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ADULT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS' EXPERIENCES OF ONLINE LEARNING AND MOTIVATIONS FOR PERSISTENCE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

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at

ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY

New York

by

Patricia F. Searby

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Dr. Roger Bloom

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ABSTRACT

ADULT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS' EXPERIENCES OF ONLINE LEARNING AND MOTIVATIONS FOR PERSISTENCE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Patricia F. Searby

The unprecedented shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic presented a unique opportunity to research adult English language learners' lived experiences of online learning and motivations for persistence. With the growing trend of offering online learning to adult learners and concerns over the high attrition rates associated with this method (Nagel, 2009), it is critical to analyze adult English language learners' lived experiences of online learning and motivations for persistence to inform pedagogical practices that will promote learner retention in online formats. The purpose of this study was to extend the current research through the lens of self-determination theory and the idea that when individuals' basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are satisfied, intrinsic motivation is promoted (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Research shows learners who are intrinsically motivated undertake learning for inherent satisfaction, become actively engaged, and persist when faced with challenges (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Using a phenomenological approach, this study was designed to examine the lived experiences of six participants from one adult literacy center located in the Northeastern United States who had participated in online learning for at least 6 months during the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings from a series of semi-structured interviews indicated four major themes: challenges of online learning for adult English language

learners, needs of adult English language learners in online learning, benefits of online learning for adult English language learners, and adult English language learners' motivations for persistence. Results show that when considering adult English language learners' basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness as a way to promote motivation, educators should account for learners' unique cultural differences, including backgrounds, attitudes, and goals.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my brother, Joe, and my mother, Mary Ella, who inspired me to pursue this doctoral program. I also want to dedicate this dissertation to my daughters, Julia and Payton, who are empathetic and courageous young women. I am truly grateful to be their mother.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

According to data from the 2012–2014 and 2017 Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), which is the most current assessment of adult literacy skills, 48 million adults ages 16 through 65 years old living in the United States have low English literacy skills (Mamedova, 2022). As defined by the PIAAC, low literacy skills consist of performing at or below Level 1, out of six levels, in the area of English proficiency. Task descriptions for Level 1 include requiring respondents to recognize basic vocabulary, determine the meaning of sentences, and enter personal information on a document (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2013, p. 67). Adults performing below Level 1 are expected to read short texts on familiar topics and locate a single piece of concrete information. If respondents are unable to perform these tasks, they may be classified as functionally illiterate (OECD, 2013, p. 67). Of those adults with low-literacy skills, White U.S.-born adults comprise 35% or one-third of the population and non-U.S. born Hispanic adults comprise 34% or one-quarter of the population (Mamedova, 2019).

For the approximately 1.5 million adults (National Association of State Directors of Adult Education, 2019) seeking to improve their English literacy skills, federally funded adult literacy programs administered free of charge for participants may be their only option. Of the adult learners participating in these programs, about 45% are native speakers who read below the ninth-grade level and 46% are English language learners (Center for Applied Linguistics [CAL], 2010). Nearly two-thirds of these English language learners are women (National Coalition for Literacy, 2013). Despite convincing

research that shows there is a “correlation between participation in adult basic skills programs and future increases in income, literacy levels, [and] high school equivalency attainment” (Morgan et al., 2017, p. 1), adult literacy programs are given limited federal funding and have long waiting lists. An annual report authored by ProLiteracy (2021), the largest adult literacy membership organization in the nation, indicated 50% of its member programs put students on a waiting list, with the majority of students on those lists seeking English language instruction. According to Tucker (2006), “There is no shortage of motivation to learn. Instead, the extreme demand for English as a second language (ESL) services far exceeds the available supply of open classes” (p. 6). The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials conducted a study to examine the waiting lists for adult ESL programs across the country and found 57% reported wait lists that ranged from a few weeks to 3 years (Tucker, 2006, p. 1). In an effort to open up classes and minimize long wait lists, administrators of some literacy programs chose to randomly group adult learners together. However, by randomly grouping adult learners together, they may be placed in classes that are not appropriate for their instructional level (CAL, 2010).

As an alternative to traditional, face-to-face programs, online learning has been increasingly offered to adult English language learners with the intended goal of increasing access to English language instruction (OECD, 2020, p. 2). Though this mode of delivery may be considered more convenient as it allows learners to balance coursework around work and family obligations, researchers have noted adults with low English literacy skills may not persist in online learning and face “difficulties they might never have encountered in traditional learning environments; for example, how to handle

the feelings of isolation and how to solve online technical problems by themselves" (Tsai, 2009, p. 34). At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, adult learners were no longer offered a choice between in-person and online instructional delivery modes. Many adult learners who chose to pursue online learning may have been unprepared for online learning and may have experienced "unease with the online format" (Hyllegard et al., 2008, p. 429).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study was to research adult English language learners' experiences of online learning and motivations for persistence during the COVID-19 pandemic through the lens of self-determination theory. The six participants, whose native language is Spanish, were enrolled in Level 4 online classes in an adult literacy program located in the Northeastern United States. Though there are no uniform guidelines among adult literacy programs, to qualify for Level 4, which is the highest level at this adult literacy program, adult learners must be able to understand and communicate in English in a variety of contexts related to daily life. The researcher chose participants enrolled in Level 4 to facilitate communication between her and the participants and to minimize her reliance on the Spanish language translators who offered support throughout this study.

The abrupt transition to online learning provided a unique opportunity for researchers to examine the "potential of learning online. It also highlights its key limitations" (OECD, 2020, p. 1) learners may have to overcome to remain in online learning and achieve positive outcomes. Quesada-Pallarès et al. (2019) noted that to overcome the challenges of independent, online learning, students must be highly

motivated. Research shows motivation is a component of persistence and is considered to be a critical factor in success in online learning environments (Artino, 2008, p. 260). Boton and Gregory (2015) attributed a lack of motivation in online education as a primary cause for student attrition (p. 62). By investigating this problem through a qualitative lens using semi-structured interviews, researchers can identify commonalities and uncover new insights about sources of motivation that may strengthen adult literacy online practices and address issues of attrition post-pandemic.

Theoretical Framework

To investigate adult English language learners' online experiences and motivations for persisting online, it was critical to analyze their internal sources of motivation through the lens of self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). Self-determination theory is primarily a psychological theory based on the idea that individuals' basic needs of *autonomy*, *competence*, and *relatedness* must be satisfied for them to become intrinsically motivated (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). Learners who are intrinsically motivated undertake learning for inherent satisfaction, become actively engaged, and persist when faced with challenges (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). According to Ryan and Deci (2000b), individuals' most basic need is for autonomy, which means behaviors are self-endorsed or congruent with one's authentic interests. Ryan and Deci (2000b) explained that only some actions are truly autonomous; others are regulated by external forces. The second basic need is competence, which refers to individuals' need "to feel able to operate effectively within their important life contexts" (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 11). Ryan and Deci (2000a) explained that competence is readily thwarted when challenges are too difficult, negative feedback is too pervasive, and feelings of mastery

are diminished or undermined. The final basic need is relatedness, which refers to individuals' perception of belonging, connectedness, and feeling significant among others in a community (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Within self-determination theory, the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness must be satisfied for psychological interest, development, and wellness to be sustained. Deprivation of any of the three basic needs will lead to decreases in growth and wellness (Ryan & Deci, 2000a).

Significance of the Study

Because adult learners are voluntary participants who balance multiple responsibilities (Mancuso, 2001, p. 165), they want to experience success quickly. If they do not experience success quickly, their motivation will diminish and they will be more likely to abandon the program. Beder (1991) explained that adults weigh the benefits and costs of participation and make "decisions based on that analysis. In many cases, a decision to drop out may be justified if the costs outweigh the benefits" (p. 27). Given adult learners' practical mindset, combined with the fact that acquiring literacy skills requires extensive hours of practice (Comings, 2007, p. 25), the issue of promoting learner retention is one of the most challenging aspects of adult literacy education. Research indicates the "average adult learner's duration in a literacy program is nowhere close to the length of instruction or practice needed" (Lesgold & Welch-Ross, 2012, p. 77). With the trend moving toward online learning (Heyman, 2010, p. 6) and research showing there are higher attrition rates in online programs compared to traditional coursework (Heyman, 2010, p. 6), it is critical to examine adult learners' experiences in online learning and their motivations for persistence to develop pedagogical practices that

may improve retention rates. According to Coryell and Chlup (2007), there is a paucity of convincing, peer-reviewed research that addresses adult English language learners' experiences in online learning and explores achievable solutions to boost retention (p. 263). This present study is significant in that it was designed to extend the current research on educating adult English language learners to inform stakeholders of how meeting learners' psychological needs may promote intrinsic motivation and persistence. Learners who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to persist when faced with challenging activities (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Though the role of motivation has been researched across a range of educational settings (Hartnett, 2016, p. 5), studies of motivation in online contexts with adult English language learners are limited in number and scope. Previous research has focused on students' online experiences in higher educational contexts, including motivations for studying online and factors that may have led to attrition. However, the differences between adults in higher education and adult learners in nonacademic settings are so vast that research with adults in higher education has little relevance to adult English learners' experiences (Mathews-Aydinli, 2008, p. 210). Literacy is a fundamental tool for advancing career opportunities, participating in civic activities, ensuring physical well-being, and empowering future generations. Although online learning is perceived as more convenient and may provide expanded opportunities for adult learners (Hyllegard et al., 2008, p. 429), the question of whether this approach meets learners' needs and, ultimately, promotes persistence and retention requires further research. In the meantime, it is essential to examine adult learners' experiences of online learning and motivations for persistence as it is likely that online learning for adult English language learners will continue post-pandemic.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this qualitative study were as follows:

Research Question 1: What are adult English language learners' experiences of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Research Question 2: What are adult English language learners' motivations for persistence in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Definition of Terms

Adult English language learners in nonacademic settings: A diverse population that:

> [ranges] in age from 16 to 90-plus, in educational background from no formal schooling to PhD holders, and in native language literacy levels from advanced to pre-literate. This population has a distinct set of needs that differ from young learners, adult ELLs in academic environments, and Adult Basic Education (ABE) students. (Mathews-Aydinli, 2008, p. 199)

Andragogy: Knowles's theory of andragogy "offers a paradigm for distinguishing the art and science of teaching adults (andragogy) as being different and distinct from the art and science of teaching children (pedagogy)" (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 84).

Attrition: A "decrease in the number of learners or students engaged in some course of study. This course of study might be a degree plan, or it might simply be a standalone online course" (Martinez, 2003, p. 2).

Autonomy: The first of the three basic psychological needs specified in self-determination theory is the sense of voluntariness and need to self-regulate one's experiences and actions (Ryan & Deci, 2000a).

Competence: The second of the three basic psychological needs specified in self-determination theory refers to individuals' basic need to feel able to operate effectively within important life contexts (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Expectancy-value theory: Individuals' expectancies for success and the value they have for succeeding are important determinants of their motivation to perform different achievement tasks (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).

Face-to-face or traditional classroom: In a traditional, teacher-centered model of teaching, the lecturer transmits knowledge to students with little input from those students (Harden & Crosby, 2000, p. 334).

Literacy: For the purpose of this study, literacy is defined as the ability to understand, evaluate, use, and engage with written texts to participate in society, to achieve goals, and to develop knowledge and potential (OECD, 2013, p. 59).

Motivation: A "theoretical construct to explain the initiation, direction, intensity, persistence, and quality of behavior, especially goal-directed behavior" (Brophy, 2010, p. 3).

Nontraditional student: Bean and Metzner (1985) defined a nontraditional student as follows:

> Older than 24, does not live in a campus residence (i.e., is a commuter), or is a part-time student, or some combination of these factors; is not greatly influenced by the social environment of the institution, and is chiefly concerned with the institution's academic offerings. (p. 489)

Online learning: For the purpose of this study, online learning is defined as a "form of distance education mediated by technological tools where learners are

geographically separated from the instructor and the main institution" (Hartnett, 2016, p. 7).

Persistence: As defined by Comings (2007), "Persistence is a continuous learning process that lasts until an adult student meets his or her educational goals" (p. 24).

Relatedness: The third of the three basic psychological needs specified in self-determination theory refers to individuals' need for a sense of belonging and being a significant member of a social group (Ryan & Deci, 2000a).

Retention: "The number of learners or students who progress from one part of an educational program to the next. In higher education, this is normally measured as enrollment from academic year to academic year" (Martinez, 2003, p. 3).

Self-efficacy: "Concerned with people's beliefs in their capabilities to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1977, p. 307).

Traditional students: Students who proceed to college after graduating high school and fall between the ages of 18 and 22 years old (Adams & Corbett, 2010, p. 2).

Summary

Though there are ongoing, and often contentious, political debates regarding immigration policies in the United States, the U.S. Census Bureau's monthly Current Population Survey (CPS; Camarota & Zeigleron, 2022) shows that the total immigrant population is 46.6 million, which is the highest number ever recorded. Despite the presence of diverging ideological viewpoints, the fact remains that "the successes and benefits from these newcomers will be influenced by the ways in which they are integrated into the fabric of the U.S. society" (Rumbaut & Komaie, 2010, p. 43). In order for these immigrants, many of whom are Hispanic, to be fully integrated into U.S.

society, they must become proficient in the English language (Jiménez, 2011). With adult literacy programs already struggling with limited federal funding and long waiting lists, it is critical to examine flexible and alternative ways in which adult English language learners can access English language instruction. In consideration of the growing trend of offering online learning to adult learners and concerns over the high attrition rates associated with this method (Nagel, 2009), it is critical to extend the research on adult English language learners' experiences of online learning and motivations for persistence through the lens of self-determination theory to understand whether meeting learners' basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness promotes motivation and, ultimately, persistence in online platforms. When learners persist, they achieve their educational goals (Comings, 2007).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review examines adult English language learners' experiences of online learning and motivations for persistence through the lens of self-determination theory. Results can be used to inform adult education stakeholders about ways to foster learners' basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in online platforms to promote intrinsic motivation and desired educational outcomes. Intrinsic motivation has been identified as an important characteristic of online learners (Shroff et al., 2007). Individuals who are intrinsically motivated are more engaged and likely to persist when faced with challenges (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The concern over the high attrition rates in online courses (Lee et al., 2013) highlights the need to examine the complexity of factors that may influence adult English language learners' experiences of online learning and motivations for persistence in online platforms.

Organization of the Literature

This literature review covers previous work that has been done on adult English language learners' motivation in online environments. The review begins by providing an overview of the impact of the pandemic on adult learners. Next, it moves to an analysis and description of the issue of attrition in online learning. Then it covers models of student attrition. Following the models of student attrition, the review moves to an exploration of persistence in adult education. Finally, the review examines motivation in online learning and influential theories of motivation such as self-efficacy and expectancy-value theories, before concluding with an examination of self-determination theory.

Pandemic and Adult Learners

Adult learners differ from traditional learners in that they are generally older, from 16 to 90 years old (Mathews-Aydinli, 2008, p. 199), and continue their education while balancing additional responsibilities such as work and family obligations (Thompson & Porto, 2014, p. 17). As a consequence of balancing multiple responsibilities, learner retention has been one of the most challenging aspects of adult literacy education (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2012). Wlodkowski (2008) explained that adults want to be successful and advance their levels of education, but they have time constraints that can negatively affect their motivation to learn.

At the onset of the pandemic and the abrupt shift to online learning, many adult learners' perceived lack of preparedness led to renewed concerns over attrition rates. Among the challenges adult learners faced in shifting to online learning were low perceptions of competency with computers and limited access to Wi-Fi (OECD, 2020, p. 5). In a survey of 1,064 adult learners, including adult English language learners, from 43 states, half of the respondents reported they were not comfortable participating in online learning (OECD, 2020, p. 5). Another challenge that emerged as a result of the sudden shift to online learning was many adult learners' inexperience with student-centered learning. In contrast to student-centered learning, Freire (1968) described traditional pedagogy as the teacher turning students into "receptacles to be filled by the teacher. The more completely she fills the receptacles, the better a teacher she is" (p. 72). Filatova (2015) explained that student-centered learning may be considered a more Westernized approach to education as "in their native countries students are expected to adhere to

teachers' directions and an enforced hierarchy" (p. 21). Shank and Terrill (1995) stated adult English language learners may resist a learner-centered classroom in which they are expected to take charge of their own learning, and Florez and Burt (2001) explained that adult English language learners' experiences in their native countries may have taught them to never question a teacher's expertise.

Last, in the midst of a global health crisis during which adults reported concerns about housing, employment, their children's education, and their family's physical health (Simpson-Baird et al., 2020, p. 1), the transition to online learning upended the critical need for meaningful, in-person social interaction. Singh et al. (2020) noted that social isolation in a public health crisis can cause anxiety and stress and Kohn and Vajda (1975) indicated social isolation can impede language learning. Kohn and Vajda explained that peer mediation is critical in an ESL classroom because it allows students to learn from and teach one another. Results from a study by Wang and Castro (2010) showed language learners need opportunities in the classroom to produce the target language in meaningful contexts.

With the array of psychological effects such as anxiety, fear, and intolerable pressure (W. Cao et al., 2020) thrust on adult learners pursuing online learning during the pandemic, it is critical to investigate learners' motivations for persistence. Cayanus et al. (2006) stated stress can have a significant negative impact on students' motivation and engagement and Boton and Gregory (2015) identified a lack of motivation as a primary cause for attrition in online learning.

Attrition in Online Learning

According to Passel and Cohn (2008), by the year 2050, it is projected that the immigrant population will represent one-fifth of the U.S. population. Rumbaut and Komaie (2010) stated the successes of these individuals will be influenced by the ways in which the nation "incorporates adults of immigrant origin in its economy, polity, and society" (p. 43). Jiménez (2011) argued that "command of the English language is considered an essential indicator of immigrant integration and economic mobility" (p. 5). To develop English proficiency, adult learners, who often balance multiple obligations (Thompson & Porto, 2014), have the more flexible option of participating in online courses. However, prior to the pandemic, only one in five adults exercised that option (OECD, 2020, p. 1). Though the pandemic and rapid pivot to online learning highlights the potential of expanding online learning as an alternative approach to face-to-face instruction, it also underscores key limitations that may lead to attrition (OECD, 2020, p. 1).

A review of the existing literature on online learning revealed attrition is constantly identified as one of the most significant concerns in online education (Boton & Gregory, 2015; Heyman, 2010). Because adult English language learners remain an understudied population (Mathews-Aydinli, 2008, p. 199), research on students' motivations for dropping out of online classes is garnered from learners in higher education. Patterson and McFadden (2009) noted online students are six times more likely to drop out compared to their peers in traditional classroom environments. Mahoney (2009) cited undergraduate students' experiences of frustration with technology, social isolation, and lack of instructor support as reasons for their withdrawal

from online coursework. Jaggars (2011) reported that low retention rates in online learning are the result of learners' perceived sense of isolation and lack of instructor guidance. Bawa (2016) explained that

> online learners tend to communicate with their instructors more to get help with a problem and less to take actual guidance to facilitate learning. As a result, the online environment can be less guidance-oriented, which may be non-conducive to retention. (p. 4)

The implications for adult learners who withdraw from virtual learning—or traditional learning as the issue of learner attrition in adult literacy education is not exclusive to online platforms—are significant. Bandura (1997) explained that individuals who

> doubt their abilities in particular domains shy away from difficult tasks in those domains. They find it hard to motivate themselves, and they slacken their efforts or give up quickly in the face of obstacles . . . and are slow to recover their sense of efficacy following failure or setbacks. (p. 39)

Models of Student Attrition and Persistence

Spady's Undergraduate Dropout Process Model

Earlier attempts to study student attrition focused primarily on psychological models and student characteristics, personal attributes, and shortcomings (Spady, 1970; Tinto, 1975), rather than on students' interactions with college environments. Spady (1970) concluded in his review of these studies that there was an absence of an "analytical explanatory category" (p. 64). Spady's undergraduate dropout process model was the first sociological student retention model. According to Spady, there are two

systems—academic and social—that influence a student's decision to withdraw, and two factors within each of these systems. Academic factors include grades and intellectual development, and social factors include normative congruence and friendship support. After Spady proposed his retention model, later researchers examined the nature of students' institutional relationships and the concept that institutions play a role or have some shared responsibility in students' decisions to withdraw. For the purposes of the current study, several student retention models are examined: Pascarella's (1980) student-faculty informal contact model; Tinto's (1975) student integration model; Bean and Metzner's (1985) model of nontraditional student attrition; Kember's (1989) model of drop-out from distance education; Rovai's (2003) composite persistence model; and Park's (2007) model for adult dropout in online learning. Thereafter, the researcher applies these models of learner attrition and persistence to adult English language learners as there are no models, thus far, that focus on retention for the growing population of adult English language learners.

Pascarella's Student–Faculty Informal Contact Model

Pascarella (1980) proposed a model that emphasized the value of student–faculty informal contact as a factor that influences persistence or withdrawal for students in higher education. Pascarella's model is based on five modules, with additional variables involved in those main modules: student background characteristics, institutional factors, informal contact with faculty, other college experiences, and educational outcomes. The basis of this model is that informal interactions between student and faculty contribute to the student's commitment to the institution and, therefore, favor student persistence. Pascarella noted different forms of student–faculty interactions will have more influence,

such as “interactions that extend the intellectual content of the study program into informal non-classroom contexts” (p. 9).

Though Pascarella’s (1980) model was intended for residential students in higher education, the model, which emphasizes student–faculty informal contact, has relevance for adult learner motivation and persistence in online platforms. MacDonnchaidh (2021) stated that in order to create a safe learning environment, teachers need to treat adult learners as respected peers. MacDonnchaidh explained that adult learners appreciate when teachers are approachable and share appropriate personal information.

Tinto’s Student Integration Model

Tinto’s (1975) student integration model that used Spady’s (1970) model as a foundation has been widely cited as critical for understanding persistence among adult learners (Bean & Metzner, 1985). Tinto claimed dropout occurs when the adult learner is insufficiently integrated into academic and social life. Other important considerations in Tinto’s (1975) model are the degree to which students are committed to their goals and to the university. Characteristics that influence students’ commitment to their goals and the university include individual attributes, pre-college experiences, and family backgrounds. Individual attributes include variables such as race, sex, and ability; pre-college experiences involve social and academic attainments; and family backgrounds include factors such as social status and expectational climates. Tinto asserted that students from a higher social status—and who place a great deal of importance on the college they attend—are more likely to persist in college. Ultimately, though students’ academic and social integration are important determinants of whether they persist, Tinto stated it is the

interaction between students' commitment to their goals and to the institution itself that will determine whether they persist in higher education.

One of the primary criticisms of Tinto's (1975) model is that it is only applicable to traditional, residential-type students in higher education. McCubbin (2007) asserted that academic and social integration are not critical predictors of attrition among nontraditional student populations. McCubbin explained that nontraditional students often have an extensive network of friends and family and therefore are less reliant on social integration. McCubbin noted that depending on the diversity of the college, the social integration aspect of Tinto's (1975) model may also be less applicable for students from ethnic minority groups as their on-campus social networks may not be as important to them as they are to the majority population.

Bean and Metzner's Model of Nontraditional Student Attrition

In contrast to Tinto's model (1975), Bean and Metzner's (1985) conceptual model of nontraditional student attrition contains a focus on attrition rates for nontraditional students. Bean and Metzner defined a nontraditional student as

> older than 24, does not live in a campus residence (i.e., is a commuter), or is a part-time student, or some combination of these factors; is not greatly influenced by the social environment of the institution, and is chiefly concerned with the institution's academic offerings. (p. 489)

Though Bean and Metzner's definition of a nontraditional student was not intended to specifically include adult English language learners studying English in nonacademic contexts, Ross-Gordon (2011) stated students only need to meet one of seven criteria to be categorized as nontraditional: being over 24 years old, having a General Education

Development (GED) certificate, working, having a child, being a single parent, waiting at least 1 year after high school to start college, or being a first-generation student. Ross-Gordon noted nontraditional students are commonly female and that traits, such as age, college, and having a job, are typically combined.

According to Bean and Metzner's (1985) model, nontraditional students are more affected by the external environment than are traditional students. Therefore, social factors are less of a concern for nontraditional students. Bean and Metzner designed their model to include factors that are external to the institution that affect persistence: academic variables such as study habits and course availability; background and defining variables such as age, educational goals, and ethnicity; environmental variables such as finances, hours of employment, and family responsibilities; and academic and psychological outcomes while in college.

Kember (1989) indicated Bean and Metzner's (1985) model is not applicable to distance learners due to the discrepancy between the definitions of distance learners and nontraditional learners. One distinct discrepancy is that in Bean and Metzner's (1985) model, nontraditional students commute to campus and attend classes in a traditional, face-to-face setting, whereas students enrolled in online courses will usually not travel to campus and have limited, if any, interaction with the instructor or peer group.

Kember's Model of Drop-Out From Distance Education

In contrast to Tinto's (1975) model and Bean and Metzner's model (1985), which focused on attrition in traditional learning environments, Kember's (1989) model was the first to examine attrition in online education. Kember's model, which is based on Tinto's model, depicts adult learners who participate in distance education as having different

characteristics from those learners who participate in traditional, face-to-face learning. Adult learners who engage in online learning generally contend with external variables outside of the academic environment such as work obligations and family responsibilities. Accordingly, adult learners who can successfully balance these responsibilities will likely persist in their online coursework. In a study by Budiman (2018) examining factors related to adult language learners' decision to drop out from an online course, findings confirmed that participants' perceived inability to successfully balance family and work responsibilities was a primary reason for their decision to withdraw from online courses. However, of particular importance for the current study is that participants stated another significant reason they chose to withdraw was their perceived lack of basic English language skills. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that adult English learners participating in online learning are not only tasked with balancing work and family responsibilities, but also must have a level of English language proficiency that enables them to persist.

Aside from Tinto's (1975) and Kember's (1989) models diverging in terms of Tinto's (1975) model focusing on residential, undergraduate students and Kember's (1989) model focusing on adult distance learners, another difference lies in how Tinto (1975) and Kember (1989) viewed the concept of social integration. Tinto (1975) viewed social integration as students' ability to integrate themselves into an institution's academic and social community, whereas Kember's (1989) viewed social integration as students' ability to balance coursework with outside commitments such as family and job obligations.

Rovai's Composite Persistence Model

Rovai (2003) synthesized the persistence models of Tinto (1975) and Bean and Metzner (1985) and proposed a model of student persistence in distance education based on the belief that previous models "were developed with on-campus programs in mind and, although they are broadly relevant to distance education programs, their ability to explain the persistence of online students is limited" (p. 1). Rovai's (2003) model is divided into student characteristics and skills prior to admission and external and internal factors after admission. According to Rovai, student characteristics prior to admission such as age, gender, intellectual development, and academic performance and preparation can affect persistence. External factors after admission include finances, hours of employment, and outside encouragement whereas internal factors include academic integration, social integration and interpersonal relationships, and study habits.

For the purposes of the current study, it is noteworthy that Rovai's (2003) model included factors such as participants' gender prior to admission as affecting persistence. Ross and Powell (1989) explained that women tend to be more successful in online courses compared to men. Rovai (2003) explained that online learners who are female have a sense of community, whereas online learners who are male have more of an independent voice and a lower sense of community, which is related to feelings of isolation. Rovai noted learners with a lower sense of community are less likely to persist in online courses. Rovai conceded that "adult persistence in an online program is a complicated response to multiple issues. It is not credible to attribute student attrition to any single student, course, or school characteristic" (p. 12).

Park's Model for Adult Dropout in Online Learning

Based on Rovai's (2003) model, Park (2007) identified factors affecting nontraditional students' decision to drop out of online coursework. Park proposed eliminating "learner skills" as she believed they have little empirical support. Park also suggested shifting external factors between "prior to" and "during the course" because she reasoned that these factors may affect learners' decisions to withdraw prior to the course and during the course. Park cautioned that although numerous researchers have attempted to identify factors that affect learners' decision to withdraw from online coursework, thus far there is no consensus about which factors have definitive influence.

Persistence in Adult Education

Though education is compulsory for children in the United States, adults are voluntary learners who often overcome significant challenges to participate in adult literacy programs (Comings, 2007). Comings et al. (1999) explained that though some adult learners enter programs "with specific or short-term goals, most come with goals that require hundreds, if not thousands, of hours to achieve" (p. 23). Darkenwald (1986) estimated that adults need a minimum of 100 hours of instruction to make progress equivalent to one grade level in the United States. Comings (2007) suggested 100 hours of instruction is considered the benchmark for students to show measurable progress, but conceded that 100 hours, or even 150 hours, "is probably inadequate for most adult students to reach their goals" (p. 26). According to Brooks (2011), the average adult learner participates in literacy programs for about 70 hours a year, but this average may be an overestimation. Brooks explained that not all time spent in an adult literacy

classroom is necessarily devoted to literacy. Besser et al. (2004) noted that if more time was spent on literacy activities, students would make more progress.

Research on how much instructional time is required for students to make progress is based on the entire population of adult learners who enter literacy programs. It is worth noting that adult literacy programs serve both native English speakers and English language learners. Researchers have noted that about half of the learners enrolled in adult education programs are English language learners (Center for Adult English Language Acquisition, 2008). The population of adult English language learners is diverse, as within the population of adult English language learners there are differences in age, native languages, experience with formal education, and levels of oral and written proficiency (Burt et al., 2003). Therefore, it is necessary to examine how much instructional time it takes for adult English language learners to make progress in English literacy. Although research is limited, findings from the Mainstream English Language Training (MELT) project, which was authorized to develop ESL curriculum for Southeast Asian refugees in the early 1980s, showed it takes between 500 and 1,000 hours of instruction for adults who are literate in their native languages to obtain basic English language proficiency (Burt et al., 2003). For those adults who are not literate in their native languages, it may take more than 1,000 hours of instruction (Burt et al., 2003).

Merriam et al. (2007) found that the majority of adults participate in adult education programs for career-related reasons. Orem (2000) explained that adult learners view education as an opportunity to improve their lives but situational barriers such as erratic work schedules can affect their ability to attend classes. The reality of adult learners' situational barriers combined with time constraints and the "amount of effort

and practice needed to develop literacy skills, makes supporting persistence one of the most challenging aspects of adult literacy programs" (Lesgold & Welch-Ross, 2012, p. 130).

Motivation in Online Learning

Motivation, which is a key component of persistence, is described as the "engine of learning" (Paris & Turner, 1994, p. 217). Motivated learners are more likely to undertake challenging activities and exhibit enhanced performance (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). According to Schunk et al. (2014), motivation plays a critical role in determining whether a learner will persist in a course, the learner's engagement, the quality of the work produced, and the level of achievement gained. Examining adult learner motivation has significant implications as research shows that when learners are motivated, they are more likely to persist in their coursework (Hart, 2012).

The existing literature, which is mostly garnered from adult learners in higher education, cites the primary reason that students are motivated to pursue online learning is the convenience it offers "through anywhere, anytime access" (Henry et al., 2014, p. 1). In addition, research indicates online learning can significantly reduce the costs of transportation and childcare (Jaggars, 2011). Another factor that may motivate adult learners to participate in online learning is that online learning may allow learners to be more anonymous. Researchers have noted that for adults who are concerned with the stigma that may be associated with illiteracy, taking in-person classes may threaten their self-esteem (Snodgrass, 1992).

However, despite the advantages of online learning, online learning may not be suitable for every student. Driscoll et al. (2012) explained that without an in-person

educator to provide focus and order, students must assume greater responsibility for their learning achievement. Brooks (2011) cautioned that using technology with adult learners "in the hope of boosting their literacy skills remains a forlorn hope" (p. 189). With the growing trend being to offer online learning to adult English language learners and concerns over lower retention rates compared to traditional classroom environments (Nagel, 2009), it is critical to examine motivation in online platforms. Researchers have identified a lack of motivation as a primary cause for student attrition in online learning (Park, 2007).

Upon a review of the literature on motivation, it is clear that retention in online platforms depends on multiple factors, such as learners' traits (Hartnett, 2016). Researchers have found students who have a low need for social interaction (Nedelko, 2008), good time management and learning motivation (Doherty, 2006), and a positive attitude toward technology and are knowledgeable about computers (Nedelko, 2008) are more successful in persisting in online environments.

Keller's ARCS Model of Motivation

Other frequently cited studies explored motivation by examining the instructional design of the environment (Keller, 2010) and factors considered necessary for eliciting learner motivation. Although Keller's (1987) ARCS model of motivation (see Table 1) has been used in a variety of settings and was not intended for online learning, it is considered one of the more notable frameworks of learner motivation (Hartnett, 2016). Keller's (1987) model consists of four components: attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction. The first component, *attention*, refers to learners' interests and is divided into three categories: perceptual arousal, inquiry arousal, and variability. Keller explained

that learners' attention can be gained through strategies such as perceptual arousal, or surprise or disbelief, and through inquiry arousal, or challenging problems. Variability refers to the use of a variety of methods and approaches to sustain students' interests. The second component, *relevance*, refers to relating the content to learners' backgrounds and experiences. The sub-categories for relevance include goal orientation, motive matching, and familiarity. Goal orientation refers to providing learners with an explanation of why the content is useful, motive matching refers to allowing learners to choose instructional methods, and familiarity refers to instructors linking new information to background knowledge. The next component, *confidence*, is divided into learning requirements, success opportunities, and personal control. Confidence refers to learners' self-beliefs and can be promoted through strategies that include communicating course objectives, providing feedback, and giving learners control over their learning. The final component, *satisfaction*, includes strategies for encouraging learners' intrinsic enjoyment in learning, providing extrinsic rewards, and maintaining consistency and equality.

Table 1

Keller's (1987) ARCS Model

Component	Sub-categories	Strategies
Attention	Perceptual arousal	Use real-world examples/humor, incongruity, and conflict
	Inquiry arousal	Use active participation/inquiry
	Variability	Use a variety of methods/approaches
Relevance	Goal orientation	Explain why content is useful in the future
	Motive matching	Assess learners' needs/allow learner choice
	Familiarity	Relate content to learners' backgrounds and experiences
Confidence	Learning requirements	Give learners evaluation criteria to establish expectations
	Success opportunities	Provide feedback so learners can adjust performance
	Personal control	Give learners control over their learning
Satisfaction	Intrinsic reinforcement	Support enjoyment of learning without external rewards
	Extrinsic reward	Provide learners with rewards and reinforcements
	Equity	Maintain consistency and treat students equally

Knowles's Theory of Andragogy

In many respects, Keller's (1987) ARCS model of motivation complements other frameworks and theories, such as Knowles's (1970) theory of andragogy. According to Knowles, adults have different characteristics than children and should not be taught in the same way. Knowles et al. (2005) stated "a distinction between the concepts of pedagogy and andragogy is required to fully grasp the concept of andragogy" (p. 71; see Table 2).

Table 2

Comparing Knowles's Principles of Pedagogy and Andragogy

Component	Pedagogy	Andragogy
The learner	Dependent on the instructor.	Self-directed
The learner's experience	Learner has less life experience. The instructor's experience is more influential.	Learner's experience is a rich resource for learning.
Readiness to learn	Students are told what they will learn to advance to the next level.	The content must be modified to meet the learner's needs.
Orientation to learning	Learning is subject- or content-centered. Content units are sequences according to the logic of the subject matter.	Learning is problem-centered and must have relevance to real-life tasks.
Motivation for learning	Extrinsic	Intrinsic

Although Knowles (1970) originally intended that the principles of andragogy would be applied to adult learners and pedagogy would be applied to younger learners, Knowles (1970) later conceded that pedagogy and andragogy are "two ends of a spectrum" (p. 43) with appropriate instructional strategies existing somewhere in between.

As theorized by Knowles (1970), there are six assumptions about the adult learner:

- *The need to know*. Adult learners will exert more effort if they are told the purpose of an activity and its objectives.
- *The learner's self-concept*. Adult learners have a self-concept or strive to be responsible for their own decisions and lives.

- *The role of the learner's experiences*. Adults have more life experience than children.
- *Readiness to learn*. Adults are ready to learn the things they need to know to cope effectively with real-life situations.
- *Orientation to learning*. Adult learners' orientation to learning is task-centered or problem-centered as opposed to subject-centered.
- *Motivation*. Adults are driven by internal rewards. As such, the opportunity to learn without pressure or external rewards is satisfying for adult learners.

For the purposes of the current research, one of the main criticisms of Keller's (1987) ARCS model and Knowles's (1970) theory of andragogy is that they do not consider cultural perspectives and diversity worldwide (Robertson, 2002; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). Reynolds (2017) stated educators need to reconsider learning strategies due to the changes that have occurred in terms of multiculturism and student demographics since the inception of the ARCS model. Li and Keller (2018) suggested that because previous research of the ARCS model used a quantitative methodology, a mixed-methods approach may lead to a better understanding of the complexities of learner motivation. Li and Keller noted that future research should include a mixed-methods approach on the impact of cultural considerations on learner motivation.

Theories of Motivation

Though motivation is a complicated construct, it can be defined as "the process whereby goal-oriented activity is instigated and sustained" (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002, p. 5). Because research shows online learning has a 10% to 20% lower retention rate than traditional learning environments (Herbert, 2006), it is critical to examine factors such as

motivation that may contribute to students' decision to withdraw. Moos and Marroquin (2010) explained that research investigating online learning should begin by examining well-established theories of motivation. This literature review covers the most broadly cited contemporary theories of motivation that are pertinent to this research, self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977) and expectancy-value theory (Eccles, 1983), before focusing on self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000b), which was the theoretical framework guiding this study.

Self-Efficacy Theory

Self-efficacy beliefs "affect thought processes, the level and persistency of motivation, and affective states, all of which are important contributions to the types and performances that are realized" (Bandura, 1997, p. 39). Because many adult learners have limited or interrupted years in formal schooling (CAL, 2010, p. 13), they may enter literacy programs harboring low self-efficacy beliefs about their ability to attain literacy skills. Bandura (1977) explained that learners come to any learning task with past experiences that determine their pre-task self-efficacy and when they "doubt their abilities in a particular domain of activity" (p. 39), they will avoid those difficult tasks. Conversely, learners with higher self-efficacy beliefs will see challenging tasks as something that can be mastered and will expend more effort and persist longer even when they encounter difficulties.

Bandura (1977) explained that individuals' self-efficacy beliefs derive from four principal sources: enactive mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and social influences, and physiological and affective states. Of the four sources, enactive mastery experiences are regarded as the most influential as learners who have repeatedly

overcome obstacles will have authentic proof of their ability to succeed. However, Bandura (1997) noted that "if people experience only easy successes, they come to expect quick results and are easily discouraged by failure. A resilient sense of efficacy requires experience in overcoming obstacles through perseverant effort" (p. 80). According to Bandura (1977), the least influential source is verbal persuasion (e.g., "you can do it!"). For the purposes of the current research, it is important to note that although verbal persuasion may be regarded as a weaker source of boosting learners' self-efficacy beliefs, research shows it is widely used because of its ease and availability (Redmond, 2010).

Expectancy-Value Theory

According to expectancy-value theory, individuals' achievement behaviors such as "choice, persistence, and performance can be explained by their motivational beliefs about how well they will do on the activity, and the extent to which they value the activity" (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000, p. 68). Pintrich and Schunk (2002) explained that individuals are primarily asking themselves, "Can I do this task?" and "Why should I do this task?" (p. 53). Eccles (1983) stated that though expectations for success and task value are distinct constructs, they are correlated. In essence, individuals' expectancy for success will predict their subjective task value. Expectancy of success represents a future-oriented conviction that an individual can accomplish a given task and is shaped by motivational beliefs that include goals, self-concept, and task difficulty. Goals reflect specific short- and long-term learning objectives, self-concept represents impressions about one's capacity in task domains, and task difficulty refers to the perceived difficulty of a given task. In addition to an individual's expectancy of success, the individual must expect some immediate or future personal gain. The four factors that contribute to task

value include attainment value, intrinsic value, utility value, and cost. Attainment value refers to the personal importance of doing well on a task, intrinsic value represents the personal enjoyment an individual derives from performing a task, utility value is the individual's perception of how well a task relates to current and future goals, and cost means individuals weigh the benefits versus the time and lost opportunities required for a task.

Although research investigating adult literacy learners' achievement behaviors through the lens of expectancy-value theory is limited, Gorges (2016) conducted interviews to examine adult learners between the ages of 21 and 67 years and with varying educational backgrounds and their subjected task value—which is their perceived future gain—of participation in an educational program. Results of the study showed there was a distinction between anticipated subjective task value prior to participation and subjective task value based on hindsight, or experience. For the purposes of the current study, it is noteworthy that Gorges's study extended the research on the critical, yet not well-examined, role of psychology to inform adult education practice. Because adult participation in literacy programs is voluntary, it is important to analyze adult learners' motivated behaviors such as their decision to participate or, conversely, their decision to withdraw. Though Eccles (1983) described "cost" as students' determination of what they will gain versus their cost of participation in terms of time and money, it is likely that adult learners would make that determination privately. Therefore, future research of adult learners' motives for participating or withdrawing from programs is necessary.

Self-Determination Theory as a Framework for Motivation

Pintrich and Schunk (2002) described self-determination theory as "one of the most comprehensive and empirically supported theories of motivation available today" (p. 257). Self-determination theory has been applied to politics (Losier et al., 2001), healthcare (Williams et al., 2000), and education (Niemiec et al., 2010), but has not been examined extensively in the realm of online learning (Chen, 2007). Because student motivation in face-to-face classrooms may differ substantially from that in online environments, it is critical to investigate motivation through the lens of self-determination theory, which posits that when learners' basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are satisfied, they experience a more enhanced sense of self.

According to Ryan and Deci (2017), autonomy is the need to self-regulate one's experiences and actions. "The hallmark of autonomy is that one's behaviors are self-endorsed, or congruent with one's authentic interests and values" (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 10). In educational contexts, autonomy support has been shown to lead to more self-determined forms of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2008). In contrast, external regulation such as deadlines serves to undermine self-determined motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Supporting learners' perceptions of their behaviors as effective and efficient is also necessary to facilitate motivation (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2006). The construct of competence is viewed as a core element in motivated actions (Bandura, 1986; Ryan & Deci, 2017) and can be easily thwarted when challenges are too difficult or negative feedback is pervasive. The last basic psychological need, relatedness, pertains to learners' sense of feeling socially connected and giving or contributing to others (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Within self-determination theory, motivation exists on a continuum (see Table 3). On one end of the continuum is amotivation, in which an individual has no intention to act. Following amotivation are four forms of extrinsic motivation: external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation. In external regulation, individuals do a task for a reward or punishment; in introjected regulation, individuals are controlled by internalized consequences administered by the individuals themselves; identified regulation involves awarding conscious value to a behavior in such a way that the action is accepted when it is personally important; and integrated regulation refers to the process of bringing together various personal values and identity. Last, intrinsic regulation is where individuals perform a task for personal satisfaction.

According to self-determination theory, intrinsic motivation is the most self-determined type of motivation and occurs when individuals naturally and spontaneously perform behaviors as the result of genuine interest or personal satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2006). In contrast, individuals who are extrinsically motivated are driven by external stimuli, such as fear of punishment, the pressure of a deadline, or the promise of a reward (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000a). Although intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are considered determinants of behavior (Kim & Frick, 2011), intrinsic motivation leads to more effort and greater persistence (Park & Choi, 2011).

Table 3

The Self-Determination Continuum

Motivation type	Regulation type	Internalization	Regulatory process
Amotivation	Non-regulation	Impersonal	Apathy No intention
Extrinsic	External	External	External rewards/punishments
	Introjected	Somewhat external	Compulsion/guilt
	Identified	Somewhat internal	Consciously valued goals
	Integrated	Internal	Values are fully assimilated into self
Intrinsic	Intrinsic	Internal	Pure interest/enjoyment

For the purposes of the current study, it is important to note that intrinsic motivation has been found to decrease with age. Deci and Ryan (1985) explained that though children are intrinsically motivated to pursue tasks, adults face external influences such as career goals that may subvert intrinsic motivation. However, Deci and Ryan contended that intrinsic motivation can be promoted in the classroom when instructors reduce external rewards (e.g., extra recess), as extrinsic rewards can undermine intrinsic motivation, and incorporate elements of challenge and control. In addition, it is important to acknowledge that researchers have questioned the applicability of self-determination theory to non-Western cultures. For example, with respect to the basic need for autonomy, Eastern cultures value conformity in contrast to Western collectivist cultures that value individuality (Chao & Tseng, 2002). Deci and Ryan (1985) conceded that future research should include cross-cultural studies examining Eastern or Western cultures.

Summary

This comprehensive literature review revealed there is limited research examining adult English language learners' motivations and persistence in online learning. After reviewing influential models of student attrition and persistence, Keller's (1987) ARCS model of motivation, and Knowles's (1970) theory of andragogy, the researcher concluded that these models, frameworks, and theories were intended for younger populations, adults in higher education, or adults whose native language was English, and do not address aspects of adult English language learners' diverse cultural backgrounds that may affect persistence. Therefore, these models, frameworks, and theories have limited, if any, application to adult English language learners pursuing online learning or their motivations for persistence. Findings from this literature review support Mathews-Aydinli's (2008) contention that "adult English language learners studying nonacademic English are an unstudied population" (p. 199).

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter provides a detailed description of the methods used to investigate adult English language learners' lived experiences of online learning and motivations for persistence in online formats through the lens of self-determination theory. The chapter begins with the rationale for conducting a hermeneutic phenomenological study. Then the chapter continues with an overview of the sampling strategy used to select participants for the study. Next, the chapter includes the procedures for how participants were recruited for this study. Data collection procedures are then described, followed by an in-depth discussion of the steps followed to analyze the data. Thereafter, the researcher's background is provided to make clear any previously held suppositions or biases regarding the phenomenon under investigation. The chapter concludes with an explanation of strategies implemented by the researcher to demonstrate trustworthiness.

Rationale

A review of the literature demonstrated the need for a deeper understanding of adult English language learners' experiences of online learning and motivations for persistence. Schartz (2014) suggested a qualitative approach may allow for a more in-depth understanding of how motivation and persistence are experienced by online learners. Patton (2002) explained that qualitative methodological approaches are based on the subjective, experiential life-world of human beings and the descriptions of their experiences. Lichtman (2013) noted "questions that involve what and why cannot easily be answered with test scores, data, and statistical analyses" (p. 4). The researcher in the current study chose the phenomenological approach because this methodology "aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of everyday experiences" (van

Manen, 2015, p. 9). By understanding the nature or meaning of adult English language learners' experiences of online learning and motivations for persistence, "we are offered the possibility of plausible insights" (van Manen, 2015, p. 9) and the "opportunity to become more experienced ourselves" (van Manen, 2015, p. 62).

Connelly (2010) explained that there are two main approaches to phenomenology: transcendental or descriptive phenomenology, which was formally developed by Edmund Husserl (1913), and interpretive or hermeneutic phenomenology, which was developed by Husserl's former student, Martin Heidegger (1962). Hermeneutics, which translates from the Greek word "hermeneutike," which means "interpretation," was initially applied to the translation of divine messages. Mugana (2015) noted the emergence of "written language alienated the words from the speaker present in oral language and brought the need for the interpretation of language" (p. 72). Mugana emphasized that "without the speaker, the words isolated on their own are subject to multiple interpretations" (p. 72).

Though there are similarities between Husserl's and Heidegger's approaches (see Table 4), such as each of these phenomenologists sought to uncover human experience as it is lived, they differ in terms of how they comprehended understanding. In Husserl's approach, observers can suspend their judgements by bracketing or putting aside their own beliefs or what they already know to get to the pure essence of the phenomenon (Langdridge, 2007). In Heidegger's view, it is not possible for observers to remain neutral and bracket out the way they identify the essence of a phenomenon because there is no way to separate themselves from being within the world (Langdridge, 2007). As such, in hermeneutic phenomenology, researchers openly acknowledge their

preconceptions and reflect on their subjectivity as part of an interpretive process (van Manen, 2015).

Table 4

Comparing Transcendental and Hermeneutic Phenomenology

	Transcendental (descriptive)	Hermeneutic (interpretative)
Philosophical origins	Edmund Husserl (1859–1938)	Martin Heidegger (1889–1976)
Epistemological assumptions	Observers must separate themselves from the world to understand the phenomenon.	Observers are part of the world and therefore, are not free of biases.
Data collection	Researchers must set aside or bracket their presuppositions.	Researchers' previous knowledge is used to create new understanding.
Data analysis	Identify units of meaning and cluster into themes to form textural descriptions.	Iterative cycles of considering how the data (parts) contribute to understanding of the whole.

Heidegger (1962) developed the concept of the hermeneutic circle, which is essentially a series of iterative cycles of moving from the whole, or entire transcript, to the parts and back to the whole again until there is a full understanding of the phenomenon. Le Cunff (n.d.) explained that the hermeneutic circle "encourages us to try to understand what we read in the context of a cultural, historical, and literacy context, along with our own personal context" (para. 3).

Participant Selection

When selecting participants for phenomenological research, it is essential to recruit individuals who can articulate their lived experiences (Creswell, 2012, p. 150). Therefore, the researcher adopted a purposeful criterion strategy to identify adult English language learners who participated in online learning during the pandemic from an adult literacy program located in the Northeastern United States. Creswell (2012) stated

“criterion sampling works well when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon” (p. 155). The criteria for participants in this study were their age, which was 18 years or older, and participation in an online course for 6 months during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, participants, whose native language needed to be Spanish, were required to have access to a computer and the internet. Last, participants needed to have been enrolled in Level 4, or the program’s highest level, while participating in their online coursework. Though there are no uniform guidelines among adult literacy programs, to qualify for Level 4 at this adult literacy program, the adult learner must be able to understand and communicate in a variety of contexts related to daily life and work in the English language. The researcher sought Level 4 students to facilitate comprehension throughout the interview process.

Phenomenological research typically includes five to 25 participants (Creswell, 2012). Seidman (2006) explained that though he would be reluctant to establish a correct number of participants for a study, the criteria of saturation should be considered. Seidman described saturation as the point in a study at which the interviewer begins to hear the same information reported. This study included six female adult English language learners who met the criteria to participate in the study, which was manageable for one novice researcher. There were no male participants included in this study as none of the prospective male participants met the criteria for this research. Creswell (2012) contended that qualitative research should include perspectives that range over a spectrum of viewpoints. Therefore, the researcher selected participants who ranged in age from 25 to 40 years old and had diverse educational backgrounds.

Recruitment

After obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the researcher began the recruitment process by emailing the adult literacy center a Letter of Intent (see Appendix A) to introduce herself and describe the research study. When the executive director of the literacy center granted the researcher Permission to Conduct the Study (see Appendix B), administrators at the center then proceeded to email a Letter to Participants (see Appendix C). The purpose of this email was to provide a general overview of the study. The researcher intended for this email to be sent directly from the adult literacy center rather than from her because she understood that adult English language learners were not familiar with her and may not have responded to her emails. The Letter to Participants also included an invitation for adult English language learners who were interested in participating in the study or learning more about the study to email the researcher directly. The researcher requested that adult English language learners email her directly, rather than the researcher contact them, to ensure they did not feel pressure to participate. Those adult learners who chose to email the researcher to express interest in the study were scheduled at their convenience for a recruitment interview. The recruitment interview was available in English and Spanish (see Appendix D) using St. John's Webex to safeguard participants' personal information as well as the meeting's content. The purpose of the recruitment interview was for the researcher to introduce herself, describe the study, and invite participants who were interested in the study to email her a time and day that were convenient for them to learn more about the study. When a participant emailed the researcher a convenient day and time, the researcher invited the participant to attend an individual recruitment interview. Though the

researcher conducted the recruitment interview in English, the recruitment interview was also available in Spanish (see Appendix E) if the participant was not proficient in the English language. Baez and Creswell (2021) stated all forms must be available in participants' first language. The purpose of the recruitment interview was to determine whether the participant met the criteria for the study. In addition, the researcher wanted to determine whether the prospective participant would allow the consent forms to be mailed through the United States Postal Service to their home address.

The purpose of having the consent forms mailed to adult English language learners' home addresses was to address ethical concerns. Baez and Creswell (2021) explained that when collecting data from marginalized groups, it is important to "include participants' relatives or other stakeholders in the informed consent process" (p. 145). After the researcher finalized the list of prospective participants who met the criteria for the study, she emailed each of them an Invitation to Participate in Research in English and Spanish (see Appendix F). If the adult learner accepted the researcher's invitation to participate in the study, the researcher mailed the Informed Consent Forms in English and Spanish (see Appendix G) to the participant's home address with a self-addressed stamped envelope for the participant to sign and return to the researcher. After the researcher received the participant's signed Informed Consent Forms through regular mail, the researcher emailed the participant a link to a group meeting to review the contents of the Informed Consent Form. If any participant was unable to attend the meeting, a subsequent meeting was arranged at the participant's convenience. Seidman (2006) urged researchers to "talk through the sections of the document with participants to ensure that they understand everything" (p. 78). Seidman suggested the following

procedures for gaining fully informed consent from participants when interviewing remotely:

- Provide participants with the consent document ahead of time.
- Review the consent information orally with participants before starting the first interview.
- Ask participants whether they have any questions about the study and answer them.
- Confirm that participants give permission to record the interviews.
- Remind participants throughout the study, at the start of each subsequent interview, about the consent information, provide them with opportunities to ask questions, and reaffirm their willingness to continue the study.

As an added resource, the researcher recruited a translator and two back-up translators, in case the primary translator needed to withdraw partway through the research, who would attend every interview should any participant require English language support. Vygotsky (1962) explained that finding the right word in English to represent the full sense of the word from individuals' native languages is demanding. Because the researcher understood the critical influence of translation in the validity of findings from in-depth interviews, the translator and back-up translators were bilingual with advanced degrees.

After the contents of the Informed Consent Form were thoroughly reviewed, and if the researcher had any doubts about the participant's consent comprehension, the researcher did not enroll the participant in the study as the participant's well-being must not be jeopardized due to language barriers.

Data Collection

For this study, data were gathered using semi-structured interviews. The researcher chose to conduct semi-structured interviews primarily to build rapport and put adult English language learners, who likely had never participated in a study before, at ease with an informal "inter change of views between two persons" (Kvale, 1996, p. 44). Molden (2011) noted that creating trust and mutual responsiveness is important in qualitative research. Aside from putting participants at ease, semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to collect open-ended data and use follow-up probes to explore participants' feelings and beliefs about online learning and "delve deeply into personal and sometimes sensitive issues" (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019, p. 1). Creswell (2013) described in-depth interviews as the primary means of collecting data for a phenomenological study. Van Manen (2015) stated the phenomenological interview serves as a "means for exploring and gathering experiential narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon" (p. 66).

The researcher followed Seidman's (2006) three-interview series to explore each participant's experience, place it in context, and reflect on its meaning. Each of the three interviews was up to 60 minutes in length using St. John's Webex virtual conference platform. Although participants had conducted their online classes using the Zoom platform and therefore were more familiar with that platform, St. John's Webex does have similar qualities but with additional security features. Though Seidman suggested 90-minute formats, he conceded that there is "nothing magical or absolute about that time frame" (p. 26). As such, the researcher determined that a shorter time frame of up to 60

minutes was more appropriate for adult language learners who often have multiple responsibilities and needed to set aside time in their schedules to participate in three interviews.

The purpose of the first interview was to establish the context of each participant's experience. The second interview allowed participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurred. The last interview encouraged participants to reflect on the meaning of their experiences. Seidman (2006) explained that the three-interview series "allows for mutual engagement and provides a foundation of detail that helps illuminate the next" (p. 21).

The researcher began the interviews by introducing herself and reassuring participants that their privacy would be protected. The researcher then explained how she would conduct the interviews in a private space where the interviews could not be observed or overheard. Thereafter, the researcher invited participants to choose pseudonyms or false names to ensure their confidentiality and privacy throughout the study. Finally, the researcher confirmed that after the interviews had been conducted, the information would not be disclosed or shared with anyone other than the researcher. The researcher explained that following every interview, the files would be uploaded to the researcher's computer and labeled Participant-Name-Date. One copy of each digital file was stored using encrypted cloud storage behind two-factor identification and the other copy was transferred to a USB flash drive. Once the data were stored, they were encrypted and protected with a password, and all personal identifiers were removed. Following any questions or comments the participants had regarding how their privacy was protected in the study, the researcher described the interview protocol.

Interview One: Focused Life History

In the first interview, the participants were asked about their past up until the time they became students pursuing online learning. The researcher asked about their experiences and a range of constitutive events in their past with their families, in school, and at work. The purpose was to lead the participants to reconstruct the event and place it in the context of their life histories. The researcher began by asking, “How did you come to participate in online learning?” (see Appendix H).

Interview Two: The Detail of the Experience

The second interview focused on the concrete details of the participants’ lives in the topic area. The researcher did not ask for participants’ opinions but rather for the participants to reconstruct their thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and details of their experiences in the topic area. Therefore, to elicit these details, the researcher asked participants, “How would you describe a typical or ordinary online class? What are some of the reasons you kept trying or stay motivated to attend class during the pandemic?” The interpreter may add: ¿Qué lo motivó a persistir en el aprendizaje en línea durante la pandemia? (translated into English: “What motivated you to persist in online learning during the pandemic?”). Because the English words motivation and persistence and the Spanish words motivación and persistencia are cognates, or words with common etymological origins, participants may have understood the meaning of these words (see Appendix I).

Interview Three: Reflection on Meaning

In the third interview, the researcher asked participants to pause and reflect on the meaning of their experiences. Vygotsky (1987) stated putting experience into language is

a meaning-making process. For interview three, the researcher took a broad stance and asked participants, “Given what you have said about your life before you started online classes and what you said about your online experiences, what did your online classes during the pandemic mean to you?” (see Appendix J).

Reflexivity

Throughout the data collection and analysis processes, the researcher facilitated reflexivity and examined personal assumptions and goals. Berger (2015) described reflexivity as the

> turning of the researcher lens back on oneself to recognize and take responsibility for one’s own situatedness within the research and the effect that it may have on the setting and people being studied, the questions asked, data being collected and its interpretation. (p. 2)

Creswell (2013) suggested incorporating reflexivity into qualitative studies by writing about personal experiences—including past experiences and how those past experiences shape interpretations—in a reflective journal. Along with a reflective journal, the researcher wrote analytic memos throughout the process of data collection and analysis. Saldana (2016) explained that analytic memos help with “future directions, unanswered questions, frustrations with analysis, and insightful connections” (p. 45). Due to the quantity of data that resulted from this study, the researcher relied heavily on analytic or brief memos to record observations about the data collection and analysis. The researcher also repeatedly reflected on her assumptions and biases as well as any concerns regarding the participants within her reflective journal. The researcher was mindful that due to the challenges of participating in a study conducted in a second language, participants were

more vulnerable to miscommunication. As such, the researcher's primary focus was to continually monitor and protect the rights and welfare of the participants.

Data Analysis

Transcription

After the researcher collected the data following Seidman's (2006) three-interview series, the researcher began the process of transcribing the interviews using Rev.com. Though the researcher had considered hiring a transcriber, due to the exorbitant expense and the researcher's reluctance to rely on the transcriber to note every nonverbal signal and correctly place every punctuation mark, the researcher chose a speech-to-text transcription application. The researcher had also considered transcribing the interviews herself. However, due to the enormous amount of data generated during the interviews, which entailed multiple interviews that were conducted and shared with participants to clarify and confirm the participants' narratives, the researcher also declined to pursue that option. Instead, after the interviews were transcribed, the researcher carefully compared each of the transcripts with the participants' original recordings to ensure accuracy.

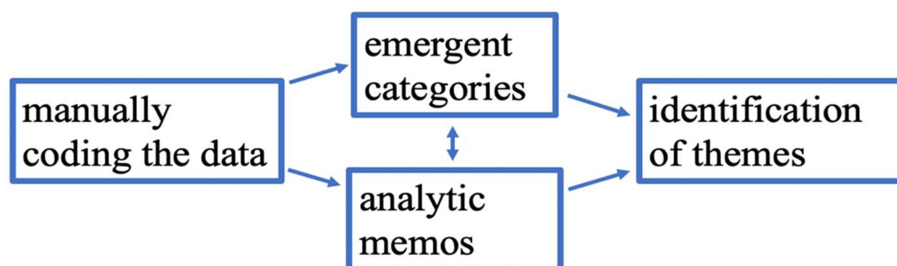
Coding the Data

Once the interviews were transcribed, the vast array of words and sentences needed to be reduced to what was most significant (Wolcott, 1990). Seidman (2006) cautioned researchers to reduce the data inductively without a set of hypotheses to test. Seidman explained that a researcher should "come to the transcripts with an open attitude, seeking what emerges as important and of interest in the text" (p. 126). Though Seidman indicated there is no right or wrong way to code a set of data, the researcher began the iterative process of reading through the data to form a general impression of

the overall depth (Creswell, 2013). As the researcher read through the data, she followed Auerbach and Silverstein's (2003) suggestion to keep a copy of the research questions, theoretical framework, and goals of the study nearby to inform her coding decisions. After reading through the data multiple times, the researcher manually coded or highlighted words, sentences, and passages she found pertinent for her research. As she manually highlighted words and passages, she started to notice categories emerge. As the categories emerged, the researcher kept analytic memos, which are the "equivalent to a lab notebook in experimental research" (Saldana, 2016, p. 44). The researcher then began the process of studying the categories for themes. Figure 1 depicts the procedures the researcher followed to conduct the data coding for this study.

Figure 1

Procedures for Coding Data



The researcher chose to manually code the data on hard-copy printouts as it gave her more control and ownership over the work. Peoples (2021) advised against using qualitative data analysis software for quality phenomenological analyses, and explained that researchers can "view transcripts as data rather than dwelling on what was said in the interview to ascertain the essence of the phenomenon being studied" (p. 66). Seidman (2006) also cautioned that new researchers may be under the misconception that computer assisted quality data analysis software (CAQDAS) will analyze their data for

them. Seidman noted that at this early stage of the process, the researcher is exercising judgement about what is significant in the transcript and the researcher's judgement is based on working with and internalizing the data. Marshall (1981) indicated the researcher's judgement "may be the most important ingredient she brings to the study" (p. 126).

Participant Profiles

Seidman (2006) recommended profiles as an "effective way of sharing interview data and opening up one's interview material to analysis and interpretation" (p. 128). Because the researcher's intent in this study was to explore adult English language learners' experiences of online learning, participant profiles were deemed the most effective way to organize the data using the participants' own words (Seidman, 2006). Seidman explained that "we interview in order to come to know the experience of the participants through their stories" (p. 128) and noted that "what we learn from a profile of a participant is as diverse as the participants we interview" (p. 128).

As the researcher read through the participants' transcripts and labeled words, sentences, and passages that pertained to the research questions, she made two copies of each of the transcripts. The researcher set one copy aside to be used as a reference to place sentences and passages into context. For the other copy, the researcher used a pair of scissors to carefully remove sentences and passages she had labeled into individual strips. The researcher then grouped the strips into categories and placed the categories into folders marked with participants' pseudonyms. After the researcher completed this process, she emptied the contents from each of the folders one at a time to ensure the contents from one participant were not mixed with the contents from another participant,

and began shaping the contents into a narrative form with a beginning, middle, and end. As the researcher crafted the contents from each participant's folder into a narrative form, she discarded a few of the sentences and passages that were less compelling or pertinent for answering the research questions.

Researcher Background

Due to the subjective nature of qualitative research, Creswell (2013) stated the role of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument necessitates the identification of personal assumptions and biases. Therefore, in this section the researcher discloses her background and experiences as they relate to how adult English language learners experience online learning and their motivations for persistence.

The researcher's personal conception of the phenomenon under investigation has been informed by her experience as an adult learner taking online asynchronous graduate courses and as a professional working in the field of adult literacy education. At the beginning of the pandemic, when students were forced to quickly adapt to the challenges of online learning, the researcher's primary concern was to keep students motivated to persist long enough to achieve positive outcomes. Over the past year, the researcher has been researching motivation in online education for adult learners by speaking to colleagues, reading scholarly research, and attending professional workshops. Though the researcher has learned a significant amount about motivation in online contexts, she has developed some biases regarding this instructional approach. For example, in her view, synchronous courses are more conducive to learning for adult English language learners. In synchronous classes, the students and teacher have more of an opportunity to build a

personal connection. Research shows this personal connection or sense of community is a motivating factor for class attendance (Whipp & Chiarelli, 2004).

Regarding another personal bias, the researcher believes it is critical for educators to meet adult literacy learners' psychological needs in traditional settings or in online learning. Because adult learners are voluntary participants who often balance multiple responsibilities, Wlodkowski (2008) explained that "if adults have a problem experiencing success, or even expecting success, their motivation for learning will usually decline" (p. 100). Once learners' motivation declines, it is likely they will withdraw from coursework and never return. By meeting learners' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, adult learners will become more intrinsically motivated. Learners who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to undertake challenging activities and persist.

Trustworthiness

Because qualitative researchers do not use instruments with established metrics, it is necessary for them to address how the study's findings are credible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The four tenets of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) that should be considered by qualitative researchers seeking to demonstrate the accuracy of their findings include credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. These constructs correspond to the criteria employed within the positivist research paradigm that underpins quantitative methodology (Shenton, 2004): credibility (in preference to internal validity), transferability (in preference to external validity/generalizability), dependability (in preference to reliability), and confirmability (in preference to objectivity).

Credibility

Lincoln and Guba (1985) contended that credibility is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness. The first strategy used to enhance the credibility of the findings was triangulation, which refers to the use of multiple methods or data sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Patton, 2002). Mathison (1988) explained:

> Triangulation has risen an important methodological issue in naturalistic and qualitative approaches to evaluation [in order to] control bias and establishing valid propositions because traditional scientific techniques are incompatible with this alternate epistemology. (p. 13)

In this study, the researcher established credibility by using a diverse group of informants so "individual viewpoints and experiences could be verified or corroborated against other individuals and ultimately, a rich picture of the attitudes needs or behavior of those under scrutiny may be constructed based on the contributions of a range of people" (Shenton, 2004, p. 66). The next strategy the researcher employed to promote credibility was to clarify her background and any biases she brought to the study. Patton (2002) stated that in qualitative research, the credibility of the researcher is essential as the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. The researcher also included a reflective journal to not only evaluate and monitor the study but also to create transparency by divulging her individual belief systems and subjectivities. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated the monitoring of the researcher's own developing constructions is critical in establishing credibility.

In addition to the researcher's reflective journal, she conducted member checks after every interview. Lincoln and Guba (1985) considered member checks to be another important provision that can bolster a study's credibility. Creswell (2014) explained that member checks "involve taking the data, analysis and interpretations back to the participants so that they can judge the accuracy or credibility of the account" (p. 252). Member checks are especially critical for the adult English language learner population as they give them the opportunity to verify that their words matched what they had intended (Shenton, 2004).

Transferability

Transferability, which is the equivalent of external validity in quantitative research, is "the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 253). Due to the small number of participants in a qualitative study, researchers question "whether the notion of producing truly transferable results from a single study is a realistic aim" (p. 71). However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated "it is, in summary, not the naturalist's task to provide an index of transferability, it is his or her responsibility to provide the data base that makes transferability judgements possible on the part of potential appliers" (p. 316). Therefore, to enhance transferability, the researcher provided a robust and detailed narrative or rich, thick description of the research (Geertz, 1973). Creswell and Miller (2000) explained that by describing the study in vivid detail, the researcher creates "verisimilitude, statements that produce for the readers the feeling that they have experienced, or could experience, the events being described in the study" (p. 129). Based on these rich

descriptions, readers can "make decisions about the applicability of the findings to other settings or similar contexts" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 129).

Dependability

To address dependability in this study, the researcher provided a detailed account of how participants were recruited for this study. By providing a detailed account of how the participants were selected, the study could be replicated in another study. Shenton (2004) stated "the processes within the study should be reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results" (p. 71).

Confirmability

The concept of confirmability, which is the last criterion of trustworthiness that a qualitative researcher must establish, is based on confidence that the findings are not shaped by the researcher but rather by the participants. Shenton (2004) indicated "steps must be taken to help ensure as far as possible that the work's findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher" (p. 72). To establish confirmability in this study, the researcher clarified her personal history as well as the perspectives and experiences she brought to the research. In addition, she identified the philosophical and theoretical frameworks that guided her choice of research approach and that influenced the methods for data collection and analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The researcher also readily acknowledged the shortcomings or limitations of the study's design and any potential effects on the results.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted with adult English language learners whose native language was Spanish. The researcher took a series of steps to address the ethical considerations in increasing validity and trustworthiness throughout the study. To begin, the researcher waited for the literacy program to email adult learners to introduce and describe the study. If any adult learners expressed interest in participating, administrators at the adult literacy program invited them to contact the researcher directly to schedule a recruitment interview. The researcher wanted the initial correspondence to be generated directly from the adult literacy program to promote a level of confidence and legitimacy in the study. Adult learners who contacted the researcher and attended the recruitment interview were provided a back-up Spanish translator and Spanish recruitment script to ensure they fully understood the study before agreeing to participate. In addition, the consent forms were provided in English and Spanish and were mailed directly to adult learners' homes to allow them to review the document with their family and friends. Throughout this process, the researcher repeatedly reminded adult learners that participation was voluntary and they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. They were also assured that all research-related materials would be kept in a password-protected file on the researcher's home computer to ensure the anonymity and trustworthiness of the findings. The adult learners who chose to participate were invited to select their own pseudonyms to protect their anonymity and integrity in the study. Last, the researcher conducted ongoing member checking to ensure she had captured accurate representations of the participants' themes and stories. If a participant found an account

to be inaccurate, the researcher revised the theme or story to better reflect the view of the participant.

Summary

This study involved the use of a hermeneutical phenomenological design to collect and analyze data on adult learners' experiences of online learning and motivations for persistence during the pandemic. As a method of qualitative inquiry, phenomenology "does not problem solve or seek correct knowledge, but rather for the meaning and significance of phenomena" (van Manen, 2015, p. 23). In this study, the researcher did not intend to problem solve, but rather to illuminate adult English language learners' experiences of online learning. Following Seidman's (2006) three-interview series, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews to explore participants' experiences of online learning. Following the interviews, the researcher crafted participant profiles to transform the data into a story using the participants' own words. Seidman maintained that profiles "bring a participant alive and offer insights into the complexities of what the researcher is studying" (p. 129). Throughout the data collection and analysis processes, the researcher incorporated reflexivity into the research by writing about her personal experiences, including past experiences, and how those experiences may have shaped her interpretations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Along with her reflective journal, the researcher wrote analytic memos to help with "future directions, unanswered questions, frustrations with analysis, and insightful connections" (Saldana, 2016, p. 45). Finally, the researcher gave a detailed explanation of the strategies she employed to demonstrate trustworthiness in the research.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study was to research adult English language learners' experiences of online learning and motivations for persistence during the COVID-19 pandemic. Adult learners, who are voluntary participants, often balance multiple responsibilities (Orem, 2000). Research shows that because adult learners balance multiple responsibilities, they may abandon programs that fail to meet their needs (Orem, 2000). With the trend moving toward online learning (OECD, 2013) and research indicating there are even higher attrition rates in online programs compared to traditional, in-person coursework (Heyman, 2010), it is critical to examine adult English language learners' experiences of online learning and motivations for persistence as online learning will likely continue post-pandemic. Two questions guided this research:

- Research Question 1: What are adult English language learners' experiences of online learning during the pandemic?
- Research Question 2: What are adult English language learners' motivations for persistence in online learning during the pandemic?

Organization of the Chapter

This chapter begins with a description of the sample. The chapter then proceeds with an overview of how the researcher shaped each participant's profile into narrative form. Thereafter, the participants' profiles are presented. The next section is a presentation of findings that includes the six categories and four significant themes that emerged across the data set. Finally, the chapter ends with a summary of the results of the analysis of the interview transcripts and description of the themes.

Description of the Sample

Using a criterion sampling strategy, the researcher recruited participants in this study from one adult literacy program located in the Northeastern United States. This sampling technique involves selecting individuals who have experienced the phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To meet the criteria for the study, participants were required to be adult English language learners, 18 years or older, whose native language was Spanish. In addition, participants had to be enrolled in Level 4, or the literacy program's highest level, and have participated in online learning for about 6 months during the pandemic. There were six participants in this study. The six participants were female and disclosed that they had never participated in online coursework prior to taking classes during the pandemic. Though the researcher sought to include male participants in this study, the male learners who attended the recruitment interview did not meet the minimum criteria. The sample for this study represented a variety of age groups with a 15-year age range between the youngest participant, who was 25 years old, and the oldest participant, who was 40 years old. The sample also represented an array of educational backgrounds as one participant had completed a medical degree, three participants had completed master's degrees, and two participants had not yet obtained high school diplomas.

Throughout this study, the researcher's primary concern was to protect the participants' confidentiality and well-being. The researcher removed all identifiers, including locations, sites, and other geographical markers, and participants were asked to choose a pseudonym. Table 5 presents participant demographics for the study in alphabetical order according to the pseudonyms they selected.

Table 5

Participant Demographics

Participant (pseudonym)	Gender	Age range	Online experience	Educational background
Alma	F	30–35	None	Medical degree
Celia	F	25–30	None	Some high school
Lucia	F	25–30	None	Master’s degree
Maria	F	35–40	None	Some high school
Rosa	F	35–40	None	Master’s degree
Sofia	F	25–30	None	Master’s degree

Participant Profiles

Although Seidman (2006) maintained that there is “no right way to share interview data” (p. 128), he suggested crafting profiles to share participants’ experiences. Profiles are created based on participants’ own words and allow researchers to present participants in context and clarify their intentions. Because the researcher found that the interviews “were compelling enough to be shaped into a profile that has a beginning, middle and end” (Seidman, 2006, p. 128), the researcher followed Seidman’s suggestion to craft profiles to share the data. The researcher collected data for the beginning of each participant’s story from Interview One: Focused Life History. The researcher collected data for the middle of each participant’s story from Interview Two: The Detail of the Experience. Last, the researcher collected data for the end of each participant’s story from Interview Three: Reflection on Meaning. Seidman explained that each interview provides details to help illuminate the next interview.

As the researcher created the profiles, she did not make changes to participants' oral speech in the written document. However, the researcher deleted many conversational fillers such as "um," "uh," and "ah" to facilitate the readability of the data.

Alma

Alma grew up in the Dominican Republic. Alma is married and has two children, ages 11 and 13 years old. Alma shared that she has five brothers and sisters and that her mother and father worked hard to pay the bills for their large family. Alma stated repeatedly that "they didn't have it too great." Alma recalled that her father, who did not finish high school, wanted more for his children, so he encouraged them to work hard in school and create better opportunities for themselves. Alma remembered that at an early age she wanted to be a lawyer but her father's friend, who was a lawyer, was killed for speaking out against the government. Alma remembered her father saying,

> I don't want that thing for you. You are a big girl. You are a big mouth. You got a big mouth. You want to talk. You want to explain. You don't . . . you can't manage your mouth. I don't want that, try another thing.

Following her father's advice, Alma decided to enroll in medical school and noted it was very competitive. She recalled that in her first year of medical school there were about 100 students, but after 6 years, only 40 students graduated. In 2018, Alma moved with her family to the United States. Alma explained,

> I didn't want to leave my country or family. I don't want that. Unfortunately, I have no choice. Too much political turmoil and insecurity and kidnapping. Dangerous things. Yeah . . . my husband had the green card and I just say, okay. I

> got the visa and we come to the United States with the children. We want our children [to] get away from all that bad things.

As a consequence of her move, Alma shared that she would be required to retake her medical exams in English to practice medicine in the United States. Alma confided that she was "concerned" she may not pass her medical exams and would be forced to give up her "dream" of being a doctor.

Alma had been in the United States for about 2 months before lockdowns were implemented to reduce the spread of COVID-19. When asked how she felt about the sudden shift to online learning, Alma said,

> I cursed. Remember, I just left my country to come here. I never see that before. I said, "How can [that] work? How can I learn English this way?" I am a very physical person. I need to touch. I need to feel things.

Though Alma acknowledged having internet access and described herself as "somewhat knowledgeable" about computers, she explained that she was not familiar with the Zoom platform:

> Oh my God . . . this was a whole new world. I can't figure this thing out . . . and I went to medical school. All of us stuck in the house together . . . all the noise . . . the dog running around. We firstly learned about [Zoom's] mute button before we tried to figure [out] all the other stuff. My childrens did not want to use the camera because their rooms was messy and I said, "no, that [is] not respectful to [the] teacher." Maybe people have their own wisdom, but for me, I do not like that.

Alma shared that the first day of her online class was “not as bad as she think.” She recalled how she came “to class in her pajamas” and that her classmates, who also spoke Spanish, seemed “friendly” and that she was happy to see their “smiling faces” without their masks. Alma told the researcher that from that first day, she vowed to “work hard” and “never miss a single class.” When asked if her peers, whom she described as “friendly,” would influence her decision to attend class, Alma insisted,

> I don’t want to impress my classmates. I have a goal to become fluent in English no matter what. All those people doing [do not make] a difference. If I see a compatriot, I like to talk to her after class but it’s not the reason I go to class . . . no, it isn’t. I have goals to thinks about. For me, if I do something, I put [in] all my effort. It’s so easy to say, “Oh, I can’t attend today. I have another thing to do.” It’s really the teacher that matters more to me anyways.

Alma described the teacher in her online class as very “kind,” but noted she was “immediately frustrated” by what she perceived as her teacher’s lack of constructive feedback. Alma observed, “American people is very kind . . . even though you don’t [aren’t] really good at something, they said, ‘Yeah, you did great.’ If you are my teacher, I want you to correct me.”

Over the course of the semester, Alma revealed that she relied more on her children than her teacher to help her improve her English literacy skills. Alma explained, “My children, they don’t care about my feelings. They say, ‘Mom, it’s not good. Your pronunciation is terrible.’ Sometimes they say, ‘Okay, you did good. You did great.’”

In addition to her teacher's lack of feedback, Alma shared that she was frustrated over the "ridiculous amount of choices" her teacher offered students throughout the program. Alma stated,

> I understand this is a country of freedom but where I'm from, they don't ask if you want to do something? They just tell you . . . too much freedom here. They give you choice about of what you want, camera on or off? They give you choice about homework. They give you choice about answering in class. I need pressure. If I don't feel pressure, I say, "Okay, I got time. I can do it later." They ask me if I want my children [to] take an exam. I ask them, "Why you ask me? If you give an exam, they take the exam."

When the researcher asked Alma what her experiences of online learning during the pandemic meant to her, Alma said she was "grateful" she did not have to "put gas in her car" and "find a babysitter" and that she could "continue her progress" in learning English and "reaching her goals." Alma exclaimed,

> Oh my God, I have worked so hard. Education is important to me. I can't imagine taking all this time away from school. I didn't thinks I could learn Zoom . . . learn online . . . all those things, but I did.

Celia

Celia grew up in Venezuela and is the only child in her family. Celia said her mother, who is managing a chronic disease, is her "everything." Celia related that although her country is home to the world's largest oil reserves, life in Venezuela is "challenging." Celia explained,

> Venezuela is crazy, crazy. No medicine. The food in the grocery store is very expensive. If you put gas in your car, you wait maybe 2 days in line. And the electricity . . . the service for all the houses are horrible. I remember one day it [I] was in my apartment and the light turned off . . . the electricity come back 8 hours later. For me was like, the world is off. If you don't have electricity, the phone service is done too. For the people it's normal. They didn't like it, but it's normal.

Celia shared that although her mom was in poor health, she convinced Celia to move to the United States go to college and find a better life for herself. Within weeks of her arrival, Celia recounted how she was "lucky" and found a job through a neighbor packing boxes at a medical warehouse. Celia described her first day of work:

> Oh my God, I remember my boss talk to me, and I didn't understand anything what [that] he was talking about. He looked at me like, "duh, you aren't a smart person?" I was like, "sorry but I don't understand what you saying." It was uncomfortable . . . but it's his country, and the country speak English, so it's my responsibility to learn this language.

Though Celia said she was "grateful for her job," she revealed that her "mission in life" was to go to a university to improve her employment opportunities. Celia explained,

> I want to study. I want to do my dreams, my goals. I want to help my mom. I think I have good chances in this country . . . maybe one day, I want to make a coffee shop.

Prior to the pandemic, Celia recalled having negative perceptions of online learning. She acknowledged that though she had never taken an online class or knew

anyone who had taken an online class, she had assumed this approach was more aligned with students in higher education. Celia explained,

> Before, when I see the information for taking online classes . . . I was like . . . I don't know if this will be good. I don't know if I want to take classes online. I was thinking my English was so bad. I was so shy. I don't know . . . maybe when I get to university, I take online class.

When the pandemic struck and there was an abrupt shift to online learning, Celia said she "had no choice" if she wanted to continue learning English. Celia recalled feeling "very anxious" at the prospect of taking online classes in the evening after a "long day" at work. The researcher asked Celia if she could describe a typical "long" day at work during the pandemic, to which Celia replied,

> In the morning . . . I feel very nervous about leaving the house to go to work. I put on a mask, a glove, everything . . . to go to work. I was scared but I had to [leave] my home. I had bills . . . rent . . . and I need to send money to my mom in Venezuela.

After work, Celia had "no energy" for her online class, and would sometimes "turn her camera off." Celia admitted that she turned her Zoom camera off because she was embarrassed:

> When the camera is on, I think you have to look good . . . like your hair is good . . . have good clothes. My whole house was horrible. I had dishes and stuff everywhere you look. I have no time to clean. I gone all day. I don't want peoples to see that mess.

Celia said there were other days when she was “too exhausted” and could not bear the thought of attending her online class, even with her camera turned off. On those days, Celia reported that someone would message her and say, “Hey, come to class. I’m waiting for you.” When asked whether she would miss class had her classmate had not messaged her, Celia said:

> No, I still go. It helped for sure, but I still go. I have my dreams . . . my goals. My life gets better . . . will change when I learn English. You can’t do much here with no English.

When asked if she would describe a favorite or memorable online class, Celia recalled:

> Sometimes in classes, we talk about life in our countries . . . like our favorite foods or other things. I like that. One class, we talk about tips . . . or tipping . . . and how peoples don’t tip in our countries, but in the United States . . . everyone tips for everything. Here . . . you buy a coffee, you gives a tip. I think [these] topics makes us talk and laugh . . . and more comfortable. It helps to talk English together . . . all of us . . . the teacher too.

Celia said that though she “enjoyed” their class discussions and that the teacher was “nice,” she was “somewhat dissatisfied” with her feedback in class. Celia noted,

> Teacher says, “good job, you are doing great” and things like that. Sometimes I feel like embarrassed because I make a mistake and she say, ‘that’s okay, you [are] learning.” I think she kind with me . . . but yes . . . I would like her to correct my English more times. No, really . . . I glad she’s nice . . . but I need to learn too.

Celia also shared that there were times when the teacher spoke English too quickly in class and that she felt “discouraged”:

> Sometimes I feel like I don’t understand anything . . . I can’t learn anything. I thinking . . . this class [is] too hard for me. I need easy class. Maybe I just can’t do this. Maybe I can’t get anything right.

Celia explained that the teacher’s weekly PowerPoint presentations “helped” by allowing her to “see the words” when she had difficulty understanding the teacher’s oral language. Celia noted other benefits of having the curriculum presented on a PowerPoint:

> If I get confuse . . . the teacher can use the marker [annotation tool] to answer my question . . . I think this help everyone sometimes . . . better than a textbook. The other good point . . . she can send [email] us the whole thing [PowerPoint] and all her notes . . . to review after so I can practice.

Celia described her experiences of online learning in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic as a “perfect distraction” during a “horrible time.” Celia said she felt “grateful” that she was able to do something “good” for her. Celia recalled,

> During class . . . it was like I disconnect for [from] everything, and just pay attention to the class. I didn’t thinks about anything else. I feel less worry . . . Before I didn’t know if I could take these online classes. But I try it . . . and got confidence. I find . . . I can learn English online. It’s amazing really . . . the pandemic didn’t stop my goals.

Lucia

Lucia is one of three daughters. She shared that her parents described her as "independent." From the time she was young, Lucia explained that she had "different plans" for her life:

> I did not want to get married. Yeah . . . people who want, they can do that. But in my case, I don't feel is the way I want my life. I want to study. I want to travel. I want to get new experiences.

Lucia remembered being a very good student and how she especially loved math and science. Lucia declared that she was "good at it." Lucia's parents, who did not graduate from high school, did not understand her enthusiasm for school, or math and science. After high school, Lucia revealed that she was the first person from her large, extended family to attend college. Upon graduating from college, Lucia left Ecuador to pursue her goal of learning English and becoming a math professor. Lucia said her father did not support her decision to go to the United States. He said,

> You are going to turn into 30 years old. So . . . when you are going to have your family? When you are going to get married, have all your kids? Your older sister . . . she got married, she has her kids. Why you don't do the same thing? This is your country . . . you has everything here. Why you want to go there?

While in the United States, Lucia explained how she saved on expenses by working as a children's nanny. Although she said her "new family" was "kind," she was responsible for three young children—6 days a week—and received very little pay. Lucia recalled being "very tired" every day. In the evenings, Lucia described how she looked

forward to going to her attic bedroom to connect with her family in Ecuador using her laptop computer.

At the onset of the pandemic, when her English classes were shifted to online, Lucia recalled being "frustrated." Lucia explained,

> Learning English is tough. For me, in-person is the best option. I didn't expect that I could learn English using a laptop computer . . . I don't know Zoom . . . and maybe I wouldn't pay attention? I also worried I wasn't going to go because [there's] no pressure to go.

When the researcher asked Lucia to describe her experiences of her first online class, Lucia replied,

> It was weird . . . [you] see everyone's faces in this little boxes. Some people's faces look dark . . . maybe their rooms didn't have enough light or something. Other peoples just had these black boxes with their names on it . . . they didn't want to show their faces. I see a couple of peoples with these pictures behind them, like they're in Hawaii or something. I was confused by this pictures . . . yes, very different from a classroom.

The researcher then asked Lucia how the teacher responded to students who chose to keep their cameras turned off. Lucia said,

> She . . . I don't know she didn't say nothing. Nobody said nothing. I guess we were all acting like this was normal . . . having conversation with a black box. For me, the teacher has to pressure us to turn on our camera. If not, otherwise I mean, I don't think we do it.

Lucia explained that the curriculum for her online class, including all assessment activities, was presented on a shared PowerPoint presentation. At the beginning of class, Lucia recalled that the teacher would post a news-related article for students to collectively read and discuss:

> One class was about guns . . . like laws about guns. Everyone got excited. Everyone started talking . . . the quiet people started talking . . . we were all . . . everyone was trying to tell their feelings. We became friends talking like that. Before that, we were more shy.

The researcher probed for more details and asked Lucia if her classmates influenced her decision to participate in her online class. Lucia answered, “It’s nice when you make friends in class. So for me, I wouldn’t say if I don’t make friends I quit, but it’s a plus for sure.” The researcher then asked if the teacher gave students the opportunity to follow their class discussions with a writing assignment. Lucia responded,

> Oh my gosh . . . nobody want to show all the other peoples their writing . . . even if the teacher [would] not say who did this writing. For example . . . I want to get better with learning [how] to be a teacher. The teacher will email this stories about education and say, “Lucia write your opinion [about] this story.” So . . . writing was a private thing . . . just [between] teacher and student.

Throughout Lucia’s online coursework, she credited the teacher with creating a “safe and comfortable” environment for students to learn. Lucia described how she appreciated her teacher’s support:

> It’s key when the teacher keeps cheering me up, keeps me working on my progress . . . makes sure I’m doing a good job. If I don’t do something right, I

> want my teacher to say, “Okay, you did your best, but you may want try something else to improve.”

When Lucia was asked to reflect on what her online experiences during the pandemic meant to her, she shared that it “kept her sanity” during a “horrible time.” She explained that her entire family in Ecuador was stricken with COVID-19. Her grandmother had been admitted to the hospital and was not expected to survive. Lucia recalled how she “desperately wanted to go home” but worried that airline travel was not safe, or even a possibility. Lucia recalled, “Even if I was stuck here [at home], I was able to keep learning and every day I say, ‘I won’t give-up. I can keep going. I can reach my goals.’”

Maria

Growing up in a rural town in central Mexico, Maria recounted how she always “wanted to learn,” but education was “not considered important.” Maria recalled that her parents told her to “work hard because she need[s] to eat.” Although Maria did not remember when she stopped going to school, possibly third or fourth grade, she insisted she “always loved school.” Maria revealed that she even aspired to become a teacher one day. After Maria’s son was born, she said she was eager to “make a different life” for him and “wished” her parents “pushed her” so her “life would be different.” Maria recalled “typical conversations” she had with her son:

> You need to study. You need to get to college because it’s hard to work [at night]. My son say, “Mommy, I don’t go to college. I start to work, and I continue to work.” I say, “no, no, no . . . go to college.” My son say, “Mommy, one person is

very rich, and doesn't go to college." I say, "I don't care. You need [to go] to college."

Maria shared that her purpose for learning English was to get a driver's license and ultimately, a better job opportunity. Currently, Maria cleaned office buildings at night so she could be home for her son during the day. Maria noted that her only son was her "whole world." Aside from her driver's license, Maria disclosed that she wanted to learn English so she could communicate with her son's friends:

> I don't speak English too good and maybe they laugh at me . . . they may say, "So, your mother don't speak English. She don't understand too good." Sometimes when you don't speak English, they don't think you're so smart. I would like to ask, "How are you?" "Where do you live?" I learn it's very important to communicate with another person.

When the pandemic started and Maria's English classes were shifted to an online format, she remembered having to borrow her son's computer:

> Oh my God . . . I was worry about breaking it. My son [was not] no happy. He always say, "I don't want [you] to touch my computer . . . it's my computer." What if I touch the wrong thing . . . then my son . . . [has] no computer for school.

Maria admitted that although she had never met her classmates, she was "sure" they would not experience the same difficulty with technology and the Zoom platform:

> Zoom looks so . . . too much for me. Maybe for my classmates, it's easy because maybe they use a computer every day. I don't know . . . I don't like the camera. It might be not so horrible if some peoples help me with Zoom . . . my son has no time. He get so angry when I ask [him] things.

Maria declared that she did not “like the camera” because she lacked confidence in her English language skills. Maria exclaimed,

> I have a [hard] time because I’m too shy . . . the other [in-person] classroom, I can just talk quiet to [the] person next to me . . . ask questions . . . get to know her. Online . . . Oh my God, everybody stare at my face, and I don’t want to give the horrid worst. My classroom, very intelligence. They talk a lot. Only me, sometimes I don’t talk. I don’t feel as smart . . . but I try.

When the researcher asked Maria if her perception of not being “as smart” as her classmates, influenced her motivation to attend class, Maria declared,

> I’m friendly but the point is to learn. The most important . . . I go for the teacher, not for my classmate. You know that people maybe is nice but [it is] maybe more important is have connection with the teacher.

For the most part, Maria recalled that her teacher “encouraged” her and created an inclusive and personalized curriculum. Maria gave an example of one class where the teacher tied the vocabulary lesson to her goal of obtaining a driver’s license:

> The teacher give words like “brake” and all these things . . . so many words to know. We was looking up words for “el volante,” Spanish for steering wheel. I don’t thinks other peoples was trying to get [a] license but they still learned all this words.

When the researcher asked Maria about her teacher’s strategies for providing feedback during these vocabulary lessons, Maria disclosed that though she “appreciated her efforts,” she was “sometimes dissatisfied.” Maria gave an example of a class where she was asked to provide details of how she prepared her favorite meal:

> I was so scared to talk. I forgot some words and . . . it was terrible. Everyone try to help me. At the end, they say, “that’s okay, Maria . . . you did good.” The teacher say, “Good job, Maria” but I don’t like that.

When asked to explain why she did not “like” it when the teacher said, “Good job, Maria,” she explained,

> The teacher . . . I want her to help me if I need to [it]. I want her to say, “Maria, maybe this word works better?” I don’t want her to say something [is] good . . . when I know something [is] not good.

Maria described her experiences of online learning during the pandemic as “very difficult”:

> My best friend’s husband got sick and went into the hospital, and never come back. He had four young children. I am fortunate because I didn’t lost time and didn’t [have to] take two buses no more to go to class. Now I sit down, and open my computer . . . well yes . . . my son’s computer. I say, “okay, I don’t have a life outside, but I can still learn . . . I can still make a better future for me and my son.”

Rosa

Rosa recalled that growing up in Venezuela with her mother and two brothers was a “difficult time.” Rosa explained that because her father had passed away, her mother was the sole provider for Rosa and her younger siblings. Rosa shared that although her mother had not finished elementary school, Rosa decided from a young age that she would study hard in school and go to college. After completing a master’s degree in business, Rosa described how she worked as a supervisor for a multinational company for

about 20 years and traveled all over the world. Rosa stated she was a "professional" in her country. When Rosa moved to the United States, she said she found work as a children's nanny. Although Rosa readily acknowledged that she loved children, she revealed that her English "was not good" and, therefore, there were few job opportunities. When asked why Rosa came to the United States, she responded that she was "determined" and would "stop at nothing" to help her children:

> Why I come? For my son's education and future. The situation is dangerous in my country . . . shootings . . . violence. No jobs. Many childrens don't go to school no more. Schools [are] empty. No good future there . . . only bad.

Despite the desperate conditions that Rosa described back in Venezuela, she shared how she

> lost so much going to the United States . . . My family, my friends, my way of life . . . and my job. It's not easy . . . how you say? I need to pull up. I need to pull myself up. Help myself.

When the pandemic started, Rosa's English language classes at a nearby community college were abruptly cancelled. She remembered feeling "nervous" about taking online classes:

> I worry I can't understand the teacher. I can't see her face . . . mouth move . . . hands move . . . hear words or pronunciations very well. I can't sit next to peoples and say, "hey, what did the teacher just say?"

When the researcher asked if she was knowledgeable about computers and had access to the internet, Rosa admitted that though she had extensive experience with computers in her previous job, she was not familiar with the Zoom platform:

> I tried to adjust the Zoom settings and thought, “Oh no, I can’t do this too good.” Nobody . . . not my kids not anyone, knew how to use this thing. I was worried I’d try the passcode, and not get in the class. Honestly, I felt dumb asking [the] teacher about this . . . I thought all the peoples already knows these things.

Rosa described her first online class as full of “numerous number of distractions.” Rosa recalled how one student spoke while banging pans together as she made dinner. Rosa reasoned, “I guess she don’t know how to use the mute thing””

> I understand . . . peoples has dogs and kids at their home . . . and everything else . . . I get that . . . but why they don’t just keep their sound off. The teacher keep stopping the class and saying, “Please, turn off your sound. Please, turn off your sound.” So crazy.

Rosa noted that eventually she and her classmates became more comfortable navigating the Zoom platform and learning how to communicate with each other in their virtual classroom “community.” Rosa credited her teacher for creating their community, in part, by encouraging students to support each other. Rosa recounted the teacher saying, “If you speak Spanish, and someone doesn’t know something, and they speaks Spanish too . . . jump in . . . help them understand something.”

Outside of class, Rosa noted that the teacher also posted extra-credit assignments on a WhatsApp chat group, which allowed students to improve their English literacy skills in a less formal environment. Rosa explained, “You know . . . we was alone in a bad pandemic so having the group chat . . . yes, it help us make friends and practice English.”

When asked if her relationship with her classmates influenced her decision to attend class, Rosa said that though she appreciated the support of her peers and that "it's better when we help each other," she did not take classes to "make friends":

> At my age, we probably don't go meet people outside class . . . we has children at home . . . busy lives . . . busy schedules, right? The person who helps you the most should be the teacher.

Though Rosa described her teacher in her online class as "kind" and "patient," she found that in general, teachers in the United States offered "too many choices":

> My teacher say, "do your homework, or it's okay not [to do your homework]." What to think about this? My son in high school . . . he don't have homework. I think, "How can he learns with no homework?" In my country, teachers say . . . do this, do that.

When the researcher asked Rosa if she perceived that her son would have received a better education in Venezuela, Rosa countered,

> Well . . . I don't know. I just like to see the teacher push students more . . . expect more sometimes . . . be more tough. For my class . . . she [doesn't] push me neither. She say, "good job, good job!" She nice like that . . . maybe she think I get hurt feelings? I say "teacher, need [to] learn English."

Rosa reflected on her experiences of online learning during the pandemic as a time of "horrible anxiety." Rosa shared that she felt so alone:

> I had few friends and no family . . . [and] not great English. I mean . . . can you think of this . . . being in a new place . . . you can't speak English real good . . . and also you worry . . . if I sick . . . who [is going] watch my childrens? This

> [was] life for us when we take those [online] classes. So, yes . . . I'd say the classes was a good thing. You know . . . I have no car so it's better for me . . . I hope [to take] more classes in the future.

Sofia

Sofia, who is the youngest of three children, shared that her mother and father only went to school for a few years while they were young. Sofia said her father had wanted to go to school, but his family struggled financially. Sofia explained,

> My dad was so frustrated because he actually didn't went to school because he was in a poor town. My grandpa, he died when [my] dad was 1 year . . . so, the one who raised my dad was my grandpa's wife.

Sofia praised her dad for returning to school when Sofia was in sixth grade. Sofia recalled how her mom cooked dinner as she and her dad did their homework together at the kitchen table. When asked why her dad chose to go back and graduate from high school, Sofia said that even though her dad was 55 years old at the time, getting an education was important to him. Sofia remembered her dad saying, "When you got a good education, you got good job opportunities and a better future. The only thing I can make for you is giving you all the study that you can have."

Inspired by her dad's determination to earn his high school degree, Sofia made a "huge decision" to leave Colombia and continue her education in the United States. Sofia noted that though her dad was initially displeased with her plans, eventually he helped her register with an au pair agency and obtain a driver's license. Sofia explained,

> My dad at first was like . . . "Are you going to take care of kids? Are you serious? You have a master's degree, and you are going to take care of kids? Why you do this? I don't understand."

At the onset of the pandemic, when lockdowns were introduced to curb the spread of COVID-19, Sofia recalled feeling "very frustrated" and "disappointed" that her English classes had abruptly shifted to online:

> I get distracted easily. I can check my phone or something. The other people in the house are distracting . . . I can't say to them, "stop talking." So . . . I prefer in-person learning with other people . . . with friends.

Sofia noted that in-person learning allowed her to learn from her classmates and "listen to their pronunciations." Sofia revealed, "Pronunciation is the tricky part because English and Spanish have a lot of similar words and my brain goes immediately for the Spanish pronunciation."

When asked if learning from her classmates motivated her to participate in her online classes, Sofia responded,

> I did have friends in class, but it's not that . . . I mean, I'm following my dreams. I'm reading my goals, that's what I really care about. I want the teacher to help me learn . . . to make it so I can learn. So for me, it's not about seeing people in class or [if] the teacher asks [if] I want to do something . . . or choose to do something . . . or making things easy for me. The teacher's feedback is more necessary for me.

When asked to describe her teacher's strategy for providing feedback in her online class, Sofia expressed "disappointment." Sofia explained,

> It's nice if my teacher says, "good job" but it's not the most important thing. It's necessary to get good feedback because that's the way you learn . . . like she could say, "Sofia, do you want to pronounce that word again?"

Sofia then clarified her response, and said, "It's not if I 'want' to do something . . . but I do need feedback. I need to feel like we're working more as a team . . . as adults working together." When the researcher asked Sofia to describe an experience in her online class where she perceived that her teacher was not "working together," Sofia recalled,

> The pandemic was making life so crazy. This one teacher decided to give us all this homework . . . way too much homework. I felt so overwhelmed and quit the class. I didn't want to show up to class without my homework.

When the researcher probed Sofia for more details and asked why she did not want to show up to class without her homework, Sofia explained,

> If I did that . . . I wouldn't be give . . . giving my very best effort and I would feel very bad at that. I want to understand all the class lessons and do a good job with my homework.

When asked if she could describe how her teacher delivered the "class lessons" or content in their virtual classroom, Sofia said, "Yes, okay . . . she used a PowerPoint slides for everything . . . I had never had this before actually . . . I was always like using a textbook." Sofia recounted that she preferred using PowerPoint presentations and that she "appreciated" how the teacher integrated YouTube videos into their classroom curriculum. Sofia recalled one class that she described as "memorable" where the teacher integrated a YouTube video:

> Teacher showed us a video of Bolivar Square from my country . . . and she say, "Hey, Sofia tell us about this place?" So, it was good. We was all talking about Colombia and Bolivar Square and things . . . and forgetting about all the bad stuff happening around us.

When the researcher asked Sofia how she felt sharing her culture with other students, she exclaimed, "I feel like the teacher. Smart. Everyone listen to me . . . and ask questions. It good for me to speak in English about things I know about . . . it give me confidence."

When asked to reflect on what her experiences of online learning meant to her during the pandemic, Sofia disclosed,

> I watched the news and it said people were dying in my country. My family in Colombia saw the news too . . . it said people were dying in the United States. It was honestly so scary and terrible.

When asked to choose a word, or words, that she would use to describe her experiences of online learning during the pandemic, Sofia responded,

> I feel "grateful" [because] that was the only way we could learn. I also know now that I can take online classes . . . they're acceptable . . . even though it's not my favorite . . . when I don't have another choice. Thank God, my life didn't have to stop.

Presentation of Findings

As the researcher crafted participant profiles from data collected from Seidman's (2006) three-interview series, she identified broader themes that captured patterns and connections across the data set in relation to the research questions. Van Manen (2015) described themes as the following:

- Theme is the experience of focus, of meaning, of point.
- Theme formulation is at best a simplification.
- Themes are not objects one encounters at certain points or moments in a text.
- Theme is the form of capturing the phenomenon one tries to understand.

For this study, 29 codes, six categories, and four significant recurring patterns or themes that emerged across the data set are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Significant Themes, Categories, and Codes

Themes	Categories	Codes
Theme 1: Challenges of online learning for adult English language learners	Negative perceptions of online learning	Inability to learn English
		Difficulties understanding English pronunciations
		No pressure to attend classes
		Perceived camera fatigue
		Inability to manage personal distractions
		Perceived camera anxiety
		Concerns about personal privacy
		Not suited for every learner
	Technical-related challenges of online learning	Inexperience with video-conferencing platforms
		Inability to purchase/access technology
Theme 2: Needs of adult English language learners in online learning	Instructor-related needs	Constructive, task-related feedback
		Instructor/student collaboration
		Instruction delivered at slower pace
		Instructor creates virtual class community
		Instruction based on relevant topics
		Limited choices for homework/camera use
		Opportunities to engage with peers

Themes	Categories	Codes
	Course design	Audio muted to avoid distractions Curriculum delivered using PowerPoint Curriculum based on students' interests/goals
Theme 3: Benefits of online learning for adult English language learners	Adult learner-related benefits	Ability to interact with peers Reduced transportation costs Increased confidence with computer skills Convenience/flexibility Uninterrupted learning
Theme 4: Adult English language learners' motivations for persistence in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic	Personal-related motivations for persistence	Commitment to goals Concerns about children's future Financial support for family in native country Participate more fully in society

Theme 1: Challenges of Online Learning for Adult English Language Learners

Several of the adult English language learners described how they were forced to flee their native countries, sacrifice their careers, and leave their families behind to come to the United States and start a new life. These participants related that they were anxious about settling in a country with deep-rooted, anti-immigrant sentiments and complex and evolving immigration legislation. Alma and Rosa, who had younger children, also had concerns about how their children would adapt to their new schools. Alma admitted that she worried about her child being bullied for his inability to effectively communicate in English with his teacher and peers. Rosa shared that her daughter was a good student in their native country and hoped she would not be placed at a lower level in school based on her weak English literacy skills.

All the participants readily acknowledged that to successfully adjust to life in the United States, which included the ability to pursue their goals and obtain better job opportunities, they needed to be proficient in English. With this objective in mind, participants recounted how they contacted an adult literacy program in their area to register for classes, which were often held at local libraries.

A few of the adult learners recalled that they had only attended 3 or 4 weeks of in-person classes before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. When the adult literacy program notified them of the sudden shift to online learning, they shared that they were "very anxious," as they had never taken online courses. Many participants, with the exception of Maria, said that although they had computers and access to the internet, they did not have technical support and felt generally unprepared. Moreover, if they were given the option, participants stated they would choose to remain in their traditional, face-to-face classes. Several participants explained that they were skeptical about the prospect of learning English in an online class.

Negative Perceptions of Online Learning. Prior to the pandemic, participants reported having negative perceptions of online learning. Rosa stated her concern was based on the feasibility of learning English online:

> I worry I can't understand the teacher. I can't see her face . . . mouth move . . . hands move . . . hear words and pronunciations very well. I can't sit next to peoples and say, "hey, what did the teacher just say?"

Sofia shared Rosa's concern about her ability to fully comprehend correct pronunciations for English words in online formats and revealed, "Pronunciation is the tricky part

because English and Spanish have a lot of similar words and my brain goes immediately for the Spanish pronunciation."

Lucia questioned whether she could "learn English using a laptop computer" and if she would even attend class given there was no outside "pressure." Alma also stated she needed "pressure" and that if given the option she would say, "Okay, I got time. I can do it later."

Maria voiced her apprehension about online learning based on her perceived inability to focus on her computer screen for prolonged periods of time. Lucia also questioned whether she could "pay attention." Sofia admitted she became "distracted easily" and would be tempted to check her phone. Aside from distractions and camera fatigue, another participant described her discomfort of having her peers, who she assumed would be more proficient in English, "just stare" at her rather than focus their attention on the teacher who would normally be situated in front of learners in a traditional classroom. Maria explained,

> Oh, my God. Everybody stare at my face, and I don't want to give the horrid worst. My classroom, very intelligence. They talk a lot. Only me, sometimes I don't talk. I don't feel as smart, but I try. I don't like the camera.

Celia shared that though she was also "uncomfortable" with the camera, stating that when the camera was on she felt she had "to look good . . . like your hair is good . . . have good clothes," she admitted that she was "more worried" about privacy and how her peers could potentially see inside her "messy" apartment. She said, "My whole house was horrible. I had dishes . . . and stuff everywhere you look. I have no time to clean. I gone all day. I don't want peoples to see the mess. It's embarrassed me so much."

Both Maria and Celia spoke about their perceptions of online learning as not being suitable for every learner. While Maria described herself as "too shy," Celia reported that her "English was so bad" but said she may consider taking online classes after she was admitted to a university. Alma described herself as a "physical person" who needs to "feel things," and therefore she wondered, "How can this work?" Sofia noted that in-person learning was "better for her" because she perceived that online learning would prevent her from learning from her classmates.

Technical-Related Challenges of Online Learning. Though most of the participants described themselves as being "comfortable" with computers and owning their own computer, they all disclosed that they were not familiar with the Zoom platform. Alma described her experience joining Zoom for the first time:

> Oh my God . . . this was a whole new world. I can't figure this thing out . . . and I went to medical school. All of us stuck in the house together . . . all the noise . . . the dog running around. We firstly learned about [Zoom's] mute button before we tried to figure [out] all the other stuff.

Other participants, like Alma, who also had extensive backgrounds in formal education, admitted being frustrated in their early attempts to use the Zoom platform. Rosa explained,

> I tried to adjust the Zoom settings and thought, "Oh no, I can't do this too good." Nobody . . . not my kids not anyone, knew how to use this thing. I was worried I'd try the passcode, and not get in the class. Honestly, I felt dumb asking the teacher about this . . . I thought all the peoples already knows these things.

Aside from several participants reporting technical difficulties with the Zoom platform, Maria revealed that she lacked the resources to purchase a computer for online classes. Left with no other option, Maria explained that she was forced to share her son's computer. Maria recounted,

> Oh my God . . . my son was no happy. He always say, "I don't want [you] to touch [my computer] . . . it's my computer." What if I touch the wrong thing and break it . . .then my son . . . [has] no computer for school.

When the researcher asked Maria if her son helped her navigate the Zoom platform, Maria responded, "Zoom looks so . . . too much for me but . . . my son has no time. He get so angry when I ask [him] things."

Theme 2: Needs of Adult English Language Learners in Online Learning

Participants for this study were enrolled in Level 4, or the literacy program's highest level. To qualify for Level 4 at this adult literacy program, adult learners must be able to understand and communicate in a variety of contexts related to daily life and work in the English language. Many participants noted they were somewhat proficient in the English language and able to qualify for Level 4 due to their parents' strong beliefs about education and years they spent in formal schooling. Sofia recounted how her father went back to finish high school when Sofia was in the sixth grade. Alma's father, who did not finish high school, encouraged her to work hard in school to create better opportunities for herself. Alma followed her father's advice and obtained a medical degree. Because many of the participants had extensive backgrounds in formal education, they were accustomed to working hard and achieving positive outcomes. To achieve these positive outcomes, participants stated they wanted to ensure that the course design and materials

and the instructor's strategies met their objective, which was to become more proficient in the English language.

Instructor-Related Needs. When the researcher asked the participants how the teacher influenced their online experiences, though every participant noted the teachers were "nice" and "praised" their efforts, they all voiced frustration about what they perceived as the instructors' lack of constructive feedback. Alma explained, "The American people is very kind. Even though you don't [aren't] really good at something, they say, 'Yeah, you did great.' My children don't care about my feelings. They say, 'Mom. It's not good.'"

Celia remembered feeling "embarrassed" when she perceived that she had made mistakes pronouncing words in English and how the instructors would exclaim,

> Good job, you are doing great! . . . I think they are nice with me . . . but yes . . . I would like them to correct my English more times. No, really . . . I glad they're nice . . . but I need to learn too.

Maria noted she "didn't like" the feedback she received from an oral language assessment where she was asked to provide detailed instructions of how to prepare her favorite meal. Maria recounted that although she had practiced for several weeks, on the day of the presentation she was "scared to talk" and felt the presentation "turned terrible." Maria remembered feeling "embarrassed" when her teacher said, "Good job!" and explained,

> I want her to help me if I need to [it]. I want her to say, "Maria, maybe this word works better?" I don't want her to say something [is] good . . . when I know something [is] not good.

When the researcher asked participants about their perceptions of how the instructors engaged with students in their online classroom, Sofia stated she would have preferred if the instructors and students were more of a "team . . . as adults working together." Sofia disclosed that she had a teacher who had assigned her too much homework. As a result, Sofia felt "overwhelmed" and quit the class. Aside from Sofia feeling overwhelmed due to what she perceived as too much homework, other participants described feeling "defeated" in their online classes when their instructors spoke English too quickly. Celia disclosed,

> Sometimes I feel like I don't understand anything . . . I can't learn anything. I thinking this class [is] too hard for me. I need easy class. Maybe I just can't do this. Maybe I can't get anything right.

Other participants described instances in their online classes where they credited the instructors for creating unique opportunities for the teacher and students to work together and form, what Rosa described, a "class community." Rosa explained, "If you speak Spanish, and someone doesn't know something, and they speaks Spanish too . . . jump in . . . help them understand something."

Celia stated the class felt like a "family" when the instructors introduced topics that were relevant to their daily lives. Celia remembered one class where they compared the standard practice of "tipping" in the United States versus how tipping is perceived in other countries. Celia observed,

> Here . . . you buy a coffee, you gives a tip. I think [these] topics makes us talk and laugh . . . and more comfortable. It helps to talk English together . . . all of . . . the teacher too.

Lucia recalled a more serious class discussion where students were invited to express their views on the contentious topic of gun control. Lucia recounted,

> Everyone got excited. Everyone started talking . . . the quiet people started talking . . . we were all . . . everyone was trying to tell their feelings. We became friends talking like that. Before that, we were more shy.

Outside of class, Rosa noted the instructors posted extra-credit assignments on a WhatsApp chat group that allowed students to improve their English literacy skills in a less formal environment. Rosa explained, "You know . . . we was all alone in a bad pandemic so having the group chat . . . yes, it help us make friends and practice English."

When the researcher asked the participants if their peers influenced their participation in class, Rosa stated that though she appreciated the collaboration and "it's better when we help each other," ultimately, she was motivated by her goals: "At my age, we probably don't go meet people outside of class. . . we has children at home . . . busy lives . . . busy schedules, right?" Alma also acknowledged that though she enjoyed meeting and learning from other people, she maintained, "I don't want to impress my classmates. I have a goal to become fluent in English. No matter what. All those people [do not make] a difference." Sofia found that though making friends in her online class did appeal to her, she was more focused on her future:

> I'm following my dreams. I'm reaching my goals . . . that's what I really care about. I want the teacher to help me learn . . . to make it so I can learn. So, for me, it's not about seeing people in class or [if] the teacher asks [if] I want to do something . . . or choose to do something . . . or making things easy for me.

The researcher then probed for more details and asked Sofia if she perceived that when the instructors offered students choices, they were making "things easy" for them. Sofia explained that she was "surprised" that the instructors in her online class offered students so many choices. She recalled that her teachers allowed students to decide whether they wanted to participate in class discussions or if they preferred to have their Zoom cameras on or off. When asked about her teacher's reaction to students who chose to keep their cameras off, Lucia stated,

> She . . . I don't know . . . she didn't say anything. Nobody said anything. I guess we were all acting like this was normal . . . having conversations with a black box. For me, the teacher has to pressure us to turn on our camera. If not, otherwise I mean, I don't think we do it.

Alma also commented on the "ridiculous amount of choices" and what she perceived as instructors' reluctance to pressure students in the United States:

> I understand this is a country of freedom but where I'm from, they don't ask you if you want to do something . . . they just tell you . . . too much freedom here . . . I need pressure. If I don't feel pressure, I say, "Okay, I got time. I can do it later."

Course Design. Several participants spoke about their experiences of adjusting to a virtual classroom design. Lucia described,

> It was weird . . . [you] see everyone's faces in this little boxes. Some people's faces look dark . . . maybe their rooms didn't have enough light or something. Other peoples just had these black boxes with their names on it . . . they didn't want to show their faces.

Maria recounted how "uncomfortable" she felt trying to engage with her peers, especially those who chose to keep their cameras off, due to her perception that conversations in online classrooms were "not private." Maria noted, "I can't just talk quiet to [the] person next to me . . . ask questions . . . get to know her."

In addition to Maria's perceived privacy concerns, Rosa expressed frustration about the "numerous number of distractions" that can arise in online classrooms. Rosa noted that in one class, a student was banging pans together as she made dinner without muting her audio:

> I understand . . . peoples has dogs and kids at their home . . . and everything else . . . I get that . . . but why they don't just keep their sound off. The teacher keep stopping the class and saying, "Please, turn off your sound. Please, turn off your sound." So crazy.

When the researcher asked Sofia to describe the curriculum for her online courses, Sofia stated the teacher generally delivered lessons around current events and topics related to their interests and goals using a PowerPoint presentation. Maria gave an example of how the teacher planned one class around the vocabulary she would need to learn to obtain a driver's license:

> The teacher give words like "brake" and all these things . . . so many words to know. We was all looking up the English word for "el volante," Spanish for steering wheel. I don't thinks other peoples was trying to get [a] license but they still learned all this words.

The researcher asked Lucia if the teacher designated class time for students to practice writing. Lucia explained:

> Oh my gosh . . . nobody want to show all the other peoples their writing . . . even if the teacher [would] not say who did this writing. For example . . . I want to get better with learning [how] to be a teacher. The teacher will email this stories about education and say, "Lucia write your opinion [about] this story." So . . . writing was a private thing . . . just [between] teacher and student.

Several participants recounted that the weekly PowerPoint presentations were an engaging and effective tool for delivering the online curriculum. Lucia noted that instead of just "hearing a word," she could also "see how the word is spelled." Sofia said the colorful images and engaging videos that were highlighted on the PowerPoint slides helped her "pay attention" in class after a long day at work. Celia revealed that the PowerPoint presentations enhanced her learning:

> If I get confuse . . . the teacher can use the marker [annotation tool] to answer my question . . . I think this help everyone sometimes . . . better than a textbook. The other good point . . . she can send [email] us the whole thing [weekly PowerPoint] and all her notes . . . to review after class . . . so we can practice.

Theme 3: Benefits of Online Learning for Adult English Language Learners

In this study, when participants discussed the benefits of online learning, they described their gratitude in the context of being able to continue their English literacy courses during a global pandemic. Several participants related how they were isolated and worried about their friends and family in their native countries. Lucia, Sofia, and Rosa recounted spending long hours caring for small children and the relief they experienced seeing other adults in the evenings during their online classes. Rosa disclosed that she did not have many friends or "great English" so her online classes were

critical for her mental well-being. Maria appreciated that she no longer had to spend her limited resources on transportation costs. Celia was thankful that when she came home tired after work and had “no energy,” she could still participate in her online classes without using her camera. Several participants revealed that they also became more confident in their computer skills as a result of their online classes.

Adult Learner-Related Benefits. Alma reported that she was relieved to see “smiling faces” and was “not as bored as she think.” Rosa said she was “proud” that she overcame her misconceptions about online learning and planned to continue taking online classes post-pandemic. Rosa noted, “I have no car so it’s better for me.” Celia stated that though initially she “didn’t know if I could take these online classes,” after some time she “got confidence.” Sofia conceded that she now knew she could take online classes “even though it’s not my favorite, when I don’t have another choice.”

Several participants shared how they benefitted from participating in online learning during the pandemic. Celia stated her online classes were a “perfect distraction” from the anxiety and fatigue she was experiencing:

> Every day I put on a mask, a glove, everything to go to work. I was scared but I had to [leave] my home. But after work . . . at night during class . . . it was like. I disconnect for [from] everything and just pay attention to the class. I didn’t thinks about anything else. I feel less worry.

Lucia exclaimed that online learning kept “her sanity” during a “horrible time.” Lucia shared that her entire family was stricken with COVID and her grandmother, who had been admitted to the hospital, was not expected to survive. Maria disclosed that her

best friend's husband had passed away, leaving behind four young children. In the midst of these tragedies, several participants admitted feeling utterly alone. Rosa explained,

> I had few friends and no family . . . I mean . . . can you think of this . . . being in a new place . . . you can't speak English real good . . . and also you worry . . . if I sick . . . who [is going] watch my childrens? This [was] life for us when we take those [online] classes. So, yes . . . I'd say the classes was a good thing.

When the researcher asked the participants to select one word to describe their experiences of online learning during the pandemic, participants overwhelmingly chose the word "gratitude." Alma appreciated the convenience of online learning and said she "came to class in her pajamas" and did not have to "put gas in her car." Maria shared that she "didn't have to take two buses no more to go to class." Other participants described how they were grateful that their online classes allowed them to continue learning. Lucia reasoned, "Even if I was stuck here [at home], I was able to keep learning and every day I say, 'I won't give up. I keep going. I can reach my goals.'"

Theme 4: Adult English Language Learners' Motivations for Persistence in Online Learning During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Participants described being guided by strong goals that ultimately motivated them to persist in online learning—despite numerous challenges—during the pandemic. Participants who were parents related that one of their primary concerns was removing their children from difficult environments where their children may not have had a promising future. Participants shared that they were worried about their children becoming involved with gangs and dropping out of school. Other participants shared that they were motivated by career goals such as starting a business or being admitted to

college. Celia disclosed that she was eager to earn more money so she could better support her mother who was not physically well and was still living in her native country. Yet other participants recounted that their motivations for persistence derived more from personal values and goals. Maria described the discomfort she experienced related to not being able to speak with her son's friends and Celia shared that she wanted to be able to understand her boss and people in her community. Both women explained that people may view them as "not smart" if they were not proficient in English.

Personal-Related Motivations for Persistence. During the course of the interviews, Rosa disclosed that she sacrificed her 20-year career as a supervisor in a job she loved working for a multinational company and found work as a children's nanny for her "son's education and future." Rosa exclaimed, "The situation is dangerous in my country . . . shootings . . . violence. No jobs. Many childrens don't go to school no more. Schools [are] empty. No future there . . . only bad." Alma also related that she chose to delay and perhaps forego her medical career to escape the "political turmoil" that was happening in her native country for the sake of her children. Alma stated, "We want our children [to] get away from all that bad things." Although Maria did not escape political turmoil in her country, she recalled that she was also motivated to persist in online learning, to some extent, because of her son. Maria revealed that she wanted to inspire her son to "make a different life." She shared that as she worked long nights cleaning office buildings, she hoped her son would pursue higher education and a better paying job. Maria recalled how she repeatedly told her son, "You need to go to college because it's hard to work [at night]."

Aside from participants' concerns about their children's ability to create a better future for themselves, other participants recounted that their motivations were based more on career goals. Celia stated that her "mission in life" was to go to college and explore business opportunities and perhaps even open a coffee shop one day. Lucia and Sofia discussed how they were willing to sacrifice long hours caring for small children, with very little pay, to become more proficient in English and perhaps even college professors one day. Although Sofia and Lucia had already obtained master's degrees in education from their native countries, they were now pursuing advanced degrees from a university in the United States. Lucia explained that having this degree would "look good" on her resume.

Last, participants spoke about their strong motivations for persistence in online learning being based on their personal values and desire to participate more fully in society with coworkers and friends. Celia declared, "The country speak English, so it's my responsibility to learn this language." Maria recounted how she wanted to learn English just to have the ability to communicate with her son's friends. Maria described how she was worried her son's friends would "laugh at her" and disclosed, "They may say, 'So your mother don't speak English. She don't understand too good.'" Celia remembered a time when she first started her job packing medical supplies in a warehouse and her boss spoke to her: "I didn't understand anything what [that] he was talking about. He looked at me like, 'duh?'"

Maria recalled that while growing up in a poor town, her parents told her to "work hard because she need[s] to eat." Maria disclosed that she always wanted to go to school

and perhaps even be a teacher. Maria stated she had always believed in the transformative power of education.

Summary

The chapter presented the results of the analysis of interview transcripts from this hermeneutical phenomenological study. This chapter provided evidence of four themes found through a close reading of the data that answered two research questions:

- Research Question 1: What are adult English language learners' experiences of online learning during the pandemic?
- Research Question 2: What are adult English language learners' motivations for persistence in online learning during the pandemic?

In the first research question, themes related to the challenges of online learning, the needs of adult English language learners in online learning, and the benefits of online learning for adult English language learners were associated with participants' experiences of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants reported feeling frustrated when discussing the abrupt shift to online learning. They seemed to resist the notion of online learning based not on previous experience or low computer self-efficacy beliefs, but on the negative perceptions they had of learning English online. A collective sense of frustration also emerged when participants described their instructors' strategies and teaching philosophies. Although the participants appreciated the curriculum used for their courses, noting that teachers' generally based the lessons on current events and topics of interest using engaging PowerPoint presentations, they said that the instructors may have underestimated their ability to handle criticism. Participants related how the instructors would praise them using remarks such as "good job," which

they perceived was more aligned with parental speech directed at children, for their efforts in class. The participants were also dissatisfied by what they perceived as their instructors' reluctance to pressure students and provide clear course guidelines. Participants attributed their instructors' lack of constructive feedback and inclination to provide less structure in the course as being a "typical American" approach to education. Although participants voiced their appreciation for the benefits of online learning during the pandemic, noting they were able to continue learning English and engage with other adult learners, many participants stated they would only take online classes again if there were no other option available.

In the second research question, the most prominent theme that emerged was related to participants' unwavering commitment to their goals. Though participants' goals varied from supporting their children, to building their careers and starting businesses, to personal goals such as boosting their self-esteem and communicating in English with those around them, their unyielding determination was evident throughout their discussions in the interviews. Of the six participants, not a single participant, during any of the multiple interviews, discussed withdrawing from their online classes during the pandemic. Alma stated that from that first day, she vowed to "work hard" and "never miss a single class." Participants acknowledged that although this was a very difficult time and their families were thousands of miles away, they would remain focused on their goal of becoming proficient in English.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study was to research adult English language learners' experiences of online learning and motivations for persistence during the COVID-19 pandemic through the lens of self-determination theory. The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

- Research Question 1: What are adult English language learners' experiences of online learning during the pandemic?
- Research Question 2: What are adult English language learners' motivations for persistence in online learning during the pandemic?

This chapter begins with an introduction followed by a discussion that revisits the problem of adult English language learners participating in online learning. The findings of this study are then presented in the context of the research questions. Next, the results of the study are discussed in relation to the theoretical framework. The chapter then proceeds with a discussion of the implications of the study. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

Revisiting the Problem

About 43 million adults ages 16 through 65 years living in the United States have low English literacy skills (OECD, 2013). As defined by the PIAAC, low literacy skills consist of performing at or below Level 1, out of five levels, in English proficiency. Of those adults with low literacy skills, non-U.S. born Hispanic adults comprise 34% or one-quarter of the population (OECD, 2013). According to data from the Pew Research Center, projections indicate the Hispanic population will rise from 14% in 2005 to 29% in 2050 (Passel & Cohn, 2008). In order for immigrants to fully integrate into society,

they must be proficient in English. With the increased demand for English language instruction (ProLiteracy, 2021), online learning has been increasingly offered to adult learners. Though this mode of delivery may be considered more convenient, researchers say adults with low English literacy skills may not persist when faced with challenges in online learning and experience difficulties "they may have never encountered before in traditional learning environments" (Tsai, 2009, p. 34). At the onset of the pandemic, adult learners no longer had the option of choosing between traditional, in-person learning and online learning. Simpson-Baird et al. (2020) explained these learners suddenly found themselves shifting to virtual learning while simultaneously navigating elevated concerns about their "employment, physical health and housing" (p. 1). With research showing there are increased attrition rates in online learning for adults in higher education (Nagel, 2009), it is critical to examine the experiences and motivations for persistence of adult English language learners who are participating in online learning in nonacademic contexts to understand whether fostering learners' basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness promotes motivation and, ultimately, retention in online formats.

Discussion of the Research Findings

The researcher used a phenomenological approach to examine adult English language learners' lived experiences of online learning and motivations for persistence. The phenomenological approach was an appropriate method for this study as the researcher sought to gain a deeper understanding of participants' lived experiences and the meaning they made from those experiences from their subjective point of view (Schutz, 1967). The criteria for this study included being 18 years or older and

participating in an online course for about 6 months during the pandemic. Six female participants were recruited from an adult literacy program located in the Northeastern United States. There were no male participants selected for this research as none of the male adult English language learners who attended the recruitment interview met the criteria for selection. In addition, participants were required to have access to a computer and be enrolled in Level 4, or the literacy program's highest level. Last, participants' native language had to be Spanish. Once the sample was recruited, semi-structured interviews were conducted that followed Seidman's (2006) three-interview series to explore the meaning of participants' experiences in the context of their lives. After the researcher collected the data, she crafted participant profiles and organized excerpts into categories. The researcher then searched for connecting patterns or threads among the categories for themes. Four significant themes emerged from the six categories:

- Theme 1: Challenges of online learning for adult English language learners
- Theme 2: Needs of adult English language learners in online learning
- Theme 3: Benefits of online learning for adult English language learners
- Theme 4: Adult English language learners' motivations for persistence in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic

Seidman (2006) explained that after researchers uncover significant themes in the data, they must reflect on those findings to answer the research questions.

Findings in Relation to the Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guided this study was self-determination theory, which indicates that if environmental conditions support an individual's need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, the individual's intrinsic motivation will be

promoted (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). Research shows individuals who are intrinsically motivated undertake learning for inherent satisfaction, become actively engaged, and persist when faced with challenges (Ryan & Deci, 2000b).

Autonomy

According to Ryan and Deci (2017), the first basic need is for autonomy, which refers to behavior that is volitional and self-endorsed. However, only some actions are autonomous, as “others are regulated by external forces or by relatively nonintegrated aspects of one’s personality” (p. 11).

Research on autonomy within learning contexts shows offering students choices supports the need for autonomy (Patall et al., 2008). As described in the literature review, Knowles et al.’s (1998) second principle of andragogy, the learner’s self-concept, indicates “adults have a self-concept of being responsible for their own decisions, for their own lives” (p. 65). Along with Knowles et al.’s (1998) second principle of andragogy, Keller’s (1987) ARCS model of motivational design indicates that by allowing learners to choose their learning methods, they will have control over their learning process and, as a result, will gain a sense of independence.

However, findings from this study showed the participants objected when their instructors offered what they perceived as a “ridiculous amount of choices” regarding camera use and homework assignments. Alma exclaimed, “Where I’m from, they don’t ask if you want to do something . . . they just tell you.” One explanation for participants’ negative reactions to instructors offering what they perceived as too many choices may be their lack of experience with student-centered learning. Crumly et al. (2014) explained that student-centered learning shifts the power from the teacher to the student, and thus

allows the student to choose what they will learn and how they will assess their learning. Shank and Terrill (1995) stated that because adult learners' experiences are filtered through language and culture, they may resist a student-centered classroom, challenging the teacher, or taking charge of their own learning. Markus and Kitayama (1991) claimed the notion of autonomy may be a distinctly Western perspective and may not be compatible with collectivist cultures. Cherry (2022) described collectivist cultures as emphasizing the needs and goals of a group, whereas individualistic cultures emphasize an individual's needs and well-being. Countries such as China and Latin America are considered more collectivist, whereas highly individualist cultures include the United States and other Western countries. Because participants in this study were educated in schools, including universities, located in Latin America, they were more accustomed to a collectivist culture. Therefore, they may have been more reluctant to adapt to a student-centered, individualistic educational approach (Shank & Terrill, 1995).

Competence

Ryan and Deci (2000a) defined competence as individuals' basic need to feel capable or effective in their environment and stated it is widely regarded as core element in motivated actions (Bandura, 1977; Deci, 1975). Ryan and Deci (2017) explained that competence "wanes in contexts in which challenges are too difficult, or negative feedback is pervasive" (p. 11). Hattie and Timperley (2007) defined feedback as "information provided by an agent regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding" (p. 81). Hattie and Timperley explained that though feedback in the form of praise such as "good job" does "express positive evaluations about the student, it

contains little task-related information" (p. 100). Sadler (1989) stated feedback should "provide information specifically related to the task" (p. 82).

The literature review highlighted Keller's (1987) ARCS model's four components: attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction. According to Keller's model, there is a direct relation between motivation and the last component, satisfaction. Keller's model indicates that for an individual to achieve satisfaction, external motivators such as praise or positive feedback are essential. Findings from this study showed participants were frustrated based on what they perceived as the instructor's lack of constructive feedback. As Maria stated in her interview,

> The teacher . . . I want her to help me if I need [to] it. I want her to say, 'Maria, maybe this word works better?' I don't want her to say something [is] good . . . when I know something [is] not good.

Celia also described her frustration with the instructor's feedback and said,

> I think she kind with me . . . but yes . . . I would like her to correct my English more times. No, really . . . I glad she's nice . . . but I need to learn too.

The literature review also highlighted self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977), which indicates self-efficacy beliefs derive from four principle sources: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological and affective states. Of these four principle sources, the least influential source is verbal persuasion. Although Bandura (1977) considered verbal persuasion to be the least influential source, Redmond (2010) explained that verbal persuasion is widely used because of its ease and availability. Brooks (2011) confirmed that verbal persuasion in the form of praise is commonly used by adult literacy instructors. Brooks stated instructors "seem to have it as an article of

faith that they must first boost learners' self-confidence before improvement in basic skills can occur" (p. 188). In Alma's view, boosting learners' confidence through praise such as "you did great" is a "typical American" attribute. Alma explained, "American people is very kind . . . even though you don't [aren't] really good at something, they say, 'yeah, you did great.'" Alma declared that when she wanted feedback to improve her English, she asked her children because "they don't care" about her feelings. Alma shared that her children told her, "Mom, it's not good. Your pronunciation is terrible."

N. Cao and Chen (2017) emphasized that constructive feedback is even more essential for adult English language learners who are participating in online learning. These researchers explained that the lack of face-to-face interaction in online learning may hinder English language learners who rely on gestures, or any variety of movements of hands and arms, for second language acquisition. Research on online learning for adults in higher education consistently shows that ineffective instructor feedback is a critical factor in demotivating students and even causing them to withdraw from online coursework (Mahoney, 2009).

Relatedness

The last of the basic needs specified within self-determination theory is relatedness, which refers to individuals' sense of belonging and feelings of being significant and contributing members of a social group (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). Ryan and Deci (2000a) explained that individuals experience a sense of relatedness when they feel cared for and connected to others. Data from this study revealed participants appreciated their instructors' efforts in promoting a virtual class community. Lucia gave an example of how her instructor would post news-related articles that she perceived were interesting

for the class and that “everyone got excited. Everyone started talking . . . the quiet people started talking . . . we became friends talking like that.” In addition to posting a general news-related topic for the class to discuss, Sofia described how the instructor would post images of landmarks from students’ native countries on their shared PowerPoint presentations and ask each student to share their culture by giving an oral presentation about this landmark. Sofia recalled that when it was her turn to give her oral presentation, she felt “like the teacher . . . smart . . . Everyone listen to me . . . and ask questions.”

Outside of their online class, Rosa noted how the teacher fostered students’ sense of belonging and engagement in virtual classroom by forming a WhatsApp group chat where they could improve their literacy skills in a less formal setting. Rosa disclosed, “You know . . . we was alone in a bad pandemic so having the group chat . . . yes, it help us make friends and practice English.”

The literature review described components of Keller’s (1987) ARCS model of motivation: attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction. In the second component, relevance, Keller emphasized that instruction should be designed to enhance attention by arousing student interest and should relate to students’ experiences. In Knowles’s (1970) six assumptions about the adult learner, one of the six assumptions, orientation to learning, indicates learning must have relevance to real-life tasks. Gay (2002) explained that when “skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal” (p. 106) and students are more interactive and engaged. Kohn and Vajda (1975) contended that peer interaction is especially critical for ESL students because it allows them to “manipulate

and modify language to understand each other" (p. 379) and acquire language more naturally.

Though the findings from this study revealed that participants' basic need for relatedness was generally met and participants overwhelmingly confirmed that they "appreciated the support of their peers," Rosa noted "it's better when we help each other . . . but I did not take classes to make friends." Sofia conceded that though she "did have friends in class . . . but it's not that . . . I mean, I'm following my dreams. I'm reaching my goals." Maria revealed that because she perceived that she was not "as smart" as her classmates, she found that having other students in the class could be demotivating. Maria disclosed that she went to class only "for the teacher." Rosa provided one explanation for why her motivation to persist in online coursework was not ultimately influenced by her classmates, stating, "At my age . . . we has children at home . . . busy lives . . . busy schedules, right?"

Implications

Examining adult English language learners' lived experiences of online learning and motivations for persistence during the pandemic through the lens of self-determination theory has critical implications for stakeholders invested in adult literacy education. Most notably, when volunteer educators undergo training in preparation for their instructional roles, strategies should be incorporated in the training for meeting adult learners' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. However, when incorporating these strategies, stakeholders should note that volunteer educators must account for learners' unique cultural differences, including backgrounds, attitudes, and goals. For example, with respect to the basic need for autonomy, participants voiced their

frustrations when they perceived they were offered “too many choices.” Filatova (2015) explained that choice is more of a Western cultural construction that does not carry the same universal meaning in collectivist societies like Latin America. In the example of self-determination theory’s second basic psychological need of competence, though data from this study confirmed previous research that showed instructor feedback is critical for improving student performance, participants expressed dissatisfaction with what they perceived as the instructor’s well-intended but nevertheless misguided “American” approach to providing praise rather than constructive feedback. As for self-determination’s theory’s final need, relatedness, although Ryan and Deci (2017) claimed that meeting individuals’ needs for relatedness is critical “for psychological interest, development, and wellness to be sustained” (p. 10), participants stated that though they appreciated their peers, and Lucia said, it was a “plus for sure” to engage with peers in her online class, they all confirmed that they attended class to learn from the teacher. In fact, one participant even stated her peers could be a distraction in their virtual classroom. Thus, given the findings from this study, it is reasonable to infer that learners’ psychological needs for autonomy and relatedness were met to varying degrees, whereas their psychological need for competence was not adequately met.

To answer the second research question regarding adult English language learners’ motivations for persistence during the pandemic, it is necessary to consider the recurring themes throughout the data. Beginning with Interview One, Focused Life History of the participant, it is worth noting that not all participants had extensive backgrounds in formal education or parents with strong beliefs in education, every participant described the unimaginable sacrifices they endured—for themselves and their

children—to obtain English literacy skills and better job opportunities in the United States. Eccles and Wigfield (2002) stated persistence can explained by the extent to which individuals value an activity. The critical implication for stakeholders invested in adult literacy education is to understand and acquire detailed information about learners' backgrounds and motivations for enrolling in coursework so this information can be woven into curriculum designs and class instruction.

Regarding Interview Two, Details of the Experience, participants described a variety of personal goals and their "expectancy of success" for reaching those goals (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). For example, one participant described learning English to pass her medical exams in the United States and another participant described learning English so she could converse with her son's friends who may otherwise assume she was not smart. Again, it is worth noting that none of the participants expressed concerns or "doubted their ability" when faced with the obstacle of participating in online learning or reaching their goals (Bandura, 1977). Therefore, these learners are assumed to have higher self-efficacy beliefs. According to Bandura (1977), individuals with high self-efficacy beliefs will see challenging tasks as something that can be mastered, and they will expend more effort and persist longer when they encounter difficulties. Though participants' goals varied—in terms of passing medical exams or conversing in English with their children's friends—every participant described how they were driven by external rewards. Ryan and Deci (2000a) explained that intrinsic motivation is found to decrease with age when the "freedom to be intrinsically motivated becomes curtailed by social demands and roles that require individuals to assume responsibility for non-intrinsically interesting tasks" (p. 60). Based on this research, suggestions for

implementing self-determination theory with adult English language learners are shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Implementing Self-Determination Theory

Definition	Applying self-determination theory	Data from the interviews
Autonomy: Behaviors are self-endorsed or congruent with one's authentic interests. (Not the same as independence.)	Instructor fosters learner involvement in all stages of learning, including setting goals and determining content. (Not the same as independence.) Instructor provides learners with course outline, demands, and objectives.	"Too many choices." "I understand this is a country of freedom, but where I'm from, they don't ask if you want to do something."
Competence: Ability to operate effectively and achieve desired outcomes.	Instructor provides constructive feedback (not praise) to develop learner competence.	"The teacher . . . I want her to help me if I need it. I want her to say, 'Maybe this would work better?'" "I would like her to correct my English more times." "Maybe she . . . think I get hurt feelings?"
Relatedness: Sense of belonging and feeling significant among others.	Instructor promotes group discussions on topics that are relevant to them. Instructor creates a chat group outside of class.	"Everyone got excited. Everyone started talking . . . the quiet people started talking." "It's better when we help each other."

Limitations

This study involved examining adult English language learners' lived experiences of online learning and motivations for persistence during the pandemic. Among the limitations of this study include that it was not conducted in participants' native language. Although the researcher had enlisted a translator for English language support, there was

a possibility that a few of the participants may not have fully understood the interview questions. Another limitation was that the interviews were conducted using a video-conferencing platform. It is likely that the researcher would have developed a stronger rapport and better understanding of participants' experiences in online learning if the interviews had been conducted face-to-face. In addition, all the participants in the study were female with varying educational backgrounds and degrees of English language proficiency. There were no male participants selected for this research as none of the male adult English language learners who attended the recruitment interview met the criteria for participation in the research. Other limitations include that participants were selected from Level 4, or the literacy program's highest level. Participants from Levels 1–3, who presumably have less English proficiency, may have lived experiences of online learning and motivations for persistence that differ greatly from those of participants in Level 4.

Additionally, it should be noted that participants in Level 4 only had three instructors conducting online classes during the pandemic. Although the instructors had volunteered for the literacy program for 3 to 5 years, none of the instructors had previous experience teaching online classes. Though one instructor was a retired teacher with a master's degree in education, the other two instructors had bachelor's degrees in history and sociology and worked as office administrators.

Future Research

Ziegler et al. (2009) explained that about 60% of adult educators are volunteers. Though leaders in the field of adult literacy education have relied on volunteers for decades to supplement limited funding—and these volunteers should be commended for

their service—there is concern that volunteer educators "may lack adequate knowledge of effective reading instruction practices" and are not prepared to teach adult learners (Bell et al., 2004, p. 544). Belzer (2006) explained,

> A few short hours of tutor training is simply inadequate to the task of getting novices to adopt the advocated instructional strategies . . . yet, the time and commitment of volunteers and the resources of programs makes offering longer training unrealistic. (p. 571)

With the sudden shift to online learning, most teachers, including volunteer tutors, may not have online teaching experience or received relevant training, and therefore may not deliver effective instruction (Chiu, 2020).

Based on this study, future research should be conducted that includes male participants. Campbell (1988) explained that gender plays a critical role in individuals' perceptions of their environment. This research should focus on examining strategies that meet adult English language learners' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Though results of the current study (see Table 7) provide general guidelines for applying self-determination theory to adult English language learners in a virtual setting, specific strategies that consider learners' unique cultural filters require further research. For example, with respect to learners' basic need for autonomy, a qualitative study could be conducted to explore the benefits of having adult educators include adult English language learners' perspectives when crafting course content to ensure the course content is more aligned with learners' unique cultures, authentic interests, and goals. With respect to learners' basic need for competence, another qualitative study could be conducted to explore strategies for delivering effective feedback. Because an adult English language

learner often has a well-developed sense of self in their native culture, Crandall and Peyton (1993) explained it is likely that they may become confused, or even hostile, at the prospect of adapting to a new culture, which includes learning a new language. Based on findings from this research, participants were particularly frustrated by the notion of adapting to what they perceived as the "American" approach to providing feedback. By using a qualitative approach for this study, researchers could conduct semi-structured interviews, which would allow them to use follow-up probes (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019), to better understand how adult English language learners' educational backgrounds may inform their perspectives on how educators should deliver feedback. As for the last component in self-determination theory, relatedness, a study could be conducted to explore strategies that promote adult English language learners' sense of belonging in a virtual classroom. For example, a qualitative study could be conducted to examine whether educators who offer virtual office hours before or after class promote a sense of relatedness and belonging that enhances motivation in online learning. The strength of qualitative research is that it provides a rich and complex understanding of a research problem (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Because there is limited research on adult English language learners' experiences of online learning, a qualitative design would be appropriate because it would enable researchers to develop insights and investigate problems that are not clearly understood or defined (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Future research on adult English language learners' experiences of online learning should also include mixed-method designs. Creswell (2014) explained that mixed-methods designs can increase confidence in findings by providing more evidence than a single approach. Green and Caracelli (1997) stated quantitative and qualitative methods

complement each other and take advantage of the strengths of each method. For the purposes of examining adult English language learners' experiences of online learning, the sequential explanatory design would be an appropriate design choice. In the first phase of this design, the researcher could use a quantitative strand such as a survey to collect data (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Quantitative data could be collected, for example, on participants' perceptions of effective feedback. Following the quantitative strand, the researcher could collect qualitative data through interviews to explain the results garnered from the quantitative strand (Creswell, & Miller 2000). For example, the researcher could conduct semi-structured interviews, which is a data collection method with a predetermined framework, to further explore participants' experiences of receiving feedback in a virtual setting.

The goal of using the sequential explanatory design is for the qualitative strand to support the statistical data. The advantage of using a sequential explanatory design is that it would allow researchers to collect quantitative data in the first phase with an increased number of adult English language learners. Though Creswell (2018) estimated that between 10 and 50 participants is sufficient to conduct qualitative research, Fowler and Lapp (2019) estimated the minimum sample size for quantitative research is about 100 participants. Another advantage of a sequential explanatory design is that researchers could select participants from the quantitative strand who have adequate English language proficiency and would be willing to participate in qualitative research. Based on the findings from the current study, adult English language learners balance multiple responsibilities, including work and family obligations. Therefore, researchers seeking to

recruit participants who could manage those responsibilities while participating in research for an extended period of time will be presented with a significant challenge.

Summary

The researcher in this study used a hermeneutical approach to examine adult English language learners' lived experiences of online learning and motivations for persistence through the lens of self-determination theory during the COVID-19 pandemic. The abrupt transition to online learning during the pandemic provided a unique opportunity for researchers to examine the potential of learning online. It also highlighted its "key limitations" (OECD, 2020, p. 1). Quesada-Pallarès et al. (2019) noted that to overcome the challenges of independent, online learning, students must be highly motivated. Research has shown motivation is a component of persistence and is considered a critical factor in success in online learning environments (Artino, 2008, p. 260). With the trend moving toward online learning (OECD, 2013) and research indicating there are even higher attrition rates in online programs compared to traditional, in-person coursework (Heyman, 2010), it is critical to specifically examine adult English language learners' experiences of online learning.

Adult English language learners have a distinct set of needs that differ from the needs of other populations. They do not have the same vocabulary knowledge as native speakers (Eskey, 2002) and may rely more on nonverbal cues like gestures as a tool to convey meaning (N. Cao & Chen, 2017). In addition, adult literacy learners may not have advanced literacy skills in any language or may have advanced literacy skills in a nonalphabetic system like Chinese (Burt et al., 2003). Other considerations include that adult English learners' cultural differences may impede oral and written comprehension

(Burt et al., 2003). Given the dynamic interplay of all these factors, Ryan and Deci (2017) stated it is critical to evaluate adult learners' unique psychological needs and backgrounds when designing learning environments.

APPENDIX A LETTER OF INTENT

Dear [Name],

I am a graduate student in St. John's Doctor of Education program. I am currently in the early stages of my dissertation work. The qualitative study that I am doing investigates adult English language learners' experiences in online learning. Specifically, I am examining adult learner motivation and persistence during the pandemic through the lens of Self-determination theory to explore how meeting learners' psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness may promote motivation. I have identified your center as a potential research site because it has a large percentage of adult English language learners who participate in online learning. I respectfully ask if you would email adult learners, enrolled in level four, who have participated in online learning for about six months during the pandemic to determine their interest in participating in this study? In addition, I would appreciate if your email could be directed to adult learners whose native language is Spanish. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to ensure the safety of all participants, this study will be conducted virtually. Please advise adult learners that the interviews will be recorded and they are free to withdraw from the study at any time. If you have questions about this study, please contact me:
Patricia.Searby18@my.stjohns.edu
Sincerely,

Patricia Searby

APPENDIX B PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY

Dear Patricia,

Thank you for considering our literacy center as the site for your research. As you may know, navigating online learning during the pandemic has been particularly challenging for the adult English language learner population. Qualitative research on motivation and persistence would be especially beneficial for all of us who work tirelessly to understand how we can better serve our adult learners taking online classes. Please feel free to let us know how we can support you throughout your study. We will email our adult native Spanish speakers, enrolled in level 4, who have participated in online learning during the pandemic to briefly describe your study. We will suggest that they contact you directly if they would like to participate in the study or if they would like additional information about your study.

Sincerely,

Senior Program Director

APPENDIX C LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear Students,

Patricia is looking for your help with research that she is doing for her school. She would like to ask some students in our level four classes about their experiences with online learning during the pandemic. You do not have to answer any question that may make you uncomfortable. Patricia will conduct these interviews virtually. She wants to make sure that all of you are safe and following COVID-19 rules. These interviews will be recorded. You do not have to participate if you do not want to participate. Even if you decide to participate and later change your mind, you may stop at any time. You do not have to explain why you chose to stop or leave the research study. If you are interested in learning more about the study, or you want to participate in the study, please email Patricia. Here is Patricia's email address: PatriciaSearby18@my.stjohns.edu
Senior Program Director

APPENDIX D SCHEDULING PARTICIPANTS FOR RECRUITMENT INTERVIEW

Dear Students,

The director of your literacy program has given me permission to contact you about participating in my research study. The purpose of the study is to examine adult learner motivation in online learning during the pandemic. If you are interested in participating in the study or you would like to learn more about the study, please email me a time and date that you would be available for an interview. After I receive your requested time and date, I will send you a link to invite you to a brief virtual meeting using St. John's Webex account. I am using St. John's Webex account to help safeguard your personal information as well as our meeting's content. You do not need a Webex account to join our meeting. You just need an invitation that will provide you with the information you need to join the meeting. If I am unable to meet you at your requested time and date, I will suggest other options. Please be aware that a translator will attend the meeting if you would like English language support. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me: Patricia.Searby18@my.stjohns.edu

Estimados estudiantes,

El director de su programa de alfabetización me ha dado permiso para comunicarme con usted acerca de su participación en mi estudio de investigación. El propósito del estudio es examinar la motivación de los estudiantes adultos en el aprendizaje en línea durante la pandemia. Si está interesado en participar en el estudio o desea obtener más información sobre el estudio, envíeme un correo electrónico con la hora y la fecha en que estaría disponible para una entrevista. Después de recibir la hora y la fecha solicitadas, le enviaré un enlace para invitarlo a una breve reunión virtual utilizando la cuenta de Webex de St. John. Estoy utilizando la cuenta de Webex de St. John para ayudar a proteger su información personal, así como el contenido de nuestra reunión. No necesita una cuenta de Webex para unirse a nuestra reunión. Solo necesita una invitación que le proporcione la información que necesita para unirse a la reunión. Si no puedo reunirme con usted en la fecha y hora solicitadas, le sugeriré otras opciones. Tenga en cuenta que un traductor asistirá a la reunión si desea apoyo en inglés. Si tiene alguna pregunta o inquietud, no dude en comunicarse conmigo: Patricia.Searby18@my.stjohns.edu

APPENDIX E RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Thank you for attending this interview. The director of your literacy program has given me permission to contact adult English language learners who may be interested in participating in this study. The purpose of this study is to examine adult English language learners' experiences of online learning and motivations for persistence in online learning during the pandemic. To participate in this study, I need to ask you some brief questions to understand if you meet the criteria, or qualifications, for this study. I want to remind you that during this interview, if you feel uncomfortable, you may choose to stop the interview or simply not answer questions that are uncomfortable. Do you have any questions or concerns? If you are ready, we will begin the interview.

Question 1: May I ask your name? Please be aware that if you agree to participate in this study, you will choose a pseudonym, or false name, to protect your identity. As the researcher for this study, I want to assure you that if you do choose to participate in this study, I will protect your privacy and you will remain anonymous, or unidentified, throughout the study. Because this interview is brief, a more detailed explanation of how your privacy will be protected will be given in future interviews and communications.

Question 2: What is your current class level at your adult literacy program?

Question 3: Can you please take as much time as you need to recall, or remember, how long you participated in online learning during the pandemic?

Question 4: What is your native language?

Question 5: Are you 18 years old or older?

Question 6: Do you have computer and internet access or availability? Please describe any concerns you may have about finding or borrowing a computer and obtaining internet access?

Question 7: Do you understand that future interviews will be recorded? Please be advised that although future interviews will be recorded, those recordings will be protected and will not be shared with anyone, other than the researcher. As I discussed earlier, because this interview is brief, a more detailed explanation of how your privacy will be protected will be given in future interviews and communications.

Question 8: Do you understand that participating in this study is your choice and you may stop at any time? Please be advised that if you do leave the study, you will not be asked to provide a reason or explanation and there will be no penalty.

Question 9: Do you understand that if you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to provide an address where I can mail the consent forms through regular mail using the U.S. Postal Service?

Question 10: Do you understand that if you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to sign the consent forms and mail them back to me using the stamped envelope that is provided?

Again, I want to sincerely thank you for attending this interview. If you have any questions or concerns about this study or you would like additional information about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me: Patricia.Searby18@my.stjohns.edu

Gracias por asistir a esta entrevista. El director de su programa de alfabetización me ha dado permiso para comunicarme con estudiantes adultos de inglés que puedan estar interesados en participar en este estudio. El propósito de este estudio es examinar las experiencias de aprendizaje en línea de los adultos que aprenden inglés y las motivaciones para la persistencia en el aprendizaje en línea durante la pandemia. Para participar en este estudio, necesito hacerle algunas preguntas breves para saber si cumple con los criterios o calificaciones para este estudio. Quiero recordarle que durante esta entrevista, si se siente incómodo, puede optar por detener la entrevista o simplemente no responder las preguntas que le resulten incómodas. ¿Tiene alguna pregunta o inquietud? Si está listo, comenzaremos la entrevista.

Pregunta 1: ¿Puedo preguntarle su nombre? Tenga en cuenta que si acepta participar en este estudio, elegirá un seudónimo o un nombre falso para proteger su identidad. Como investigador de este estudio, quiero asegurarle que si decide participar en este estudio, protegeré su privacidad y permanecerá en el anonimato o no identificado durante todo el estudio. Debido a que esta entrevista es breve, se brindará una explicación más detallada de cómo se protegerá su privacidad en futuras entrevistas y comunicaciones.

Pregunta 2: ¿Cuál es su nivel de clase actual en su programa de alfabetización de adultos?

Pregunta 3: Tómese todo el tiempo que necesite para recordar cuánto tiempo o cuántos meses participó en el aprendizaje en línea durante la pandemia.

Pregunta 4: ¿Cuál es su idioma nativo?

Pregunta 5: ¿Tiene 18 años o más?

Pregunta 6: ¿Tiene computadora y acceso a internet o disponibilidad? Describa cualquier inquietud que pueda tener sobre encontrar o pedir prestada una computadora y obtener acceso a Internet.

Pregunta 7: ¿Entiende que futuras entrevistas serán grabadas? Tenga en cuenta que aunque se grabarán las entrevistas futuras, esas grabaciones estarán protegidas y no se compartirán con nadie, excepto con el investigador. Como mencioné anteriormente, debido a que esta entrevista es breve, se brindará una explicación más detallada de cómo se protegerá su privacidad en futuras entrevistas y comunicaciones.

Pregunta 8: ¿Entiende que participar en este estudio es su elección y que puede dejarlo en cualquier momento? Tenga en cuenta que si abandona el estudio, no se le pedirá que proporcione una razón o explicación y no se le impondrá ninguna sanción.

Pregunta 9: ¿Entiende que si acepta participar en este estudio, se le pedirá que proporcione una dirección a la que pueda enviar los formularios de consentimiento por correo regular utilizando el Servicio Postal de EE. UU.?

Pregunta 10: ¿Qué es un formulario de consentimiento informado? El formulario de consentimiento informado es un acuerdo entre el investigador y el participante que describe las funciones y responsabilidades del investigador y el participante a lo largo del estudio de investigación. El investigador conservará una copia del formulario de consentimiento que será firmado por el investigador y el participante. El participante recibirá una copia de ese formulario de consentimiento.

Pregunta 11: ¿Entiende que si acepta participar en este estudio, se le pedirá que firme los formularios de consentimiento y me los envíe por correo usando el sobre con estampilla que se le proporcionó?

Nuevamente, quiero agradecerle sinceramente por asistir a esta entrevista de reclutamiento. Si tiene alguna pregunta o inquietud sobre este estudio o si desea obtener información adicional sobre el estudio, no dude en comunicarse conmigo:

Patricia.Searby18@my.stjohns.edu

APPENDIX F RESEARCHER'S INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Dear _______________,

I am a graduate student in St. John's doctoral program. I am studying adult English language learners' experiences in online learning and motivations for persistence during the pandemic. If you choose to participate in the study, we will meet for three interviews. Each interview will last up to 60 minutes. The purpose of the interviews is to talk about your experiences in online learning during the pandemic. The interviews, which will be organized around your schedule, will be recorded. The interviews will take place online and outside of your regular English language classes. You may choose a pseudonym (false name) to hide your identity in the study. You may withdraw from the study at any time and for no reason. If you are interested in participating in the study, or if you have any questions, please contact me at: PatriciaSearby18@my.stjohns.edu

Sincerely,

Patricia Searby

Estimado _______________,

Soy un estudiante graduado en el programa de doctorado de St. John. Estoy estudiando las experiencias de los estudiantes adultos de inglés en el aprendizaje en línea y las motivaciones para la persistencia durante la pandemia. Si elige participar en el estudio, nos reuniremos para tres entrevistas. Cada entrevista tendrá una duración máxima de 60 minutos. El propósito de las entrevistas es hablar sobre sus experiencias en el aprendizaje en línea durante la pandemia. Las entrevistas, que se organizarán en torno a su horario, serán grabadas. Las entrevistas se llevarán a cabo en línea y fuera de sus clases regulares de inglés. Puede elegir un seudónimo (nombre falso) para ocultar su identidad en el estudio. Puede retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento y sin motivo alguno. Si está interesado en participar en el estudio o si tiene alguna pregunta, comuníquese conmigo a: PatriciaSearby18@my.stjohns.edu

Sinceramente,

Patricia Searby

APPENDIX G INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Student Researcher: Patricia Searby, St. John's University

Title: Adult English Language Learners' Experiences of Online Learning and Motivations for Persistence During the Pandemic

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study: The researcher is inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you in more detail when you attend an informational meeting before the study begins. There will be a translator at the informational meeting if you would like English language support. If you are unable to attend the meeting, the researcher will organize another meeting that is more convenient for you. After all your questions are answered about the study, and if you still choose to participate, you may sign this form and return it to the researcher.

How will the Researcher Send this form? With your signed permission, the researcher will mail this form to you at the address you provide. The researcher will safeguard and protect all information disclosed to her, including your address. She will not share this information with anyone. Throughout the study, your information is password protected, encrypted, and stored on the researcher's computer. The choice of whether you want to participate, or you do not want to participate in this study, is entirely your decision.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study? You are being asked to participate in the study because you are an adult English language learner who has participated in online learning for six months or longer during the pandemic. For this study, it is important to find participants who meet these guidelines as the study will examine adult English language learners' experiences in online learning and their motivations for persistence in online learning.

Why is this research being done? With the rapid change to online learning during the pandemic, and many adult learners trying online learning for the first time, it is important to understand how educators can support and teach students in their online classrooms. As you all know, online classrooms are very different than in-person classrooms.

What will I be asked to do? If you decide to participate in this study, the researcher will interview you, or ask you questions, for three different interviews:

Interview 1: The first interview will ask you about your background and educational experiences before you started online learning.

Interview 2: The second interview will ask you about your experiences in online learning during the pandemic.

Interview 3: The third interview will ask you to reflect on the meaning of your online experiences.

Where will these interviews take place and how much time will it take? The three interviews will be recorded. The researcher will organize dates and times that work best for you. Each interview will take about up to 60 minutes.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to me? This study has few risks for you. One risk in this study is that the researcher has a background in research, which allows her to

control or guide the interviews. To lessen the researcher's control or power in the interviews, the researcher will be clear with you about the research topic and will answer any questions about the research. The researcher will also share her own background and explain her interest in the research. Another risk that could happen is that you may not be comfortable answering certain questions. To prevent this from happening, the researcher will remind you at the beginning of each interview that you always have the choice of not answering questions that make you uncomfortable, and that you may stop the interview at any time. The information from this research will only be seen by the researcher. The researcher will share the participant's interview with him or her after each interview and throughout the research process.

Will I benefit by being in this research? There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in the study. However, if you take part in this research, you may be helping other adult English language learners taking online classes by letting teachers, and other policy makers, know what motivates you to stay, or persist, in online classes long enough to improve your English literacy skills.

Who will see the information about me? Your interview will be private and only the researcher in the study will see information about you. No reports will use information that can directly identify you in any way. Additionally, your literacy program will not be identified and the researcher will use a pseudonym, or false name, of your choice. The recordings and transcripts will be labeled with your pseudonym, or false name, and will be kept on the researcher's personal computer.

What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research? There are no expected threats from this study. This study is based on information collected during the

interviews. Each participant's identity is private. He or she will only be identified by their pseudonym, or false name. If you are uncomfortable at any time, you may withdraw from the study.

Can I stop my participation in this study? Your participation in this research is your choice. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can choose not to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may quit or stop at any time. If you choose not to participate, or if you choose to quit, you will not lose any rights or benefits that you may have as a student.

Who can I contact if I have questions or problems? If you have any questions about this study, please contact Patricia Searby at her cell phone number (631) XXX-XXXX or PatriciaSearby18@my.stjohns.edu

Will I be paid for my participation? You will not be paid for participating in this study.

Is there anything else I need to know? You must be an adult (18 years or older) native Spanish speaker, who has completed at least six months of online learning during the pandemic. In addition, you must be enrolled, or have been enrolled in Level 4, or the highest level, with access to the internet, and a computer.

If you choose to participate in the study, please sign and print your name and return this document to the researcher in the stamped envelope that the researcher has provided.

I agree to take part in this research.

____

Signature of the participant — Date

____

Printed name of the participant — Date

____

Signature of Patricia Searby — Date

Estudiante Investigadora: Patricia Searby, St. John's University

Título: Adult English Language Learners' Lived Experiences of Online Learning and Motivations for Persistence During the Pandemic

Consentimiento informado para participar en un estudio de investigación: El investigador lo invita a participar en un estudio de investigación. Este formulario le informará sobre el estudio, pero el investigador se lo explicará con más detalle cuando asista a una reunión informativa sobre este formulario antes de que comience el estudio. Si no puede asistir a la reunión, el investigador organizará otra reunión que funcione mejor para su horario. Después de que se respondan todas sus preguntas sobre el estudio, y si aún así decide participar, puede firmar este formulario y devolvérselo al investigador en el sobre sellado que el investigador ya ha enviado por correo a su domicilio. La elección de si desea participar, o no desea participar en este estudio, es completamente su decisión.

¿Por qué se me pide que participe en este estudio de investigación? Se le pide que participe en el estudio porque es un estudiante adulto del idioma inglés que ha participado en el aprendizaje en línea durante seis meses o más durante la pandemia. Para este estudio, es importante encontrar participantes que cumplan con estas pautas, ya que el estudio examinará las experiencias de los estudiantes adultos del idioma inglés en el aprendizaje en línea y sus motivaciones para la persistencia en el aprendizaje en línea.

¿Por qué se está haciendo esta investigación? Con el rápido cambio al aprendizaje en línea durante la pandemia, y muchos estudiantes adultos que intentan el aprendizaje en línea por

primera vez, es importante comprender cómo los educadores pueden apoyar y enseñar a los estudiantes en sus aulas en línea.

Como todos ustedes saben, las aulas en línea son muy diferentes a las aulas en persona.

¿Qué se me pedirá que haga? Si decide participar en este estudio, el investigador lo entrevistará o le hará preguntas para tres entrevistas diferentes:

Entrevista 1: La primera entrevista le preguntará sobre sus antecedentes y experiencias educativas antes de comenzar el aprendizaje en línea.

Entrevista 2: La segunda entrevista le preguntará sobre sus experiencias en el aprendizaje en línea durante la pandemia.

Entrevista 3: La tercera entrevista te pedirá que reflexiones sobre el significado de tus experiencias en línea.

¿Dónde se llevarán a cabo estas entrevistas y cuánto tiempo tomará? Las tres entrevistas se grabarán. El investigador organizará las fechas y horas que mejor funcionen para usted. Cada entrevista durará hasta 60 minutos.

¿Habrá algún riesgo o incomodidad para mí? Este estudio tiene pocos riesgos para usted. Un riesgo en este estudio es que el investigador tenga experiencia en investigación, lo que le permite controlar o guiar las entrevistas. Para disminuir el control o el poder del investigador en las entrevistas, el investigador será claro con usted sobre el tema de investigación y responderá cualquier pregunta sobre la investigación. La investigadora también compartirá sus propios antecedentes y explicará su interés en la investigación.

Otro riesgo que podría suceder es que es posible que no se sienta cómodo respondiendo ciertas preguntas. Para evitar que esto suceda, el investigador le recordará al comienzo de cada entrevista que siempre tiene la opción de no
responder preguntas que lo hagan sentir incómodo, y que puede detener la entrevista en cualquier
momento. La información de esta investigación solo será vista por el investigador. El investigador compartirá la entrevista del participante con él o ella durante todo el proceso de investigación.

¿Me beneficiaré al estar en esta investigación? No habrá ningún beneficio directo para usted por participar en el estudio. Sin embargo, si participa en esta investigación, es posible que esté ayudando a otros estudiantes adultos del idioma inglés que toman clases en línea al permitir que los maestros y otros responsables políticos sepan qué lo motiva a permanecer, o persistir, en las clases en línea el tiempo suficiente para mejorar sus habilidades de alfabetización en inglés.

¿Quién verá la información sobre mí? Su entrevista será privada y solo el investigador del estudio verá información sobre usted. Ningún informe utilizará información que pueda identificarlo directamente de ninguna manera. Además, su programa de alfabetización no será identificado y el investigador usará un seudónimo, o nombre falso, de su elección. Las grabaciones y transcripciones se etiquetarán con su seudónimo o nombre falso y se guardarán en la computadora personal del investigador.

¿Qué pasará si sufro algún daño por esta investigación? No hay amenazas esperadas de este estudio. Este estudio se basa en la información recopilada durante las entrevistas.

La identidad de cada participante es privada. Solo se le identificará por su seudónimo o nombre falso. Si se siente incómodo en cualquier momento, puede retirarse del estudio.

¿Puedo dejar de participar en este estudio? Su participación en esta investigación es su elección. No tienes que participar si no quieres y puedes optar por no responder a ninguna pregunta. Si decide no participar, o si decide renunciar, no perderá ningún derecho o beneficio que pueda tener como estudiante.

¿A quién puedo contactar si tengo preguntas o problemas? Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre este estudio, comuníquese con Patricia Searby a su número de teléfono celular (631) XXX-XXXX PatriciaSearby18@my.stjohns.edu

¿Me pagarán por mi participación? No se le pagará por participar en este estudio.

¿Hay algo más que necesite saber? Debe ser un estudiante de inglés adulto (18 años o más), que haya completado al menos seis meses de aprendizaje en línea durante la pandemia. Además, debes estar inscrito, o haber estado inscrito en el Nivel 4, o el nivel más alto, con acceso a internet, y una computadora.

Si decide participar en el estudio, firme e imprima su nombre y devuelva este documento al investigador en el sobre sellado que el investigador ha proporcionado.

Acepto participar en esta investigación.

___

Firma del participante Fecha

___

Nombre impreso del participante Fecha

___

Firma de Patricia Searby Fecha

APPENDIX H INTERVIEW ONE — LIFE HISTORY OF THE PARTICIPANT

Thank you for participating in this study. I want to remind you that during the interview, if there is ever a time that you feel uncomfortable, you may opt to stop the interview or simply not answer the questions that are uncomfortable.

Do you have any questions or concerns?

In order to collect accurate data from you, may I record our session? If yes, I will begin the recording.

Thank you for allowing me to interview you for my doctoral study. The purpose of this study is to examine adult English language learners' experiences of online learning and motivations for persistence in online learning during the pandemic. The findings from this study may inform educators, researchers, and policy makers about the types of resources, curriculum and professional development needed to promote motivation and persistence, and ultimately, success for adult English language learners in online platforms.

This interview will be the first of three interviews. All of the information that I gather from you will be confidential. Information that could identify you will not be used. In addition, only pseudonyms, or false names, will be used in this study. You may select a pseudonym if you would like? Please let me know if you feel uncomfortable with any of the questions, you may ask that I skip that question. Also, if at any time you would like to

withdraw from the study, you may do so without any stated reason. My first interview with you is mostly to gain a better understanding of you and your background and educational experiences before you enrolled in online learning.

Are you ready? If yes, let's begin the interview.

Question 1: Please tell me about your attitudes about education.

Possible prompts:

Were you a high-achieving student? Average student? Quiet or shy student? Did you enjoy learning?

What were your perceived early objectives for attending school?

Question 2: Please tell me about your parents' attitudes about education.

Possible prompts:

What are your parents' beliefs about school? How long were you expected to attend school?

Did your parents read to you? Keep books in the house? Help with your homework?

In what ways did your cultural background support or discourage education?

Question 3: Please tell me about your classmates.

Possible prompts:

Tell me about your friends at school? In what ways did you rely on your classmates for support?

What were their perceived objectives for attending school?

Question 4: Please tell me about your teachers?

Possible prompts:

What were your teachers' beliefs about education?

Were you encouraged to ask questions? Participate in classroom discussions?

Were you given individualized instruction/curriculum? Choice of authentic materials?

APPENDIX I INTERVIEW TWO — DETAILS OF THE EXPERIENCE

Thank you again for participating in this study. This is our second of three interviews in this study. I want to remind you that during the interview, if there is ever a time that you feel uncomfortable, you may opt to stop the interview or simply not answer questions that are uncomfortable. Do you have any questions or concerns? In order to collect accurate data from you, may I take an audio recording of our session? If yes, I will begin recording the interview.

You may recall, the purpose of this study is to understand how adult English language learners experience motivation and persistence in online learning during the pandemic. The findings for this study may inform educators, researchers, and policy makers about the types of resources, curriculum and professional development needed to promote motivation and persistence, and ultimately, success for adult English language learners in online platforms. This interview will be the second of three interviews. All of the information that I gather from you will be confidential. Information that could identify you will not be used. In addition, only pseudonyms, or false names, will be used in this study. During our last interview you asked that I use the pseudonym_________________. If I address you during the interview, I will refer to you by your pseudonym. My first interview with you was mostly to gain a better understanding of your educational experiences and what led you to participate in online

learning. In this interview, I will ask more specific questions about your experiences in online learning during the pandemic. Are you ready to begin the interview? If yes, I will begin the interview.

Question 1: Please describe your prior beliefs about online learning.

Possible prompts:

Had you participated in online learning before the pandemic? Why or why not.

What were your beliefs or preconceived notions or concerns about learning English online?

Question 2: Please describe the sudden instructional shift to online learning.

Possible prompts:

At the onset, describe your level of confidence about learning English online?

In what ways were you prepared or unprepared for the shift to online learning?

Were you knowledgeable and familiar with computers and the internet? The Zoom platform?

Describe your access to technical support from a family member or friend?

Describe your previous experience in student-centered learning?

Question 3: Please describe your experiences in your online classroom?

Possible prompts:

Describe a typical online class.

What were the challenges of your online classes? Were these challenges impacted by the pandemic?

In what ways did the teacher demonstrate cultural responsiveness?

Describe how the teacher interacted and recognized students who had their cameras off?

How did the teacher present the curriculum online?

Describe the teacher’s strategies for handling corrections?

Were lessons differentiated to meet individual learner’s needs, learning styles and interests?

Were students offered choices for assignments, homework, and assessments?

How influential were peers in encouraging learners’ attendance and participation in class?

APPENDIX J INTERVIEW THREE — REFLECTION ON MEANING

Thank you again for participating in this study. This is our third of three interviews in my study. I want to remind you that during the interview, if there is ever a time that you feel uncomfortable, you may opt to stop the interview or simply not answer questions that are uncomfortable. Do you have any questions or concerns? In order to collect accurate data from you, may I take an audio recording of our session? If yes, I will begin recording the interview.

You may recall, the purpose of this study is to understand how adult English language learners experience motivation and persistence in online learning during the pandemic. The findings for this study may inform educators, researchers, and policy makers about the types of resources, curriculum and professional development needed to promote motivation and persistence, and ultimately, success for adult English language learners in online platforms. This interview will be the third of three interviews. All of the information that I gather from you will be confidential. Information that could identify you will not be used. In addition, only pseudonyms (false names) will be used in this study. During our last interview you asked that I use the pseudonym_________________. If I address you during the interview, I will refer to you by your pseudonym. My first interview with you was mostly to gain a better understanding of your educational experiences and what led you to participate in online

learning. In the second interview, l asked you more specific questions about your experiences in online learning during the pandemic. In this interview, I will ask that you reflect on how you understand the meaning of your experiences. As a phenomenological study, both your and my interpretations of your experiences are crucial for the analysis of the study. Are you ready to begin the interview? If yes, I will begin the interview.

Question 1: In our last interview, you told me about your shift to online learning. My question now is what did the shifts to online learning mean to you?

Would you describe it as a time of dread, hope, demands, growth?

What words best describe this period to you? Tell me why you choose those words?

Question 2: In our last interview, you told me about your experiences in your online learning during the pandemic. My question now is what did those experiences mean to you?

Possible prompts:

What does that period of your learning online mean to you?

As you reflect on that time, would you describe it as one of pride, struggle, success, achievement?

What words describe that period to you? Tell me why you choose those words?

Question 3: In our last interview, you told me about teachers' instructional practices in online learning.

Possible prompts:

My question now is what did teachers' instructional practices mean to you?

How successful do you feel as a result of the teachers' online instructional practices?

Question 4: In our last interview, you shared how your peers influenced or did not influence your online experiences.

Possible prompts:

My question now is what did it mean to you to share your online experiences with your peers?

What did student engagement and collaboration in online learning mean to you?

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