8-28-2013

The Influence of Weblogs on English Oral Proficiency in English Language Learners

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in English Language Learners

By

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A Graduate Field Experience

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Literacy and ESL

At Cardinal Stritch University

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

2013

This Graduate Field Experience
Has been approved for Cardinal
Stritch University by Ruth Ann Hoenick

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                                        (Advisor)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to recognize my biggest supporters for the ability to do this research. Truly, I could not have done it without you.

Thank you to Amanda and Megan, my study team members through this process, for your friendship and collaboration. And, of course, you made this fun!

I also could not have done this without Ruth, who has guided me both professionally and personally through this program. Your flexibility has made a world of difference for me. Thank you.

A huge thank you to Mom, Dad and Stefan for not only moral support, but also taking care of the kids, and, at times, also taking care of me.

Of course, my appreciation goes to my husband, Clay. His time, energy, and support went into this endeavor, as well. I could not have accomplished this work without him at each step of the way. I love you.

And, finally, to my daughters, Sofia and Stella. You both are my reason and inspiration for doing this work. I love you, and I hope you are inspired to pursue higher education, like I was when I watched my mom walk across the stage and get her graduate degree when I was a kid.

ABSTRACT

This research investigated the effect of blogging on oral proficiency in English Language Learners (ELLs). Specifically, the study aimed to prove that participation in written blog posts would transfer to increased speaking proficiency as determined by three measures of oral proficiency. These measures were 1) established scores on the W-APT Speaking Test, 2) average length of utterances and 3) time to produce an effective response on the W-APT. The researcher worked with eight participants who were ELLs at language proficiency levels one through five on a six-point scale at the start of the study. The results indicated that blogging increased scores for all three measures of oral proficiency, with the most notable gains in time to produce an effective response and average length of utterances.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

As students entered the classroom as digital natives--children who have grown up with the internet--educators adapted their practice to accommodate these students. Moreover, the technological skills they taught students augmented students' ability to use computers in ways that built upon skills taught at school. Furthermore, using technology helped educators extend the walls of their classroom to wherever students can access these technologies. Technology was incredibly important in education today (Gaskins, 2003; Huang & Hung, 2010). English language learners (ELLs) especially stood to benefit from increased interaction with the English language. Using technology was a way to give them this access. Will using blogs increase ELLs' oral proficiency as measured by the WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT) oral proficiency rubric (W-APT, 2013)? In this paper, I will discuss the merits of using technology with English language learners. More specifically, I wish to determine the effect using blogs will have on oral proficiency scores. First, I will describe the school where the proposed research will take place.

Description of the School

I researched the use of blogs at Abraham High School. Abraham High School was a suburban high school in a predominantly white, upper-middle class community. A majority of students performed at advanced or proficient levels on the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE, 2013). The curriculum was rigorous yet broad; the school offered about a dozen Advanced Placement courses in addition to other advanced course offerings. In addition, the school offered a wide variety of programs that

prepared students for work directly after high school. These programs included trade and

co-op programs in the community. The graduation rates for 2010-2011 and 2011-2012

were 100% and 98%, respectively. About 90% of graduates continued directly to a four-

year college (Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools, WINNS, 2012).

At Abraham High School, parents, staff and the community were all involved

stakeholders in the educational process. All three of these groups participated in an

annual climate survey. Based on the survey, all three groups were satisfied with the

school district in most areas. Though the passage of Act 10 in Wisconsin over the last

two years left many staff members feeling unsatisfied, many staff members still reported

on the survey that their discontent was mainly at the state level of education and not with

building administration and leadership. This section discussed Abraham High School,

while the next area will describe in more detail the English as a Second Language

Program.

Programming Model

Abraham High School had a comprehensive curriculum in that it prepared

students for a 4-year college, a two-year degree, a trade, or work directly after high

school graduation. While several area high schools reduced course offerings for students

who are not college-bound, Abraham High School maintained and expanded these

offerings. Students may have taken Advanced Placement courses, honors courses,

participated in intensive trade programs, or worked for several hours during the school

day in a co-op program with area businesses. This wide variety of course and program

offerings produced a high graduation rate, with 100% of students graduating in 2011 and

98% graduating in 2012. Students considered at-risk, including English language learners (ELLs), tended to graduate on time and with their peers.

Within Abraham High School was the small English as a second language (ESL) program where the research took place. The ESL service model was content-area tutoring. There were eight students identified as active ELLs at this school. This class took place in a small room located inside the school library designated exclusively for ESL classes. Students whose Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to State, (ACCESS) scores were below a level five must take the course. Students who scored between a 5.0 and 5.9 composite on the ACCESS chose whether or not they took the course. During ESL class, students met in groups of two to five with the ESL teacher. Typically, there were two sections of the ESL classes. One teacher performed these duties.

The teacher performed several functions in her role. First, she monitored students' progress in all their content area classes. The teacher also explicitly taught students self-advocacy techniques for requesting help from other teachers. The ESL teacher also found or modified content area texts for English language learners. She worked with the students using comprehension techniques to pre-teach, re-teach, and build background knowledge connected to students' other classes. The teacher also gave modified assessments to students if the students required more time to complete these assessments. Finally, the ESL teacher at Abraham High School discussed cultural concepts with students who were new to the school system. Because there was one ESL teacher, she made the majority of decisions about the ESL curriculum. The next section will discuss the decision-making process at the building level.

Decision-making Process

The decision-making process at Abraham High School was currently in transition from a top-down to shared decision-making model. This was because the administrative leadership was relatively new. When hired four years ago, the current principal began to transition away from a top-down decision-making model. He did this by reactivating the Building Leadership Team (BLT,) introducing several staff surveys, creating Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and many other initiatives. The principal's goal of involving more stakeholders in the decision-making process has been successful as measured by staff satisfaction, parent satisfaction, and continued high scores on standardized tests. Many policies and procedures were still determined by the school board or other district administrators, but the building-level administration was making strides in changing this. The next section will outline policies and procedures shaped using this decision-making process at the district level.

Policies, Procedures and Staffing Information

The way policies, procedures and curriculum are determined were still in transition. For this reason, most of the decision-making process continued to take place at a district level. Policies and procedures were decided by the Board of Education and were revised each month at Board meetings. Despite the current top-down model, the Abraham School District attracted highly qualified teachers. For the past 5 years, 100% of teachers at Abraham High School were licensed in their subject area. This year, there were several staff positions left open and two staff members with an emergency license in their content areas (WINNS, 2012). Teacher pay was low when compared to other districts. Over two-thirds of staff in the school had a Master's degree or higher (WINNS, 2012). Many

teachers in Abraham had advanced degrees, but few are multilingual. With the exception

of the nine members of the Foreign Language Department who spoke the languages they

teach, less than 10% of other staff members spoke another language proficiently. There

were no staff members who spoke Hmong, Guajarati, or Chinese, which were the three

languages spoken by the current English language learners at the school. The teaching

staff included one person of color, which means less than 2% of Abraham High School's

teaching staff is non-white. This sharply contrasted with the student body demographics.

Description of Student Population

While the teaching staff at Abraham High School was not racially diverse, the

student body was becoming more diverse. The 2011-2012 school year was the first in

which the population of white students dipped below 90% as shown in Figure 1.
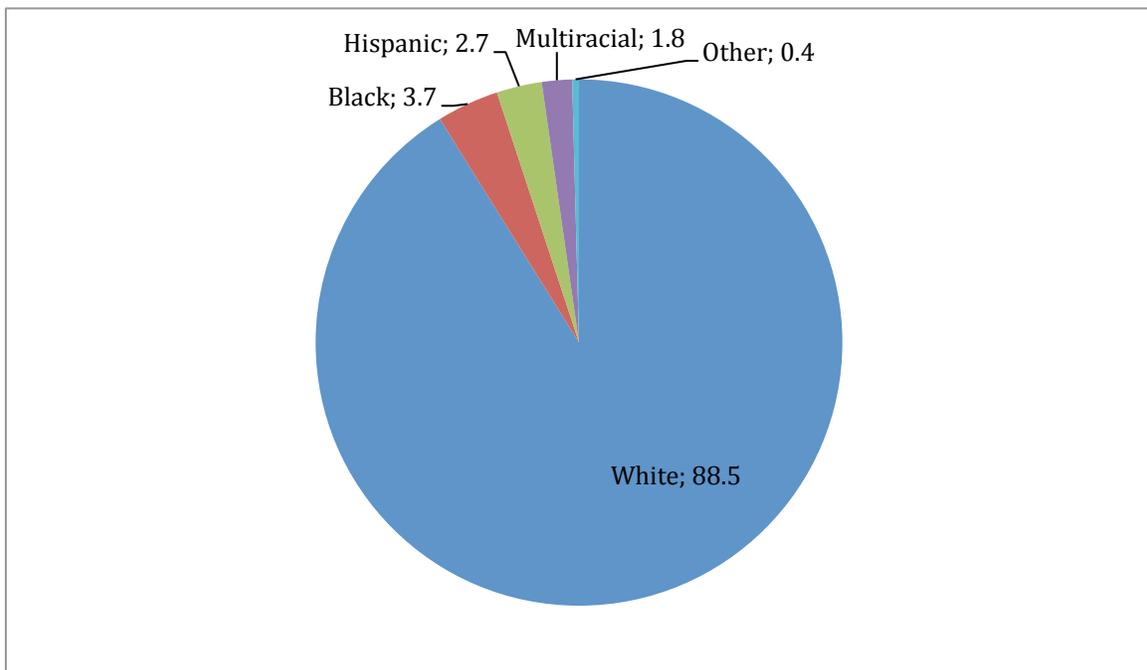
Figure 1   Student body demographics by race

As shown in figure 1, white students were still a vast majority at Abraham High School. However, all other populations on the chart grew at a faster rate since the late 1990s. This made Abraham High School much less racially diverse than schools in Milwaukee, but typical for similar suburbs of Milwaukee (WINNS, 2012).

Abraham High School had a typical student body population in terms of race for its location. However, the school had a high percentage of students with disabilities as illustrated in Figure 2.
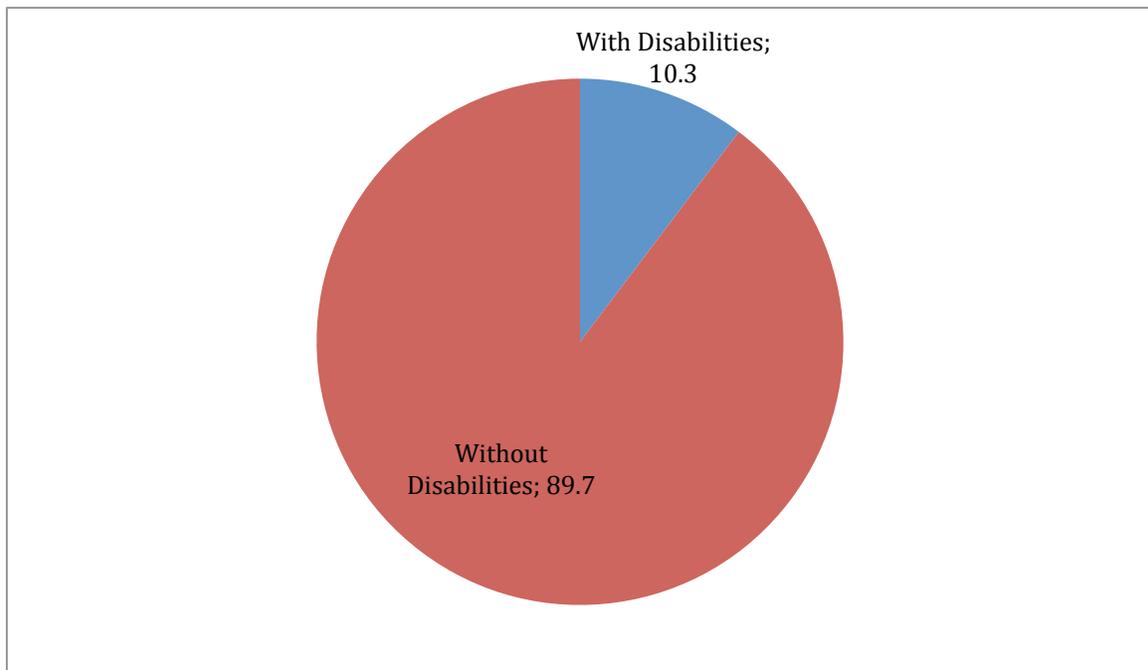
Figure 2   Student body demographics by ability and disability

Slightly more than 10% of students at Abraham High School received special education services for a variety of disabilities. Of the 10.3% of students who received these services, the largest subgroup, at 3.1%, was the group of students with a learning disability (WINNS, 2012).

Abraham High School's demographics were also changing in terms of socio-economic status. Figure 3 shows the number of students who are economically disadvantaged is the fastest-growing group in the school.
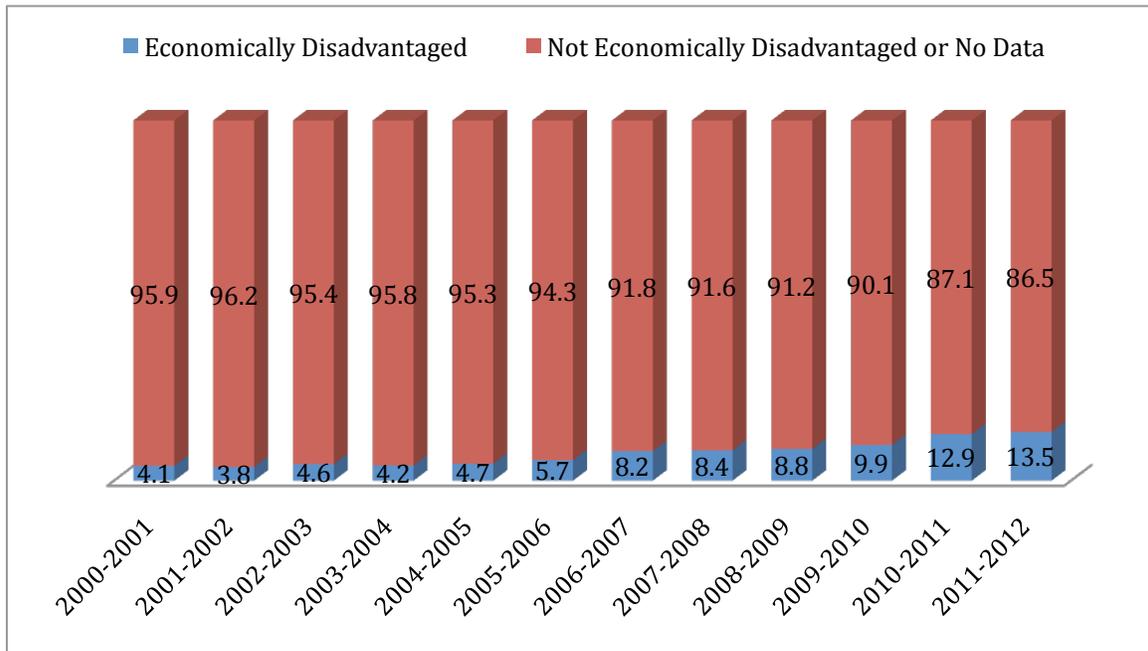
Figure 3   Student body demographics by socio-economic status, 2000-2012

The percentage of the student body that was considered economically disadvantaged tripled in the last decade. In addition, the administration at Abraham High School reported they believe there were more families who fit the definition of "economically disadvantaged," but have not filed paperwork to qualify their child for free and reduced lunch. The next section of this chapter will discuss student language and academic progress.

Student Language and Academic Data

The Abraham School District had a reputation of academic excellence based on several different measures. Perhaps the most commonly monitored measure of academic success in Wisconsin was the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE,

2011). The following table shows WKCE results for all tenth grade students at Abraham

High School.

Table 1

2011 WKCE results in reading, math, science and social studies for grade 10.

Subject Area	Did Not Test	Minimum	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
Reading	0.0%	1.5%	6.5%	23.7%	68.3%
Language	0.0%	0.9%	8.3%	58.6%	42.2%
Mathematics	0.0%	4.1%	8.6%	47.0%	40.2%
Science	0.0%	5.3%	7.7%	32.0%	55.0%
Social Studies	0.3%	4.7%	4.7%	26.3%	63.9%

The WKCE scores in Table 1 above demonstrated that 92% of students were

proficient or advanced in reading, and that 90.8% of students were proficient or advanced

in language. In mathematics, 12.5% of students were considered at a minimum or basic

level, and 13% were at minimum or basic levels in science. However, all scores at

Abraham High School exceeded the state average. Over the past two years, ACT scores

dropped slightly in the district. The change was from a composite score of 23.7 in 2010-

2011 to a 23.2 in 2011-2012 (WINNS, 2012). Because of this change, staff was

concerned that WKCE scores would also dip in the future. The WKCE data on English

language learners at Abraham High School was unpublished because the sample size was

so small that individual students' data could be connected to their identity. For this

reason, ELLs' test scores could not be included in this chapter.

In my research, I studied the academic performance of English language learners

at Abraham High School. Figure 4 shows the languages these students speak at home,

including students who are monitored after exiting the ESL program.
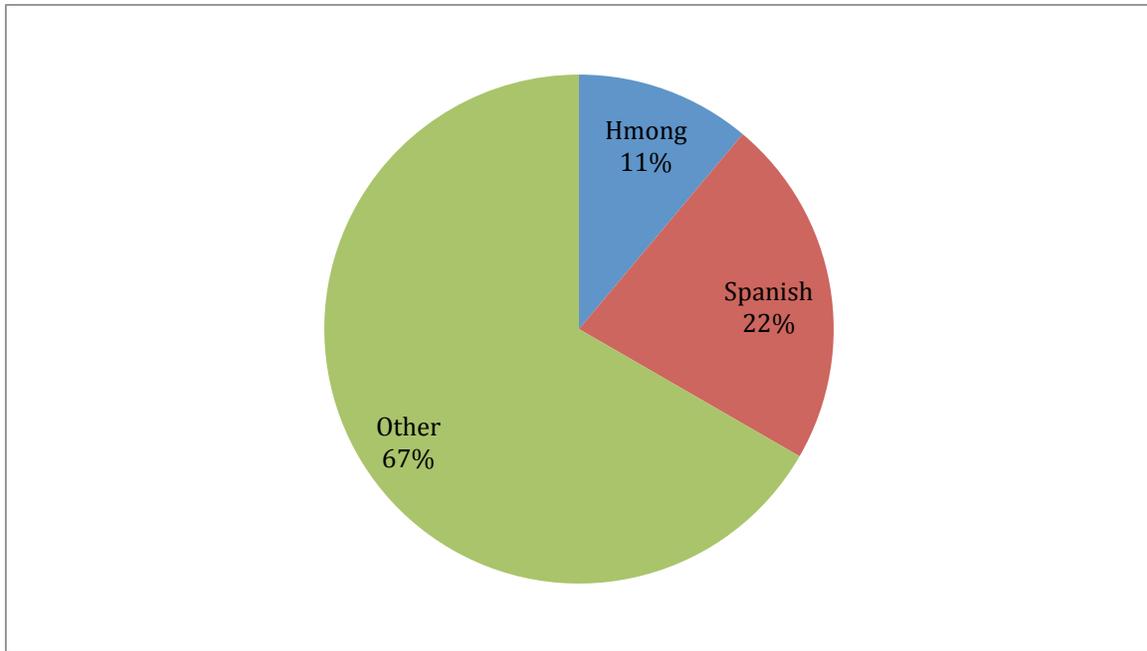
Figure 4   Student body demographics: English language learners' first language

At Abraham High School, there were many ELLs whose first language was not spoken by any staff member. Most of the students categorized under "Other" spoke Guajarati, a language of India. Until 1999, there were no English language learners at the school. Starting during the 1999-2000 academic year, there were between two and four students who were considered Limited English Proficient (LEP). This remained constant until the 2008-2009 academic year, when the population of LEP students grew to seven. However, the demographics of the community and the school district were rapidly changing. There were over 20 English language learners at the elementary schools that fed into Abraham High School (WINNS, 2012). This means more students were expected to enter into the high school ESL program in the next few years.

Summary of Best Practice Research

Meeting the needs of English language learners in the Abraham School District was a relatively new challenge. To adapt to these and other changes, work needs to be done to research best practices for English language learners. I focused my research on oral assessment of English language learners. To do this, I considered the validity of assessments, and the needs of the students taking the assessments. I also investigated the utility of a class blog to practice English skills in conjunction with technology, and outside of the classroom. To summarize assessment factors, I concluded that many standardized tests of oral proficiency lacked reliability or validity (Pray, 2005). Because of the subjective nature of many rubric assessments, there was a possibility for variation between evaluators who administer these types of assessments. Not only must teaching staff evaluate the assessments for consistency, but they must also receive training to use them correctly. To provide several different kinds of assessment, Huang and Hung (2010) described the use of technology to supplement traditional assessments. The use of technology provided a formative assessment and a private environment in which students felt more comfortable speaking (Huang & Hung, 2010). More specifically, by using technology to augment language learning, students benefited in two ways. First, by offering more opportunities for formative assessment, language learners had more feedback upon which to reflect and self-evaluate. In addition, the use of technology lowered the affective filter by giving students a private environment in which to formulate responses. These factors, and others, affected student performance in speaking another language.

Not only assessment type, but also student factors affected oral proficiency. Since female students tended to perform at higher levels than male students in oral examinations, gender was one of these factors for which the educator must account (Motallebzadeh and Nematizedeh, 2011). In addition to gender, Gan and Davison (2011) found a positive correlation between oral proficiency and the use of culturally appropriate gestures while speaking. While there was extensive research in some areas of oral proficiency assessment, many authors indicated a need for reliable, valid oral language assessment (Gan and Davison, 2011; Huang & Hung, 2010; Motallebzadeh and Nematizedeh, 2011; Pray, 2005). Without triangulating multiple sources of data, teachers of English language learners will get an incomplete or unreliable measurement of student progress in speaking. In my research, I implemented a class blog as a means to augment student oral proficiency, and investigated the potential for an additional piece of assessment with which both students and teachers can document oral proficiency growth.

Overview of the Project

My research utilized blogging in the context of informal chats to improve oral proficiency. To this end, I planned on assessing ELLs with the WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT) Speaking Test (W-APT, 2013) to determine a baseline for student performance. Then, I instructed English language learners for three weeks without any additional interventions or differences in instruction. This instruction included the same duties outlined earlier. This instruction included monitoring student progress, teaching students self-advocacy techniques, using comprehension techniques, giving modified assessments to students, and discussing cultural concepts with students. I

assessed the ELLs after a three-week period to measure growth with the W-APT Speaking Test.

Next, I continued the same practices in instruction for the next three weeks, except I added required contributions to a class blog, to investigate the effects of informal, chat-type writing on speaking proficiency. To determine the ELLs' final growth and the degree to which blogging transferred to improvement in speaking proficiency, I gave the W-APT Speaking Test a final time. I hypothesized that blogging would increase ELLs' oral proficiency since it allowed students the additional benefit of practicing the language at home, and with technology with which they may already be familiar. The questions I investigated in depth were to what extent blogging was an effective tool to transfer to skills in speaking. In addition, I planned to determine which students were able to transfer the most blogging experiences to speaking experiences, and which language level or levels had the most growth in oral proficiency as a result of chatting on the blog.

Conclusion

In summary, using technology with all students, especially English language learners, was one way to augment their English oral proficiency (Huang & Hung, 2010). Abraham High School was a school that could benefit from using such technologies with ELLs because of its rapidly changing student demographics. The programming in Abraham High School was comprehensive, yet English language learners in particular seldom used technology to practice spoken language. There were very few staff members who could provide this kind of spoken practice with students due to scheduling restrictions and lack of second language knowledge. This challenge was a new one, but the student population in Abraham continued to grow in linguistic diversity with each

passing year. For this reason, best practice research indicated the school could be proactive in providing opportunities for ELLs to improve their oral language with technology. I proposed using blogs to use technology with which students are familiar to increase their time chatting and practicing English. In the next chapter, I will discuss research that supports my hypothesis and highlights other studies on oral language proficiency.

CHAPTER TWO

Introduction

This chapter provides background and current research in blogging and oral proficiency. It will first explore technology used in education, and connections between written and spoken language. Second, it will discuss the research done in the area of technology and blogging on written performance. Third, this chapter includes a section on blogging as a medium with which to learn about culture and language. Last, the chapter examines an evaluation of the advantages, validity, and reliability of several types of assessments typically used to evaluate oral proficiency as well as factors that contribute to oral assessment scores, including previous experience with print and specific identity factors. The chapter concludes with a summary of findings and implications for further research in the area of using technology to increase spoken language skills for language learners. The first area of importance to be discussed in this chapter is the effect of blogging on spoken language skills in learning another language.

The Effect of Blogs on Oral Performance

In his article, *Potential of text-based internet chats for improving oral fluency in a second language* (2009), author Christopher Blake investigated the gains in oral fluency of students who used text-based Internet chats. The author's aim was to explore the relationship between oral proficiency and use of text-based chats, compared to a control group and a third group with in-person interaction. The primary means of data collection was qualitative.

In order to screen his participants, the author began by using a holistic rating scale to find only intermediate English speakers. This was because intermediate speakers were

most likely to approach a speaking task without hesitation while the learners still exhibited potential for growth. A total of 34 participants completed the entire study. These participants were university students or the spouse of university students who were invested in learning English. The 34 participants were divided up evenly, and the author made an effort to place students from a variety of first languages in each class.

Before the study, Blake gave a pre-test to all participants. The pre-test was recorded on PRAAT speech analysis computer software with several capabilities to measure fluency. These capabilities included measurement of pauses, measurement of syllables uttered between pauses, rate, and the length of phonation between pauses. This information was used as the baseline to measure growth. Then, the author conducted a 6-week study with the 34 students. After screening the sample, Blake divided the participants into three groups. All three groups received the same curriculum. The first group, the control group, received no additional interaction. The second group received traditional face-to-face interaction. The third group received text-based Internet chats as a form of interaction. The same instructor taught all three groups to ensure consistency in instruction. With the exception of the second group, which met face-to-face, the students completed the course online.

The procedures for interactions during the course varied. In the control group, students saw the curriculum and vocabulary in their online course, and then submitted assignments to the professor. The professor would provide individual feedback via e-mail. The in-person group interacted with the same curriculum in person, and followed conventional conversational rules such as taking turns to interact during class. The text-

based Internet discussion group watched the same content as the control group while online, but used a chat feature to converse with classmates in real time during the class.

After completing the 6-week study, Blake gave students the same post-test that they took with the PRAAT software as a pre-test. Then, he compared scores to measure growth. The author measured the same five measures of fluency: 1) Speaking rate; 2) Phonation time ratio; 3) Articulation rate; 4) Mean length of run; and 5) Average length of pauses. Finally, each participant was given an exit interview.

The researchers provided several major points taken from their coded information. After completing the 6-week study, the author found that the Internet chat group showed more growth in all five areas studied than the control group. Furthermore, the Internet chat group showed greater gains in four of the five areas studied when compared to the face-to-face group. The only place where the face-to-face group showed more growth than the Internet chat group was in articulation rate.

The author advised future research to continue to evaluate uses of Internet chat in Internet classes to improve oral fluency. Furthermore, he also recommended incorporating some element of the Internet chat framework into face-to-face classes. The author hypothesized that the Internet chat group could "speak" more often than the in-person group since many students could type quickly, and there was no need to take turns. This gave more students more time to communicate with each other. The author was careful to point out that, aside from the first and last five minutes of each class, the structure of the Internet chats was professor-lead and very rigid. Blake warns against expecting the same types of gains from less structured, traditional Internet chats. Finally, a few of the participants said they believed they had not learned a lot to improve their

oral fluency, even though they showed gains. Blake said this suggested a remaining

skepticism of this technological tool as a means to augment oral fluency. While this

research connected gains in spoken language to written language, the next article will

discuss how voice blogs increase oral proficiency in language learners.

Author Yu-Chih Sun (2012) studied the use of voice blogs, or voice recordings of

responses to questions, to determine the effect on speaking proficiency. She investigated

the use of this educational technology, and then wrote her article, *Examining the*

effectiveness of extensive speaking practice via voice blogs in a foreign language

learning context. More specifically, she wanted to determine two different things: the

growth in speaking of each student participant, as well as the perceived gains of each

student.

Sun began her study with 46 college students learning English in Taiwan. All the

students were learning English as a foreign language in Taiwan through this public

speaking course. There were 15 female and 31 male students, divided into two classes of

22 and 24. The students averaged nine years of experience taking English classes, and

none of them had ever studied abroad.

Students who participated in this study were assigned to a course for one

semester, or 18 weeks. The goal of the course was to gain intensive practice in English.

Students were given what Sun called "insufficient" time in class to practice speaking. For

this reason, Sun required the students to supplement their speaking participation with

voice blog entries from each student. Students were instructed on the use of the voice

blog the first day of class. The next class meeting, students were assigned the task of

producing 30 voice blog entries and 10 responses to others' blogs over the course of the

semester. The responses to other students could focus on the content, grammar, or meaning of what other learners said. The teacher of the course gave purposefully open-ended instructions on how and about what to speak to on the blog. The directions given were simply to produce 30 blog entries and 10 responses.

After the conclusion of the semester in class, the teacher of the course asked students to take a self-evaluation on their work in the blogs. Specifically, the researcher used the Likert scale for students to rate themselves on a variety of measures they may have improved upon, including fluency, pronunciation, organization of ideas, and accuracy in both grammar and lexical skills. Another part of the researcher's plan to evaluate student language growth was to have two evaluators listen to each student's first three and last three blog entries. The two scorers were Sun, and another experienced master's student working in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) department. Both Sun and her second rater were not native speakers of English. To train the second rater for reliability, Sun engaged the rater in training on the use of the evaluation criteria. The language samples were played in a random series in order to help prevent any bias that may arise from Sun's knowledge of the identity of the speaker. Then, the samples were evaluated for different aspects of speaking skills, namely pronunciation, complexity of the language, fluency, or accuracy. All these qualities were rated on a one- to five-point scale, with five being the highest possible rating. After all samples were rated, the researcher and her second rater determined how reliable their evaluations were when compared to one another. Using the Pearson's product-moment correlation, Sun determined that inter-rater reliability was at a high level of 0.915.

Sun determined that while students perceived gains in their speaking, there were no significant gains in that the language was not more complex, fluent, accurate, nor did it reflect better pronunciation. The last three blog entries for the students were, on average, shorter than the earlier entries. Upon performing a t-test, Sun determined that while there were gains in the areas of pronunciation, complexity of the language, fluency, and accuracy, they were too low to be statistically significant. When students evaluated themselves using the Likert scale, learners reported they felt improvement was most evident in pronunciation and least in grammatical accuracy.

The author stated her research corroborated previous research, which was that blogging must involve personal expression or a social goal in order to be motivating, but that the task must also have a focus on grammar to help improve accuracy. Moving the focus from accurate use of language to social and meaningful expression of ideas, Sun wrote, will make the blogging experience more authentic for learners, but will not produce more accurate grammar. Sun also hypothesized that motivation to continue throughout the semester waned due to the shorter length of blog entries as the study progressed. Finally, the author also said a semester of speaking practice was a relatively short period of time to see significant gains in so many different areas in speaking. While the previous study investigated student perception of learning in terms of accuracy of spoken language, the next article will discuss both student perception of learning and written language progress.

Effect of Blogs on Written Performance

In her article, *Understanding class blogs as a tool for language development* (2008), author Doris de Almeida Soares investigated two main questions. First, she

wanted to know to what extent students viewed the blogs as a learning tool. Also, she wanted to find out what blogging was like when learning another language around the world. She accomplished this second goal by surveying language professionals from around the world about their blogging habits and those of their students.

The sample of students who blogged consisted of nine students in a low-intermediate level English as a Foreign Language class. The students were high-school aged. The author chose the second sample group, the group of international educators, by posting an online survey linked to her blog. She received sixteen responses from educators from eight different countries. Eight teachers taught English as a Second Language (ESL) at the college or university level, two taught in a language institute, three in a K-12 school, two taught English as a first language, and one taught vocational studies.

The author created a class blog for a 15-week term of school, and during this time, de Almeida Soares documented the blog entries and reflection responses of her students. After the first three weeks, de Almeida Soares found few students completed the requisite number of posts she required for class. In response to this problem, the author completed two different procedures to determine to what extent students saw themselves as active participants in the blog and which obstacles were keeping them from contributing regularly. In the first phase in determining students' perceptions of the blog, de Almeida Soares posted a reflection question for students to answer. She asked students to explain why the class had a blog, how it would help with English, and how motivated they were to use it. All students understood the blog was to practice English and help them interact with others. Students sited two main obstacles to using the blog: lack of free

time outside of school, and technical difficulties. In response, the author gave students

class time. During class time, students responded to others' blogs, as well as posted

multimedia with the guidance of their teacher.

To gain insight from other educators worldwide, the author created an online

survey. Sixteen educators from eight different countries responded to questions on

engaging students in blogs. Only two of the educators used blogs with young students or

students with beginning language levels. Most of the educators used blogs because of

their personal interest in technology, rather than as a larger, school- or institution-wide

effort. Overall, most educators said their class blogs were not mandatory, and that

students would comment mostly in small bits of text. From these survey results, the

author wrote recommendations for other educators about to implement a class blog.

Author de Almeida Soares provided several practical recommendations for

implementing a class blog, especially for the first time. She concluded that even though

students were tech-savvy in general, an in-class tech tutorial on how to use the blog was

essential. This, she stated, increased participation. The author also recommended teachers

help students understand how blogging for educational purposes differs from and was

similar to a social networking site like MySpace or Facebook. Several students

commented the uses of both types of blogs—educational and social networking—were

similar, yet had enough significant differences to merit class discussion of these

differences. De Almeida Soares also determined students gained more from class time to

share their blogs and responses to the blogs of others. In addition, the author concluded

that the number of times students posted did not correlate to students' perceived value of

blog. The surveys students completed described how students knew and understood the

utility of educational blogs, regardless of the quantity or length of blog posts. Finally, de Almeida Soares recommended that teachers and students know how file uploads and storage capabilities on the blog work, if the teacher planed for students to use them during the use of the blog. Overall, de Almeida Soares commented that blogging and associated technology was here to stay, and teacher understanding of its use will become more crucial as time progresses.

The researcher's conclusions about her students' blog participation lead to several implications for educators who, like her, were starting to blog with students. She recommended implementing an in-class tutorial and time to share in class. She said more research may be needed in the types of in-person training necessary to successfully blog with students. In addition, de Almeida Soares' comments on the differences between educational blogging and social network blogging brought to mind continuing research on the utility of both types of sites as language learning tools. Finally, if educators planned on students using file uploads or other multimedia embedded into their blog posts, de Almeida Soares called for more research on how to most effectively instruct students on the use of this element of the blog, as well. The previous research discussed specific elements of blogging and how students view them as learning tools, while the next article will discuss creating personal yet educational interactions through the medium of a blog.

Author Matthew Nepomuceno (2011) called learning to write a "dreaded" skill in his article, *Writing online: Using blogs as an alternative writing activity in tertiary ESL classes.* This was because the language macro skill of writing involved producing output while still giving appropriate attention to both grammar and content. The question of

whether to stress structure in writing or communicating ideas was a vexing one for many

educators who wanted students to both enjoy writing but also produce grammatically

correct written pieces. Nepomuceno recommended using blogs to teach writing to

English language learners because of their flexibility, accessibility, and possibility of

producing authentic and relevant writing samples. Therefore, Nepomuceno aimed to

implement blogging as a supplementary writing activity, and to then measure its ability to

augment student writing skills. He also wanted to explore other possible uses of blogging

in teaching different sets of writing skills. To obtain data on other possible uses of blogs,

the researcher surveyed study participants about their perceptions of the blogging

process.

Nepomuceno's sample consisted of 36 second-year college students enrolled in a

writing class from varying academic disciplines. All participants were students in the

Philippines. The students volunteered to participate in the study while concurrently

enrolled in the writing class. Before beginning the study, the participants took a pre-

survey to gain insight into their personal information as well as skills. Most participants

were between 17 and 19 years old, and a majority had previous experience blogging

online. For example, about two-thirds had computer and internet access at home, while

the remaining third utilized computer shops or internet cafes to access the internet on a

regular basis. Of the 36 original participants, 35 of the 36 used at least one social

networking site such as Friendster or Facebook, so they had experience micro blogging.

Nepomuceno noted that though 36 participants began the study, only 27 finished it.

Nepomuceno managed the blogs and served as administrator during his study. He

reviewed several social networking sites and chose one called Multiply (multiply.com) as

the basis for the study on blogging. His rationale was because site security protecting privacy was greater on Multiply, and there were more toolbars to utilize for blog personalization. Nepomuceno's main role as administrator of the blogs was to approve blog entries for posting. Blogs were unapproved if they did not follow posting guidelines or were off-topic. First, Nepomuceno informed participants of the goals of the blog and how to appropriately utilize the technology. He gave credit in class for only the participants who initially signed up for the blog and routinely posted and responded to others' posts within the blog class. Comments as well as entries were required at least once a week. The author stressed the importance of providing feedback, whether positive or negative, in a constructive way so as not to embarrass the original blog's author. Finally, Nepomuceno informed students of the importance of maintaining confidentiality of participants' identities.

The study took place over a 12-week period divided into three phases. The first phase, which was exploratory in nature, the administrator (Nepomuceno) would post a blog topic and participants would comment. This was for students to become familiar with the blog, as well as for them to determine their interests in topics for the next phases of blogging. The second phase was called the "Personal Blog" phase, in which participants created their blog about personal or interpersonal topics of interest, such as sports or fashion. The third phase delved into deeper issues, and participants were to create blog entries and comments on more controversial issues, such as current politics or educational policy. Extra credit was awarded to students who produced a number of blog entries throughout the course of the study. Finally, Nepomuceno gave a post-survey at the end of the study.

The author found blogs first became longer in length around the fourth week of the 12-week study, and then became shortest near the seventh week of the study. Nepomuceno attributed this dip to the increasing demands from the university in terms of assessments at that point in the semester. However, despite shorter and fewer blog entries, students continued to write on an increasing variety of topics as time went on. The personal topics made way for political topics later on in the study, as Nepomuceno planned. The final survey Nepomuceno gave included student perceptions of blogging in the study.

Nepomuceno recommended blogging as a positive way to utilize technology to supplement writing instruction. Most students enjoyed blogging, and said their reasons were social interaction, increased time writing, increased ease of writing, and learning time management when using the internet for an academic purpose. The author endorsed blogging to give students a more personalized writing experience. Difficulties students cited in attempting to write blogs included lack of home computer or internet access, other computer-related distractions, negativity directed toward bloggers, and writer's block. For this reason, Nepomuceno recommended minimizing these difficulties before implementing a blog. Ways to combat these issues included utilizing in-class or lab time for writing, teaching time management skills in conjunction with technology instruction, and other skills to combat writer's block, both on blogs and in other writing situations. The previous article discussed writing on blogs as a supplementary writing activity. The next article will provide further focus on blogging for writing instruction while also fostering meaningful interactions online.

Author Annick Rivens Mompean (2010) discussed the ability to fine-tune the types of interactions on a blog in her article, *The development of meaningful interactions on a blog used for the learning of English as a foreign language.* Her aim was to see how blogs work for adult learners to create meaningful or real-life interactions, identifying favorable elements to replicate and ones that were not as useful to accomplish the course outcomes**.** She also intended to measure characteristics of the text publications in the blog, both when students used them alone or with groups. Rivens Mompean also measured whether or not students posted or commented on others' blogs, and how interactions were structured. Finally, she investigated motivating factors in using the blog, including whether the weight of the part of the grade associated with the blog affected student participation. The author also examined the types of pedagogical interventions to use to give feedback to students, including correcting language. Rivens Mompean wanted to correct grammatical errors to improve student language accuracy. However, keeping in mind that the blog was open to all internet users, she cited the conundrum of giving feedback in a public forum that was so open any person with internet access could access this feedback, as well. The author wanted to survey her students and other educators who blogged with students on the topic of bridging the gap between personal online communication, like social networking sites, and educational online communication, such as educational or course blogs. Because the social aspect of blogging was more motivating but the academic aspect of blogging was more fruitful in terms of producing accurate language, Rivens Mompean needed to investigate how to balance the two factors to maximize student language growth.

The sample consisted of master's students in France learning English as a foreign language. The students were in their second semester of the program. The participants were of varying levels of English proficiency. There were 13 female students and six male students, which was representative of an entire class in the master's cohort.

Students were assigned to blogging groups of three or four students of different English levels. They were tasked with analyzing the content of the blog, including themes, content of communication, quality of exchanges, and the organization of responses. Also used to triangulate the data was a participant survey given at the end of the course, and self-reflections completed by student participants throughout the course. The students' grades were determined by both a quantitative and a qualitative measure. The quantitative measure was that each student needed to make five contributions to their own blog, plus comments on the blogs of other students. The qualitative measure was based on the complexity of contributions, taking into account the language level of the student when he or she began the program. After the blogs were posted, the evaluators corrected or gave feedback to the participants. To provide feedback, they wrote comments to draw more clarification from the writers or to point out inaccuracies in form or function of the language.

Rivens Mompean called the blogging exercise a dialogue that was created when other students commented on the ideas of other students. The author, when analyzing the blog entries as a portion of the qualitative grade, gave different types of blog contributions different names. She called some students animators, pedagogues, or provocateurs if those particular comments from the student fulfilled the specific roles. An animator was a blogger who attempted to engage peers online into responding by

reaching out for feedback. A pedagogue was someone who delved into the educational aspects of the content or form in the blog. A provocateur was someone who used rhetoric or argumentation to engage others' participation in the blog. These three groups of comments constituted the majority of authentic interactions in comments. Rivens Mompean hypothesized this was because these types of comments most closely mirror the social uses of blogs, rather than those used in the classroom.

When analyzing student responses to surveys on the blogging experience, Rivens Mompean noted many students wanted more close support in writing and grammar. Another finding was about half of the participants said they used the blogs to write more often than they usually did. However, most students also felt writing was less authentic if the topic was assigned to them, rather than self-selected. Another finding was that many students wanted private ways to address feedback on their blogs instead of in a public place; in this case, in the comments section of their blog.

The author gave several recommendations on the use of blogs for language learning. First, she recommended teachers use caution about choosing a specific type of blog. A group blog, for example, was open to members of a segment of the class and facilitated building a group identity within the larger class. A personal blog put more pressure on an individual to produce more language. A class blog was open to all class members and built a class identity, but was less likely to produce more extensive language from all class members. Rivens Mompean also encouraged teachers to take a linguistic analysis of what students wrote to drive instruction in specifically grammatical features. Furthermore, the author recommended keeping topics student-selected, so the exchange remained rich and argumentative. This type of discourse was more authentic

than the idea of blogging for educational use, which, in turn, aided in producing more motivating and authentic discourse. Finally, Rivens Mompean recommended teachers find a way to provide feedback in a private setting in order to lower the affective filter of blog participants who may make more grammatical errors or otherwise struggle with writing. This section discussed the merits and challenges of written blogs, while the next section will explore studied connecting technology to language and culture in education.

Studies on Culture, Language and Technology

In her article, *A social tool: Why and how ESOL students use Facebook* (2012), Kathleen Mitchell aimed to find why English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) students join the social networking site Facebook. In addition, she studied which factors kept ESOL students interested in Facebook, and which features of the site discouraged them from staying active on the site.

The study took place at a large west coast university intensive English program. Students at the university came from many different countries. A purposive sample of students was chosen from the students at this university based on enrollment in an intermediate to advanced writing course during one term. All students in the course were given a survey to determine the students' level of involvement on Facebook, as ranked by number of potential interactions within a one-month period. To calculate this number, Mitchell multiplied number of friends on Facebook by number of times logged into Facebook per day. Students with the highest numbers were classified as "high" involvement, and the same procedure was used to classify other students as having "medium" or "low" involvement. The author's aim was to select a group of students with a wide variety of levels of involvement. She obtained a sample larger than needed, and so

therefore giving preference to potential study participants concurrently enrolled in a speaking class for selection in the study.

First, the participants were given an initial interview, which varied in length from 20 to 40 minutes. Mitchell asked students already on Facebook about their usage of the site, motivation to join the site, ability to use the site, and general computer usage. Non-Facebook users were asked about their knowledge of the site, motivation for using the site, and general computer usage.

The second phase of the study involved the participants adding the researcher as a friend on Facebook. Then, Mitchell monitored the students' Facebook activity for a period of four weeks. During that period, the researcher tracked participant activity and changes in relationship status, educational history, hobbies, and other personal information. The researcher also documented events on the News Feed, or list of activity of friends, of each participant. The News Feed archives participant activity on Facebook in chronological order, from most to least recent, and documents interactions and other Facebook interactions. In situations when the researcher was not privy to information from friends of participants in the study, Mitchell did not seek to add participants' friends to obtain a second half of an online conversation with participants.

In the final step of the study Mitchell conducted a closing interview with each participant after the four-week period of online monitoring. Unlike the initial interview, which included set questions, the interviewer asked each participant about specific aspects of his or her Facebook activity. The initial interview, the four-week monitoring period, and the closing interview were used to provide the author with her final analysis of the data.

Individual students used a wide variety of types of interactions on Facebook. The

three main purposes students cited for using Facebook were keeping in touch with friends

from home countries, learning about American culture from American friends, and to

make new friends online. None of the students who participated in the study explicitly

stated practicing English as a goal for joining Facebook, though all of the participants in

the study used English in at least some of their interactions. Few of the participants met

new friends online, though many of them used Facebook to continue contact with new

Americans who they had met before in person, for example, in class or at a party.

Students used the social networking site for a variety of purposes, and they also varied in

how they used Facebook to communicate. Some commented on lots of photos, videos

and status updates of friends, which is a form of micro blogging. Other students relied

more on private messages, only seen by author and recipient, rather than posting public

comments on others' news feeds or photo albums. Others used Facebook to create and

receive invitations to parties. Many used it as a tool to combat loneliness associated with

living as an immigrant in the United States. A difficulty that some of the students had

was understanding what a "tag", "poke" or other English online terms meant in the

context of Facebook. Another challenge was using or becoming familiar with the

technology.

Positive uses of Facebook included combating homesickness. Many students

spoke with friends from home, as well as with friends who had also come to America and

experienced the same type of culture shock as they did. Concerns about the utility of

Facebook as a writing practice tool involved informal register. Mitchell questioned

whether or not writing informally, as if the user were speaking rather than writing, was a

practical way to teach writing if the writing was so informal. Mitchell recommended teachers use student motivation to be on Facebook to explore cultural norms and language, and focus on social aspects of language learning. Mitchell further commented that by giving students social goals rather than language learning ones, assessment would be closely aligned with how students actually use Facebook. Since students practiced English on the site anyway, Mitchell recommended teachers keep lesson goals involving Facebook communication-based. While Mitchell examined micro blogging and its connection to language and culture, author Hui-Yin Hsu focused on learning culture through blogging in the next article.

Author Hui-Yin Hsu (2012) conducted a study to answer the question of how to train pre-service teachers to increase their awareness of other cultures. Specifically, she sought to give these pre-service teachers a forum in which they could become more sensitive to the cultural concerns of others and evaluate educational materials to eliminate bias in these materials. Hsu wanted to find these answers in the context of reading and reading instruction using weblog technology in her study, *Preparing teachers to teach literacy in responsive ways that capitalize on students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds through weblog technology.* Her study was a mixed-methods study because qualitative data such as observations, blog content, case studies and focus groups were used in conjunction with quantitative pre- and post-surveys.

The researcher aimed to study teachers who were training to teach literacy. For this reason, Hsu began with 27 pre-service teachers as her study's participants. Of the 27, most identified themselves as middle-class. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 45 years old. Four of the 27 participants identified themselves as people of color. All of the

participants were students of education at a four-year teacher preparation program. The specific course which all participants took at the time of the study was a literacy methods course that required an additional 20 hours of field experience in addition to the semester-long scheduled class sessions. The study took place in the northeast United States.

All of the 27 pre-service teachers who participated in the study took a pre- and post-survey to measure understanding of cultural and language diversity. The specific assessment they took was called the *Language Knowledge and Awareness Survey* (2000). The survey gave eight scenarios in regards to diversity and cultural issues within a reading context. Then, the pre-service teachers responded to the scenarios. The results were analyzed to give Hsu information about the participants' knowledge of cultural issues before and after the study. To compare the pre- and post-survey, the author used a t-test to show growth between the two surveys.

After the pre-survey, participants participated in several activities. These activities gave the author information to triangulate her findings. One of these activities was to post in a group blog. The 27 pre-service teachers were required to post weekly and reflect on questions involving diversity and culture. These included ethnicity, religion, gender, age, socio-economic status, region, language, and ability. Then, the participants were required to reflect on student needs and the connection between meeting these needs in the classroom and the potential biases in materials, systems and individuals that might keep these needs from being met. Pre-service teacher participants also joined in a case-scenario analysis. This involved participants responding to scenarios like those in the pre- and post-surveys. Hsu then evaluated the participants' responses, paying attention to the degree to which they were culturally responsive. Also, the research members were

observed during their 20-hour field experience. The participants also wrote their final paper reflecting on this field experience. Hsu used this paper, as well as participants' blog post reflections, to triangulate her findings. The final step of the study was for participants to complete the post-survey.

Author Hui-Yin Hsu found that pre-service teachers increased in their awareness of diversity and cultural issues throughout the course of the study. Using both the pre- and post-surveys, Hsu found that the participants increased in awareness on every item. The results of the pre-service teachers' blog reflections showed similar evidence of greater cultural sensitivity. Hsu's second goal of observing the utility of weblogs as a venue to increase participation also showed positive results. The pre-service teachers viewed cultural awareness as an ongoing process. They comfortably participated in the blog forums. The more introverted participants especially were able to gain a voice through the blog forum. The discussion time on the blog was able to augment classroom discussion when class time was cut short or the discussions were much more complex than the class period allowed time to discuss.

Because of the success of the blog, Hsu recommended extending research on blog use in both pre-service and current teachers. She endorsed incorporating both groups into a blog-related study. This participation of teachers of varying levels of experience, Hsu said, could enrich all groups involved. She ended her study calling for more longitudinal studies on the implications of blog use for teachers, both pre-service and experienced veterans.

Oral Assessments and Student Factors Affecting Performance

In their article entitled *Implementing electronic speaking portfolios: perceptions of EFL students,* (2010) Heng-Tsung Danny Huang and Shao-Ting Alan Hung explored the relationship between oral proficiency and use of e-portfolios. Specifically, the authors demonstrated the usefulness of a digital way to store oral artifacts, and linked this process to English language learners' growth in proficiency. The primary means of data collection was qualitative.

Huang and Hung provided 51 second-year university students in Taiwan with training in an e-portfolio program. The authors also selected six of the 51 students as "focus students" to more extensively interview. They selected the six students based on the students' initial attitude questionnaire and desire to participate in further interviews.

The authors conducted a 19-week study with the 51 students. During the first week, students attended a tutorial in the e-portfolio website called *Wretch*. During the second and third week, students set up their account with *Wretch* and created their initial profile. For the remaining 16 weeks, students uploaded verbal responses to a topic discussed in English class via audio or video files. In addition, students were required to visit classmates' e-portfolios and offer feedback. Students were also encouraged to personalize their portfolios by uploading additional multimedia. The researchers concluded the study with 30-minute interviews with the six focal students. The final interviews were for students to reflect on the experience of using an e-portfolio and to revisit the initial attitude questionnaire. These interviews were conducted in the students' first language.

To qualitatively assess their data Huang and Hung engaged in a six-step process. During the last four steps, the authors constantly modified their coding to accurately portray the data while taking into account counterevidence.

Huang and Hung provided several major points taken from their coded information. The results showed that e-portfolios helped draw attention to weaker areas in student speaking. E-portfolios also offered additional speaking opportunities while allaying speaking anxiety. These portfolios acted as an archive to conveniently document student progress. The authors confirmed this opportunity created more reflective learners. Two caveats of the e-portfolio model were an absence of face-to-face interaction as well as rehearsal opportunities masked true student English proficiency levels. Huang and Hung consequently concluded that e-portfolios were incredibly useful to English language learners but a combined approach which also included traditional assessment (oral presentations, role-plays and other in-person assessments) best assessed student oral proficiency performance.

The authors advised future research to continue to evaluate uses of e-portfolios in the classroom as part of a balanced assessment of oral proficiency. Specifically, the authors noted that traditional oral assessment of English language learners is typically summative. The researchers then called for the addition of e-portfolios, which benefit students by offering a formative assessment of students' skills while also teaching students to think metacognitively about their learning process.

In her study entitled, *How well do commonly used language instruments measure English oral-language proficiency* (2005), author Lisa Pray aimed to determine if three of the most commonly used assessments of oral proficiency in English have construct

validity. These three assessments were the Spanish version of the Language Assessment

Scales (LAS-O) (1990), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Proficiency Test (IPT) (2001), and the Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey (WMLS)

(2001). Previous research indicated the three aforementioned tests provided false

negatives in that native English speakers may be identified as non-English proficient by

these tests. Therefore, this would call into question the validity of these measures of

English proficiency. Pray intended to test the LAS-O, the IPT and the WMLS for false

negatives. She also wanted to find the connection between student socio-economic status

(SES) and their scores on these assessments. The primary means of data collection was

quantitative research.

Pray conducted her study in the southwestern United States in a large urban

district with approximately 25,000 students. The author also wanted to find the influence

of SES on student achievement on the assessments. Overall, 50% of the students within

the entire district qualified for free lunch. Therefore, the identification of a student as

receiving free lunch was a proxy variable to indicate that the student was from a lower

SES.

To obtain a sample of students, Pray received information from the school district

on individual students and their teachers. The author requested data on students that were

white or Hispanic, enrolled in general education classes, enrolled in fourth or fifth grade,

and not enrolled in any classes for gifted students. The author requested white or

Hispanic, English-speaking students to find a group that was English-proficient to test.

She requested students in general education classes, not gifted courses or special

education, to assure she had a group of students who were developmentally average. Pray

also requested students enrolled in fourth or fifth grade since, by the age of 8 or 9, most

normally developing students were fluent in their first language. From this pool of

students, the author of this study chose 40 students: 20 non-Hispanic white native English

speakers, and 20 Hispanic native English speakers. In addition, 20 of the 40 students

were from a low SES, and 20 were not. This was to determine if SES was a significant

factor in test performance.

Pray administered all three assessments, the LAS-O, the IPT and WMLS to all 40

students. She gave each student one test a week over a three-week period. This was to

ensure that differences in the examiners of the assessment were not also variables to

affect the data. Then, the researcher scored all of the tests. Next, she had a research

assistant score the same tests. Finally, she had a company score all the tests, as well. The

author did this to determine if the person scoring the assessment affected the score.

The investigator found the scores varied greatly between the LAS-O, the IPT and

the WMLS. The results of the LAS-O showed 100% of the sample was fluent in English.

Outcomes of the IPT indicated, 3% of the sample was non-English speaking, 12% was

limited English-speaking, and 85% was fluent English-speaking. The WMLS scores

noted none of the sample was fluent or advanced at English speaking. The WMLS

indicated that 10% of the sample had negligible English, 50% had very limited English,

and 40% had limited English. After performing a t-test, Pray found there was a weak

correlation between high SES and high scoring on the tests, but this correlation was not

strong enough to prove the author's hypothesis about SES being a crucial factor in these

assessments.

Other findings showed certain test items on the WMLS were difficult to interpret, such as unclear drawings. Also, several vocabulary questions were misleading in that they asked students for terms that were historical, regional, or situated in cultural contexts with which the majority of the sample was unfamiliar. The author noted that the WMLS over-relied on academic language as a determiner of English proficiency. The author found that the IPT relied on student responses to take the form of full sentences, which created several incorrect student responses that were otherwise correct. She also found that the IPT relied heavily on a retelling portion of the test that may have been difficult for many to comprehend. Finally, in terms of scoring the LAS-O, there were large differences in scoring depending on the person who performed the scoring. Pray cited multiple differences between her scoring, the scoring of her research assistant and the company who scored tests for profit. Pray remarked that the rubric used to determine the scores included too much room for interpretation of scores. Since the scores varied significantly based on the rater, the researcher determined they were unreliable.

Pray said more research needs to be done regarding instruments used to measure oral proficiency. Certainly, if a group of native English speakers could not obtain a proficient or fluent score on an oral English assessment, something was lacking in the assessment. This connected to several implications for further research. First, the need for reliable assessments of oral speaking ability remained extremely important. Furthermore, there continues to be a need to critically evaluate every oral assessment tool used. Taking into account cultural and other factors related to identity, as well as valid assessment measures, are necessary for more accurate assessments of oral ability.

As evidenced by the previous studies, methods of oral assessments varied greatly and offered different strengths and weaknesses to students and educators alike. However, independent of the type of assessment used, student factors also influenced outcomes on oral assessments. Three student factors are vocabulary and sight word knowledge, gender and cross-cultural competence and its relationship to gestures. These factors were addressed in the next section.

In their article *What does oral language have to do with it? Helping young English-language learners acquire a sight word vocabulary*, (2008) Lori Hellman and Matthew Burns' aim was to research the area of sight word reading, and how the process of acquiring sight words varies between English language learners and students whose first language is English. Specifically, the authors discussed the development of this sight word recognition skill and how teachers can incorporate it to create a meaningful curriculum in both reading and language. The authors stressed the importance of English language learners making sight words automatic in order to decode efficiently and fluidly since they tend to struggle more than native speakers of English with syntax and other grammatical features. The primary means of data collection was qualitative.

The authors researched sight word acquisition in three elementary schools located in an urban school district. The district was located in the Midwest region of the United States. Participants included a total of 43-second grade students who were English language learners. All members spoke Hmong as a home language. The three schools where the authors conducted the study had a student population that qualified for free or reduced lunch from 83.9% to 93.1%. The student population of English language learners was between 46.6% and 64.0%.

Hellman and Burns measured student oral proficiency with the Language

Assessment Scales-Oral (LAS-O) (1994). This assessment measured speaking, listening,

vocabulary, and verbal proficiency. To measure progress in oral proficiency, each

English language learner was taught a series of unknown words by practicing them in

groups with known words. Each group included eight known words to one unknown

word. The student would practice his or her words in such a way until they made three

errors with a new word. Then, the rate at which the students learned the words was

recalculated. The authors gave the following example of how the rate was calculated: if

the student learned five new words during the vocabulary drill with few errors, but then

made three errors while practicing the sixth word, their acquisition rate would be five.

The researchers found a significant correlation between the scores on the LAS-O

and the acquisition rates for new sight words, with the average reliability for all 43

students at a 0.63. The authors stressed the reciprocal relationship between language

proficiency and high sight word acquisition rate. The authors said the two processes were

related, though it was unclear which ability came first. Furthermore, the authors

questioned whether a third ability came into play that influences these two abilities.

The authors advised future research to continue to find ways to develop sight

word skills with English language learners. Furthermore, the researchers stressed the

importance of connecting pre-existing language proficiency with ability to learn more

sight words. The authors provided a short list of ways teachers who are unfamiliar with

teaching sight words can incorporate these techniques into instruction. These included

providing high frequency word lists and reading material at the student's individual level,

providing visual support, and giving students the opportunity to ask what words mean in

a safe space, preferably individually or in small groups, to avoid embarrassment in front of peers. The previous article aimed to determine the influence of sight word vocabulary on language acquisition. The next article will discuss the effect of gender on language acquisition.

Authors Khalil Motallebzadeh and Shaahin Nematizedeh (2011) studied the role of gender as a factor in oral assessment. Their research included *Does gender play a role in the assessment of oral proficiency?* The means of data collection were quantitative. The authors intended to use information obtained about gender and language learning to improve assessment and instruction, and determine if other studies on this topic would be consistent with their findings. The design of this experiment was what the authors called an *ex post facto* design, meaning that the researchers entered the process with a hypothesis, performed the study, and then attempted to find the relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable. In this case, the independent variable was gender and the dependent variable was oral proficiency performance on an assessment. Because of this, the primary means of data collection was qualitative.

The group studied in this research consisted of 429 English language learners at different language proficiency levels at six different institutes in Iran. The participants varied in age from 16 to 33 to focus the study on adult learners. First, all students were given the Oxford placement test. Second, participants were filtered based on scoring intermediate marks, defined as scoring between 60 and 70 percent on the Oxford placement. This part of the sample was 198 participants. Then, the 198 students scoring intermediate were given an oral examination in English by two experienced interviewers using the International English Language Testing System, or IELTS, speaking assessment

descriptors. Out of the 198 participants, 160 scored intermediate, or the equivalent of scoring in the range of four to seven on a nine-point scale. These 160 students, who the authors deemed intermediate by both the Oxford placement test as well as in terms of the IELTS descriptors, were the main participants of this study. About 67% of the 160 participants were women, and the remaining 33% were men.

The participants took part in the main oral interviews. Experienced interviewers gave English language learners the IELTS interview, parts 2 and 3. Part 2 consisted of several steps. First, the interviewers gave the participant a speaking prompt card. The participant had one minute to read the card and take any notes. Then, the interviewers asked the English learner to speak for 2 minutes on the topic. Part 3 was that the assessors then started another discussion related to the prompt from part 2 with the participant. The entire interview was recorded. Both interviewers determined the overall score for each participant, and made unanimous decisions about the English language learners' oral proficiency. Two raters, who were separate from the interviewers, then assessed the recordings of the participants' oral performance using the four IELTS standards of fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammatical accuracy, and pronunciation. The authors compared the results of the final interviews by gender using a T-test.

Motallebzadeh and Nematizedeh found females perform slightly better on assessment of oral proficiency than males. This was consistent with another study the researchers cited while introducing the experiment. The authors attributed this difference to females being more serious about language study. To support this hypothesis, the authors described how female participants seemed to be under stress when they noticed they were being taped, while male participants were un-phased by the camera.

Specifically, female participants exhibited more self-conscious behaviors such as reserved body language when they knew they were being taped. Males did not exhibit these behaviors to the same extent as female participants, which the authors interpreted as a lesser concern for the outcome of the assessment.

The authors said more research needs to be done in male motivation and improving numbers of males in language classes. The researchers also noted using male/female pairs to practice oral skills in classroom instruction might decrease the difference in performance. Finally, the author described the benefit of using these male/female pairs for paired assessment interviews to decrease female participants' stress while giving male participants a heightened sense of the importance of oral assessment.

As Motallebzadeh and Nematizedeh found, gender played a role in student outcomes on oral proficiency assessments. Another student factor that influenced oral proficiency assessment is culturally appropriate use of gesture while speaking another language.

Authors Zhendong Gan and Chris Davison (2011) began with the question: To what extent do appropriate gestural behaviors during group oral assessment positively correlated with high oral proficiency? In their article, *Gestural behavior in group oral assessment: a case study of higher- and lower-scoring students*, Gan and Davison discussed the importance of non-verbal communication. The authors' major concerns were that, while nearly two-thirds of communication was non-verbal, verbal communication on tests of oral proficiency was all that was measured (Eryilmayz & Darn, 2005). The authors observed high school students in a case study on the correlation of gestural and language competence. The primary means of data collection was

quantitative, since the researchers began with a concrete hypothesis that there was a connection between non-verbal and verbal language achievement. Then, they tested this hypothesis within their experiment design.

The group studied consisted of Chinese high school students whose first language was Chinese and who were learning English in Hong Kong schools. All members of the sample were in 9th grade. The study took place over a two-year period and involved 15 schools and 24 teachers' classes. The two groups of four students in this case study are a representative sample of student outcomes based on the whole body of data analyzed over the two year study.

The teachers of the subjects were trained extensively in administering the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) (2005), which is the assessment the researchers in this study observed for their experiment. The HKCEE is intended to be a school-based, low stress assessment. Though the HKCEE has both an individual and a group section, Gan and Davison only observed the group section since it yielded gestures to document and analyze. The exam evaluated students on pronunciation and delivery, communication strategies, vocabulary and language patterns, and ideas and organization. The first group watched the film *Forrest Gump* in English and was then prompted to discuss what gift they would give Forrest, the film's protagonist. The second group watched the film *About a Boy* in English and was then asked to discuss parallels between their lives and the lives of the two protagonists. The researchers designed their study to observe and videotape all interviews, looking for representative ones to show instructors in order to train the instructors on appropriate and inappropriate use of gesture.

The students were rated on a zero to six point scale, with six being the highest

rating in any area. The second group watched the film *About a Boy* in English and was

then asked to discuss parallels between their lives and the lives of the two protagonists.

The authors found the students in the higher-scoring group used gestures much more

often to augment understanding, seldom misusing gestures and usually using them to

augment meaning. For example, when talking about giving a gift, a participant held both

hands out in front of him, palms up, as if to hand a box to someone. Another example

was when a participant held her hand to her chest near her heart as she said the movie

was very touching. The students in the lower-achieving group used gestures like closed

posture, hands on faces, and hands on laps and behind backs. These gestures did not

indicate meaning in terms of what was being said, and these speakers all scored lower

than the previous group. In some cases, the gestures the lower group used actually created

confusion about what was being said, rather than clarifying. Gan and Davison concluded

the students from the higher group, which represented the information collected

throughout the study, showed students using paranarrative, metanarrative, and narrative-

type gestures. Narrative gestures were ones used along with what was in text, while

paranarrative and metanarrative were higher-level techniques. They were describing

events associated with the text and comments connecting self to text, respectively. They

also had what is considered good non-verbal behaviors in English-speaking countries,

like eye contact. The lower scoring group seldom had these non-verbal behaviors, and

when they did use gestures during evaluation, they were limited to the narrative type.

The authors stated more research needed to be done in conversational analysis

because of the potential for it to be very subjective. In addition, Gan and Davison called

for more instruction in gesturing, teaching appropriate gestures, and using assessments

that take into account the use of gestures in evaluation. The latter recommendation was

most difficult due to the necessity for both interviewer and interviewee to meet in person,

or to provide video footage to evaluate body language and gesture. An example of this

caveat was that the most popular oral proficiency assessment, the Oral Proficiency

Interview (OPI) was conducted over the phone, and therefore gesture was never taken

into account. Finally, gestures varied widely across cultures, and so studies on types of

gestures would vary depending on the first language and culture of every examinee.

Gender, socio-economic status, gesture, sight word background, vocabulary

knowledge, and cross-cultural competence were some of the innumerable factors that

enhanced or harmed student oral performance. Therefore, it was difficult in the previous

three studies to choose types of assessment that took an accurate measurement of oral

fluency.

Conclusion

There was a need for further research in the connections between technology,

assessment and spoken language skills of English language learners. These needs

included the effect of blogging on oral performance, both in terms of written and spoken

blogs. While Blake (2009) combined written blogs with spoken performance in a

language, there were few other studies that attempted to connect these two aspects of

language development. However, Blake determined that improvement in grammar during

blogging happened when the learning focus of the blog was explicitly a grammatical one

(Blake, 2009). This focus on structure may have hampered creativity or authenticity in

writing. Sun (2012) connected voice blogging with performance on oral assessments,

taking into consideration the increased speaking time as a factor in the study's success. Compared to oral proficiency and spoken blogs, there was much more information about the utility of written blogs to improve writing (de Almeida Soares, 2008; Nepomuceno, 2011; Rivens Mompean, 2010). Overall, the aforementioned authors concluded that writing with blogs improved writing in some way, whether it be motivation to write, ability to use new technology, or potential for increasing grammatical accuracy. The key in these three studies was that the authors stressed the setting of a writing goal as either to provide social and authentic writing, or to provide accurate and grammatical writing. None of the authors offered concrete ways to focus on both the social and academic aspects of blogging simultaneously. While writing on a blog was overwhelming positive, there were several other factors in the success of learners using a blog for the purpose of English acquisition.

Aside from studies on written and spoken blogs, there was a need to review literature associated with the connection between language, technology and culture. Mitchell (2012) and Hsu (2012) provided information on these connections. Mitchell explored how English language learners used Facebook, a social networking site with micro blogging capabilities, to accomplish cultural and social goals. According to Mitchell (2012), few students explicitly cited improvement in language as a goal in using Facebook, though language was a secondary function of the use of the site for many English language learners. Hsu (2012) determined that pre-service teachers stood to gain cultural knowledge through blogging as a reflective tool. Mitchell (2012) and Hsu (2012) both advised keeping in mind the cultural aspects and advantages of using a blog, whether or not users' primary aim is to use the blog as a learning tool.

Finally, how blogging and oral language connect could not be relevant without also discussing how oral language growth was measured. This growth required knowledge of variables associated with the assessments, as well as the people who take these assessments. To summarize factors that influence assessment, this author concluded that current standardized tests of oral proficiency do not necessarily have reliability or validity (Pray, 2005). Educators may need to spend considerable time evaluating assessments, as well as time in training to properly utilize the aforementioned assessments. One solution mentioned by Huang and Hung (2010) was the use of technology to augment evaluation of oral proficiency. The benefits of using e-portfolios included a method of formative assessment, less class time spent performing oral assessments, and greater learner comfort due to a more private assessment setting (Huang & Hung, 2010). Aside from the method of oral assessment, student factors also contributed to differences in performance in these assessments. Motallebzadeh and Nematizedeh (2011) determined that, when administering a commonly used standardized test, gender was a variable that influenced student performance in the favor of male examinees. Furthermore, research by Gan and Davison (2011) documented a positive correlation between appropriate gestures and proficient scores in oral language assessment. Assessment, then, was a crucial factor to evaluate when determining the utility of blogs as a means to augment speaking proficiency.

This body of research indicated a need for exploration of the connections between blogging, written language, and oral language proficiency. When performing research, this author kept in mind connections as related to culture, technology, assessments, and other student factors that may have influenced the outcomes of the research. While this

chapter reviewed investigations relevant to this action research, the next chapter will

outline the sample and procedures of the current study on the influence of written

blogging on oral proficiency on English Language Learners.

CHAPTER THREE

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine to what extent writing informal blog entries improved the oral language skills of English Language Learners (ELLs). In researching this study, the guiding questions were 1) Does writing short, informal, speech-like blog entries transfer to improvement in English speech? 2) Which language proficiency level or levels—beginner, intermediate or advanced—gained the most in terms of speaking proficiency by blogging? The research design for this study came from a combination of several studies by Blake (2009), de Almeida Soares (2008), Nepomuceno (2011), Rivens Mompean (2010), and Sun (2012). These studies involved implementing either written or voice blogs in varying classroom settings and determining both their effectiveness in terms of generating grammatically accurate language as well as authentic language. This chapter provides background on the sample, procedures and instructional steps, means of data collection, and a summary of these steps. First, it will give more detail about the sample population.

The procedures included a time period in which the baseline growth in speaking skill was determined, followed by a time period in which the blogging intervention was utilized. The researcher collected data in the form of the WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT) (Appendix A) in speaking and then the researcher used the assessment samples as her means of data collection (W-APT, 2013).

Sample Population

The sample consisted of eight ELLs from Abraham High School. All were between the ages of 16 and 18. The average age in the class was 17.125 and the mean age

was 17. The students were all in grades 10, 11 or 12, with two students in 12th grade, five

in grade 11, and one in grade 10. It should be noted that three of the eight students were

placed one grade lower than usual for their chronological age when they arrived in the

United States to account for any credit deficiencies and discrepancies in the number of

previous years of formal schooling. Six of the eight students were of Indian origin, with

Gujarati as their first language. One student was American-born and a native speaker of

Hmong. Another student was Chinese with Mandarin Chinese as a first language.

Commonalities among the eight members of the sample population were that they all

came from Asian descent, and they all spoke a language other than English almost

exclusively at home.

The amount of time each student had lived in the United States prior to the study

varied greatly. Of the eight students, one was born in the United States shortly after her

parents arrived in California as immigrants. However, she was raised speaking Hmong at

home. Four of the eight students arrived from India during the fall semester of the 2010

school year, which meant they had been in the United States for two and a half years at

the time of the study. Of these four Indian students, three were from the same extended

family that already had other aunts, uncles and cousins in the community. The remaining

Indian student who was unrelated came to the United States to work at a family

restaurant. Another two of the eight students arrived to the United States in winter of

2012, meaning they were in the United States for four months prior to the study. These

two students were also related to the aforementioned three Indian students who already

had family established in the community. Finally, the last student to arrive came to the

United States in February 2012, or one month before the study. He spoke Chinese and his family arrived to work in a relative's Chinese restaurant.

The students involved in the study also tested at a wide variety of English proficiency levels. Of the eight students, the three who had arrived in the United States within the previous four months had never taken the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS) test since they missed the district testing window for 2012. Because they were in their home countries during the ACCESS testing window, their scores on another screening assessment are included in lieu of their ACCESS scores. This assessment is the WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test. Two of the eight students tested at a level 1 of a 6 level scale based on their composite scores on the W-APT. Specifically, one student tested at a 1.5 and another tested at a 1.9. One student tested at a level 2.0 on the W-APT. Of the five students present during the 2012 ACCESS testing window, they also tested at a wide range of scores. One student was at a level 3.6. Three scored within a level 4 range, with one student per score of 4.6, 4.8 and 4.9, respectively. The final student was at a level 5.5. This section of the chapter described the sample population for this study. The next section will outline the procedures of the research study.

Procedures

Participants of this research were already assigned to an English as a Second Language (ESL) class with the researcher. They met for 51 minutes daily. Several weeks prior to the study, participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study. Students and their parents submitted a signed consent to participate form, which highlighted the voluntary nature of the study. The study took place over a six-week

period, plus one additional day the week after the intervention concluded in which the

third test was administered. The six-week period was divided into two three-week phases:

One phase prior to the intervention, and one phase during the intervention. Students were

given the W-APT Speaking Test three times during the six-week period: Once on week 1,

day 1; again in week 4, day 1; and last in week 7, day 1, when the study had concluded.

Table 1 below outlines in more detail the timetable for the testing, intervention, and

training on the class blog.

Table 1

Schedule of research with and without intervention.

Week and Phase	Day 1	Days 2-5
Week 1: Phase 1	Students given W-APT Speaking Test	No intervention
Week 2: Phase 1	No intervention	No intervention
Week 3: Phase 1	No intervention	Day 5: Students trained in class on the use of the class blog
Week 4: Phase 2	Students given W-APT Speaking Test; Students' intervention (participation in blog) begins	Intervention
Week 5: Phase 2	Intervention	Intervention
Week 6: Phase 2	Intervention	Intervention, concluding on day 5
Week 7: Post-Test	Students given W-APT Speaking Test	Conclusion of study

This study sought to utilize the W-APT Speaking Tests as a measure of speaking

proficiency in the participants. To this end, the researcher first assessed the participants

on the first day of the six-week study. The researcher performed all assessment duties in

order to avoid any issues with inter-rater reliability. This first test served as a baseline for

student speaking performance. Then, participants received regular, in-class instruction

without any type of change or intervention. This instruction included daily tasks such as

monitoring student academic progress in other classes, teaching students self-advocacy

techniques, comprehension strategies, and American cultural concepts. The researcher

also continued to administer any modified assessments from content area classes to

participants. To end phase 1, participants received training from the researcher on the use

of the blog they were to utilize during phase 2 of the study.

The training took place on the final day of phase 1, during week 3, day 5 of the

study. At school in a computer lab, the researcher conducted a training in which she

taught the eight participants how to create a blog username, password, and blog post. The

eight participants used the in-class time to accomplish these tasks. In-class time was

utilized in order to avoid confusion surrounding how to use the blog technology. After

the completion of phase 1, on day 1 of week 4, the researcher administered the W-APT

Speaking Test a second time. This second assessment was used in conjunction with the

first assessment to determine rate of growth in speaking without any intervention. This

second of the three assessments signaled the conclusion of phase 1 of the study, and the

beginning of phase 2. Phase 2 of the study began with the administration of the W-APT

Speaking Test for the second time. Next, the researcher introduced the specific criteria

for participation in the class blog.

Regular classroom instruction continued as before. In addition, students were

assigned written postings in a class blog as a requirement of their ESL class. The

emphasis of the blog contributions was on participation, not grammatical correctness. As

long as students completed the requisite number of blog posts, they were credited with

fulfilling their obligation to pass the course. The researcher used the website Edublogs

(edublogs.com) as the website for the class blog. The site was selected for several reasons. First, it was user-friendly and had simple tabs and subtitles with which to work. In addition, the site offered a variety of graphics, backgrounds, and themes to contribute a visual element to the blog. There were also several options to the researcher in terms of how posts could be displayed, and whether or not administrator approval was necessary before student blog postings were published to the site. Finally, privacy was well-protected on the Edublogs site. Only the researcher and the eight participants could access the class blog or any information posted on it. In addition to this privacy measure, the researcher also required students to use pseudonyms as usernames when using the blog, so that their identities could not be traced back to their blog postings or profiles.

The blog was a class blog, in that the researcher served as administrator of the blog and the eight participants posted responses to various conversation threads throughout the three week blogging period. The researcher enabled students to post responses to topics without administrator approval in order to increase the timeliness of response availability online. The researcher posted topics and questions related to these topics throughout the three week intervention period.

Topics were posted an average of four times a week, excluding weekends. The researcher chose topics that related to school functions and events during that time period to involve students in posting comments on topics the students routinely spoke about at school. These topics were drunk driving awareness, Earth Week, technology, and upcoming final exams. Each topic mentioned above had its own topic thread. When students clicked on the threads, drop-down menus appeared in which students could access more specific questions pertaining to each topic. Students then posted responses to

the administrator's question, or responses to the comments from other students on the site. In addition to these four topic threads for school-related themes, the researcher also created a thread entitled "Class Questions." This thread included any questions students had about coursework, what was done in content-area classes, and any clarification of meaning from classes at school.

Phase 2 continued the same practices in instruction for weeks four through six, except that the students had the added required contributions to a class blog. To determine the ELLs' final growth and the degree to which blogging transferred to improvement in speaking proficiency, the researcher gave the W-APT Speaking Test a final time, after the six week study had concluded, on week 7, day 1. This third and final administration of the W-APT Speaking Test concluded the study. The previous section discussed the procedures of the research study, while the next section will discuss the way data was collected during the study.

Data Collection

The researcher collected test results to use as data during this research study. The W-APT Speaking Test was administered three times per participant at the beginning, middle and end of this study. All participant W-APT Speaking Tests were recorded on an audio recorder for analysis. Three measures of the participants' oral proficiency were taken from these assessment results. The measures were as follows: 1) scores on the W-APT Speaking Test, 2) average length of utterances and 3) time to produce an effective response. The W-APT Speaking Test and corresponding score sheet (Appendix B) were used to score the assessment. After the test administration, the recordings of the assessments were used in conjunction with a tally sheet (Appendix C) to determine the

number of utterances and words. The recordings were timed, and then the data on the tally sheet was used in conjunction with the timing to determine average length of utterances and amount of time needed to produce an effective response. These were the instruments used to measure the effect of this intervention. I discussed the different types of data used to determine the effectiveness of blogging as a way to improve speaking. The next section summarizes the sample, procedures and data collection of this research study.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the design of the experiment has been outlined. Specifically discussed were the sample, procedures and data collection. The sample consisted of eight ELLs between grades 10 and 12 attending a suburban high school. The procedures of the study occurred in two phases. During phase one, students were given a speaking assessment and then continued without any interventions for three weeks. The two phases were divided by the second of three administrations of the same speaking test to determine the normal growth curve during this period of time. During phase two, the students continued with the same type of in-class instruction, but in addition wrote brief and informal messages on a class blog. Students were then given the speaking test a third and final time. This was to determine the growth curve during this period of time with the addition of the blog as an intervention. This chapter also examined the data collection to determine the effectiveness of the intervention. The data used included W-APT Speaking Test score, length of utterances, and amount of time necessary to produce an effective response. While this chapter discussed sample, procedures and data collection, the next chapter will present an analysis of the data collection.

CHAPTER FOUR

Introduction

This chapter will present an analysis of the data collected during the research study. The hypothesis was that student participants would improve their oral proficiency skills through informal chats on a class blog. Presented below is a discussion of the assessments used and the scores participants obtained. Then, this chapter will examine the data results in detail. More specifically, the analysis will focus on three types of data collected: WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT) (2013) Speaking Test (Appendix A) results, average length of utterances, and amount of time needed to produce accurate answers. Finally, this chapter will display the results of the blogging intervention in more detail and in terms of outcomes for students of different English language levels. First, the chapter will present the assessments used to obtain the research data.

Assessment Process

The assessment given to eight active English Language Learners (ELLs) was the W-APT Speaking Test. The test itself was given three times for each participant throughout the study. Each participating student was given the W-APT (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (2013) prior to beginning instruction for this research. It was administered a second time on day 1 of week four of instruction and lastly at end of the study, therefore day 1 of week seven of intervention. In order to document the speaking samples, all student speaking tests were recorded on an audio recorder for further analysis. This was to gather three types of data from the test analysis. The measures of data were: 1) established scores on the W-APT Speaking Test, plus 2) average length of utterances and 3) time to produce an effective response on the W-APT.

The researcher administered all tests during the study to eliminate inter-rater differences in scores. The W-APT Speaking Test scores were analyzed and given scores according to the rubric provided by the creators of the test. A tally sheet (Appendix C) was used while listening to recordings of the speaking samples to provide a more detailed analysis.

Analysis of the Data

The results of analyzing three different elements of speech samples from the eight participants found support for blogging as a means of improving both average length of utterances as well some support for improvement on time spent to produce an accurate answer. The data showed little improvement in students' established W-APT Speaking Test scores. Table 2 below contains information on that improvement in W-APT Speaking Test scores. The W-APT Speaking Test was created to measure two elements of language, 1) the quality of language and 2) quantity of language. The scores are organized with the student with the highest overall language proficiency level before the study at number 1, and the student with the lowest at number 8 on Tables 2 through 4. The language proficiency level is based on a 6 point scale. On the table, green denotes an improvement in performance, pink a decrease in performance, and yellow shows no change.

Table 2

W-APT General Speaking Scores

Student # and Language Proficiency Level	Week 1, Day 1 (Raw Score/Level)	Week 4, Day 1 (Raw Score/Level)	Change Without Intervention	Week 7, Day 1 (Raw Score/Level)	Change With Intervention
1 LPL 5.5	7/5	7/5	0/0	7/5	0/0
2 LPL 4.9	6/4	6/4	0/0	7/5	+1/+1
3 LPL 4.8	6/4	6/4	0/0	6/4	0/0
4 LPL 4.6	5/4	5/4	0/0	5/4	0/0
5 LPL 3.6	5/4	5/4	0/0	5/4	0/0
6 LPL 2.0	3/2	4/2	+1/0	5/3	+1/+1
7 LPL 1.7	2/1	2/1	0/0	2/1	0/0
8 LPL 1.5	2/1	2/1	0/0	3/2	+1/+1

Table 2 above demonstrated the majority of students, or five out of eight, saw no improvement in their established W-APT Speaking Test score after the intervention period. Two of the eight students saw improvement after but not before the intervention. One of the eight students saw improvement both before and after the intervention. Overall, the data supported a minimal improvement in W-APT Speaking Test scores.

Though W-APT Speaking Test scores did not improve significantly as a result of blogging as an intervention to improve speaking, there were two pieces of data that supported blogging to improve speaking for English Language Learners (ELLs). The first of these pieces of data was on average length of utterances on the W-APT assessment. An increase in average length of utterances was a signifier of improved speaking proficiency.

Increased length of utterances showed the student improved in ability to string together longer and more complex sentences. For this reason, length of utterances was used as a measure of students' ability to more fluidly put together coherent sentences with ease and without pausing. On Table 3, green denotes an improvement in performance, and pink denotes a decrease in performance. No student remained the same in proficiency of length of utterances.

Table 3

Length of Utterances in Words on the W-APT

Student Number and Language Proficiency Level	Change in Average Length of Utterances Without Intervention	Change in Average Length of Utterances With Intervention
1 LPL 5.5	-0.5665	+0.4316
2 LPL 4.9	-0.7494	+1.7408
3 LPL 4.8	-0.2794	+0.6182
4 LPL 4.6	-0.6431	+1.2866
5 LPL 3.6	-0.2564	+0.4102
6 LPL 2.0	+1.0592	+1.4679
7 LPL 1.7	+0.0038	+0.7259
8 LPL 1.5	-0.1518	+0.0875

During the first three weeks of data collection, the majority of students saw a decrease in average length of utterances. The two students who did see an increase in average length of utterances were both at beginning language proficiency levels. After the blogging intervention, all eight of the students participating in the study saw an increase in average length of utterances.

The amount of time to answer the questions on the W-APT was the third and final

measure of student performance in this study. The goal of blogging was to improve

speaking skills in the participants, and student ability to answer the test questions

thoroughly yet fluently was used as a signifier of success on the assessment. Specifically,

the less time a student needed to accurately answer the question, the more improvement

in fluency he or she gained. The researcher did not count time used to give or clarify

directions when calculating the length of time participants used to answer (Appendix E).

Table 4 shows the results of this data. Again, green denotes an improvement in

performance or a shorter testing time, and pink denotes a decrease in performance, or

longer testing time.

Table 4

Length of Time to Respond Accurately

Student Number and Language Proficiency Level	Change in Length of Responses Without Intervention	Change in Length of Responses With Intervention
1 LPL 5.5	1:19 shorter	1:09 shorter
2 LPL 4.9	0:17 shorter	1:03 shorter
3 LPL 4.8	0:12 longer	2:21 shorter
4 LPL 4.6	0:01 shorter	0:07 shorter
5 LPL 3.6	1:18 shorter	1:28 shorter
6 LPL 2.0	2:17 longer	3:28 shorter
7 LPL 1.7	2:16 shorter	0:44 shorter
8 LPL 1.5	0:49 shorter	2:02 longer

Table 4 above contained data showing continual improvement in most students' ability to produce accurate responses. All but one student—the one with the lowest overall language proficiency level prior to the study—showed improved fluency in answering test questions quickly and accurately. In addition, the majority of students showed a greater amount of improvement with intervention, as measured by time cut from response time in minutes and seconds. The time cut from responses ranged from several minutes to a few seconds. This drop indicated that while not statistically significant for all students, overall the drop in time needed to produce an answer consistently improved after the intervention. The two students who did not show more improvement with intervention were the student with the highest overall language proficiency level and the student with the lowest overall proficiency level. Those students in the middle ranges of language proficiency improved the greatest amount in reducing the time to respond. Student 6, who was at a level 2.0, and Student 3, who was at a level 4.8, showed the most improvement in this area. The students who participated in this study came from a wide variety of language proficiency levels as noted in the second column of Tables 2 through 4. The test used, the W-APT, uses the same six point scale as the ACCESS test, with a score of six showing complete English proficiency and a score of one showing very limited control of the English language. Participants in this study came from every language level between one and five. The data, then, compared to English proficiency level was important to note. Students of beginning, intermediate and high English proficiency levels scored differently after the blogging intervention.

A review of Tables 2 through 4 indicate students in the middle ranges of language proficiency saw the most consistent benefit from the blogging intervention. The students

at the intermediate level of proficiency did not necessarily make the most notable gains, but they consistently made gains on the time needed to respond accurately and the average length of utterances. For all students, average length of utterances was the area of most growth. Though the amount of improvement varied, all students at every language proficiency level saw an increase in average length of utterances after blogging during the three week intervention. The vast majority of students, or seven out of eight, also saw a decrease in time needed to accurately respond to the question. The student who used more time to answer assessment items was a beginning language learner, at level 1.5, before the study took place. After the blogging intervention, student performance followed distinct patterns. Most students stayed at the same level of the W-APT Speaking Test, though more students saw improvement than they did prior to the blogging intervention. After blogging for three weeks, all eight participants had longer utterances on average. Finally, with intervention, seven of the eight participating students answered the questions more quickly than prior to intervention. The only student who did not answer more quickly was Student 1, who had the lowest English proficiency level prior to the start of the study.

Conclusion

To conclude, the research data indicated blogging with English language learners improved scores for the W-APT to some degree, increased average length of utterances, and decreased time necessary for study participants to formulate an accurate response. Given that the conventional W-APT scores remained the same or improved slightly, that students used less time to answer, and that their answers included longer utterances on average, the three measures put together indicated greater overall speaking proficiency

for the participants of this research study. The most notable and consistent improvement

on the W-APT Speaking Test language samples after blogging was in average length of

utterances. All students, regardless of English proficiency level, saw improvement in

ability to formulate fluent answers in a shorter period of time. This chapter included the

research data from the study, while the next chapter will provide an explanation of the

results and provide its implications for instruction and further research.

CHAPTER FIVE

Introduction

The previous chapter provided findings of the data from this research study. This chapter will present connections to the study's hypothesis, current research, the Common Core State Standards, and an explanation of the results of the study. This will be followed with a discussion of this study's strengths and limitations. Next, this chapter will include conclusions to the study's main questions, which were if written blogging improved English Language Learners' (ELLs) spoken English, to what extent, and in which areas of language. Finally, this chapter will provide implications for educators and researchers to apply in the field of instructing ELLs. Finally, the researcher of this study will offer recommendations for further research.

Connections to Research

The main focus of this research study was the transfer of written language to spoken language through a technological medium. Specifically, the study sought to connect participation in a class blog to improvement in spoken English for the participants. The problem was motivated by concerns in the classroom that students had limited time to converse with each other in English and focus on spoken language output due to time constraints and pressure to accomplish work for students' content area classes. Several previous researchers also cited lack of class time to practice and improve speaking as a concern (Blake, 2009; Nepomuceno, 2011; Rivens Mompean, 2010; Sun, 2012). Therefore, this study aimed to prove that increased time using written chats, which mimic spoken language in their informal register and conversational nature, would transfer to increased speaking ability in ELLs. Several researchers found that increased

practice in the specific domains of language—listening, reading, speaking or writing—

lead to increased skill within that same domain (de Almeida Soares, 2011; Hsu, 2012;

Huang & Hung, 2010; Nepomuceno, 2011; Rivens Mompean, 2010; Sun, 2012). This

research study was different because it was done to find if improvement in one language

domain would transfer to a different language domain. In this case, the specific domains

were writing skills transferring to speaking skills. Few other researchers sought to prove

this type of transfer existed; however, Blake (2009) connected increased writing on a

blog with attention to grammar with increased skill in spoken grammar for ELLs. This

study was similar to Blake's, but instead focused on speed, fluency and content of

language output rather than grammatical accuracy. Because of the need for time to

practice speaking and the relative scarcity of research on the topic, the researcher in this

study aimed to connect improvement in the writing domain of language with

improvement in the speaking domain of language.

Connections to Common Core State Standards

Aside from establishing the connection between written and spoken language, the

main goals of the study were building speaking skills needed to further students'

education at a postsecondary institution and in their future careers. This goal reflected a

shared goal of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) **(**Common Core State

Standards Initiative, 2012). The Common Core focused on language constructs,

including discourse, explanation, and text structures needed for higher-level language

skills. This study also investigated participants' abilities to construct fluent language

samples, and to provide cohesive explanations for assessment items. Also, this study

connected to the CCSS because it sought to unify the written type of chat discourse on a

blog with the spoken discourse of informal speech similar to Blake (2009). Investigating

the transfer of these skills, as well as reinforcing to students the utility of increased

speaking fluency, contributed to the support of the Common Core State Standards.

Furthermore, this study's assessment provided student participants with the ability to use

evidence in speaking to express predictions and opinions. The Common Core State

Standards also provided the instructor with more concrete guidance in the area of skills

needed for all students, including ELLs, to have success after graduating from high

school. Ultimately, this study provided students with skills to use in the future, including

blogging, using technology to the fullest extent, and participating fully in the school

setting.

Explanation of Results

The results of this study indicated the researcher's hypothesis that informal

written chats on a blog resulted in improved speaking proficiency was correct to varying

degrees, depending on specific areas of language. These areas of improvement were

primarily an ability to string together longer utterances fluently and speed of language

production. All data indicated that blogging with English Language Learners (ELLs)

improved oral language in general.

This general idea that there was a transfer of skill between writing informally and

speaking informally aligned with the previous research by Blake (2009) and Mitchell

(2012). In specific areas of language, the amount of improvement varied based on type of

data collected. The results by type of assessment were as follows: 1) improvement on the

WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT), 2) improved fluency and ability to string

together language effectively as measured by average length of utterances. improved

speed as measured by time spent on the assessment while still producing an accurate

answer, and 3) improved speed as measured by time spent on the assessment while still

producing an accurate answer. These three types of assessment and rationale for level of

improvement will be discussed below.

Firstly, slight gains were observed when using conventional scores on the W-APT

Speaking Test as an indicator of speaking skill. This assessment of language measured

students' ability to answer questions correctly in terms of grammar and content. The

researcher was not surprised there was minimal improvement in this area of language

because the study did not explicitly focus on this area of language. When the study

participants were given directions on how to use the class blog and what to write, there

were no conditions placed on the grammatical correctness of the language used on the

blog. Therefore, because students were not required to correct blog submissions in terms

of grammar, the grammar did not improve significantly in this study. This confirms what

several other authors found in specific research studies discussed in Chapter Two: When

the researcher had a specific focus of the part of language to improve, the researcher saw

improvement in that area (Blake, 2009; Hsu, 2012; Huang & Hung, 2010).

In other research studies, the opposite was also true: If the researcher did not

emphasize a specific element of language usage, the researcher did not see specific gains

in any part of language production (Rivens Mompean, 2010; Sun, 2012). The researcher

of this study included a language focus on students writing fluently and without

hesitancy, as if they were informally chatting online. As the previous research supported,

this researcher found that focusing on writing fluently and without hesitancy in an

informal way effectively produced improvement in students' ability to speak fluently and with fewer pauses.

Secondly, the research data in this study indicated that blogging with ELLs increased average length of utterances. Without exception, all eight research participants saw gains in this area. Longer average length of utterances indicated the students, regardless of initial English proficiency level, could more fluently formulate accurate answers and more efficiently string together more words into utterances. These findings are consistent with the literature on previous studies in the area of speaking proficiency for ELLs. As previously stated, the language focus on getting an idea across included the sub skill of efficiently stringing together language into longer utterances. I believe because this was the main focus of the study, this was also the area of most notable improvement. This expansion in length in utterances was also consistent with the idea that there was an explicit connection between informal chats and speech (Blake, 2009; Mitchell, 2012). Thus, written chats or blog entries translated to longer utterances on average when speaking

Finally, in addition to slight gains on the W-APT, students made greater gains in their ability to accurately answer the test questions in shorter amounts of time. This measure of language ability was found by recording the test sessions of each student participant and finding the time it took each student to effectively communicate an accurate answer (Appendix 4). These gains were not as great as the gains in the second measure of student improvement, the average length of utterances, but were more notable than student gains on the W-APT. Again, this could be attributed to the main focus of the study being on student participants communicating a message informally. When

informally chatting with peers, students employ several language sub skills to effectively communicate in this way. Two of these sub skills are communicating fluently or without hesitation, and, to some extent, quickly. When chatting back and forth, students needed the sub skill of speed in communicating in order to maintain the pace of the online conversation, much as students needed the same speed when speaking or chatting in person. Additionally when communicating via text message or on a social networking site, participants seldom if ever cited grammatical correctness as their motivation for writing (Mitchell, 2012). A product of communication through different types of mobile devices, such as phones and computing devices with internet access, is that this communication placed a premium not on grammar but on getting a message across. This researcher found students focusing on getting a point across translated to fluently, less hesitantly, and often quickly responding to inquiries., While the explicit focus of this study was to communicate a message informally, a part of this informal communication was often paired with more speed than the speed associated with formal communication just as the work by Nepomuceno (2011) and Sun (2012). The focus on informal communication lead to decreased time needed to prepare a spoken answer, and therefore more speed. While speaking speed increased slightly in this study, the most notable improvement was in participants' ability to create longer utterances.

While the strengths of this study far outnumbered the weaknesses, there were groups of students who benefitted more than others during this research. The conventional W-APT scores improved slightly for students, and the improvement of these three students was not limited to any specific language ability level. In terms of gains on the average length of utterances, the students with intermediate English language

proficiency saw the most benefits. Similarly, the students who saw the greatest improvement in speed to answer questions were those at an intermediate language level. All in all, the most consistent gains were found in students at intermediate language levels.

Strengths and Limitations

This study had a variety of assets. First of all, students from each language level participated in the study, which enabled the researcher to draw conclusions about how beginning, intermediate, and advanced ELLs responded to the blogging intervention. This broadening the spectrum of student language abilities present in the study. In addition, all students had been in the United States for a variety of time, from eighteen years through less than a month. There were also an equal number of each gender in the sample. This further enabled the researcher to apply this data to broader groups of learners who could potentially benefit from this research. This diverse group of participants provided a wider variety of skill sets from which the researcher could obtain data. A more diverse group of student participants assured the study would be pertinent to educators that work with ELLs of all language levels.

Another strong point of this study was that it was designed with the recommendations of previous researchers in mind. The researcher performed all assessment procedures to eliminate inter-rater bias. This potentially could affect results and damage the reliability of the results (Pray, 2005; Sun, 2011). Another major consideration that enabled the study to be successful was technological considerations. For example, this study utilized tutorial or in-class time to acclimate students with the blogging website, login procedures, and troubleshooting. This aided to minimize

problems with technology that could have potentially affected the results of the study a consideration emphasized by Nepomuceno (2011;) and de Almeida Soares (2011.) Because of the demographic information of the sample and the procedures dealing with technology, the connections between speaking skill and blogging was very clear.

A third strength of this study was identifying assessments that fulfilled the need for calculations that are more sensitive to gender, culture, socio-economic status, and other identity markers (Gan and Davison, 2011; Motallebzadeh & Nematizedeh, 2011; Pray, 2005). The researcher in this study reviewed several speaking assessments to carefully determine which one to use. While improvements have been made in recent years, not every assessment takes into account factors that may skew results in favor or against students of specific backgrounds. This study used the W-APT because the researcher found it representative of diverse populations and relatively free of bias.

A final strength was that the researcher took into account the comfort of the participants, further facilitating participant ease with the testing process. Previous research overwhelmingly supports enabling students to feel comfortable with the setting, researcher, and other participants in the study (Hellman & Burns, 2008; Rivens Mompean, 2010). This study was performed with the participants' emotional comfort in mind. The researcher performed testing privately, yet in the room where class took place to give students a sense of familiarity. In addition, the researcher stressed to students the non-competitive nature of the study to preserve the friendly relationships between the student participants in each class. Also, before and after each speaking test session, the researcher engaged all participants in a personal conversation to put the students at ease. Finally, the researcher had a positive rapport with all participants prior to the study,

which facilitated trust with the testing process and test administrator. While not possible with all research studies, this extended concern for the affective filter and genuine well-being of the participants added to the effectiveness of the research process of this study.

While there were several elements of this research study that enabled reliable results and generally strengthened the study, there were definite limitations encountered during research. One of these limitations is the small sample size. This study included eight participants. Though this was the entire active ELL population at the school where the study took place, having more participants would increase the accuracy of the data. In addition, all students in the sample were of Asian descent. Furthermore, though there were students of each language proficiency level participating in the study, there was only one advanced English speaker. Ideally, the sample would include larger numbers of students, as well as students from a wider variety of geographical, racial, language ability, and socio-economic groups. This type of sample would make the analysis more reliable, as well as enable the researcher to further designate different groupings of the sample for different, more personalized interventions through blogging.

Another consideration that would potentially improve the reliability of the study would be a longer time frame in which to perform the study. While some current research used the same time frame as this study, most researchers recommended longer time periods to obtain more data, especially given the need to learn the English language over a period of years, rather than weeks or semesters (Blake, 2009; Hsu, 2012; Sun, 2012). Future studies would ideally be the length of an academic year, or perhaps longitudinal studies lasting several years as students move from beginning to advanced proficiency levels.

Recommendations for Future Research

Since this study found there was transfer between writing and speaking skills, and that blogging facilitates this transfer, further research is advised. This could include providing an emphasis on different parts of language when blogging to individualize instruction. This and other studies found there must be a focus on some element of language, such as grammatical accuracy, speed, fluency, vocabulary, or another part of language in order for students to see notable gains from a blogging intervention (Blake, 2009; de Almeida Soares, 2011; Hsu, 2012; Huang & Hung, 2010; Nepomuceno, 2011; Rivens Mompean, 2010; Sun, 2012). English Language Learners (ELLs), like all learners, have distinct strengths and weaknesses in language learning. Therefore, providing each student with individualized goals while blogging could potentially provide useful intervention in the area needed. For example, in a class of ELLs, some students could participate in a class blog but focus on grammatical accuracy, if it were the students' area of most need. In that same class, the students least likely to take risks with language could participate in the same blog, but with fluency, quantity of language, or speed as their language goal. Yet another group of students could focus on expanding their vocabulary. Further research in the area of using written blogs to enhance speaking and meet the needs of individual ELLs would provide insight into personalizing instruction for students.

Another area for further research could be to find whether there is a similar transfer between the remaining two domains of language: listening and reading. This and other studies connected the domains of writing and speaking, which were the two domains concerned with language output. Listening and reading, the remaining two

domains, were those needed for language input. This type of study could yield positive

results that connects the transfer between listening and reading. If listening and reading

provided the transfer of skills that speaking and writing did, perhaps further interventions

that may improve ELLs' reading and listening skills would benefit students, as well.

A final recommendation for future studies is to incorporate as many student-

selected topics as possible throughout the blogging intervention. The blogging

intervention in this study used three topics determined by the researcher, yet topics in

which the student participants had expressed interest before or during the study. As in

this study, other researchers found students thought blogging to be more motivating or

fun if there were social and student-selected elements (Mitchell, 2012; Rivens Mompean,

2010). Further research could possibly vary in its outcomes if the researcher did not

choose topics motivating to students. For this reason, a study in motivation and blogging

might provide further insight into success using blogging technology to increase language

proficiency. For example, a researcher may change the design in which the blog topics

were student-selected and thus motivating to students. A research study of this nature

may yield data that shows to what degree student-selected topics determine the outcome

of the blogging intervention.

Conclusion

This chapter provided connections to this study's hypothesis, other current

research on this topic, and how this body of research supports the employment of the

Common Core State Standards. These connections aided the researcher in concluding that

using a class blogging intervention provided transfer of skills between writing and

speaking for ELLs. These connections corroborated the research of several others in the

education field looking for support for similar types of. In this study, the researcher saw all students benefit in terms of slight improvement on the traditional W-APT, average length of utterances, and speed of response. The greatest improvement was in the area of focus for the study. For this reason, the concept with the most implications for instruction was that instructors must employ a focus in some element of language to see gains in that particular element.

There were several additional implications for instruction as a result of this research study. First, the researcher benefitted as an instructor because she was able to support students in furthering their speaking skills, as well as their familiarity with blogging technology. These skills will provide ELLs with crucial language and technological skills for the remainder of their time in high school, as well as their time at a postsecondary educational institution or their career. Furthermore, the researcher gained insight into how to expand and improve upon class blogging in the future. One future goal of the researcher was to improve instruction by incorporating a class blog as a yearlong requirement of the ELL course. This will allow the researcher to observe a larger body of data throughout the year and personalize instruction with said data. In addition, the researcher plans to involve high school graduated ELLs in the class blog to maintain the connections and relationships between students, while also providing current students with access to alumni whose experiences and guidance will benefit them as they progress as learners. Finally, the researcher will share her results of this research study and provide instruction to colleagues in the area of blogging. This will aid other instructors who wish to implement blogging into their teaching, whether to further language skills or student content knowledge.

The experience of designing, carrying out and writing about this action research has undoubtedly improved my abilities as an educator. First, this study has empowered me to perform more action research to improve instruction during my work as a classroom teacher. Many times, educators continue with procedures, assignments, or assessments but cannot determine exactly what kind of impact these elements of instruction have on student learning. To hone my skills as an instructor, I need to continue to find which parts of my instruction truly impact student learning, and obtaining and using data in my classroom will enable me do this. Secondly, this study has empowered me to use more technology in the classroom, both with my ELLs as well as my Spanish language learners. Because I now have more experience with the associated technology, I can now give rationale and evidence for using blogs as a means to increase speaking proficiency. In any language class, time to improve speaking is usually at a premium. By employing blogging technology in my classroom, I can provide more opportunities for students to grow their speaking abilities and their technology skills—both crucial abilities to participate in a more and more globalized world.

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Appendices

Appendix A

W-APT Speaking Test and W-APT Test Administration Manual

W-APT™
Grades 9–12
Speaking Test

Intended for students in
2nd semester Grade 9
through
2nd semester Grade 12

WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test W-APT™

Test Administration Manual

Grade Clusters 1–12

Version 2 Release 8, November 2012

Part of the ACCESS for ELLs® Assessment Battery

WiDA™ CONSORTIUM

Appendix B

W-APT Score Sheet

Grades 9–12 W-APT™ Scoring Sheet
for Speaking and Writing

Date: _____ School/District: _____ Test Administrator: _____

First name: _____ Last name: _____ Grade: _____ Age: _____

Student ID: _____ Home language: _____ D.O.B.: _____

SPEAKING TEST	Exceeds	Meets	?	Approaches	No Response	Not Administered
Part A						
T1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
T2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
T3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Part B						
T1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
T2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
T3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
T4	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
T5	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Speaking Task Scoring Guidelines

Exceeds task level expectations in *quantity* and/or *quality*

Meets task level expectations in *quantity* and *quality*

Approaches task level expectations but falls short in *quantity* and/or *quality*

No response, response incomprehensible; student unable to understand task directions

Raw Score Conversion Table

If Total Number of Boxes Marked "Exceeds" or "Meets" is:	Then Speaking PL is:
8	6
7	5
6	4
5	3
3–4	2
0–2	1
SPEAKING PL Determine from table above	

Enter Speaking PL in Composite Proficiency Level Table on Page 2 of this Scoring Sheet

WRITING TEST If both tasks were administered, enter the higher of the two scores. The minimum PL score is 1. Consult Test Administration Manual and Writing Samples for scoring details.	**WRITING PL SCORE**	Enter Writing PL in Composite Proficiency Level Table on Page 2 of this Scoring Sheet

Page 1

Appendix C

Example Tally Sheet: Average Length of Utterances

Words: 1 tally Utterance: 1 box	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	11	1								
2	111	111								
3	1	111								
4	1	11								
5	11	11								
6	111	1								
7	111	1								
8	11	111								
9	1									
10	111									

Student Name: Example Student   Date of Test: Week 1, Day 1

Total Words: 37

Total Utterances: 18

Average Words / Utterance: 2.0556

Appendix D

Index of All Student Results

Student 1: Level 5.5

	Test 1	Test 2	Diff 1 to 2	Test 3	Diff 2 to 3
W-APT Score (Raw Score / Level)	7/5	7/5	0/0	7/5	0/0
Ave. Utterance Length	Words: 833 Utt: 268 Ave. Utt. Length: 3.1082	Words: 671 Utt: 264 Ave. Utt. Length: 2.5417	Words: 162 Utt: 4 Ave. Utt. Length: 0.5665	Words: 556 Utt: 187 Ave. Utt. Length: 2.9733	Words: 115 Utt: 77 Ave. Utt. Length: 0.4316
Length to Respond	11:17	9:58	1:19	8:49	1:09

Student 2: Level 4.9

	Test 1	Test 2	Diff 1 to 2	Test 3	Diff 2 to 3
W-APT Score (Raw Score / Level)	6/4	6/4	0/0	7/5	+1/+1
Ave. Utterance Length	Words: 425 Utt: 117 Ave. Utt. Length: 3.6324	Words: 542 Utt: 188 Ave. Utt. Length: 2.8830	Words: 117 Utt: 71 Ave. Utt. Length: 0.7494	Words: 467 Utt: 101 Ave. Utt. Length: 4.6238	Words: 75 Utt: 87 Ave. Utt. Length: 1.7408
Length to Respond	8:29	8:12	0:17	7:09	1:03

Student 3: Level 4.8

	Test 1	Test 2	Diff 1 to 2	Test 3	Diff 2 to 3
W-APT Score (Raw Score / Level)	6/4	6/4	0/0	6/4	0/0
Ave. Utterance Length	Words: 562 Utt: 205 Ave. Utt. Length: 2.7415	Words: 682 Utt: 277 Ave. Utt. Length: 2.4621	Words: 120 Utt: 72 Ave. Utt. Length: 0.2794	Words: 422 Utt: 137 Ave. Utt. Length: 3.0803	Words: 260 Utt: 140 Ave. Utt. Length: 0.6182
Length to Respond	9:43	10:02	0:21	7:41	2:21

Student 4: Level 4.6

	Test 1	Test 2	Diff 1 to 2	Test 3	Diff 2 to 3
W-APT Score (Raw Score / Level)	5/4	5/4	0/0	5/4	0/0
Ave. Utterance Length	Words: 401 Utt: 120 Ave. Utt. Length: 3.3417	Words: 394 Utt: 146 Ave. Utt. Length: 2.6986	Words: 7 Utt: 26 Ave. Utt. Length: 0.6431	Words: 409 Utt: 105 Ave. Utt. Length: 3.9852	Words: 15 Utt: 41 Ave. Utt. Length: 1.2866
Length to Respond	7:30	7:29	0:01	7:22	0:07

Student 5: Level 3.6

	Test 1	Test 2	Diff 1 to 2	Test 3	Diff 2 to 3
W-APT Score (Raw Score / Level)	5/4	5/4	0/0	5/4	0/0
Ave. Utterance Length	Words: 369 Utt: 114 Ave. Utt. Length: 3.2368	Words: 304 Utt: 102 Ave. Utt. Length: 2.9804	Words: 65 Utt: 12 Ave. Utt. Length: 0.2564	Words: 217 Utt: 64 Ave. Utt. Length: 3.3906	Words: 87 Utt: 38 Ave. Utt. Length: 0.4102
Length to Respond	8:18	7:00	1:18	5:32	1:28

Student 6: Level 2.0

	Test 1	Test 2	Diff 1 to 2	Test 3	Diff 2 to 3
W-APT Score (Raw Score / Level)	3/2	4/2	+1/0	5/3	+1/+1
Ave. Utterance Length	Words: 107 Utt: 77 Ave. Utt. Length: 1.3896	Words: 311 Utt: 127 Ave. Utt. Length: 2.4488	Words: 204 Utt: 50 Ave. Utt. Length: 1.0592	Words: 195 Utt: 61 Ave. Utt. Length: 3.1967	Words: 116 Utt: 66 Ave. Utt. Length: 1.4679
Length to Respond	7:55	10:12	2:17	6:40	3:28

Student 7: Level 1.7

	Test 1	Test 2	Diff 1 to 2	Test 3	Diff 2 to 3
W-APT Score (Raw Score / Level)	2/1	2/1	0/0	2/1	0/0
Ave. Utterance Length	Words: 784 Utt: 396 Ave. Utt. Length: 1.9798	Words: 484 Utt: 244 Ave. Utt. Length: 1.9836	Words: 300 Utt: 152 Ave. Utt. Length: 0.0038	Words: 401 Utt: 148 Ave. Utt. Length: 2.7095	Words: 83 Utt: 96 Ave. Utt. Length: 0.7259
Length to Respond	12:00	9:44	2:16	9:00	0:44

Student 8: Level 1.5

	Test 1	Test 2	Diff 1 to 2	Test 3	Diff 2 to 3
W-APT Score (Raw Score / Level)	2/1	2/1	0/0	3/2	+1/+1
Ave. Utterance Length	Words: 678 Utt: 278 Ave. Utt. Length: 2.4388	Words: 494 Utt: 216 Ave. Utt. Length: 2.2870	Words: 184 Utt: 62 Ave. Utt. Length: 0.1518	Words: 783 Utt: 253 Ave. Utt. Length: 3.0945	Words: 289 Utt: 37 Ave. Utt. Length: 0.8075
Length to Respond	9:40	8:51	0:49	10:53	2:02

Appendix E

Index of Time to Respond

Student	Week 1, day 1	Week 4, day 1	Difference Without Intervention	Week 7, day 1	Difference With Intervention
Student 1	11:17	9:58	1:19	8:49	1:09
Student 2	8:29	8:12	0:17	7:09	1:03
Student 3	9:43	10:02	0:21	7:41	2:21
Student 4	7:30	7:29	0:01	7:22	0:07
Student 5	8:18	7:00	1:18	5:32	1:28
Student 6	7:55	10:12	2:17	6:40	3:28
Student 7	12:00	9:44	2:16	9:00	0:44
Student 8	9:40	8:51	0:49	10:53	2:02