where the mother tongue is English [sigh] and not only here, but in other parts where I am from. Also, if you have another language you have a merit in your resume. Then it is paramount for me! My priority is to learn English because I want to grow professionally.”

### **Curriculum/Technology**

Other topics associated with curriculum and technology were the need for the technology component, as well as technology/mass media as an important component, methodology, and curriculum. In addition, assessing, evaluating, and improving outcomes were also associated topics with this category. They emerged from Questions 9,



10, and 11 of the open-ended survey, Questions 9 and 10 of the individual interviews, and Questions 8, 9, and 10 of the focus groups.

The open-ended survey asked in Q.9, “List three reasons why you like or not attending the lab sessions.” Participants stated their concerns about not having a technology component tied to their intensive English classes as a language lab. Even though, these classes did not include a language class, they were eager to have the opportunity to practice in an online environment. Q.10 inquired, “Do you prefer your instructor to be a ‘lecturer’ or a ‘facilitator’?” Colombiano stated, “Obviously, that it could facilitate my learning because the class could be more dynamic and offer more opportunities for me to learn English.” On the other hand, Dialexa stated, “I like the combination of both because it is important to teach a class about new things and their explanation [sic], but it is also important the investigation from the student.” Q.11 asked to “List three things your instructor did to prepare you for your self-directed study.” Although this question also related to the student’s self-concept abilities, it is worth noting that their responses aimed at the way that the instructors prepared their students for self-study through the assignment of homework that sometimes satisfied the lack of technology in the classroom. The four participants mentioned “watching television and listening to music or radio in English” as a powerful tool to develop fluency in the language. Colombiano emphasized, “He made things in class very dynamic. I liked the form in which he taught us different methods and practices in English.”

The individual interviews reflected dissatisfaction from the participants that their class was not bound to a lab component, whether during class time or as an arranged

extracurricular activity with a computer courtyard on campus. As a response to Q.9: “Why did you like attending the lab session once per week? Why not?,” Alex’s answer was representative of the group’s feeling toward this important technological component of a language class. He said, “I didn’t know there is a laboratory, or never were we informed that we could enter the laboratory, and never in reality [the instructor] gave us laboratory classes!” This was a common concern amongst the four participants. In reference to Q.10: “Did you prefer the instructor to teach the class as a lecturer or as a facilitator in the group?,” Alex came up with a concern given by the other participants of this group when he said: “Mostly for an audience! I could say that 20% of the class he taught was to facilitate the learning to the group in English!” Participants demonstrated determination to study English, but they expected their instructors to use the appropriate methodology for second language learning and advancement. Also, they expressed an expectation to have a class where the instructor would include technology as a curriculum complement.

As shown during the other data collection events, the responses offered during the focus groups, regarding the use of technology by means of attending the language lab, demonstrated that if the class does not offer a lab component, students should be given this opportunity as an extracurricular activity. Q.8 asked, “Did you like attending the lab at least once a week? Explain how attending the lab was or was not able to help you understand better when you listen or to pronounce better when you speak.” The following responses showed similar responses to the individual interviews:

Mafalda: No, we never went to the lab, and we came up to the second level and so far, we have not gone!

Isomol: Look, I consider we did the in the first level definitely because one hour, listen carefully, we listened and repeated to be corrected. Yes, we did it. However, we did not sit an individual laboratory and placed a headset to speak or listened with a machine, but in general, we did it. We practiced. What happened is that when we started the second level, we broke those parameters gained from the first steps.

Angie: It should be. They should have it!

Kathy: Good, they should implement it! Look, it should be implemented in this program to have two hours of laboratory!

Lilly: Yes, even though it would cost a bit more.

Jennie: I think it is important because at least in my experience, for what I have studied, you pass me a sheet or book and I read it, and I understand it. There are words which you don't know what they are, but you search them and you remember them. My real problem is 'talking,' then if one does not have the laboratory availability [pause] speaking and listening! So, I can read but when I have to communicate with other people, I can't do it in a piece of paper!

The focus group responses strongly indicated that participants regarded their instructors as facilitators because of their use of appropriate methodology to deliver and assess content. Q.9 asked participants to explain how the instructor delivered the content in class: as a lecturer to an audience or as a facilitator to their learning. Instructors

prepared their students to be self-directed during their practice out of class as stated in the following responses. Students continued to emphasize they wanted to use technology in their learning process:

Mary: As a facilitator of learning, using the necessary technical means, sometimes the board, other times any slides, some video, and of course, he offered the grammatical part, the essential part, what you should know, and after that he allowed us interact.

Mafalda: I'd say he was a facilitator of learning. It was nothing like a monologue. It was something, uhm, like [sic] we talked freely. We had the opportunity to develop our ideas, to speak freely, to get to know each other, to share. No, I did not see it like a speech. He looked at us as beginners despite being adults, like adolescents who were beginning! Yes, he was facilitator. I consider that to be the best teaching mechanism of instructor for beginners. Isn't it?

Pequitas: Yes! The professor was always a learning facilitator because, in every step, he was aware of the students' needs. He was also aware whether the student had learned or not learned! Since we were slow learners, he was always aware and interested in our progress to help us.

Jenny indicated a "transformational outcome" as a result of the instructor's inclusion of technology in his teaching strategies. She said, "So, I think that has helped me. I am watching lots of news in English, on television. I am seeing many programs, and when I go to claim something anywhere, a supermarket, I pretend to be dumb, like I do not understand, and even though if it takes me an extra hour to say what I have to do, I

do it because if not, I will not lose the fear, nor will I achieve to talk fast.” Another link among self-direction, engagement and mentorship was found in responses to Q.10: “How did you practice on your own after class? Did the instructor prepare or train you to study on your own?” Isomol and Mafalda offered a substantial response indicating that even without the inclusion of a lab component into the class, the instructor emphasized the use of technology as a vital resource in their language acquisition and development.

Isomol: “Yes. He prepared us to be ready because he used the technology available at the school as a tool, so we were obligated to continue at home. For example, he asked us to look for what we found interested in about three hundred lectures on the Internet. Then we were to listen, read and write about the themes we found interesting from the Web. Next day, we read in class what we had written. We analyzed it and discussed it with other classmates. In reality, we practiced the four components to learn the language: reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Mafalda: I also had a daily activity to do in regard to the class. I mean, I arrived home and kept myself very busy with the exercises on the website, the book, and apart from that I had to hear the radio and watch television. If one saw a program on television that called you attention, a movie, or anything else, thus the following day we discussed in class. You spoke in English about you had heard or watched the previous day.

### **Transformational Outcome**

The participants expressed that several positive effects stemmed from their engagement in the IEP that I coded according to significant concepts related to personal transformation. Acculturation, learning outcomes, retention, and personal achievement were the associated topics that emerged from Questions 1, 9, 10, and 12 of the open-ended survey, Questions 1, 11, and 12 of the individual interviews, and Questions 1, 11, and 12 of the focus groups.

The open-ended survey asked Q.1:“Why did you enroll in the Intensive English Program?” As previously discussed in the Self-Concept category, Colombiano emphasized his need to learn English to become a business man and resuming his higher education in his country. This is highly expected transformational outcome from engaging in the IEP. Q.9 asked three reasons why the participant did or did not like the lab sessions. The lack of technology in the classroom demonstrated that the curriculum needs to be adapted to the technology trends in language acquisition programs as suggested by the participants. Transformational outcomes are related to the students’ acquisition and development of their second language skills through continuous listening and pronunciation. The voices are modeled by trained specialists who recorded the audio and videos made accessible at the lab or in an online lab environment to complement the class.

Q. 10 asked, “Do you prefer your instructor to be a ‘lecturer’ or a ‘facilitator’? As I mentioned in the Curriculum/Technology category, participants valued their instructor as a facilitator for their learning progress although they believed that a combination of

both styles could add more value to their learning experience. This is also related to transformational outcomes. Students may become more self-directed and achieve progress more quickly when instructors explain content knowledge through their lectures. I believe that as a facilitator, the instructor can pass along his or her experiences to the students while using the students' experiential baggage to fully develop their language abilities. Q.12 asked, "Please write any comments or perceptions about what made you advanced in your English language development and what has encourage you to continue in the program." Colombiano liked everything about the course and reiterated, "One of the methods that helped me learn what I know today is that I listened and watched videos in English." Dialexa wrote, "I felt that I have learned, but I still need more and for this reason, I want to follow other levels."

These responses are closely related to retention that is the ultimate goal for student transformation. Participants expressed appreciation for everything that brought value to their financial investment in the IEP program. As soon as they noticed advancement in their second language acquisition, they felt that a step on the ladder of professional success had been achieved. For the institution, student's transformational outcomes are a gain in achieving sustainability for programs merely dependent on student fees generation.

The individual interviews showed the participants' determination to learn English as advancement to their further studies in higher education and to become professionals. Q.1 asked, "Explain three reasons why you study English." Sebastian responded, "The motivation to learn, to learn a lot. To learn English, learn other languages. To improve

education!” Q.11 asked, “How did the instructor prepare you to study after class on your own? How did you practice?” Tata gave me her perception of her class as a poor transformational experience due to the lack of instructor’s continuity with homework revision or preparation for other extracurricular activities. The dialogue went as follows with Tata as Participant (P) and me as the Interviewer (I):

P: In any way because he did not [pause] No, he gave only websites! He assigned it from the beginning, and there was no homework! [smiling]

I: Concerned?

P: Because I feel it is important that one should make efforts a little more, you know!

I: Yes.

P: Of course, [the teacher] was realistic because he said that supposedly we were not going to do the homework, but in reality, I could have come to another class that if we did the homework, we would have been [sic], we would have come.

I: I understand.

P: You're bound to learn more, to investigate a little more, everything!

However, the transformational outcome can be best measured in the responses offered to Q.12: “What other comments would you like to add regarding your learning effectiveness that encourages you to continue to be enrolled in the program?” Most participants were happy with their overall experience, but for Alex, the class did not fulfill his expectations. Their responses were as following:



Fiona: Yes, it is effective! For that reason I am here, it is one of the reasons why this program is one of the best out there. I like very much the system they are using!

Sebastian: None! I liked everything! Learning, education! It is effective! I learned, in other words, to be in this level!

Tata: It is effective: learning as we take here, but I feel the class must be a little more dynamic OK? And well, yes, yes [pause] I learned! That it is a good college! [sic] have good, good material for teaching. You can say, I mean, that the class must be a little more dynamic. So that it does not become tedious because there are several hours of class, and what is important is that you and understand what they are teaching you! Enjoyed!

Alex: I arrived here by many acquaintances, and in fact, all of them departed from the program without speaking perfect English. But you understand and learn good English! But in my opinion, in my case, No, I have not learned what is necessary or what I needed to learn. In the dynamics of the class!

The focus group responses revealing transformational outcomes were also observed in response to Q.11: How do you think the instructor or the language center could help you better so you can continue taking IEP courses? The importance that the IEP administration would give a thorough analysis of using the best instructional resources from instructors with appropriate methodology to linking technology to the learning process was reflected on participants' responses. These suggestions add to the achievement of the program goals with transformational outcomes. In this regard, Lilly

emphasized, “Because if I had an institute and I say, “come to study, to enjoy, to study without pressure, without stress” then that is a system! One participant recommended:

Lilly: Restructuring the program definitely. For example, not only focusing on the book, and the professor to follow the book, but diversifying the way of learning with lab and speech as in the credit program. Since we are non-credit they could give us a chance. Should we pay a hundred dollars more? We pay a hundred dollars more, but really give us the opportunity to make a complete course.

Besides taking into consideration this, in the school where we are studying. I believe that it can done: speech, lab, listening.

The use of a lab component included with the class was a common recurrence in the participants’ recommendations. Pequitas added, “I have not yet gone to the lab. I don’t know because in this second level, we have not being told yet. They have not required us to go. I don’t know. We need some of that even from our house.” Mafalda corroborated, “Yes, I feel that I want to interact more through the Internet and use the tools online because almost none of us, I don’t even know how many of us, have logged in this institution webpage, or the lab, or [how many] have utilized it.” Finally, testing or assessment should be considered even in non-credit class environments. Angie noted, “It is the compromise and of the course requirements! I think it is very important, that besides the attendance, they should require the amount of class time and the tests. I think the tests are very important, one weekly, I would say that on Friday after every cycle would be very important.”

To close the focus group sessions, I asked participants to offer recommendations related to their needs in order to acquire and advance their English language skills. Q.12 asked, “What other comments do you have regarding your learning or continuance in the program?” This question elicited participants’ evidence of their transformation since they began with the IEP program. Although many participants only gained modest English speaking skills as beginners, they recognized the worth of this program by what they learned through their first course. Mafalda said, “In general, we have covered everything I believe is the reason for continuing here because I knew this institute was very good in English. I began and felt very satisfied with the first level but for the continuity. I would have had, but I did not have good expectations for my second level.” Another comment showed satisfaction with the beginning course but disappointment about the second:

Pequitas: In reality, I liked the first course and learned a lot. The knowledge acquired was from the first course rather than the second one. Practically, I have relaxed, and I would like to have this kind of teachers as the one we had in the first level because they motivate you to continue studying. In reality, like my classmate said, I did not have time for anything else that wouldn’t be my English class. Leaving classes, practically all day, [sic] it was only studying for my English. I went to libraries and bookstores just to have peace of mind and study because the teacher kept us in that rhythm. He had a great experience.

Lilly wanted to continue with the same instructor, “It is not convenient if we would lose that instructor. [But] It is good to see, listen to different mentors, different methods, but when you pass from one level to another there should not be great jumps

[meaning changes]” Kathy corroborated, “The selection! Uhm, the selection of the professor is extremely important!” Mary added, “Well, I think that we have learned a lot. I have learned a lot, and the personal effort prevails, but it is very important to have a person to guide you, to stimulate you, to give you strength to struggle more.” Jenny considered the curriculum components as an important factor for student development, “For me it’s imperative! There should be speaking and listening in the intensive course. That is fundamental for me. It should be important to have both components joined in a course.” Kathy stressed the self-determination for achieving transformational outcomes, “I am enchanted with this program. There are certain issues to modify [as stated], but I do like it! Yes, you learn! You learn and it goes with everyone’s personality and how you make a demand to yourself!

### **Conclusion**

I presented the findings from a bounded case study exploring influential factors affecting retention and language acquisition in beginning ESL students. Five critical themes or categories emerged from three data collections sources featuring 12 questions each. A case study approach was the best design to study opinions, perceptions, and attitudes of a bounded group of students who had completed a beginning course in second language acquisition and were enrolled in their second course. Participants were recruited from a table set up outside of the IEP classrooms where they learned about the study, the requirements, and other ethical issues. The students who offered their voluntary participation were selected to form a purposeful sample of 39 participants to whom I sent

an open-ended survey through Survey Monkey®. Only five students participated, but one did not respond to the answers.

From this purposeful sample, I selected 15 students to make a homogeneous sample and invited them for participation in an individual interview or a focus group session for data collection on the factors that motivated and engaged them for persistence in the IEP. The details of their demographic characteristics offered voluntarily during the data collection events demonstrated a diverse sample featuring participants from 19 to 60 years of age, from both genders, and different socioeconomic backgrounds. They were from Hispanic descent coming from five Latin American countries. Participants attended at least one data collection event where they were able to express perceptions and beliefs about their experiences in the IEP. No compensation was offered, but I gave the participants a \$20 gift certificate redeemable at the campus bookstore as a token for their participation.

The data was coded using open and axial coding, and it was analyzed, and synthesized in response to the research questions with the assistance of the ATLAS.ti software for qualitative studies. One question intended to investigate what motivates beginners to continue taking courses in the IEP. Another question focused on how teaching styles and technology used in class may enhance beginners' learning process to keep them engaged in the program. Five categories were coded according to themes that emerged from participants' responses. These categories were found by coding the fragments of data during the open coding process and the axial coding performed linking

these fragments to common themes related to the research questions concerns. The findings have been synthesized in a thick narrative report.

I ensured the trustworthiness of the study by keeping a reflective journal to avoid researcher bias and by using low-inference descriptors (i.e, verbatim quotes). Another strategy I used to ensure validity and credibility of this qualitative study was to employ the triangulation of data collection events. The questions used in the open-ended surveys, individual interviews, and focus groups, are based on the two research questions for the study.

The findings of this case study revealed factors that influence beginning students to continue and persist in higher level IEP courses. The findings were reported as a thick narrative based on students' perceptions and responses to the open-ended survey questions, the individual interviews, and the focus groups. Moreover, the social relevance of the study may result in a contribution to positive social change in communities with diverse populations of immigrants and refugees in need of second language acquisition. The impact of having more speakers of English as a Second Language ready for employment may improve the negative effect on social program aid while satisfying the workforce in need of replacement for retirees or because of vacancies during economic growth.

Communities with large populations of immigrants may benefit if they participate in Intensive English programs that focus on developing and advancing their second language skills. This could bring about more professional opportunities. The study investigated the factors contributing to the success and sustainability of these programs

through student-instructor engagement and instructional motivation. The study investigated the factors contributing to the success and sustainability of these programs. One evident factor was student engagement because of motivation by their instructors. The findings showed that learning success is a result from such engagement associated with mentorship offered by instructors who can deliver content based on student-centered methodologies that include the use of technology and formative assessment. Such factors based on constructivist approaches may improve retention through students' persistence in Intensive English Programs.

### **Policy Recommendation as a Project Study Outcome**

Several factors can affect retention and advancement of students with IEPs. I addressed the problem that many beginners are not continuing in the IEP sequence. Although beginning students have identified several reasons why they continued to matriculate in the program, poor student engagement within their cohort groups, lack of mentorship qualities in some instructors, and little inclusion of technology in the curriculum have been persistent reasons for their dissatisfaction. Based on the findings of this study, I found that even though teachers may be aware of their role as mentors and facilitators in continuing education courses, the majority of them may not have sufficient training to deliver instruction based on student-centered approaches. The impact of this study offers significant evidence that instructors' lack of motivational abilities to engage the group as a cohort to continue successive courses may not lead to the expected transformational outcome the students expect to achieve. This is the acquisition and advancement of English language skills in students that may result in obtaining better

opportunities for employment, social communications, and continues pursuing higher education studies.

My project study was intended to investigate beginner ESL students' perceptions toward the factors that contributed to their persistence in the IEP. The theoretical framework associated with my project study falls under the paradigms of constructivist and behavioral social learning theories. Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010) asserted that "social constructivists challenge the scientific realist assumption that reality can be reduced to its component parts" (p.7). Social constructivists support that our long-term life experiences have contributed to who we are thus impacting the way we impart or acquire knowledge. Interaction among members of the group is the basis for knowledge acquisition and sharing in a constructivist learning community. To support the development of new knowledge, the constructivist instructor will use the knowledge and experiences brought by the students to the classroom to build new knowledge. On the other hand, the behavioral social learning theories embrace the instructors' awareness to create a safe a positive multicultural environment in the classroom to foster student engagement for effective transformational learning outcomes.

Section 3 will present a three-day professional development program for instructors teaching ESL for IEPs. This proposed professional development program is based on the existing problem at the South Florida Campus found from participants' responses during the open-ended surveys, individual interviews, and focus groups of the study. Through group discussion and role-play interaction based on current research from



the literature review, instructors will develop a series of best practices to teach ESL using student-centered methodologies (see Appendix A).

I expect this professional development program will develop instructors' awareness of the andragogical model developed by Malcolm Knowles and its relevance for adult learning. Instructors will learn and reflect on the factors that influence student retention and language acquisition in IEPs. Finally, I also expect that this project study, with the proposed professional development program, may contribute to the growing research of scholars and practitioners in the application of student-centered approaches to achieve higher rates of engagement and retention in IEPs.

## Section 3: The Project

### **Introduction**

According to the findings of this research study, I believed that participants felt that instructors who were able to engage and motivate the group by using student-centered methodologies, including creative uses of technology, were more successful in their students' language acquisition, thereby increasing greater retention in the IEP program. The data collection and analysis of the open-ended surveys, individual interviews, and focus groups indicated the participants' belief that instructors should have a vocation to teach and suggested that they should be trained by the institution to be successful mentors. More specifically, participants believed that IEP instructors should have initial and periodical training on how to motivate and engage students for second language acquisition and development.

From the participants' collective insights and suggestions, I propose a 3-day professional development program for instructors teaching ESL for IEPs, such as the one I manage for a community college. The primary goal of this program is to develop the awareness in instructors on how motivation and engagement are very effective in student retention and to learn the best practices on how to use student-centered approaches for instructional delivery. My proposed project focused on responding to the problem defined in Section 1 stating that IEPs' most critical problem is beginning students' attrition in sequential or continuing courses. Through a professional development program, the instructors will have the opportunity to learn trends in student-centered approaches linked to motivation, engagement, and IEP methodology. I believe such a program will be

effective because the instructors will interact with each other in an active forum reflecting on their experiences in the classroom. The presenter will facilitate the discussions and will introduce best practices for student-centered learning based on the andragogical core adult learning principles developed by Malcolm Knowles: the need to know, self-concept, prior experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation to learn.

Prytula and Weiman (2012) recommended, “In order to effect change, administrators may be required to restructure the school time-table to facilitate opportunities for teachers to work collaboratively in a professional learning community” (p.2). For colleges with a culture of faculty and staff development, this may be an acceptable practice. However, in other academic cultures that may not offer classroom training for their faculty, a hybrid course may be designed to allow less classroom time. Instead, online modules could be added as a complement to complete the discussion assignments. My proposed professional development program will use the 3-day program. A description of the rationale for the project development and how it can address social change has been noted. In addition, a review of the literature on research done in the areas of student-centered methodology has been included as background information. Furthermore, the project implementation process and the way it will be evaluated has been described. The implications of the project are discussed as well, and the appendices include artifact documents to facilitate the understanding of the project design and its purposes.

### **Description and Goals**

The results of this research study and the literature that I have reviewed served as a background for my proposed professional development program entitled “Effective Retention in Intensive English Programs Based on Student-Centered Approaches.” I will refer to this professional development program as “professional training” for the purpose of this study. I have reviewed literature on adult learning instructional methods, student-centered approaches, and the inclusion of technology in second language curriculum development for the design of this instructional workshop. Other research related to motivation and mentorship have also been reviewed and included in this section. Participants in the study advocated that instructors should be trained to become effective engaging vehicles for their development into professionals with English language proficiency.

The agenda of this professional training includes a myriad of discussion activities that will induce participants to reflect on their teaching experiences (see Appendix A). As a workshop facilitator, I will introduce new trends in adult learning methodology based on student-centered approaches focusing on student motivation and engagement to IEP instructors. Such engagement will contribute to the creation of student cohorts to stay matriculated in the IEP, thus increasing retention in the program. Participants of the workshop will work in groups to explore the best practices needed to develop students’ awareness of self-direction. I hope to encourage instructors that they should act as facilitators of learning and not rely on the traditional “teacher-directed” approaches. I believe this research study offers evidence that those teacher-oriented methods are no

longer effective in teaching adults a second language. Knowles et al. (2005) defined the opposite of student-centeredness: “It is teacher-directed education, leaving to the learner only the submission role of following a teacher’s instructions” (p.62). In the teacher-directed approach, the responsibility for all decisions to be made for the students’ learning experiences is given to the teacher. In this study, I found that many adult students were not pleased with this approach; they wanted to have more control over in their own learning direction.

The primary goal of this professional training is to develop the instructors’ awareness on motivation and engagement as effective tools for student retention and to learn best practices on how to use student-centered approaches for instruction delivery. In this regard, instructors are expected to demonstrate understanding on adult learning based in student-centered approaches. The following specific outcomes are expected from this training:

- Understand the role of the instructor as a mentor who facilitates adult learning.
- Understand the role of the instructor as a motivator to engage students in cohorts for continued retention in the program.
- Learn how to add group interaction activities to the curriculum with the use of technology.
- Understand that the student needs to be trained and supported by the instructor for self-direction in the learning experience.

- Learn best practices to create a learning environment that will result in student personal and professional transformation by becoming proficient in English as a second language.

By achieving these goals, the instructors will become aware of the needs of adult learners to ensure their retention in the IEP with positive transformational outcomes. The 3-day professional training will look at five areas of learning success derived from the categories found on the participants' responses during the data collection of the study: engagement, mentorship, self-direction, curriculum, and transformational outcomes.

On the first day of training, the facilitator will feature a multimedia presentation as an introduction of Knowles' Andragogical Model. This will help the instructors understand that student-centered methodologies are conducive to adult learning and development and will open the discussion based on their own experiences in the classroom. The second part of the day will be conducted in break-out groups where participants will have topics assigned to create role-play scenarios. They will finalize the session with a summary of their reflections as a group. Attard (2012) contended that "the individual is always at the centre, and knowledge creation starts with the individual, is supported in a collaborative environment, and goes back to individual reflection where new knowledge is adapted and analyzed according to specific contextual circumstances" (p.204).

The second day will be divided in two parts. During the first part, the groups will be reunited and the role-play scenarios planned the previous day will be acted out by the instructors. During the second part of the day, instructors will summarize the best

practices that came of the activity. The third training day will start with a discussion of new trends in student-centered approaches for ESL students. At the end of this training, the reflections from the three sessions will be collected for further discussion, and a summary of best practices in student-centered approaches will be drafted. To evaluate instructors' achievement in the workshop, the facilitator will ask them to write a brief scenario on how to develop engagement and motivation through learning activities linked to student-centered approaches.

### **Rationale**

To address the problem of this study described in Section 1, the proposed professional training will focus on instructional techniques and methodological strategies that instructors should use to improve student retention in the IEP. Retention is a primary focus area of continuing education courses given the importance of student fees to the sustainability of the department. By implementing this instructional workshop, the instructors will have an opportunity to become aware of effective student-centered methodologies used in second language acquisition for personal or professional reasons. The results from the data analysis as stated in Section 2 demonstrated that participants preferred instructors capable of delivering instruction with effective methodology and motivational mentorship. They recommended instructors be trained periodically to learn "how to be good teachers." Participants mentioned they perceived instructors as role models who could lead them throughout the entire learning journey until they felt completely transformed or, as put in other words, competent in the English language.

This is why I determined that the professional training would be the best option to work in a practical solution to the stated problem.

Training and development must be a constant for any professional or educational field as stated by Herman (2012): “If an institution of higher education has a goal of increasing online instruction, the administration must invest in faculty development, particularly through institutional policies that provide for adequate resources for effective professional development” (p. 104). Moreover, faculty training should have great support by academic institutions for the benefits that bring in student satisfaction and retention resulting in program growth and higher sustainability (Cruz, 2013; Webb, Wong, & Hubball, 2013), and these institutions should take action to offer this needed training (Harris & Cullen, 2008). For many teachers, expertise and self-regulated learning is a tool to measure and balance their instructional performance that can result in higher student achievement. Kreber, Castleden, Erfani, and Wright (2005) concluded that instructors can benefit from periodic professional development by acquiring self-regulated learning abilities and becoming better practitioners.

In this proposed professional training, the instructors will be provided basic strategies to engage and motivate their students. They will be encouraged to see their mission as role models and facilitators for their students’ transformations. Instructors will reflect on the importance of incorporating technology in their instructional methods for rapid advancement in their second language development. Paige (2010) corroborated the instructor’s role to detach from teacher-directed learning with this meaningful statement:



We constantly face the temptation to tell students what they should do, should know, should think! In order to help student become self-directed in their learning habits as adults, we must once again begin showing students how to identify and then engage all types of potential learning situations (p.303).

Finally, instructors are expected to leave the professional workshop with a clear perspective of their teaching role and understanding the difference between student-centered versus teacher-directed approaches. According to the findings of this study, participants stated their satisfaction with instructors who acted as facilitators. They stated their preference for instructors who motivated them to continue to be engaged and achieve positive learning outcomes in successive courses.

### **Review of the Literature**

I consulted literature related to adult learning methodology, specifically about student-centeredness, to address the professional training for instructors teaching in IEPs. I divided this literature review according to the themes that emerged from the study during data collection and to the workshop agenda and design. The sections in this literature review are based on adult learning methodology, motivation and engagement, curriculum and technology, and transformational expected outcomes from retention in the IEP programs. In Section 1, I discussed the andragogical model developed by Malcolm Knowles that places the student in the center of the learning experience, thus stressing its importance for adult learning. Chan (2010) noted, “There is a necessity for an educational approach that considers adult learning needs. The andragogical approach, developed extensively by Malcolm Knowles, is a well-lauded response to these needs” (p.27).

Current research has suggested that higher education institutions are making a great effort to move toward student-centeredness and to develop awareness in the scholarly community through symposiums and other educational forums (Kember, 2009; Rangachari, 2010; Finch, 2013). Furthermore, high schools are experimenting with student-centered approaches to put students in control of their own behavior and discipline (Freiberg & Lamb, 2011).

On the other hand, this proposed professional training aims to meet the requirements of current trends for effective professional development programs (Ahmed, 2013), where the “teacher professional development should shift from a behavioristic towards constructivist approach” (Pitsoe & Maila, 2012, p.318). This is reflected in the workshop design format where the facilitator will provide participants with discussions followed by with hands-on practice based on their experiential background (Burke, 2013; Efthymios, Ioanna, & Iosif, 2009). The primary goal of this training is that the facilitator will model student-centered teaching techniques to the participants through interactive and collaborative service learning (Corte, 2012; Gurmeva-Ivanova & Kostadinova, 2010; Kelly, 2013). I hope the participants will use these kinds of exercises of group discussions and interactions with their own students. The facilitator will be able to determine the training’s effectiveness through exercises that can elicit the participant’s reflection and feedback.

### **The adult learner**

One of the most important characteristics of adult education is marked by the “need to know” of the learners along with five more assumptions of the andragogical

model (Knowles et al., 2005; Taylor & Kroth, 2010b). Adults need to bring their life experiences to the classroom and apply them to the concepts they learn and discuss with the group as suggested by the constructivist approach (Nagowah & Nagowah, 2009). “The learners’ self-concept” is defined by the learners’ need to develop self-direction to take charge of their own decisions and self-demand for tasks that will enhance their language development and ultimate success (Kreber et al., 2005; Boone, 2013). Recent research has shown that there is no significant difference in males or females regarding independent self-concept and self-esteem (Marčič & Grum, 2011).

“The role of the learner’s experiences” is an assumption related with the role of instructors and students to use their life experiences as a frame to build up their classroom learning (Rowland, 2011). Learning a second language can bring a high level of anxiety that could be perceived in students with lower proficiency level (Sultan, 2012). Research found that the experience gained during social contact in the target language during study abroad programs could also help learners to reconstruct their identities (Devlin, 2013). This can be facilitated by the instructors to condition the learners’ for sharing their life experiences with the class for group discussion, reflection, and collaboration.

The “readiness to learn” and the “orientation to learning” are assumptions of the andragogical model that have an intrinsic relationship. Adult learners come to the classrooms with the goal to learn as soon as they understand when the right time to learn is; therefore, instructors can take advantage of these conditions by providing instruction linked to reflective practices based on their experiential backgrounds (Attard, 2012;

Waldman, Glover, & King, 1999). Finally, “motivation” is a driving force for adult learning. Adults understand that the only way out from impoverishment is through education. The ESL learner will have to face other factors such as work experience or study credentials that if not available, this can demotivate them in a competitive job market (Kim, 2011). They need to learn to get better jobs, to continue advanced studies leading to certification, to obtain better salaries and to be professional competent in society.

Instructors are motors that can impulse motivation by focusing on constructivist approaches with respect to the instructional practices and procedures they use in their classrooms (Gordon, 2009; Keaton & Bodie, 2011; Sivasubramaniam, 2011). Instructors can impede student drop-out, thus avoiding their goals for advancement to become frustrated (Gom, 2009). Therefore, instructors should understand the assumptions of andragogy as the frame of effective student-centered learning environments linked to self-directed learning. Embracing andragogy as an interdisciplinary discipline could help instructors to see their language students as adult learners in need of transforming from language development to become effective professionals (Alansari, & Albustan, 2009; Taylor & Kroth, 2009a). In reference to the application of interdisciplinary andragogical models for adult learning, Kranjc (2011) asserted, “Adult education is a response to the changing situations in public and private lives. In the future we can expect to see more team work with professionals from different fields” (p.42). Thus, the purpose of this proposed professional training is to develop awareness on the instructors of the andragogic models of student-centeredness that can be effective in their ESL classrooms.

## **Motivation & Engagement**

One of the most important topics of the proposed professional training is how to motivate students to engage and persist matriculated in the program. Gong (1999) stated a clear definition of motivation that can be very helpful topic for discussion:

To understand other issues related to motivation, you cannot go past knowing what it is. Motivation is an influence or a stimulus. This stimulus, whatever it might be, drives people towards the achievement of something in their lives.

People's efforts are expended on a given task in which their behavior simultaneously changes towards reaching the goal. (p.17)

ESL Instructors should not ignore the capital reason that brings their students into their classrooms. They need to understand their students' struggle to come along speaking the official language of a country that have offered them shelter and opportunities of a new life, but requires them to speak its language as a way to succeed. Therefore, it is important for instructors to seek and utilize personal skills to maintain the motivation brought by their students to the classroom (Powell & Kalina, 2009).

Instructors should utilize their motivational skills in engaging the group in interactive practices rather than using lecture type classes (Brewer, Kramer, & O'Brien, 2010). That motivation should not die there; it should be fueled by the instructor in daily exercises of engagement during instructor-student-group interaction and practice in the classroom.

Engagement is an intrinsic part of such interaction as a result of motivation and social interest for professional achievement (Stoykova, 2013). How the instructor could foster such an environment in class has been analyzed in detail by Gardiner (2013) who

asserted, “Because the constructs of motivation and engagement are multifaceted and overlap into so many areas of students' lives, a deeper understanding of motivation and engagement may benefit educators, parents, and students” (p.4). This is the reason why engagement as a result of motivation should be stressed in this professional training.

However, it is important to emphasize in this professional training that internal motivators are more prevalent than external motivators in adult learners (Knowles et al., 2005). This is marked by ESL learners' desire to maintain their self-esteem in a society where a language different than their own. Therefore, they need to develop their language skills to have a better quality of life and increase their job satisfaction, the internal motivators. External motivators, such as promotions, better jobs, and salaries, are more prevalent in advanced ESL students who seek writing and oral development courses to improve their professional careers. Instructors will identify different strategies to do in class during the length of the course to elevate their student self-esteem and motivation gradually as they progress or find challenges to advance (Lee, 2010). These strategies will be stated as “best practices” at the conclusion of this professional training.

### **Mentorship**

Daloz (1999) said, “If mentors did not exist, we would have to invent them. Indeed, we do so from childhood on” (p.17). The findings of the study demonstrated that participants had a clear need for instructors who could be role models in charge of leading them through the different learning stages of language acquisition and development. Daloz (1999) also clarified that mentors, as we see them today, are guides to lead students in their learning journey and emphasized, “They know they exist as

teachers only because of their students; they know they are part of a transaction, a relationship” (p.20). The role of the instructor is like being a counselor helping a client in need to set the pace for motivation and good learning (Bender, Yaffe, & Sechrest, 2012; Eisouh, 2011; Mader, 2009). This is very important for IEP programs where students pay for their fees, and their retention is what guarantees that instructors may have a class to teach, and for which they will be compensated.

Mentorship is a valuable topic for discussion during professional development where instructors collaborate with peers (Stillwell, 2009), which is the intention of the proposed professional training. The academic institution is a vital support for students by ensuring tutoring and mentoring as part of student engagement among peers and instructors alike (Smith, 2010; Yavuz, 2011). Instructors will draw their best practices as mentors from the discussions stimulated by the facilitator during the training.

### **Self-concept**

Among the six assumptions of andragogy established by Knowles, “the learners’ self- concept” is second on the list with this definition: “Adults have a self-concept of being responsible for their own decisions, for their own lives” (Knowles et al., 2005, p.65). This assumption is linked to the findings of the study whereas participants stated their need to be self-dependent and have assignments on their own to practice and advance quicker with their language development. Most of them recognized personal and professional factors that posed challenges along their learning journey. However, their self-determination to achieve their goals of learning how to speak English became a great motivator to continue engaged in the program.

The self-concept topic has been included in the proposed professional training as a pivot point to let the instructors understand it as a tool on their side to facilitate self-paced learning as a complement to the face-to-face class (Al-Huneidi & Schreurs, 2012). Moreover, instructors can use the multiculturalism found on bilingual programs, such as the IEP, to use the immigrant's' experiences as part of the combination practice assignments to be done in class and as extracurricular activities (Duarte, 2011). Some of the study participants stated their pride in being able to identify themselves by their countries in many class practices as a group.

The professional training will help instructors to understand the vital importance to include the notion of “the self-concept” to develop self-enhancement activities for self-perpetual change in the students without losing their belonging to the group (Sampson, 2012). Instructors should assist students in focusing their language learning with possible self-images to maintain their motivation and develop self-regulation, and develop deeper “strategic learning strategies” ( Chih-Chuan, Chen, & Cheng-Chuan, 2011; Sampson, 2012). The instructors will develop a series of “best practices” in self-direction during the training discussions and peer interaction.

### **Curriculum and Technology**

Rapidly changing technology should be considered in the application of constructivism models for student-centered instruction to enhance student collaboration and develop efficient learning environments (Bofill, 2013; Thinley, Reye, & Geva (2014). On the other hand, Wang (2011) comes to mind when he asserted, “Education reforms from teacher-centered to student-centered courses usually come with the



adoption of new teaching strategies” (p.113). Therefore, Wang (2011) recommended professional training development for instructors in software application which will be emphasized in the proposed professional training. Participants of this study recognized the need of technology inclusion in the curriculum in term of internet or lab practice related to their course work.

Some textbook publishers of ESL material, such as Cengage Learning, Cambridge, and Pearson, have developed software for student practice to be uploaded in language labs. This technology can also be accessed through the use of an “online lab” hosted on a “cloud” and internet storage (Kaur & Singh, 2013; Sosa-Sosa & Hernandez-Ramirez, 2012). The proposed professional training will include this type of technology to develop awareness in the instructors of the added benefits in student motivation, engagement and language development. One notable online lab is MyEnglish Lab offered by Pearson Education (<http://www.longmanhomeusa.com/myenglishlab>) that it is successfully used at the South Florida IEP program. The North West Campus where the study was conducted did not offer this component in the IEP.

The recent introduction and proliferation of tablets in the market also added to the convenience of the students for self-study in their own personal environments (Kaganer, Giordano, Brion, & Tortoriello, 2013; Wong, Chen, & Jan, 2012). Yet, instructors must be ready to guide their students in the process of doing their assignments as part of their homework using the online labs made available with the purchase of their text and workbooks (Li, 2010; Nedungadi & Raman, 2012). For this purpose, the professional training will have a group discussion to obtain instructors’ opinions on their use of

technology in their classrooms. They will explore new trends of online labs and will create a series on “best practices” to bring back to their classrooms.

### **Transformational Outcomes**

The participants of this study expressed that acculturation, learning outcomes, personal achievement and their retention in the program were positive effects they gained from their engagement in the IEP. Based on studies about the psychological effects of acculturation, Berry (1997) defined acculturation as the cultural and individual behavioral effect observed in people who developed in one cultural context, and then migrated into another. He considered two different cultural groups as they came in contact with each other, whereas the most noticeable change was in the acculturating group. In that regard he mentioned,

A later discussion, (Social Science Research Council, 1954) emphasized that assimilation is not the only kind of acculturation; it can also be reactive (triggering resistance to change in both groups), creative (stimulating new cultural forms, not found in either of the cultures in contact), and delayed (initiating changes that appear more fully years later). (Berry, 1997, p.7)

Participants in this study expressed a great interest in their acculturation into the English speaking community. However, they felt frustrated when their ESL teachers spoke Spanish to them, or they felt frustrated when people in service positions of different sectors in the community responded to them in Spanish when they spoke in English, as they noticed their Spanish resemblance. Acculturation is linked to students' motivation to attain personal achievement (Rubinfeld & Clément, 2007), as the students'

goal is to speak the official language of the country. This will make them professionally competitive with the ultimate goal of living successfully in two cultures (Berry, 2005). Retention in the program is based on the students' determination to learn the language quicker while growing socially and professionally.

Hagan (2004) asserted, "Acculturation is a central issue in an ESL program" (p.444), though the professional training will feature a discussion about the importance of acculturation as a primary goal of the IEP. Students should be prepared for diverse professional work environments and should be trained to support experiential learning and reflection (Kratze & Bertollo, 2013; Seaman & Rheingold, 2013). Instructors could discuss their personal experiences of acculturation in the classroom and outside of the classroom to show the different ways they can help their students. Instructors will discuss positive and negative effects of speaking any other language than English in class, and make recommendations on how to succeed in establishing a dialogue in English when they seek out services in the community.

In spite of several "pros" and "cons" in reference of the "theory" of transformation pioneered by Jack Mezirow in the late 1970s in sync with the "theory" of andragogy espoused by Knowles (Cranton, & Kasl, 2012; Newman, 2012), I believe that Mezirow's theories are still very valid for adult learning. Mezirow (1997) concluded, "This understanding of the nature of significant adult learning provides the educator with a rationale for selecting appropriate educational practices and actively resisting social and cultural forces that distort and delimit adult learning" (p.11). During this professional training, I proposed to share with the ESL instructors that their work with the students

should start by transforming frames of reference through critical thinking (Boghossian, 2012; Brookfield, 2002; Brookfield, 2005; Johanson, 2010). Gradually, this critical thinking will develop their language skills to take action of their own reflective insights. Then they will develop other abilities to assess and express their beliefs through discourse.

Another goal of ESL students is to succeed in their pursuit of advanced higher education studies without having achievement gaps in other subjects due to their language competence (Kim & Herman, 2009). Instructors will create a summary of “best practices,” to help students achieve their goal to remain in the program and realize their transformation into ESL speakers.

### **Literature Saturation**

The literature on professional development that I found is mostly relevant to training in the fields of health, business, and education, but it is not abundant in the area of IEPs. I found literature through Boolean searches in reference to professional development for ESL programs that may be a somewhat outdated. However, considering the relevance of this topic for this project, I have incorporated some of this literature that still have relevance today and added new selections that I found related to the importance of Knowles’ assumptions of andragogy and Mezirow’s theory of transformation. The topics that will be featured in the professional training have been researched through articles found on Boolean search through the library database of the university although the literature is not abundant in the areas of Intensive English programs per se. It is my

intention that this project study becomes part of the body of research in this important field of second language development.

### **Implementation**

The implementation of this professional training could be initiated as soon as this project study is approved. At such time, I will submit a request to the continuing education department of the college with the professional training details and goals. I will reassure in my request that the content of the professional training is a prescription to the needs expressed by participants of this project study.

Upon approval of this proposed professional training, I will offer myself as the initial facilitator. I will discuss the time line of the training that needs to be offered during three days of 8 hours each, although they don't need to be necessarily consecutive days. The following section will discuss the resources that are necessary for implementation of this professional training.

### **Potential Resources and Existing Supports**

One important resource is the support from the continuing education department to allow instructors to take this training. Some institutions are open to offer professional development to their instructors and faculty; therefore, they could be very supportive (Herman, 2012). Next, the IEP may have potential instructors that eventually could serve as facilitators for this developmental program.

The success of this program depends on the support offered by the administration and supervisors in facilitating time and resources to the instructors for training. The facilitator could design a flexible timeline to accommodate instructors' busy schedules

and personal obligations. Other choices for hybrid training are available and preferred by instructors and the administration.

### **Potential Barriers**

One of the common potential barriers is to get part-time instructors to commit to the training considering the amount of hours that it requires. Therefore, they will request compensation for their time and attendance. Another potential barrier may be the nonsupport from the continuing education department to pay instructors for this training. This 3-day training of 24 hours could be a challenge for payroll resources in programs with more than 10 instructors. If the 3 days of 8 hours each could be a deterrent, I will discuss other options with the department administration to offer the workshop in 6 half days to minimize the impact on payroll. Another alternative could be to use the college department of training and development to sponsor this training as they may have their own resources to reward the instructors monetarily or with a certificate of professional development.

Finally, some instructors may not be motivated to explore new methodologies for adult learning when they are seasoned teachers or are in tune with the student-centered approaches. This is the reason why the facilitator should explain the benefits of this professional training as it will help the instructors to be more in tune with current trends in adult learning for student retention and learning success. Barrett, Bower, and Donovan (2007) emphasized, "Without appropriate incentives and professional development opportunities, faculty will continue to perpetuate teacher-centered styles even for online

learners” (p.46). Instructors resistant to change their teaching approaches can pose a real threat to this professional development.

### **Proposal for Implementation and Timetable**

As previously stated in this section, I will submit a proposal request to the administration of the continuing education department at the college that I work as soon as I complete this doctoral program. I expect to be able to implement this training program in the 2014-2015 college calendar upon approval from the department administration. Then I will set the dates for the first set of 24-hour training.

According to the results from the assessment of the first 24 hours of training, I will request feedback from the administration to develop an action plan for continue implementation or for reconsidering the option of offering it as hybrid or online choices. This training could be offered once or twice per year, according to the amount of new instructors joining the IEP. At the end of this professional training, I hope that the instructors will be more sensitive about developing strategies for student retention in the IEP and will use the “best practices” drawn from the reflective discussions in the training.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Student and Others**

I am primarily responsible for this professional training as part of the project study I have produced for my doctoral program completion. I will be responsible for the planning, coordination, and facilitation of this training. I will announce the dates and times of this training through a flyer by email to all ESL instructors of the IEP at the South Florida Campus.

Even though this training may not be set as “mandatory,” I will emphasize the benefits for instructors to attend. I would encourage them to envision this training as a forum to reflect on their practice in the classroom and their interaction with the students. It will be very beneficial among the facilitator, the administration, and the participants to keep an open dialogue and cooperation to make this a successful professional development program.

### **Project Evaluation**

This professional training intends to develop abilities in the IEP instructor to deliver their classes in a student-centered environment to achieve higher retention rates in the program and student development in the English language. To evaluate professional evaluation, Bredeson (2002) recommended four key organizers to guide professional development evaluation: “purpose (What do we want to know?), value (Why is this assessment information important?), method (How do we go about gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data?), and utility (How will these assessment data be used?” (p.668). Therefore, there will be formative evaluation at the end of the each day of training with the overall goal of learning instructor’s perceptions and opinions of the training program and their recommendations for improvement.

Desimone (2011) recommended, “And surveys, of course, are the most cost-effective way to study professional development” (p.70). This is the reason I will use formative evaluation after each training session with by means of a two-part survey. The formative evaluation will allow the administration to assess the training at different stages for technical improvement, if necessary, or for using the participants’ feedback on their



benefit. The first part of the evaluation features a Likert survey of six questions assessing different aspects of this training on a scale of 1 to 5, and the second part features a few open ended questions for the participants to express their perceptions and recommendations. This evaluation tool has not been piloted since it is already in use for similar programs in our IEP (see Appendix A).

Moreover, the value of this evaluation relies on the participants' survey responses. These provide useful suggestions for the facilitator and administrators in order to determine the effectiveness of this training and the making of any improvements. Furthermore, the utility of the evaluation depends on the evidence obtained from it and its presence in the report to stakeholders: the facilitator, the administration, and the instructors. Gustky (2012) considered that reflecting the evidence on the evaluation outcome is of crucial importance in professional development programs as it may yield validity to justify the need for their continued administration.

### **Implications Including Social Change**

#### **Local Community**

Most adult learners realize that their engagement in any educational efforts can make them more competitive in society than the ones not engaged in a learning program, a finding in the responses from participants in the project study. The participation in professional development programs can open many opportunities to instructors since they will become updated in current educational and methodological trends (Pitsoe & Maila, 2012). The social implications of this professional training could be that instructors can become better mentors for their students, thus facilitating students' engagement in

cohorts that will travel several levels of Intensive English courses. In turn, this will bring social change for students who could be able to immerse into the mainstream culture once acculturated, thus reflecting in their professional development (Berry, 2005).

### **Far-Reaching**

Although this project study is designed to address the needs of the IEP at a South Florida Campus, other language institutions could review it and adapt it to their needs if necessary. The different recommendations drawn from participants of the study have contributed to the design of this professional program that can be replicated by another institution with similar IEP. This could result in improved instructors who could motivate and engage their students with the help of student-centered methodologies. This should be the goal of any instructor, but it is even more necessary for instructors teaching a second language development course for adults.

### **Conclusion**

The importance of this program development, hereby called professional training, is that it addressed the need to provide periodic training to instructors teaching English for IEPs. According to the data analysis of participants' responses in the project study, I concluded that instructors needed to recognize the importance of using a student-centered methodology in their classes. These methodological needs were related to motivation and engagement, mentorship, self-concept, curriculum and technology, and transformational outcomes. The literature review for this section offered background insight to link the constructivist theories of andragogy developed by Knowles and the theory of transformation by Mezirow to Section 1. I added updates and trends from recent research

reflecting on these epistemological influences linked to students' retention on the program and their consequent transformation in speakers of ESL

The goal of the professional training is to help instructors understand that student-centered approaches can help them achieve quick positive outcomes in student retention and language development. The training will be done in three full sessions for a total of 24 hours. Participants will be able to discuss their professional experiences in helping students achieve language development goals in class and in extracurricular activities. These discussions will be done in peer group collaboration, in the form of interactive forums, to reflect and develop a set of "best practices" for classroom application. I recognized the potential resources as offered through the administration support for this program, but also potential barriers may be present that could affect the overall success of the program. These barriers could be instructors' time and resources to participate, or the opposition of seasoned instructors to change their teaching style based on teacher-directed approaches.

The stakeholders of this training are the administration, the facilitator, and the instructors. I will assume facilitation of this professional development on its inception after approval of my request to the continuing education administration, once I finish this doctoral program. To assess the efficacy of this training, formative evaluations will be done upon conclusion of each session. I will report the participants' perceptions and opinions offered with an evaluation tool of 6-question Likert survey followed by a three open ended questions. The evaluation results will be shared with the administration for consideration on whether it should be continued or improved. Some of the improvements

may include converting the training into hybrid or fully online options to avoid challenges from the administration due to payroll costs.

Finally, the importance of evaluating the professional training is that it will be a tool to assess whether instructors were receptive to this type of training, and if they have become aware of the importance of using student-centered methodologies. Once this occurs, positive change will be achieved by the student with the mentorship of the instructor. This is the social implication of this professional training. Students need to continue their engagement in the IEP program to learn the official language of the country and be ready to immerse in cultural mainstreams. This acculturation will be a predominant success in their social and professional life.

## Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

### **Introduction**

In this final section, I will provide my reflections and conclusions regarding this project study. The purpose of the study was to learn what the factors are that motivated ESL students to engage and persist in an IEP. I was motivated to conduct this study out of the importance of achieving student retention in continuing education programs as a step to maintain their sustainability within community colleges or any other academic institution.

The purpose of this section is to offer my reflections about the development of this project as an outcome of the study as well as my development as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer. This section will address the impact of this project on social change and will conclude with the implications and directions for further research.

### **Project Strengths**

This project study was grounded on social constructivist epistemologies as evidenced in the literature I reviewed. The theories underpinning this study were andragogy (Knowles, 2005), mentoring (Daloz, 1999), self-direction (Roger, 1974), transformational theory (Mezirow, 1994), and experiential learning (Banduras, 1977). The participants' suggestions for improving the IEP offered me a pathway for the need to incorporate these theories as a backbone of instruction to achieve adult learners' transformation from beginning language students to proficient second language speakers. That is the ultimate goal of IEPs, supported by Mezirow's transformational theories that are also part of the aforementioned social constructivist epistemologies. Transformation

is central to my study because of the students' needs to transform into English speakers for social or professional purposes.

One of the most important strengths of the study was that it captured participants' perceptions and beliefs about their motivation and engagement as students of an IEP. From online, open-ended surveys, to focus groups and individual interviews, participants felt comfortable to discuss and reflect on their experiences as ESL beginners of an IEP. In addition, the focus group sessions demonstrated peer collaboration. This was another strength that opened a window for participants to discuss likes and dislikes in a respectful and honest way without apprehension. Furthermore, the findings provided me with the insights and foundations to recommend a professional development program for IEP instructors.

### **Recommendations for Remediation of Limitations**

The implementation of a 3-day professional development to IEP instructors relies on available resources that each institution could dispose for training and development. Considering that academic institutions are moving toward the implementation of online or hybrid faculty development, this project may find three limitations on the implementation of the training. First of all, the lack of institutional support to compensate part-time instructors with a salary for attending 24 hours of training whether in consecutive days or spread out during the year may create a time constrain challenge. Second, obtaining part-time instructors' commitment to dedicate the time and resources to attend this training could be another important obstacle. Third, the participants of the study were from a Hispanic background; thus, their native language was Spanish. With a

more diverse group of participants from various language backgrounds, the findings may have been different.

To remediate these limitations, I suggest the following recommendations:

1. The administration of educational institutions offering IEPs should allow their part-time instructors to take time to attend the recommended professional training. If monetary compensation for the time to attend this professional training is not available, other sources of compensation should be awarded such as a Certificate of Completion or any other motivational reward.
2. The professional training could be broken down in eight sessions of 3 hours each, distributed throughout the academic year. Schedule availability requests could be sent to instructors with different preferential times to agree on a convenient schedule.
3. Instructors participating in the professional training should consider that the participants of the study were native Spanish speakers. However, their responses shed light on the methodology for adult learners that should be used for engagement and retention in adult programs. More research should be done in IEPs with a diverse language speaking population.

### **Scholarship**

This project study offered me the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills to understand the meaning of scholarly reading and writing as a qualitative researcher. I consulted peer-reviewed literature that allowed me to build the study within a theoretical framework and to discount the initial assumptions of the problem I chose. This was done

by locating related literature, reading critically, and applying it to the theories and themes emerging from the discussions. This work has contributed to my growth as a scholarly researcher. As an administrator, I learned that professional development should be implemented in educational programs as a way to train or upgrade instructors on the implementation of student-centered methodologies in adult education programs.

During my search for related literature on journals and professional publications, I found researchers who discussed methodological stances that have been proven effective in second language acquisition. For example, Knowles's (2005) theories of andragogy are the foundation for adult learning in self-sustainable programs such as the IEP on the South Florida Campus. I also recognize the importance of applying other researchers' experiences and recommendations to my study. Although I discovered that much of the available and current literature relies on adult education programs that offered vocational ESL courses and are grant funded, there is little discussion about IEP issues. As a researcher, I am proud that this study could be a resource for other researchers and practitioners.

### **Project Development and Evaluation**

The project development was based on the qualitative study design that I chose. By conducting a case study, I was able to study a bounded group of beginning ESL students in a continuing course at a sister campus that offers a similar IEP. To comply with ethical guidelines of the National Institute of Health for conducting research with human participants, I took all measures to ensure that participants would be selected without coercion. Every procedure during participant recruitment to data collection was



done in accordance with the ethical guidelines of no coercion and the maintenance of confidentiality of the subjects. All transcriptions were kept in a locked folder of my personal computer, and the Letters of Informed Consent were kept in a locked drawer of my desk. This is also a secondary effect of the scholarly work that I have gained by conducting this study.

Since I managed the IEP at the South Florida Campus, I had to move the study to a sister campus offering a similar program. This was done in compliance with three ethical guidelines established by Walden University. I never expected to see so much enthusiasm from the group of students who volunteered for the study; however, they seemed genuinely interested since the moment that I spoke to them from my recruitment table on campus. I collected the data as planned and maintained my commitment to break any personal biases during the analysis and when reporting the findings.

The findings of the study gave me the opportunity to create a professional development program of 3 full days for IEP instructors. I understand that professional training should be continuous to produce better outcomes (David & Bwisa, 2013); therefore, I identified instructors teaching for IEPs as primary stakeholders. The administration and the facilitator are also stakeholders whose function is to facilitate the success of this training. As I planned the professional development, I considered that formative evaluation should be done in each full day of training. This evaluation will give relevant feedback to determine the efficacy of this training program and what improvements the facilitator should make before the next session. Furthermore, my doctoral committee was very critical in ensuring that my study was in compliance with

the scholarly writing style and the ethical issues as required by Walden University. Through periodic check-points, they have guided me very closely to ensure this project study could contribute to the field of adult education.

### **Leadership and Change**

Transformational leaders are the ones who not only can mentor or motivate, but the ones who strive to model academic programs where students have a voice to critique, challenge, and effect change (Palmer, 2007). This is the reason that I decided to conduct a case study where I could listen to students' insights about how they perceived their study program and what suggestions they had for making changes. As a result, I proposed a professional development program for the IEP instructors.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century requires educational leaders who can provide adaptive and creative solutions for the challenges that society faces whether locally or globally. (Ingleton,2013). According to this belief, language instructors should be the transformational agents who transport students with diverse cultural backgrounds and no command of the language to becoming proficient English speakers. In a larger context, coordinators and managers can become transformational leaders by helping instructors achieve educational leadership skills through professional training. These abilities can be a great complement to the instructional tasks that could contribute to their students' transformation.

### **Analysis of Self as Scholar**

In retrospect, the time I dedicated to engage in a doctoral program at Walden University has offered me a great opportunity to grow both professionally and as a

scholar. The commitment that I made to complete this doctoral program served as support as I first began to develop researching skills by applying my professional expertise to the project study development. By reflecting on my class discussions and the development of the project study, I believe that it was an extraordinary experience since I had not conducted any scholarly studies before. The study became clearer each time I completed the next step by following the advice of my doctoral committee. Every step I achieved was like a renewed commitment to the contribution of social change in continuing education programs.

My ability to relate the project study to the theories I found in the reviewed literature and the cumbersome preparation to collect and analyze the data developed and enriched my scholarly reflective skills. I learned and developed a system to browse through different scholarly databases accessible through Walden University. My system consisted on saving the journal articles in folders for easy access and creating annotated bibliographic indexes that I could use at a later time. I learned how to select peer-reviewed articles for consideration and application to my research through the online reference system EBSCO Host for databases such as Academic Search Complete, Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), ProQuest, Sage, and others. Modern technology offers researchers a great advantage for finding accessible and updated literature in these databases. The selected literature can be easily organized and saved in electronic folders created in the database for future use. Before engaging in this project, I had not conducted any scholarly studies; therefore every step of the project study was a learning experience for me.

### **Analysis of Self as Practitioner**

In the development of this project study, I learned that adult learners perceive their growth as “old children,” like one participant of the study mentioned. This made me reflect on the adult learners’ need to be self-directed with instructor’s guidance (Smith, 2008). I felt accomplishment when I noticed the interest demonstrated by the participants during data collection. It was inspirational to hear their goals of becoming professionals in this country, of returning to their countries to complete higher education degrees, or of being able to communicate with their children in English. These reflections have augmented my sensitivity toward adults learning a second language for advancement. It helped me understand that one should not make assumptions about the adult learners we have in our classrooms. They may have needs and personal challenges, but they strive to push their education forward as a priority. I see the instructor as the vehicle for student transformation and success through mentoring and individual attention.

By reviewing the application of Knowles (2005), Rogers (1974), Daloz (1999), Banduras (1977), and Mezirow’s (1994) theories of andragogy and learner’s transformation to current research, I found them still relevant for adult learning. Sharing these theories with a new generation of instructors teaching a second language provides a benefit for the instructors to be more in tune with their students’ needs and challenges. Developing a professional development to achieve this goal is a great step toward the fulfillment of my belief that instructors should continue improving throughout their career span (David & Bwisa, 2013). Furthermore, developing surveys and using Survey

Monkey® as a delivery channel have opened new opportunities for me to explore its use for student feedback about their learning experience.

### **Analysis of Self as Project Developer**

This project study offered me the opportunity to design and implement a research study about the problem of student dropouts from the IEP that I oversee. I had to assess the needs of the program under the assumption that there were factors influencing ESL students for their retention and success in the IEP. The planning and implementation of the various project stages was a fulfilling learning experience for my practice as a manager of educational programs. I developed this project as a qualitative study where I could collect students' perceptions and opinions about the program through focus groups, individual interviews, and online open-ended surveys.

Transcribing the participants' responses was a slow process because I wanted to make sure that the data would be carefully analyzed. Coding and identification of emerging themes was a challenging process. However, with patience and careful study of tutorials from the ATLAS.ti program that I used for analysis, I was able to select five emerging themes dealing with motivation, mentorship, self-direction, curriculum and technology, and transformational outcomes. Coding and categorizing are areas that I would like to explore further in future studies. I enjoyed working with this qualitative research because I was confident that it can have great replication in the educational field, specifically for IEPs. I used thick narratives to facilitate the understanding of this research problem and its effect on beginner's retention. According to the findings, instructors' needs to enhance methodological skills to deliver second language instruction

with motivational and transformational approaches are expected to be fulfilled with the professional development I recommended for this project.

### **The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change**

There is a tendency to believe that workers who are nonnative to the English language in the United States could receive higher salary incentives if they are English language proficient (Chiswick & Miller, 2010). Therefore, immigrants seek ESL programs to develop or improve their English language skills. This is also a current need for immigrants and their children who need language development as a step to fulfill a requisite in their process of legalization in the country (Asher, 2011; Mirici, et al., 2013).

On the other hand, Hispanic people are transforming the demographic landscape of the United States. Casas and Ryan (2010) stated, "According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of Latinos in the United States increased by 58% from 1990 to 2000 as compared with a 13% increase in the U.S. population as a whole" (p.1). IEPs are an important immersion hub for many English speaking cosmopolitan cities to serve immigrants trying to achieve ESL development or for tourists coming to an ideal vacation place to study English. Participants' responses in the study indicated that for these programs to be successful, the instructor should be motivational and inspiring. In addition, the methodology used for content delivery should be based on student-centered approaches that can engage students for persistence in the program. Then students will be able to grow and be transformed professionally by becoming proficient in English.

The data collection suggested that instructors need to be trained to be skilled in helping adult student advancement. For example, participants stated that some of their

instructors had a natural instinct to teach, so they did not need great effort to become their mentors to engage the group for successful transformation. However, the notion that instructors should be trained periodically to improve their methodology and to be current with adult education trends was suggested by the study participants. In the proposed professional training, instructors will have an opportunity to discuss and reflect on their experiences in class. They will discuss what teaching strategies that are not effective and will summarize the best practices to be shared with other instructors.

One important implication of the professional training is that students will benefit from instructors who take professional development to become engaging motivators and mentors for their adult learners. However, more research should be done to link the impact of teaching improvement to student learning achievements because of professional development (Desimone, 2009). The expectation of the IEP administration is that students could develop basic communication skills to perform proficiently in their social and professional environments. Another outcome could be the achievement of closing the existing gap between native speakers and second language learners (DeLuca, 2012). From a global perspective, English speaking countries may have better developed communities where people with other native languages could be proficient in English as well. In the United States, immigration and social policy concerns have a relationship with immigrants' ability to have English language proficiency. As Hero (2010) asserted, "an interaction of the size of the noncitizen population with immigrant welfare eligibility inclusion/exclusion policies had a negative effect on benefit levels" (p.458). Therefore,

IEPs can assist immigrants to be ready for the workforce and may alleviate the dependency on welfare and other social programs.

### **Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research**

This professional training will be first implemented at the South Florida Campus for the instructors of the IEP. According to the success of this implementation, the training will be proposed to other sister campuses with larger IEPs. In campuses with small programs, invitations could be extended to instructors for participation in future offerings at the campus selected for training. Eventually, the professional training should allow new instructors to collaborate with seasoned instructors on a yearly basis. As the initial facilitator, I will train other language coordinators to become facilitators and share this responsibility as needed. Moreover, I plan to contribute with presentations at ESL and Professional Workforce Conferences. I look forward to publishing this professional development in professional journals as a contribution to the body of research in this field. Eventually, I could assist other institutions that could require my advice as a consultant for implementation of the project in their institutions.

The direction for further research is grounded in three areas. First of all, this qualitative study was done with a population of 16 participants whose native language is Spanish. Further research should be conducted with populations with diverse languages. Second, this case study was done at a site with a large female population; therefore, only 25 % (4 students) of the participant sample were males. Further research should have a better balance in gender. Third, the population from the sample group of participants did not have language lab practices as a regular component of the intensive course; they also



did not have any experience of the effect of attending a lab, whether in person or online, as an extracurricular activity. Further research should be done with populations of IEPs where lab practice should be incorporated into the course at least once per week as part of the class curriculum. A major implication of the study is that instructors' collaboration in the proposed professional training may have positive outcomes with increased student achievement and a decrease of beginners' dropping out for lack of motivation and engagement.

### **Conclusion**

This project study was designed to investigate students' perception and opinions related to their engagement and persistence in an EIP. I developed my research questions to discover factors that influenced beginning students to persist and advance in the program. As a researcher, I designed a case study for a program similar to the one I manage; this provided a way to avoid an ethical conflict. During the data collection, I noticed the bond among participants who had completed a beginning class and were engaged in a continuing course as a cohort. Their responses were triangulated through focus groups, individual interviews, and open-ended surveys and coded into five different themes. These findings enhanced my understanding of the participants' determination to continue engagement in spite of their personal challenges and instructors who lack the appropriate methodology to teach. Participants' suggestions indicated that the IEP administration should select and train instructors to become motivators who could engage their students to continue advancing in successive courses. This is the reason why I designed the proposed professional training.

This professional training is modeled after constructivist theories of andragogy and transformation. Current adult learning trends explored in the professional training will help instructors develop a set of best practices in the areas of motivation, mentorship, self-concept, curriculum and technology, and transformational outcomes. These best practices can serve as a model for all stakeholders of the IEPs to achieve higher student engagement and retention in the program.

Through reflective inquiry during the completion of this study, I have strengthened my awareness on the importance of transformational outcomes for ESL students. I recognized that student-centered practices as an andragogical model for adult learning is the goal for this professional training. Positive social change can be achieved by mentoring English learners so they can persist in the engagement in their language development pursuits. This should be the primary goal of IEP instructors.

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## Appendix A: Professional Development Program

## Effective Retention in Intensive English Programs Based on Student-Centered

## Approaches

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### Purpose

The purpose of this outline is to provide professional development for IEP instructors to achieve student persistence in courses of successive proficiency levels. The implementation of this project will satisfy a necessary tool to train instructors in student-centered methodologies to become facilitators of adult learning and achieve student transformational outcomes through motivation and engagement in the IEP. I will serve as a facilitator for this training.

Once implemented, this professional development experience will become a formal part of the faculty training program for seasoned and new hired ESL instructors in adult language programs through the academic calendar. This program consists of three full days of training distributed throughout the year. Participants' feedback after each day will serve as a source for program evaluation and improvement. Efficacy of the program through participants' feedback and support from the school administration will determine its continuance as an ongoing professional development program.

### Materials

The following materials will be necessary to support this professional development model:

- Articles

Lei, S. A. (2010). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: Evaluating benefits and drawbacks from college instructors' perspectives. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 37(2), 153-160.

Marčič, R., & Grum, D. (2011). Gender differences in self-concept and self-esteem components. *Studia Psychologica*, 53(4), 373-384.

Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative learning: Theory to practice. *New Directions for Adult & Continuing Education*, (74), 5.

- Books:

Chapelle, C.A. & Jamieson, J. (2008). *Tips for teaching with CALL: Practical approaches to computer assisted language learning*. White Plains, NY: Pearson Education.

Knowles, A., M., Holton, E.F., & Swanson, Richard, A. (2005). *The adult learner: The definite classic in adult education and human resource development* (6th ed.). San Diego, CA: Elsevier Butterworth Heinemann.

Handout: “The Andragogical Theory of Adult Learning”. (Knowles, 2005, pp.61-72)

Merriam, S.B., Caffarella, R.S., & Baumgartner, L.M. (2007). *Learning in adulthood* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Handout: “Traditional Learning Theories”. (Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner, 2007, pp.275-294).

- LERN books: Timeless Recommendations.

Draves, W.A. (1997). *How to teach adults* (2nd ed.). Manhattan, KA: The Learning Resources Network (LERN). Chapter 2: “How Adults Learn”, (pp. 5-12)

a) Handout: Chapter 3: “Helping Adults Learn”, (pp.13-20)

b) Handout: Chapter 7: “Involving your participants”, (pp. 51-56)

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Draves, W.A. & Coates, J. (2004). Nine shift. Work, life and education in the 21st Century. River Falls, WI: The Learning Resources Network (LERN).

Handout: Chapter 13“Half of All Learning is Online: Shift Eight”. (pp.229-247)

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- Outlines:
  - a) “Best Practices for Student-Centeredness in IEP”
  - b) “Trends in Adult Learning” Video by Dr. Sharan Merriam
- PowerPoint Presentation: “Transformational Adult Learning for Intensive English Programs” by Luis M. Rodriguez-Garcia.
- Printed PowerPoint Presentation
- Professional Development Evaluation Survey submitted through Survey Monkey® after each development session. The data collected will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of this professional training and to make improvements for future sessions.
- Video:
 

“The Healthy Aging Brain” by Dr. Louis Cozolino. These materials are reproduced with permission from Laureate Education, Inc. ©.

“Trends in Adult Learning” by Dr. Sharan Merriam. These materials are reproduced with permission from Laureate Education, Inc. ©.

- Writing chart, computer with projector, markers, notepads, and pens

#### Timeline

1. Schedule three sessions of professional training at intervals of one per semester beginning in September, 2014 and ending in May, 2015. Each training day will feature two modules; therefore, Day 1 will introduce Module 1, Day 2 will feature Modules 2 and 3, and Day 3 will conclude with Modules 4 and 5. There will be one hour break for each session. (June, 2014)
2. Obtain the email address of all instructors teaching for the Intensive English Program on campus. Send invitation email to all instructors and include the chairpersons of other campuses affiliated to the institution, so they can extend an invitation to their IEP instructors. Invite instructors to send their commitment for participation by replying to the invitation email. (June, 2014)
3. The professional training will be structured to accommodate from 15 to 25 instructors. Gather the names of all instructors who replied for participation and create a roster. (July, 2014)
4. Make reservations, through the room reservation system of campus administration, for training facilities in electronic classrooms equipped with computers, projectors, and a sound system. (August, 2014)
5. Print copies of the modules for each session of the professional training. (August, 2014)

6. After each professional training session, the participants will fill out a Likert Survey with open ended questions. The data collected from each day of the training will help the facilitator to evaluate the effectiveness of this professional training and make improvements according to participants' suggestions.  
(September, 2014 through May, 2015)

#### Session 1: Module 1. Andragogy vs. Pedagogy

Module 1 provides an overview of Andragogy versus Pedagogy as an introduction to the professional training. Participants will develop an understanding of “student-centeredness” as constructivist theories to facilitate transformational learning in adult learning compared to traditional teacher-directed learning mostly used with children. This session will be one full day of training.

As facilitator, I will provide a PowerPoint Presentation titled: “Transformational Adult Learning for Intensive English Programs” at the beginning of the training. I will introduce andragogical concepts from constructivist theorists while engaging participation and collaboration from participants. Participants will offer insights, concerns, and anecdotes in reference to each slide.

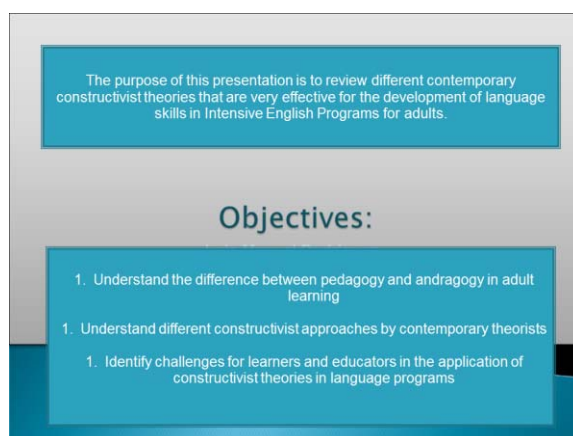
## I. Introduction. (20 minutes)



Introduction Slide: Ice Breaker and Personal Introductions.

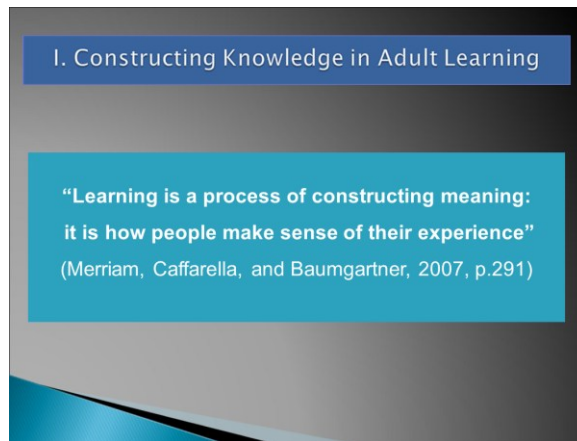
-Ask everyone to give a personal introduction to the group.

## II. Objectives. (5 minutes)



Review Objectives

### III. Constructing Knowledge. (25 minutes)



Ask: How do adults learn? After hearing some participants’ responses, I will continue:

From my experience teaching and coordinating Intensive English Programs, I believe pedagogy for adults is about integrating new concepts or information to be processed and applied in the adult’s contextual experiences and interactions within the community. I believe instructors should embrace students and become a coach or mentor without ignoring the learners’ cultural, sociological, or other unique characteristics.

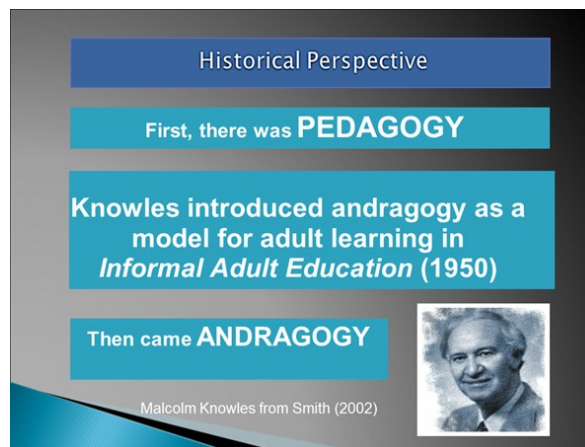
Activities:

1. Read definition of constructive meaning by Merriam et al. (2007)
2. Ask: How do you perceive your role as part of students’ construction of learning?

Discuss answers.



#### IV. Historical Perspectives of the Constructivist Learning Theories (60 minutes)



Pedagogy was founded on the assumption that learning is centered on passive reception from the student, and it has been the traditional way of learning for children and adults. Malcolm Knowles embraced the theories developed in Europe in the 1940s for teaching adults and published *Informal Adult Education* (1950). His work recognized the learner's need to feel comfortable with the flexibility of learning through informal self-direction and without oppression. Knowles became the most relevant supporter of andragogy and is considered its father.

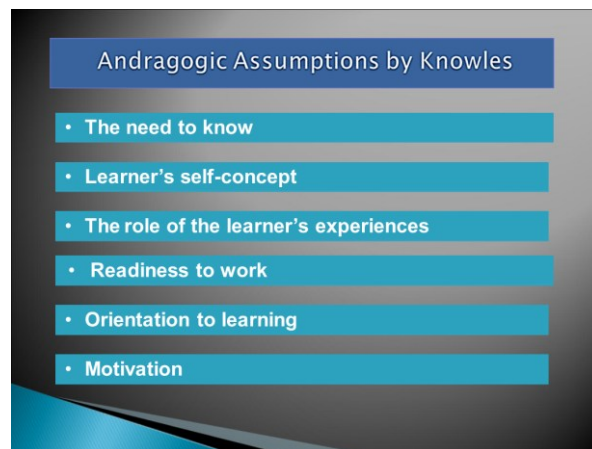
The difference between pedagogy and andragogy lies in the latter being a successful model for adult learning. This is due to the self-direction of the learner to acquire knowledge through motivation and engagement facilitated by the instructor, who functions as a mentor or facilitator of learning (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005).

Activity:

1. Distribute Handout: "Andragogy vs. Pedagogy, Assumptions"

2. Break in two groups. One group will read and discuss the pedagogy assumptions and the other one will read and discuss the andragogy assumptions
3. Ask participants: What qualities of both theories can you recognize as being used in your classroom?

### **Andragogic Assumptions (40 minutes)**



The andragogical model has been based on a set of assumptions considering the learner as an adult with different needs and expectations that are different than the needs of children and adolescents. Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner (2007) stated that “Knowles clearly saw these assumptions as foundational to designing programs for adults” (p.85). Andragogic assumptions are opposite to their pedagogical counterparts; learners are directed by their teachers contrary to the andragogic self-directing learning where the teacher becomes a coach or guide.

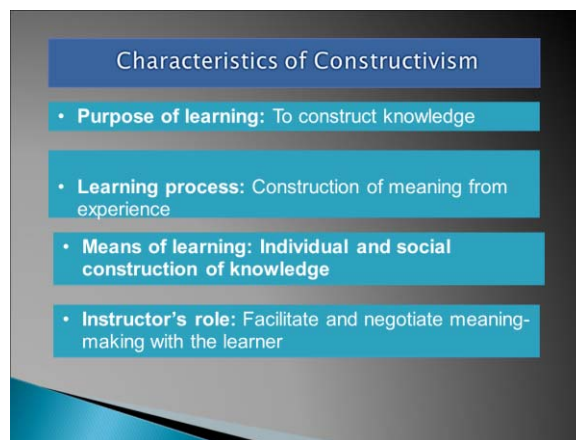
### **Activity:**

1. Ask participants Question 4.5 from the handout:

2. How does the andragogical model fit with your own learning style (Knowles, et al., 2005, p.72)?
3. Breakdown in groups: Each group will write one anecdote reflecting the andragogical assumptions reflected in their practice and will collaborate with the class discussion.

(Allow 10-minute break)

### **Characteristics of Constructivism (60 minutes)**



Adults realize that their engagement in educational efforts will make them become more competitive in society for the fulfillment of personal achievement at different life stages. Creating an environment conducive to learning is a major responsibility for educational program developers. These courses are crucial for the achievement of higher learning outcomes and the contribution of higher yields for the self-sustainable nature of Community Education within the community colleges.

Activity:

1. Distribute handout: “Traditional Learning Theories” (Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner, 2007, pp. 275-294)

2. Read and explore the traditional learning theories making emphasizing constructivism. Break down in groups and each group will present the definition of each theory and its principal characteristics.
3. Ask: In your experience, how do you facilitate the construction of learning in your classroom?
4. Discuss answers.

### Contemporary Contributions: Transformational Learning (20 minutes)

2. Contemporary Contributions

- Mezirow: Transformational Learning

Mezirow (2005)

- Mezirow (1997) recognized *habits of mind* and *a point of view* as the two dimensions making up a frame of reference for those structures of assumptions allowing us to understand our experiences.

Daloz (1999) stated "whether as close as the classroom or as distant as myth, mentors are creations of our imagination, designed to fill a psychic space somewhere between lover and parent" (p.18).

Faculty Profile: Daloz (n.d.)

Mezirow (1997) contended “adult learners themselves view learning to think as autonomous, responsible persons as an important educational objective” (p.8). Adult learners view their educational development as a motivator to achieve lifelong personal and professional goals. The instructor becomes a mentor who facilitates a bonding with the learner for the attainment of positive outcomes on language acquisition and development.

Transformation through language learning and development should be the goal of the IEP. Dropping out from the program could become a nontransformational experience.

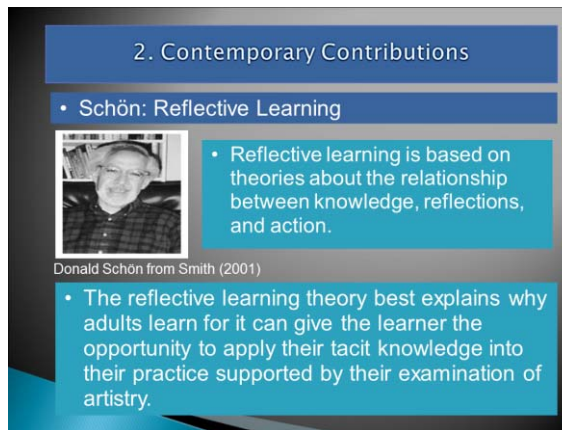
Merriam et al. (2007) asserted, “Through storytelling, Daloz and his students journey toward a more holistic and transformed world-view. Like Mezirow and Freire, Daloz recognizes the importance of cognitive growth. He acknowledges the importance of the whole person in that growth (p.139).”

Activities:

1. Ask participants to comment on Mezirow and Daloz’ quotes. Relate to Merriam et al. quote.
2. How do participants perceive such comments reflected in their practice?

(Break for lunch, 60 minutes)

### Contemporary Contributions: Reflective Learning (45 minutes)



2. Contemporary Contributions

- Schön: Reflective Learning

Donald Schön from Smith (2001)

- Reflective learning is based on theories about the relationship between knowledge, reflections, and action.
- The reflective learning theory best explains why adults learn for it can give the learner the opportunity to apply their tacit knowledge into their practice supported by their examination of artistry.

Second language students would prefer to ask a native speaker a grammatical related question expecting an accurate “grammatical” answer. Although the native speaker may understand the function of the grammatical structure, he or she may not be able to give an appropriate grammatical explanation. The reason is that the tacit knowledge of the native speaker can allow him or her to give examples showing the

linguistic behavior in question. (These are the theories-in-use.) The native speaker can offer an explanation without grammatical foundation (These are the theories of action.)

ESL instructors are trained practitioner that can use the research knowledge to explain the structural concept from the grammatical standpoint. The tacit knowledge can help them deliver the concept by their “examination of artistry.” Schön (1987) asserted that “artistry is an exercise of intelligence, a kind of knowing, though different in crucial respects from our standard model of professional knowledge” (p.13).

Activity:

1. Why do you think the native speaker was not able to convince the student with the grammatical explanation? How was the native speaker able to do to explain?
2. Discuss Answer: The native speaker may lack the “artistry” gained by the ESL instructor through research and practice.
3. Present the following quote from Dr. Stephen Brookfield, an expert on critical thinking:

Teachers function sometimes as catalysts of discussion and inquiry, sometimes as contributory group members. They perform such diverse roles as being advocates for missing perspectives, adversaries to propaganda, readers of sessions, mediators of divisive tendencies, and resource persons. They focus on contextual skill development, so that cognitive skills are acquired in the exploration of genuine student experiences. (Brookfield, 2010, p. 80)

4. Ask for some examples of reflexive learning you practice in the ESL classroom according to Dr. Brookfield's timeless statement.

### **XIX. Contemporary Contributions: Self-directing Learning (40 minutes)**

2. Contemporary Contributions

- Rogers: Self-directing Learning
- The notion of "self" cannot stay outside constructivism for being the motor of learning in adults. Is not their interest to enhance their knowledge to perform better in their world?

Carl Rogers from Smith (1997)

- It is the responsibility of the instructor to help learners detach from previous directed and passive pedagogical instruction

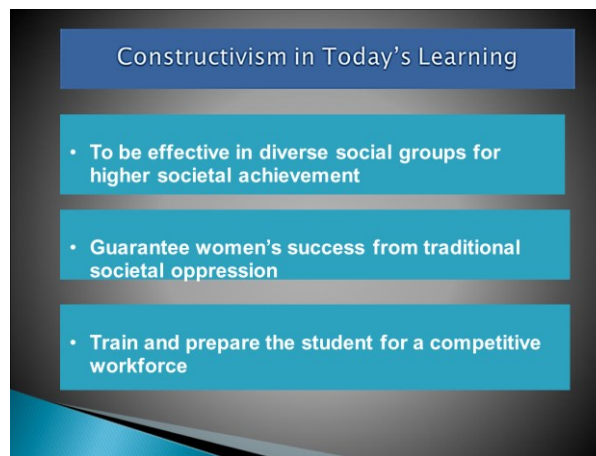
During the 1960-1970s, Carl Rogers conducted research and experimentation with psychological patients leading to the application of self-directed learning to models of student-centeredness in adult learning. As stated by O'Hara, (2003), Rogers' applications demonstrated "higher levels of consciousness in individuals and within larger systems" (p.65). She considered such studies as a foundation for the development of transformative learning models of social learning.

The individual's self-concept could lead to a more active and self-directing process. Merriam et al. (2007) identified three major goals of self-directed learning: "Enhancing the ability of adults to be self-directed in their learning. The fostering of transformational learning as central to self-directed learning (...), [and] promoting emancipatory learning and social action" (p.129). Self-directed students will achieve transformational outcomes by reaching more social and professional opportunities in society.

Activities:

1. What practices in class could help students develop self-directed study skills?
2. As an instructor, how can you prepare the student to be more self-directed out of class?

#### **X. Constructivism Today (25 minutes)**



Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) stated that “in order to foster transformative learning, this perspective promotes inclusion of voices traditionally silenced and a sense of belonging as a member of the group” (p.143). Diversity and cultural identity should be respected and recognized as characteristics intrinsic to the student’s personality and experiences. Students should be empowered to reject oppressive behavior towards them or from them to others. This will be an important step toward eliminating challenges that can impede transformation through knowledge acquisition and social integration.

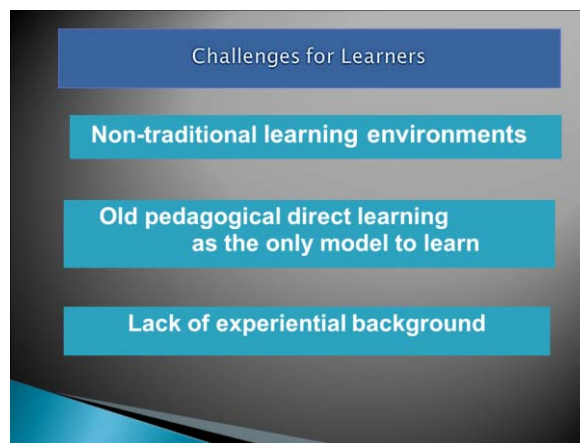
Activity:



1. How do you ensure student integration in classrooms with diversity of students from different ethnicities, age, gender, and economic backgrounds?
2. How would you combat bullying and other oppressive practices in classroom?

(Allow 10-minute break)

### **XI - Challenges for Learners (20 minutes)**

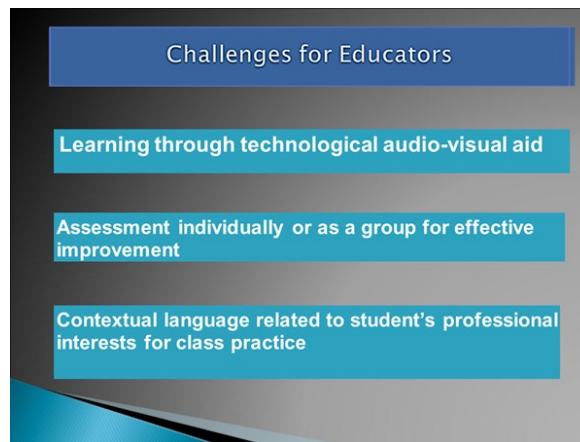


We instructors experienced that students may feel uncomfortable or afraid of talking in a diverse group while others may “bully” the weaker ones in an attempt to show up their gains. Most adult learners bring experiences from work, studies or social outstanding from their countries. Others may come from depressed countries and they don’t have much study or work experience. Daloz (1999) stated, “Mentors most obviously provide vision by modeling the person whom the protégé wants to become” (p. 223). As mentors, we should help our students overcome fear to be ridiculed by other students when they participate in classroom activities. This can be achieved by exchanging knowledge through group collaboration. Intrinsic motivation should be an impulse for students to achieve successful learning outcomes.

Activity:

1. Ask about different motivational activities done in class.
2. How can these activities engage students to finish the course and return to the next one?
3. Students come from societies with a perspective of learning under traditional pedagogic models and may reject a different approach in adult learning. Some can adapt learning under andragogic models. How would you transition the student to embrace the andragogical models of adult learning?

**XII. Challenges for Educators (20 minutes)**



The andragogic learning theories can offer students a possibility to integrate new concepts or information to their jobs along with their experiences and interactions in the community. Technology usage is present by the usage of multimedia as a class resource, language lab practice and other applications of the class material to the students' real life scenarios. Assessments are positive tools, which are used to involve students in peer partnership to make recommendations for class improvements.

(Continue to next slide for topic conclusion)

### **XIII. Challenges for Educators (Continued) (20 minutes)**

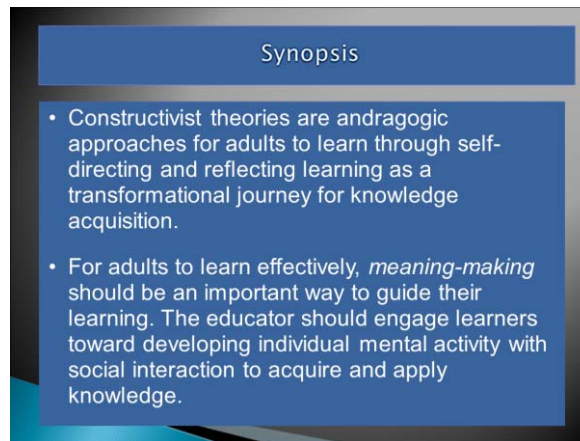


- Instructors need to adopt role models as mentors and coaches to help students achieve self-directing learning with modern technological aids of their preference.
- Educators need to recognize students as individuals with unique characteristics, personalities, and goals. This will allow a better interaction and productive instructor-learner relationships.
- Instructors need to utilize student's experiences for application of new concepts and knowledge.
- Institutions should support educators with accessible training such as Career Training Development workshops, reimbursed tuition, etc.

Activity:

1. How would you incorporate technology in your classroom?
2. What do you do for professional development? What is available for you and how do you take advantage of it?

#### XIV. Synopsis (20 minutes)



Introduce the synopsis by considering that constructivism is the sum of other approaches and educational perspectives. Close this site with the following statements written on a chart:

In sum, all perspectives possess commonalities. All theorists are constructivists. That is, they view knowledge as constructed by the learner rather than ‘out there’ to be discovered (...) Most theorists mention social change as a result of transformative learning. (Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner, 2007, p. 144)

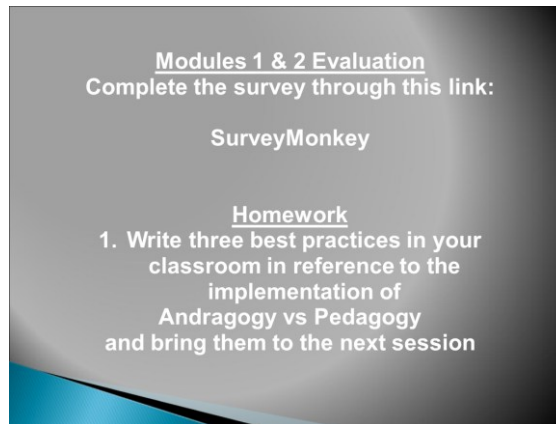
Activity:

1. Discuss Merriam et al., quote.
2. Ask: Why is social change so important in transformational learning.
3. Write two exercises you can do in class to practice meaning-making

#### XV. Questions and Answers (20 minutes)

Encourage participants to add any further comments or ask other questions relevant to the presentation.

## XVI. Evaluation, Homework Assignment, and Farewell (20 minutes)



(End of Session 1, Module 1)

### Session 2: Module 2. Motivation, Engagement, and Mentorship

Module 2 provides an overview of motivation as an important instructor tool to engage students in the learning journey, thus ensuring retention in the program. Mentorship will be addressed as a characteristic that instructors need to develop to achieve students' engagement with the group that will motivate them to continue advancing through different proficiency levels. Participants will understand that motivation, engagement, and mentorship are “student-centered” approaches of the constructivist theories that facilitate transformational adult learning. This module will be half day of training. As facilitator, I will provide handouts and videos to steer collaborative discussion leading instructors to write a series of best practices to be applied in their classrooms.

### Ice Breaker: (25 minutes)

1. Review and discuss the best practices that participants brought from last session assignment. Add the best practices to a main document titled: “Best Practices for Student-Centeredness in the IEP”

2. Review and discuss the andragogy assumptions learned on the last module.

**How Adults Learn: Timeless Recommendations. (55 minutes)**

1. Distribute handouts of “How Adults Learn” by William Draves. Participants will divide in 4 groups and each will read and discuss amongst them the four characteristics of adult learners: emotional, physical, mental, and social.
2. The groups will take turns discussing the characteristics to the group and relate them to their classrooms. What would they do to accommodate such characteristics?
3. Take notes to create a set of best practices.

**The Healthy Aging Brain (90 minutes)**

1. Watch the video “The Healthy Brain” by Louis Cozolino. (40 minutes).

Ask participants to take notes.

(Allow 10 minutes break)

2. Group collaboration (50 minutes) Each of the 4 groups will be assigned one of the following questions to be discussed:
  - a) According to the population of students registered in your classes, some of them will be adults over 30 years of age. How would you address their concern that they cannot learn a second language because they are not children anymore? How can you help them gain confidence? Give examples and use real life anecdotes.
  - b) How would you help older students cope with the dynamism of younger so that both are equally engaged? Give examples of strategies of pairing, or creating study groups in which younger students will help older ones cope with learning

anxiety. Older students offer their life experiences to younger ones to enhance engagement and learning.

- c) Comment on Dr. Cozolino's comments that we should not let our brains detach from learning activities. What would you advise your older students to keep their motivation?
- d) Discuss how storytelling by older students could be an asset for your class? Give examples.

### **Helping Adults Learn: Timeless Recommendations. (40 minutes)**

1. Distribute handouts of "Helping Adults Learn" by William Draves.
2. Participants will divide into three groups and each will read and discuss with other members in the group what the attributes of a good teacher, their skills, and the steps in positive teaching are.
3. The groups will take turns discussing the attributes of good teachers and relate those specific features and characteristics of good teachers to their classrooms. What would they do to become a better, more positive teacher?

### **Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation (30 minutes)**

1. Distribute a copy of the journal article "Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation: Evaluating Benefits and Drawbacks from College Instructors' Perspectives" by Simon A. Lei.
2. Create two groups that will read and discuss in class the following topics:
  - a) What are the intrinsic motivators and drawbacks for college students? How do you perceive your role as instructor to help the students achieve higher outcomes?

- b) What are the extrinsic motivators and drawbacks for college students? How do you perceive your role as instructor to help the students achieve higher outcomes?
  3. Take notes to create a set of best practices to be discussed and added to the document “Best practices for student-centeredness in the IEP.”
- (End of Module 2: Break for Lunch. 60 minutes)

### Session 2: Module 3. Self-concept and Group Support

Module 3 provides an overview of the meaning of self-concept as an important instructor tool to engage students in their language acquisition and development, thus ensuring retention in the program. Participants will understand that creating awareness of the student’s self-direction in adult learning is a “student-centered” approach of the constructivist theories that facilitate transformational adult learning. This module will be half day of training. As facilitator, I will provide handouts and videos to steer collaborative discussion leading instructors to write a series of best practices to be applied in their classrooms.

#### **Introduction: (25 minutes)**

1. Review and discuss the best practices that participants brought from last session assignment.
2. Add the best practices for Modules 1 and 2 to a main draft that will be completed after Module 5.

#### **Self-concept and Self-esteem (55 minutes)**

1. Create 2 groups and distribute a copy of the article: “Gender Differences in Self-concept and Self-esteem Components” (Marčič & Grum, 2011)



2. Assign one of the following topics for discussion to each group for discussion:
  - a) The study showed that in the area of self-concept males and females statistically differ especially in “interdependent self-concept” (p.377). How can you relate this study to your students? Explain what activities would you offer in class to take advantage of this interdependent self-concept of your adult learners?
  - b) On page 374, the authors discuss “contingent and uncontingent self-esteem.” Please explain both and relate to your adult learners. How can you interact with them taking in consideration both characteristics?

### **Involving Your Participants (30 minutes)**

1. Distribute handouts of “Involving your participants” by William Draves.
2. Create three groups and assign each of the following topics for discussion:
  - a) Explain the seven ways to tap participants’ skills and knowledge, from “Students as Participants” (p. 53). What characteristics may help you or not in your IEP class?
  - b) Give several examples of the “Teachable Moment” (p.53) in your classroom according to the reading.
  - c) How do you deal with “drop-outs” (p.55) in your class? How can you approach the administration for help?
  - d) Relate to “Adjusting to Differing Expectations” (p.56) and reflect in the way you handle them in your classroom.

**Evaluation, Homework Assignment, and Farewell (10 minutes)**

1. Remind students to submit Session 2 evaluation through Survey Monkey® for Modules 2 and 3.
2. Students will bring a set of best practices from Module 3 for next session.

(End of Module 3 and Session 2)

**Session 3: Module 4. Curriculum and Technology: Teaching with CALL**

Module 4 provides an overview of the effectiveness to use technology to enhance the learning process while developing technological skills. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, technology is way of life from the use of sophisticated smart telephones to the use of computer like devices such as Ipad™, computer tablets and a great array of Internet applications and instructional free webpages. Instructors can take advantage of these technological aids to engage students in their language acquisition and development, thus ensuring retention in the program.

Participants will understand that training students in the use of online labs, if no physical lab with related software to the curriculum is available, will maintain their motivation and engagement in the program. Assigning technology aided homework, whether on physical or online labs, is an approach that can contribute to student's self-direction development. This is another "student-centered" approach of the constructivist theories that facilitate transformational adult learning. This module will be half day of training. As facilitator, I will provide handouts and videos to steer collaborative discussion leading instructors to write a series of best practices to be applied in their classrooms.

## **Teaching with CALL**

### **Ice Breaker: (25 minutes)**

1. Review and discuss the best practices that participants brought from last session assignment. They will be added to the document: “Best practices for student-centeredness in the IEP.”
2. Review and discuss current trends in computer-assisted language learning (CALL). Read “What is CALL” (pp. 1 -10) from the book “Tips for teaching with CALL” (Chapelle & Jamieson, 2008).
3. Participants will discuss language lab components attached to their actual teaching curriculum.

### **Group Assignments (40 minutes)**

1. Break down into four groups. Each group will read and discuss the following chapters:

Group 1: Chapter 1, Vocabulary and Chapter 2, Grammar.

Group 2: Chapter 3, Reading and Chapter 4, Writing

Group 3: Chapter 5, Listening and Chapter 6, Speaking

Group 4: Chapter 7, Communication Skills and Chapter 8, Content-based Language

2. Group Discussion (55 minutes)

Each group will do a brief presentation about the following topics found on each chapter:

- a) What do researchers say?
- b) What the teacher can do?

- c) Access one webpage online and demonstrate an exercise with a projector. There is a CD Rom with the book that can be used for demonstration.
- d) What homework practice should be assigned?

(Allow 10-minute break)

### **Half of All Learning is Online (100 minutes)**

1. The facilitator will explain what the “nine shifts” are according to authors Draves and Coates.
2. The four groups will convene to read and discuss the handout “Half of Learning is Online: Shift Eight” (pp. 229-247) from the book “Nine Shift: Work, Life and Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” (Draves & Coates, 2004). Topics are assigned for group collaboration.
3. Discussion: Each group will discuss the following topics:
  - Group 1: Discuss what information transfer is and why more information occurs in online learning. What experiences have you, a colleague, or a student had with online learning?
  - Group 2: Explain the forces driving online learning? What is its impact?
  - Group 3: How can you compensate the online learning with “learning in person”? What would you like to accomplish with “learning in person”?
  - Group 4: How knowledge is organized online? How do young people learn online?

### **Evaluation, Homework Assignment, and Farewell (20 minutes)**

1. Remind students to submit Session 2 evaluation through Survey Monkey® for Modules 2 and 3.

2. Using the provided outline, Students will add a set of best practices from Module 4 to the document “Best Practices for Student-centeredness in IEPs.”

(End of Module 4: Break for Lunch. 60 minutes)

### Session 3: Module 5. Trends in Adult Learning for Transformational Outcomes

Module 5 provides an overview of the trends of adult learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Globalization and the shift to lifelong learning are among the different trends explored in this module. Participants will understand that andragogy theories with emphasis in self-directed and transformational learning are preferred trends of “student-centeredness” for adult learning. This module will be half day of training. As the facilitator, I will provide handouts and videos to steer collaborative discussion leading instructors to write a series of best practices to be applied in their classrooms.

#### **Ice Breaker: (15 minutes)**

1. Review and discuss the best practices that participants brought from last session assignment.
2. Participants will add them to the document: “Best practices for student-centeredness in the IEP.”
3. Distribute participants into four groups for the next activity.

#### **Trends in Adult Learning (45 minutes)**

Participants will watch the video: “Trends in Adult Learning” by Dr. Sharan Merriam. They will receive an outline for note taking to discuss the following topics after the showing:

1. Globalization: How has globalization affected adult education

2. Rapid Change: What does “half-life of knowledge” mean? How do you see this affecting your classroom or curriculum?
3. Another trend is the shift to lifelong learning. Explain what is “life wide” and how does that reflect in your classroom?
4. “Learning is more contextualized” is another trend involving andragogy, self-directed, and transformational learning. What could be the benefit of these theories for instructors who continue embracing education as a direct-learning approach?
5. Situated cognition: Give five examples of its application in your language development class.
6. The growth of critical perspectives is another trend we are experiencing as a rapid evolving in the social and political environment. How do you see this trend reflected in your practice? How could you empower your students to reject “oppression”?
7. How can you implement the holistic conceptions of learning in your class?
8. What are the implications of “learning is lifelong” for your language development courses?

### **Group Collaboration and Discussion (60 minutes)**

Each group will collaborate for 10 minutes in preparation to answer two of the questions featured on the outline. After the discussion, participants will write a set of best practices to be added to the document “Best practices for student-centeredness in the IEP.”

(Allow 10 minutes break)

### **Transformational Learning (60 minutes)**

1. The four groups will get together again to read the journal article, “Transformative Learning. Theory to Practice” by Jack Mezirow (1997).
2. Each of the group will be asked to answer two of the following questions:
  - a) Read the following statement, “When circumstances permit, transformative learners move toward a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of experience” (p.5). Discuss how you apply the cognitive, conative, and emotional components of the frames of references in your language class. Include the two dimensions: “habits of mind” and a “point of view”.
  - b) How would you use “communicative learning” in your class to achieve “discourse”. Explain two scenarios in a beginning IEP class.
  - c) How could you see this statement reflected on your conversational class, “Self-reflection can lead to significant personal transformations” (p.7). Give two examples.
  - d) Mezirow indicated that “there are four processes of learning” (p.7). Explain each one of them and set examples of each in your curriculum.
  - e) Explain “autonomous thinking” (p.7). How can you train your students to become autonomous thinkers?
  - f) Mezirow compared the “foundations of learning” (p.8) between children and adult learners. Can you set examples of each of the tasks of the foundations of adult learning?
  - g) According to Mezirow, “to facilitate transformational learning” (p.10), what should educators do?

h) Apply the following statement to your mentoring role as an IEP instructor, “In fostering self-direction (...), the educator functions as a facilitator and provocateur rather than as an authority on subject matter”. What activities would you implement to achieve self-direction in your students?

**Professional Development Conclusions: (40 minutes)**

Add the best practices from Module 5 to finalize the document: “Best Practices for student-centeredness in the IEP.” Read all best practices and discuss their relevance.

**Evaluation and Farewell (20 minutes)**

1. Participants will talk about the activity they like the most from the entire presentation.
2. Participants will discuss one topic they learned that is very relevant for their teaching environment
3. Remind participants to submit Session 2 evaluation through Survey Monkey® for Modules 4 and 5.



## Video Outline

**Video: “Trends in Adult Learning” by Dr. Sharan Merriam.**

1. Globalization: How has globalization affected adult education?
2. Rapid Change: What does “half-life of knowledge” mean? How do you see this affecting your classroom or curriculum?
3. Another trend is the shift to lifelong learning. Explain what is “life wide” and how does that reflect in your classroom?
4. “Learning is more contextualized” is another trend involving andragogy, self-directed, and transformational learning. What could be the benefit of these theories for instructors who continue embracing education as a direct-learning approach?
5. Situated cognition: Give five examples of its application in your language development class.
6. The growth of critical perspectives is another trend we are experiencing as a rapid evolving in the social and political environment. How do you see this trend reflected in your practice? How could you empower your students to reject “oppression”?
7. How can you implement the holistic conceptions of learning in your class?
8. What are the implications of “learning is lifelong” for your language development courses?

Presentation Evaluation Form  
 Professional Development Program  
 Effective Retention in Intensive English Programs Based on Student-Centered  
 Approaches.

Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Rate the presenter based on the following:*

*Please circle the response that best indicates the degree to which to agree with each statement.)*

<b>THE PRESENTER...</b>	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE</b>	<b>DISAGREE</b>	<b>SOMEWHAT AGREE</b>	<b>AGREE</b>	<b>STRONGLY AGREE</b>
a) presented the subject matter clearly	1	2	3	4	5
b) presented the subject matter clearly	1	2	3	4	5
c) prepared presentation according to instructions	1	2	3	4	5
d) made the goals and objectives clear at the beginning	1	2	3	4	5
e) presented him/herself in a professional manner	1	2	3	4	5
f) was able to communicate well and held the group attention	1	2	3	4	5

Overall, were you satisfied with the presentation?  Yes  No

What were the strengths?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What improvements do you suggest?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What other comments would you like to share?

\_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: (optional) \_\_\_\_\_ ☞ Thank you! ☞

Outline: Best Practices for Student-Centeredness in IEP

Professional Development Program

Effective Retention in Intensive English Programs Based on Student-Centered Approaches

Theme	Language Practice Activity	Best Practice
MOTIVATION AND ENGAGEMENT		
MENTORSHIP		
SELF-DIRECTION		
CURRICULUM TECHNOLOGY		
TRANSFORMATIONAL OUTCOMES		

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## Appendix B: Certification to Conduct Research





## Appendix C.1: Application for Request to Conduct Research On-site

## Request to the Institution

A South Florida College  
CASSC Research and Testing Committee  
Research Application

Date     TBA    

Proposal: Influential Factors That Affect Retention and Language Acquisition in Beginning ESL Adult Students

Primary Investigator: Luis Manuel Rodriguez-Garcia  
No other investigator will participate in the study.

Institution: Walden UniversitySummary prepared by: Luis Manuel Rodriguez-Garcia

Please email completed request and attachments to the Director of Institutional Research at email: \_\_\_\_\_.

Applies To All Research Requests

## 1. Proposal received stating purpose &amp; benefits of research

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors that motivate beginning students to continue engaged and matriculated in the Intensive English Program (IEP) program while succeeding in the acquisition and improvement of skills in English as a Second Language.

The importance of the study is that by knowing such factors, educational institutions could design strategies to keep students motivated and engaged in the second language acquisition courses. Following assumptions based on previous research that andragogical frameworks of student-centeredness could influence the motivation and engagement of second language acquisition, this case study aims to get student's opinions, perceptions and feedback on their experiences in their first course.

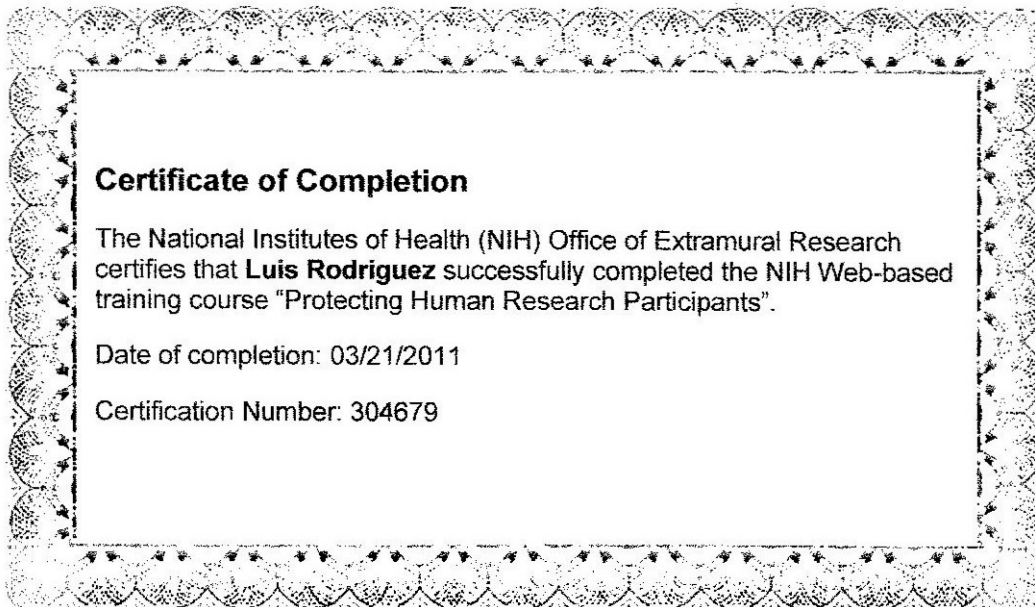
The guiding questions are expected to satisfy the reasons for motivation and engagement in the beginning course as well as the instructional approaches used in class that kept students motivated to continue engaged in successive courses.

Benefit: The need to ensure student retention for program sustainability in continuing education courses and to develop language skills for students' success in the workforce will provide context in this qualitative study steered from an interpretive epistemological standpoint.

## 2. Which one of the following does this research support?

Dissertation,  Master's Thesis,  Grant,  In-Class Research,  Other  
[In-class research should be approved before the start of the semester.]

3. Has Primary Investigator successfully completed training in the responsible conduct of research?  Yes,  No



4. Prior approvals (from requesting institution/agency): TBA

[List approvals here. Copies of approval from dissertation committees and approval from the University review board must be included as attachments. Copies of approvals from affected faculty and chairperson approvals from affected departments must be included as attachments.]

5. Investigator has made arrangements for collecting data:

[Include a description of the data collection plans here. Researchers must make their own arrangements to collect data and it is up to the researcher to get faculty cooperation if they plan to use class time. Researchers can also try alternative methods, such as setting up a table to solicit students in a common area. The college does not provide faculty or student e-mail addresses.]

Arrangements to collect data has been made with the Director of the IEP department (Attached Letter). As a primary investigator for the study, I will set up a table to solicit students in a common area of student traffic after class. I will offer information about the project-study and will collect email addresses and phone number from students interested to participate through the Participant Recruitment and Orientation Form (copy to the student). From these forms, up to 40 students will be selected as a purposeful sample and will be sent an open-ended survey through Survey Monkey ®. Also, from the purposeful sample, up to 15 participants will be selected as a homogeneous group for being beginning IEP students on their second course. They will be invited to attend one of two focus groups or one interview session. I will ensure the groups to have diversity according to their demographic characteristics related to age, gender, race, and economic backgrounds.

Each of these events will last no more than sixty (60) minutes and they will be administered on campus after students have completed their schedule of classes. Students will be asked to arrive 15 minutes prior to the focus group or interview session for orientation and clarification on their rights as participants. I will make arrangements and will conduct the data collection events in the following order:

**Survey instruments:**

[Include a short description of the survey instrument. Include any survey instruments researchers plan to use as an attachment]

**Open-ended Surveys:** Twelve open ended questions will be e-mailed through Survey Monkey® to the purposeful sample (up to 40 students) to start the data collection for the study. These questions will focus on student-instructor engagement, motivation and student-centered methodology used in the classroom. Participants will be asked to sign an electronically form prior to the survey. The survey will available in English and Spanish, considering the student population of the IEP program at North West Campus is predominantly Hispanic. (See Appendix F)

**Focus groups:** Two focus group will be conducted to seek students' opinions and perceptions on their experiences in their first course of the Intensive English Program. Twelve open ended questions will be asked to the group during this data collection event. The questions will focus on class and group engagement, student motivation and student-centered methodology used in their classroom. Participants will be asked to sign a Letter of Informed Consent prior to the focus group event. The questions will available in English and Spanish, considering the student population of the IEP program at West Campus is predominantly Hispanic The focus groups will be audio recorded to be written verbatim. (See Appendix G)

**Individual Interviews:** The interviews will follow the same structure of the focus group with 12 similar questions related to engagement, motivation and student-centered instructional methods used in classroom. During the individual interviews face to face, participants will be more comfortable to offer their answers. Participants will be asked to sign a Letter of Informed Consent prior to the focus group event. The interview will available in English and Spanish, considering the student population of the IEP program at North West Campus is predominantly Hispanic The focus groups will be audio recorded for verbatim transcription purposes. (See Appendix H)

**Electronic data:** No electronic data will be used in this case study. However, focus groups and individual interviews will be tape recorded for verbatim transcription purposes. Students will offer voluntarily their email addresses contacting procedures.

#### 6. Consent forms are present or will be used where necessary:

[If human subjects are being used, the informed consent must be included as an attachment. It is especially important that the document indicate that subjects are free to participate or not.] Letters of Informed Consent will be signed by participants prior to participation in any data collection event, as specified in Item #5. (Appendix E)

#### 7. Confidentiality of data is addressed:

[How will the researcher ensure confidentiality?]

As specified in the Letter of Informed Consent:

- Participant's responses will be kept confidentially and a pseudonym will be used to represent the information in the study report.
- Participants' responses should not be shared with anyone including friends and family.
- The researcher will not disclose participant's personal information or identity to third parties.
- The audio recording tapes will be saved with password for a period of five years as required by Walden University.

#### 8. Estimated intrusiveness of study:

[Give best estimates to the three items below.]

**Number of participants:** Up to 40 students enrolled in their second EIP course will make the purposeful sample and will be invited to respond the online survey through Survey Monkey. From the purposeful sample up to 15 students will be invited to attend one focus group session or the individual interviews. The criteria for the type of event will be based on participants' choices.

Classroom time: None

Faculty/staff time: None

Computer time/resources: None

**9. Appropriateness of study to the college:**

[Comment on the two items below. The college receives many research requests and this is an important part of our consideration.]

**Potential benefits:** The Intensive English Programs of the college will benefit from findings and conclusions about the motivational factors that engage students to continue enrollment in the program. The findings and recommendations of the study may also be generalized to other institutions.

**Negative aspects:** None. The investigator will strive for maintaining any personal bias aside from the study and that the dissemination of findings will not damage the college reputation.

**10. Any issues not covered above:**

The investigator oversees the operations of the IEP at the South Florida Campus. The investigator will respect all confidentiality issues and will ensure that participants in the study will not use their classroom/learning time for any of the data collection events. Instructor's participation will not be required.

There will be no conflict of interests due to my supervisory position because I will solely speak to students from another campus with whom I currently have no direct contact nor will I have it in the future.

Inclusion and exclusion of participants' criteria have been disclosed in the Letter of Informed Consent.

## Appendix C.2: Researcher's Request to Department Chairperson for Cooperation

[Date]

Name, Director

School of Continuing Education

Institution – South West Campus

Dear Mr. Name,

As a candidate for a Doctor of Education degree in Higher Education and Adult Learning at Walden University, I plan to conduct a case study for the dissertation as a graduation requirement titled “Influential Factors the Affect Retention and Language Acquisition in Beginning ESL Students.” The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors that motivate and engage beginning students to continue enrollment in Intensive English Programs (IEP) while succeeding in the acquisition and improvement of English as a Second Language skills. Considering that the IEP may benefit college wide with this study, I have decided to conduct it at North West Campus which have similar programs and will not bring ethical repercussions to my coordinating position at the South Florida Campus.

As part of the process to collect data from IEP participants, I will be requesting permission from the CASSC Research and Testing Committee of this institution. Once approval from CASSC is secured, I will apply to the Institutional Review Board of Walden University for the required approval to start the study. All measures to comply with the National Institutes of Health have been taken into consideration to respect the confidentiality and safeness of the participants. Therefore, I appreciate your acceptance of cooperation before I submit my request to CASSC.

Research Protocol:

I will take time off from my office duties under Personal Time compensation during the following data collection events:

- To solicit participants for the study, I will be setting up a table on a conspicuous area near student traffic at the end of their classes during three days for two hours each day.
- I will distribute information about the study and will collect email addresses from students willing to participate (Participant Recruitment and Orientation Form).
- An open-ended survey will be sent to the entire purposeful group of up to 40 students via “Survey Monkey®” to the email address offered voluntarily by during solicitation and recruitment on campus grounds.
- I will select an homogenous sample of up to 15 participants outside of class hours. There will be two focus groups and individual interview sessions. The focus groups and the interview sessions will last 60 minutes each.

- I will personally engage with the students during the three data collection events in the role of researcher or investigator; however, this will not cause a conflict of interests to my supervising position at the EIP of the South Florida Campus.
- I will ensure that my engagement with the participants will not make them feel coerced.

I expect the data collection to start by March 11, 2013 and conclude by April 20, 2013. I will reserve one small conference room or classroom during the afternoon hours after classes have concluded for the focus groups and the individual interviews. I believe this study will be of great benefit for the IEP and hope that other institutions may follow the recommendations made after the findings have been analyzed and reported. I am available to answer any questions you may have regarding this case study, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

---

Luis Manuel Rodriguez,  
Coordinator  
South Florida Campus

### Appendix D.1: Participant Orientation Form (English)

Participant Orientation for a Research Study at the Intensive English Program of the North West Campus

Information of the Characteristics and Steps of the Study

1. Researcher: Luis Manuel Rodríguez. Email: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Study Title: Influential Factors That Affect Retention and Language Acquisition in Beginning ESL Students
4. Reason for the Study. To investigate factors for student retention in beginning Intensive English Program students
5. Composition of the Student Sample: About 40 students who enrolled in their second course of the Intensive English Program at the Northwest Campus will be invited to this study. Students from credit programs are excluded as IEP is a non-credit program.
6. Informed Consent Form: Significance of the form.  
  
Students who accept participation in the study will sign a *Letter of Informed Consent* for each data collection event in which the student participates.  
  
Note: The consent form explains the protection rights for the participant. Participants can withdraw from the student any time, if so preferred. A copy of the form will be given to the student.
7. Characteristics of the study and requisites to participate:
  - a) Ethical: Confidential nature of the study. Pseudonyms will be assigned to each student for privacy.

- b) Data Collection: Email invitation to complete one (1) open-ended survey online for all participants. Five (5) participants will be selected for each of two focus groups. Another five (5) participants will be selected for individual interviewing.

Note: Some participants who participated in the Survey Monkey® may be called to voluntarily participate in one focus group or one interview. However, it is estimated that the participants will attend one event only.

- c) Time frame for the study: Participants will attend one focus group or one interview session between June 17 to 21, 2013. The Survey Monkey® questionnaire will be offered seven (7) days to be responded on the Internet around the same dates.

- d) Compensation: No compensation will be offered for participation in the study. A gift certificate for the Campus Bookstore with a \$20 value will be offered as a token of appreciation.

Note: After the Survey Monkey has been submitted, the participant will print a coupon for the Gift Certificate to be redeemed at the Campus Bookstore. After the Focus Group or Individual Interview has finished, the student will receive the \$20 Gift Certificate.

8. Next Steps:

- a) An open-ended survey will be emailed through Survey Monkey ® to all selected participants. The Letter of Informed Consent will be included
- b) Students selected to participate in focus groups or the individual interviews will be called to arrange the meeting schedule. Prior to beginning the data collection event, the students will sign and hand out their Letters of Informed Consent

If interested in participating write your email address to be contacted:

---



## Appendix D.2: Participant Orientation Form (Spanish)

## Información sobre las características y pasos del estudio

1. Investigador: Luis Manuel Rodriguez. Correo: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Teléfono: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Título del estudio: Factores influenciales que afectan la retención escolar y el aprendizaje de los principiantes en el programa de Inglés como Segunda Lengua.
4. Razón por la que se efectúa el estudio: Para investigar los factores que influyen en el aprendizaje y la retención de principiantes en el programa de Inglés Intensivo.
5. Composición de la muestra de participantes: Hasta 40 estudiantes que comiencen el segundo curso en el programa de Inglés Intensivo del Programa Intensivo de Inglés del recinto Noroeste serán invitados para participar en este estudio investigativo. Estudiantes de programas con crédito no podrán participar por ser el Ingles Intensivo un programa sin créditos.
6. Carta de Consentimiento Informado: Los estudiantes que acepten participar en el estudio firmarán la Carta de Consentimiento Informado por cada evento de entrevista en que participe.  
  
Nota: La Carta de Consentimiento Informado explica los derechos del participante para su protección. Cualquier participante podrá terminar el estudio en cualquier momento si así lo deseara.
7. Características del estudio y los requisitos para participar:

- a) Éticos: Carácter confidencial del estudio. Se usarán seudónimos para proteger la privacidad de los participantes.
- b. Colección de información: Todos los participantes serán invitados a completar un (1) cuestionario a través de Survey Monkey® por la Internet. Cinco (5) participantes serán seleccionados para cada uno de los dos Grupos de Enfoque. Otros cinco (5) participantes serán seleccionados para las entrevistas individuales.

Nota: Algunos participantes que decidan en responder el cuestionario de Survey Monkey® también podrían ser llamados para participar en un grupo de enfoque o en una entrevista individual. Sin embargo, se estima que los participantes solo asistirán a un evento de colección de información.

- c) Duración del estudio. Los participantes asistirán a una entrevista de grupo o a una entrevista individual entre Junio 17 y 21 del 2013.

La encuesta por la Internet puede completarse en un término de siete (7) días desde que sea recibido dentro de estas mismas fechas.

- d). Compensación: No se ofrecerá compensación monetaria a los participantes. Al finalizar el Survey Monkey®, el participante podrá imprimir un cupon por un valor de \$20 para comprar en la librería del recinto. Un certificado de regalo por \$20 para comprar en la librería del recinto también será entregado a cada participante al finalizar el grupo de enfoque o la entrevista individual como agradecimiento por su participación.

8. Próximos pasos:

- a) El cuestionario a través de Survey Monkey® será enviado a todos los participantes. Una carta de Consentimiento del participante será firmada electrónicamente antes de contestar el cuestionario en Survey Monkey®.
- b) Otros participantes serán seleccionados para participar en los grupos de enfoque o las entrevistas individuales y se llamarán para fijar citas. Estos eventos comenzaran con la firma y entrega por los participantes de sus cartas de consentimiento.

Si está interesado (a) en participar escriba el correo electrónico para contactarle:

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### Appendix E.1: Letter of Informed Consent (English)

You are invited to take part in a research study of influential factors that affect retention and language acquisition in beginning students of English as a Second Language (ESL) in an Intensive English Program (IEP). You have been selected to participate in the study because you have completed the beginning course and registered for the second one.

This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Luis Manuel Rodriguez-Garcia, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. You may already know the researcher as a coordinator of the Intensive English Program, but this study is separate from that role.

#### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors that motivate beginning students to continue engaged and matriculated in the Intensive English Program (IEP) while succeeding in the acquisition and improvement of skills in English as a Second Language.

#### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be selected to participate in an open-ended Survey sent by email to all participants through Survey Monkey®. You will be able to sign electronically this Letter of Informed Consent before taking the survey online. The survey may take 30 to 60 minutes. Also, some participants will be selected to participate in one of the following events:

- One (1) Focus Group or one (1) Individual Interview.
  - Any of these two events will have an estimated time of 60 minutes.
  - You are expected to arrive at least 15 minutes prior to your scheduled time.
  - You are expected to verify the accuracy of the information you offer to the researcher and understand your rights as a human subject participating in a research study.
  - Participants will sign the Letter of Informed Consent prior to participate in the focus groups or individual interviews.
- The criteria for selection will be based on:
  - Beginning students of the IEP Program on their second course.
  - All participants will be invited via email to take the open-ended survey on Survey Monkey through the Internet.
  - Selection of participants for the focus groups and surveys will be based on:

- a) Participant preference to focus groups or individual interviews
- b) Diversity: Groups will be formed with participants of different age, gender and economic background. This information was shared by the student in the Recruitment and Orientation Form.

Once participants have taken the survey, they will have concluded with their participation in the study, except any participant who may have been selected to take part of the focus group or the individual interview.

**Sample Questions:**

- How did the instructor help you engage with the group?
- Mention three things you liked most from your class and three you did not like.
- Explain three class activities that made you feel part of the group.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at the Intensive English Program will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as fatigue, stress or becoming upset. However, participating in this study would not pose any physical or psychological risk to your safety or wellbeing as required by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to protect human subjects participating in research studies.

There will be no immediate personal benefits to you for participating in the study. However, your responses will enlighten the study which could be of benefit for the administration of this and other IEPs in the future.

**Payment:**

- You will not be offered a payment for your participation. However, a Gift Certificate for the Campus Bookstore with \$20 value will be offered to you as a Token of Appreciation after completing your participation in the focus group or individual interviews. Students participating in the open-ended survey will be able to print a coupon on Survey Monkey® with a value of \$20 redeemable at the Campus Bookstore.
- You will not incur in any costs to participate in the study which will be set conveniently on campus after class time.

**Privacy:**

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by the researcher in a locked cabinet at the researcher's home. A pseudonym will be assigned to participants to add more security and protection to them when writing the reports. Data will be kept for a period of at least five (5) years, as required by Walden University.

**Contacts and Questions:**

You may ask any questions you have now, or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via email. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Walden University's approval number for this study is **IRB 04-11-13-0154058** and it expires on **04-10-14**.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep before the focus group or the individual interview session. The participant of the open-ended survey from Survey Monkey® will be able to print it from the website or could request a copy to the researcher to be sent through regular mail.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, "I consent" that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Email Address

Date of Consent

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature

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## Appendix E.2: Letter of Informed Consent (Spanish)

### Carta de Consentimiento Informado (Español)

Usted ha sido invitado a participar en un estudio investigativo sobre los factores que influyen en el aprendizaje y la retención de principiantes de Inglés como Segunda Lengua (ESL) en el Programa de Inglés Intensivo (IEP). Usted ha sido seleccionado (a) por haber completado el primer curso y haberse matriculado en el segundo curso en este término. Esta planilla es parte de un proceso llamado “consentimiento informado” /*informed consent*/ para permitirle entender el estudio antes de decidir formar parte de él.

Este estudio es conducido por un investigador llamado Luis Manuel Rodríguez García, quien es un estudiante de doctorado en la Universidad Walden. Usted podría conocer que el investigador trabaja como coordinador del Programa Intensivo de Inglés del Recinto South Florida, pero este estudio es independiente de esa función.

#### **Información de Antecedentes**

El propósito de este estudio es investigar los factores que motivan a los estudiantes que comienzan el Programa de Inglés Intensivo a continuar matriculados en cursos sucesivos, así como su adquisición efectiva del inglés como segunda idioma.

#### **Procedimientos:**

Si usted acepta participar en este estudio será seleccionado para participar en una encuesta abierta que será enviada por correo electrónico a todos los participantes a través de Survey Monkey®. Usted podrá firmar electrónicamente esta Carta de Consentimiento Informado antes de comenzar la encuesta por la Internet. Contestar esta encuesta podrá tomarle de 30 a 60 minutos. Además de participar en la encuesta, usted puede ser seleccionado para participar en uno de los siguientes eventos:

- Un (1) grupo de enfoque o una (1) entrevista individual.
  - Cualquiera de estos dos eventos tiene un tiempo estimado de 60 minutos
  - Se espera su llegada al menos 15 minutos antes de la cita
  - Se espera que usted verifique que la información que usted brinde sea correcta y que usted entienda sus derechos como participante humano en un estudio investigativo
  - Los participantes en grupos de enfoque o en las entrevistas individuales firmarán la Carta de Consentimiento Informado antes de participar en el grupo de enfoque o entrevistas individuales.

- El criterio para la selección de los participantes se basará en principiantes matriculados en el segundo curso de IE
- Todos los participantes serán invitados por email a tomar la encuesta abierta a través de Survey Monkey® por la Internet
- La selección de los participantes en los grupos de enfoque y entrevistas individuales será basada en:
  - a) Preferencia del participante por un grupo de enfoque o por entrevista individual
  - b) Diversidad: Los grupos serán formados con participantes de diferente edad, sexo, y recursos económicos. Esta información fue ofrecida por los participantes en la Planilla de Reclutamiento y Orientación

Una vez que hayan completado la encuesta, habrán terminado su participación en el estudio, con la excepción de algún participante de la encuesta que haya sido seleccionado/a para participar también en el grupo de enfoque o en la entrevista individual.

**Ejemplos de las preguntas:**

- ¿Cómo el instructor le ayudó a integrarse al grupo?
- Mencione tres cosas que le gustaron más de su clase y tres que no le gustaron.
- Explique tres actividades de la clase que le hicieron sentirse parte del grupo.

**Condición voluntaria del estudio:**

Este estudio es voluntario. Todos respetarán su decisión de participar o no en el estudio. Nadie en el Programa Intensivo de Inglés le tratará diferente si usted decide no participar en el estudio. Si usted decide integrarse al estudio ahora, usted podrá cambiar su decisión luego. Usted puede terminar su participación en cualquier momento.

**Riesgos y beneficios por participar en el estudio:**

Participar en este tipo de estudio incluye algunos riesgos de molestia menor que pueden encontrarse en la vida cotidiana como fatiga, estrés o sentirse enfadado/a. Sin embargo, la participación en este estudio no pone en riesgo su seguridad y bienestar físico o psicológico según está establecido en el procedimiento legal requerido por los Institutos Nacionales de Salud (NIH) para proteger seres humanos participantes en estudios investigativos. No habrá un beneficio inmediato para usted por participar en este estudio. Sin embargo, sus respuestas iluminarán este estudio que será de beneficio para la administración de este u otros IEPs en el futuro.



**Pago:**

Usted no será recompensado monetariamente por participar en el estudio. Sin embargo, se le entregará una tarjeta de regalo para usar en la librería del recinto por un valor de \$20 como gesto de agradecimiento al completar su participación en los grupos de enfoque o las entrevistas individuales. Los participantes de la encuesta abierta por la Internet podrán imprimir un cupón de \$20 en Survey Monkey® que podrá ser utilizado en la librería del recinto. Usted no incurrirá en gastos adicionales por participar en el estudio que será programado convenientemente en el recinto después que los participantes hayan terminado el horario de clases del día.

**Privacidad:**

Cualquier información que usted provea será mantenida confidencialmente. El investigador no usará su información personal para ningún propósito fuera de este proyecto de estudio. Además, el investigador no incluirá su nombre o cualquier dato que lo identifique a usted en los reportes del estudio. La información se mantendrá segura por el investigador en un gabinete con llave en su domicilio. Un seudónimo será usado para identificar a los participantes y así añadir más seguridad y protección para los participantes cuando se publiquen los reportes. La información se mantendrá en dicho lugar seguro por un periodo de cinco (5) años como es requerido por la Universidad Walden.

**Contactos y preguntas:**

Usted puede hacer las preguntas que tenga ahora, o si tiene preguntas más tarde puede comunicarse con el investigador a través de su correo electrónico. Si quiere hablar privadamente sobre sus derechos como participante puede llamar a la Dra. Leilani Endicott. Ella es la representante de la Universidad Walden que puede discutir esto con usted. Su teléfono es 1-800-925-3368,. El número de aprobación de este estudio por la Universidad Walden es **IRB 04-11-13-0154058** y su expiración es en **04-10-14**.

El investigador le dará una copia de esta planilla al participante antes de empezar el grupo de enfoque o la entrevista individual para que la conserve. El participante de la encuesta a través de Survey Monkey® podrá imprimirla directamente de la Internet o comunicarse con el investigador para pedir una copia por correo.

**Autorización y consentimiento**

He leído este consentimiento en su totalidad y comprendo el estudio lo suficiente como para hacer una decisión sobre mi participación en éste. Al firmar debajo, “yo consiento” y declaro que estoy en acuerdo con los términos descritos en este documento:

Nombre del participante (Imprima): \_\_\_\_\_

Correo electrónico del participante: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha de consentimiento: \_\_\_\_\_

Firma del participante: \_\_\_\_\_

Firma del investigador: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F.1: Questions for the Open-ended Survey (English)

## OPEN-ENDED SURVEY THROUGH SURVEY MONKEY®

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_

Choose a Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

Complete this survey before xx/xx/2013

Researcher: Luis Manuel Rodríguez-García

The following survey will collect information about your perceptions and opinions upon your experience in the first course you recently concluded at the Intensive English Program. Your answers are voluntary and you may avoid answering any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. The information you offer in this survey will not be disclosed to third parties and will be a valuable feedback tool in a research study.

**I. Letter of Informed Consent**

Students will sign to answer the survey

**II. Begin the Survey:**

1. (RQ1) Why did you enroll in the Intensive English Program?
2. (RQ1) List three things done by the instructor which helped you to engage with the group:
3. (RQ1) What did your instructor do or not do to make you feel he or she was your mentor?
4. (RQ1) What did the instructor do when you missed or were late for classes?
5. (RQ1) How did the instructor motivate you to register for the second course?

6. (RQ1) List some challenges that affected your learning or continuance in the program:

Personal: \_\_\_\_\_

Professional: \_\_\_\_\_

7. a. (RQ2) Explain three reasons why you liked the class:

7. b. (RQ2) Explain three reasons why you did not like the class:

8. (RQ2) List three class activities that made you feel comfortable and integrated with the group:

9. (RQ2) List three reasons why you like (or not) attending to the lab sessions:

10. (RQ2) Do you prefer your instructor to be a 'lecturer' or a 'facilitator'? Explain why.

11. (RQ2) List three things your instructor did to prepare you for your self-directed study:

12. (RQ1,2) Please write any comments or perceptions about what made you advance in your English language development and what has encouraged you to continue in the program:

### **III. Thank You: Gift card with \$20 value**

Thank you for answering as honestly as possible. A gift certificate for \$20 to be spent at the campus bookstore could be printed from this page. If you have any technical difficulty request the coupon by calling this number (786) 379-5553

## Appendix F.2: Questions for the Open-ended Survey (Spanish)

## ENCUESTA DE PREGUNTAS POR SURVEY MONKEY®

Apellido: \_\_\_\_\_ Nombre: \_\_\_\_\_

Escoja un seudónimo: \_\_\_\_\_

Complete esta encuesta antes de xx/xx/2013

Investigador: Luis Manuel Rodríguez-García

Esta encuesta recoge información sobre sus percepciones y opiniones experimentadas en el primer curso que usted concluyó en el Programa Intensivo de Inglés

Sus respuestas son voluntarias y usted puede no responder alguna pregunta que no le haga sentir bien. La información que usted provea en esta encuesta será estrictamente confidencial y su contribución de ofrecer estas respuestas es un recurso de mucho valor en este estudio investigativo.

**I. Carta de Consentimiento Informado:**

Participantes firmarán antes de continuar con la encuesta.

**II. Comience la Encuesta:**

1. (RQ1) ¿Por qué se matriculó en este curso intensivo?
2. (RQ1) Diga tres cosas que hizo el/la instructor/a que le ayudaron a integrarse al grupo:
3. (RQ1) ¿Qué cosas hizo o no el/la instructor/a que le hizo sentir como su mentor/a?
4. (RQ1) ¿Qué hizo el/la instructor/a para ayudarle cuando usted llegó tarde o se ausentó a alguna clase?
5. (RQ1) ¿Cómo le motivó el/la instructor/a para matricularse en esta segunda clase?
6. (RQ1) Diga qué dificultades le impidieron el aprendizaje o la integración con el grupo:

Personal: \_\_\_\_\_

Profesional: \_\_\_\_\_

7. a. (RQ2) Explique tres razones por las cuáles le gustó su clase:

7. b. (RQ2) Explique tres razones por las cuáles no le gustó la clase:

7. (RQ2) Explique tres actividades que le hicieron sentir cómodo (a) en clase e integrado(a) al grupo:

9. (RQ2) Explique tres razones por las que le gustó o no el asistir al laboratorio:

10. (RQ2) ¿Prefiere que el instructor sea un maestro que dicta clases o uno que facilita el aprendizaje? Explique por qué.

11. (RQ2) Diga tres cosas que hizo el instructor para prepararle en su estudio independiente:

12. (RQ1,2) Escriba otros comentarios sobre su percepción u opinión sobre lo que le ha ayudado avanzar en su aprendizaje del inglés o motivado a seguir matriculando cursos el programa intensivo.

### **III. Gracias: Tarjeta de regalo con valor de \$20**

Gracias por contestar estas preguntas tan honestamente como haya sido posible. Una tarjeta de regalo por \$20 para comprar en la librería del recinto puede ser impresa desde esta página. Si tiene alguna dificultad técnica, usted puede llamar al (786) 379-5553 y solicitar su tarjeta de regalo.

## Appendix G.1: Focus Group Questions (English)

### Questions for the Focus Group

The answers you will provide should be based on your experience during the beginning class in the intensive English Program. Each question should be answered within five minutes.

1. (RQ1) What are the reasons why you study English?
2. (RQ1) Explain three class activities that made you feel part of the group?
3. (RQ1) How did the instructor help you engage with the group?
4. (RQ1) Explain the challenges you encountered to be on time or to attend regularly. What did the instructor do to help you?
5. (RQ1) Do you feel like you were mentored by your instructor during the first course?  
What did he or she do to make you feel so?
6. (RQ1) What personal or professional reasons affect your ability to learn effectively?
7. (RQ2) Mention three things you liked most from your first class and three you did not like. Explain why you liked them or why you did not like them.
8. (RQ2) Did you like attending the lab at least once a week?

Explain how attending the lab was or was not able to help you understand better when you listen or to pronounce better when you speak

9. (RQ2) Explain how the instructor delivered the content in class: as a lecturer to an audience or as a facilitator to your learning?
10. (RQ2) How did you practice on your own after class? Did the instructor prepare or train you to study on your own?
11. (RQ2) How do you think the instructor or the Language Center could help you better so you can continue taking IEP courses?
12. (RQ1-2) What other comments do you have regarding your learning or continuance in the program?



## Appendix G.2: Questions for the Focus Group (Spanish)

### Preguntas para el Grupo de Enfoque.

Las respuestas que usted ofrezca en esta discusión deben ser basadas exclusivamente en las experiencias durante la primera clase que usted tomó en el Programa Intensivo de Inglés. Cada pregunta debe ser contestada dentro de cinco minutos.

1. (RQ1) ¿Cuáles son las razones por las cuales estudia inglés?
2. (RQ1) Explique tres actividades en clase que le hicieron sentir parte del grupo.
3. (RQ1) ¿Cómo le ayudó el/la instructor/a para integrarse al grupo?
4. (RQ1) Explique las dificultades que usted ha tenido para llegar a tiempo o asistir a clases regularmente. ¿Qué hizo el instructor para ayudarle?
5. (RQ1) ¿Usted sintió que el/la instructor/a se convirtió en su mentor? ¿Que hizo el/la instructor/a para que usted se sintiera apoyado(a)?
6. (RQ1) ¿Qué razones personales o de trabajo le afectan para aprender efectivamente?
7. (RQ2) Mencione tres cosas que más le gustaron del primer curso y tres que no le gustaron. Explique por qué le gustaron o no.
8. (RQ2) ¿Le gusto asistir al laboratorio de lenguaje al menos una vez por semana? Explique cómo el asistir al laboratorio le ayudó a comprender mejor cuando alguien le habla y a pronunciar mejor cuando usted habla.
9. (RQ2) Explique como el/la instructor/a explicaba el contenido en clase: como si hiciera un discurso a la audiencia o como facilitador/a para su aprendizaje. Exprese su opinión al respecto.

10. (RQ2) ¿Cómo practicaba usted por sí mismo (a) después de la clase? ¿El/la instructor/a le preparó y enseñó cómo hacerlo?
11. (RQ2) ¿Cómo cree usted que el/la instructor/a o el Language Center podrían apoyarle mejor para continuar tomando cursos en el Programa de Inglés Intensivo?
12. (RQ1-2) ¿Qué otros comentarios o sugerencias tiene usted con respecto a su aprendizaje o en su motivación para continuar tomando clases en el Programa Intensivo de Inglés?

## Appendix H.1: Questions for the Individual Interview (English)

(Allow 5 minutes per question)

1. (RQ1) Explain three reasons why you chose to study in the IEP.
2. (RQ1) What did the instructor do to help you integrate with the group?
3. (RQ1) Did the instructor act like a mentor? What did the instructor do in class to make you feel he or she was a mentor? Explain.
4. (RQ1) Were you able to attend classes every day on time? If not, what did the instructor do to help you?
5. (RQ1) What personal or professional factors affected your ability to learn effectively?
6. (RQ1) What did the instructor do to motivate you continue this second course in the IEP?
7. (RQ2) What did you like the most from your class? What did you like the least? Explain
8. (RQ2) What activities were used in class that made you feel comfortable and part of the group?
9. (RQ2) Why did you like attending the lab session once per week? Why not?
10. (RQ2) Did you prefer the instructor to teach the class as a lecturer or as a facilitator in the group?
11. (RQ2) How did the instructor prepare you to study on your own after class? How did you practice?

12. (RQ1-2) What other comments would you like to add regarding the effectiveness of this program for your learning that encouraged you to continue enrolled in successive courses of this program?

## Appendix H.2: Questions for the Individual Interview (Spanish)

1. (RQ1) Explique tres razones por las cuáles decidió estudiar en el Programa Intensivo de Inglés.
2. (RQ1) ¿Qué hizo el/la instructor/a para que se integrara al grupo?
3. (RQ1) ¿Actuaba el/la instructor/a como mentor/a? ¿Qué hacía en clase para que usted le viera como mentor/a más que como instructor/a? Explique.
4. (RQ1) ¿Pudo usted llegar siempre a clases temprano y tener buena asistencia? Si no, ¿cómo le ayudó el/la instructor/a?
5. (RQ1) ¿Qué factores personales o profesionales le afectaron en su aprendizaje?
6. (RQ1) ¿Qué hizo el/la instructor/a para motivarle a continuar con este segundo curso del programa intensivo?
7. (RQ2) ¿Qué le gustó más de su clase? ¿Qué le gustó menos? Explique.
8. (RQ2) ¿Qué actividades se usaron en clase que le hicieron sentirse cómodo(a) y como parte del grupo?
9. (RQ2) ¿Por qué le gustó asistir al laboratorio una vez por semana, o por qué no?
10. (RQ2) ¿Considera que el/la instructor/a enseñaba la clase para una audiencia o como un facilitador del aprendizaje con el grupo? Explique que prefiere y por qué.
11. (RQ2) ¿Cómo le preparaba el/la instructor/a para que estudiara después de clase? ¿Cómo practicaba usted?
12. (RQ1-2) ¿Qué otro comentario tiene sobre la efectividad de este programa para su aprendizaje que le motivó a continuar en cursos sucesivos?

### Appendix I.1: Demographic Information (English)

To be responded by participant at conclusion of open-ended survey on the Internet, or prior to beginning of the focus groups, individual interviews in face-to-face interaction.

Note: Participant must have signed the Letter of Informed Consent before offering any personal information.

#### I. Personal Information

Fecha: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
           Month Day Year

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Pseudonym to be used for the study: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

#### II. Participant Demographic Information (OPTIONAL)

You can offer the following optional demographical information which will be kept confidential and safe for a period of five (5) years as recommended by Walden University, institution supervising the study.

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: Male: \_\_\_\_ Female: \_\_\_\_\_

Country of origin: \_\_\_\_\_ Do you work?: Yes \_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_

What amount do you consider closer to your yearly household income (Mark only one with X):

Less than \$10,000 \_\_\_\_\_ Up to \$20,000 \_\_\_\_\_ Over \$50,000: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for participating in this research study**

## Appendix I.2: Demographic Information (Spanish)

Para ser respondido por el participante al finalizar el open-ended survey o antes de comenzar el grupo de enfoque o entrevistas individuales.

Nota: El participante debe haber firmado la Carta de Consentimiento Informado antes de ofrecer cualquier información personal.

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### I. Datos Personales

Fecha: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
           Mes    Día    Año

Nombre del participante: \_\_\_\_\_

Seudónimo para ser usado en este estudio: \_\_\_\_\_

Correo Electrónico: \_\_\_\_\_ Teléfono: \_\_\_\_\_

### II. Información Demográfica del Participante: (OPCIONAL)

Usted puede brindar información sobre los siguientes datos demográficos que se mantendrán confidenciales y seguros hasta ser destruidos en un término de cinco (5) años como es recomendado por la Universidad Walden, institución que supervisa el estudio:

Edad \_\_\_\_\_ Sexo: Masculino: \_\_\_\_ Femenino \_\_\_\_\_

País de Origen: \_\_\_\_\_ Trabaja: Si \_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_

¿Qué cifra usted considera es más cercana al total de salarios que entran en su casa anualmente? (Marque sólo uno con X):

Menos de \$10,000 \_\_\_\_\_ Hasta \$20,000 \_\_\_\_\_ Mas de \$50,000: \_\_\_\_\_

**Gracias por su participación en este estudio.**

## Curriculum Vitae

Luis Manuel Rodríguez-García

PO Box 11590, Miami, FL 33101  
lmrodriguez@aol.com

## Education

Doctor of Education, Higher Education and Adult Learning  
Walden University, Baltimore, MD 2014

Master of Science, Modern Language Education  
Florida International University, Miami, FL 2003

Bachelor of Arts, Board of Governors General Studies  
Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, IL 2001

Bachelor of Science, Hospitality Management/ Travel & Tourism  
Florida International University, Miami, FL 2000

Associate of Arts  
Miami-Dade Community College, Miami, FL 1997

Spanish & Literature, High School Teacher 1979  
Instituto Superior Educacional, Havana, Cuba

## Professional Experience

**2003–Present Miami Dade College. Miami, Florida****2013 – Present*****Program Manager. Workforce Professional Training, Technology and Language Programs***

Plan, design, implement and assess continuing education programs for local and international partnerships. Supervise area coordinators for implementation and evaluation of these programs

**2007–2013*****Language Center Lead Coordinator, School of Continuing Education & Professional Development at Wolfson Campus***

- Supervised the development, implementation and marketing of new course curriculum for ESL and Foreign Language programs based on service learning and student-centered approaches
- Coordinated/managed logistics and implementation of special language learning programs for domestic and international students
- Recruited international students to MDC programs via email and phone from Student Services referrals.
- Responsible for designing, proposing and implementing training programs leading to employment readiness in cooperation with state and local employment agencies
- Executed cost analysis and budget for programs generating over a million dollars in students fees yearly



- Monitored students' progress and retention through data analysis
- Produced, analyzed and report program outcomes periodically to the Chairperson
- Negotiated text material customization and pricing with major textbook publishers
- Directed adjunct faculty committees for collaboration in the creation of new programs or curriculum development
- Managed the enrollment and operation of the outreach locations
- Selected, interviewed and hired new part-time instructors periodically. Trained new and seasoned instructors periodically in student-centered approaches leading to higher retention outcomes
- Collected, analyzed data from student class surveys for retention reports and to offer feedback to instructors
- Oversaw the production and advertising of language course catalogues by semester
- Supervised program related tasks to a staff consisting of coordinators, assistant coordinators, lab assistants and part-time instructors
- Assisted in the production of the advertising course catalogue
- Assigned and supervised program related tasks to a staff of 3 assistant coordinators, 3 assistant coordinators, 2 lab assistants and 60 part-time instructors

***P/T Job Developer, Career Services. Wolfson Campus  
2005–2007***

- Partnered with potential employers for employment opportunities and recruitment on campus
- Provided career development, resume writing, job interviews, and workplace etiquette training programs
- Participated in a college wide committee for testing and launching the electronic online system for student employment services
- Provided support to students for job search and referrals
- Collected work performance information about new hired students through recruiter's feedback for reports to the director of Career Services
- Scheduled networking sessions with employment agencies to focus on employment availability and student referral
- Worked in cooperation with Student Life and ACCESS Department to facilitate student career and employment opportunities
- Collaborated with the academic departments for internship/job placement on targeted occupations
- Assisted the Career Specialist with student advisement and the Internship Program and the Annual Career Fair.
- Taught workshops for College Training and Development (MDC-CT&D)
- Acted as Co-Chair in the Annual Employment Development Week and Campus Job Fair committees

***P/T Foreign Language Coordinator, Community Education. Wolfson Campus  
2004–2005***

- Developed, implemented and marketed new course curriculum to diversify and grow the Foreign Language Program
- Monitored student progress and retention by offering individual academic advisement
- Interviewed, hired, trained, and supervised new instructors. Reported payroll

- Produced and analyzed cost/revenues reports
- Oversaw the enrollment and operation of the outreach locations
- Used written communication with faculty to exchange supplemental course material, syllabi or request collaboration for new program or curriculum development
- Coordinated and taught Customer Service for outreach contracts
- Visited and supervised instructors in class
- Assisted in the production of the advertising course catalogues for print

***P/T Hospitality Management Public Relations Assistant. Wolfson Campus***

***2003 – 2004***

- Planned and conducted a public relations campaign to create and maintain favorable public interest for the Hospitality Management Program on campus
- Advertised the program through publicity efforts including lectures, job fairs, and visiting hotels to disseminate information to employees about the MDC Hospitality Program
- Served on the committee for the Food and Hospitality Expo celebrated on Wolfson Campus in the summer of 2004
- Coordinated with the Academies of Travel and Tourism, of Miami-Dade County Public Schools, student participation in the development of the International Villages Exposition
- Represented the Hospitality Management Program at community projects and at public, social and business in different community events
- Served as an advisor for the InterAmerican Campus students to enroll in the Hospitality Program

***ESL/EAP Adjunct Instructor. InterAmerican Campus***

***2003 – Present***

- Teach in a multicultural setting various levels of Speech, Grammar, Reading, and Writing for the English for Academic Purposes program (ESL-EAP)
- Develop syllabi and instructional/assessment material using student-centered approaches
- Use formative assessment to evaluate and grade students
- Use online course frameworks for technology enhancement to language courses.
- Taught different levels in the Language Laboratory using computer technology
- Taught Intensive Spanish and English for the non-credit/Continuing Education program and contract training for private and public sector corporations

### Workshops Presented

- 2012 *Got a New Job? Now Keep It by Following These Simple Steps.* 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Employment Development Week. MDC, Wolfson Campus, Miami, FL.
- 2011 *Preparing for a Successful Interview.* 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Employment Development Week. MDC, Wolfson Campus, Miami, FL.
- 2010 *Creating Student-Centered Language Programs.* National Council for Continuing Education & Training (NCCET). Annual Conference, Miami, FL.
- 2007 *Making Positive First Impressions.* 23rd Annual Employment Development Week. MDC, Wolfson Campus, Miami, FL
- 2006 *Using FACTS.ORG in Student Services:* CTD, MDC, Wolfson Campus, Miami, FL
- 2006 *A Career in Hospitality Management: The Ticket to a Worldwide Ride.* 17th Annual Career Week.

MDC, Wolfson Campus, Miami, FL

2006 *Looking Great in Paper*. “Adding Keys to Success Seminar.” Miami Edison Senior High School, Miami, FL

2006 *From ESL Students to Successful Professionals*. Career Day at Palm Springs Middle School, Miami, FL

### Professional Organizations

- The American Association of Teachers of Spanish & Portuguese (AATSP)
- Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). A Global Education Association
- Miami-Dade TESOL Association
- The Bilingual Association of Florida
- Association of Florida Colleges (AFC), formerly Florida Association of Community Colleges (FACC)
- Learning Resources Network (LERN)