LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES AND EXPECTATIONS: ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND TEACHERS IN AN ESL CLASS

by

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Language Ideologies and Expectations: English Language Learners and Teachers in an ESL Class

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ESL  English as a Second Language
ELL  English Language Learner
GMU  George Mason University
L1   Native language
L2   Second language (non-native language)
LEP  Limited English Proficiency
TWU  Tenants and Workers United
ABSTRACT

LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES AND EXPECTATIONS: ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND TEACHERS IN AN ESL CLASS

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Due to the ever-growing number of immigrants entering the United States annually, the demand for adult classes of English as a second language (ESL) has swiftly increased, prompting the need for research to determine the most successful education techniques. This study seeks to supply additional information to the limited knowledge of adult ESL education through the analysis of survey and interview results conducted at the beginning and end of the class, and observations throughout the semester of both adult students and volunteer teachers in a gratuitous ESL class in Fairfax, Virginia. Initial surveys and interviews demonstrated that both students and teachers alike were extremely motivated, but decreased final attendance showed that most had lost their drive. It appeared the students who indicated a practical need to learn English were the most satisfied and remained as class participants. Both students and teachers seemed to absorb each other’s attitudes, creating a circle of causality that influenced all class members. The results of this study offer valuable information as to how adults and volunteer teachers respond to ESL classes, and also elicit opportunities for future studies.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In September of 2010, I began volunteering as a teacher of a class of English as a second language (ESL) at Tenants and Works United (TWU) in Falls Church, VA. As a graduate student at George Mason University (GMU) studying the Spanish language, I was constantly seeking opportunities to practice the language with other students and with native speakers. I grew up in a single family home where English was the only known language of friends and family. Although I always studied the language and enjoyed practicing with friends, informal Spanish conversation with native speakers was not as readily available in the suburbs of Virginia as I would have liked. I also lived for four years in a very small town in the mountains of Virginia occupied by a very homogenous population. Now, living closer to Washington D.C., a highly diverse area, I could easily take advantage of the multiculturalism and multilingualism for the wealth of conversational opportunities. Therefore, when I heard about the prospect of being a volunteer English teacher for native Spanish speakers, I knew in this particular situation I could offer my knowledge of the English language in return for extra language practice in Spanish.

At the same time, I began a graduate course at GMU that focused on the language ideologies associated with various groups and where these ideas stemmed from. It was fascinating to learn about other cultures’ perceptions about certain ethnic groups or even
their own language and customs. I then became aware that TWU offered English language classes to Spanish speaking immigrants of all ages and backgrounds. Since I had never witnessed an ESL class nor had much experience with immigrants, I was interested to learn about the language ideologies of the teachers and students, and to discover how an ESL class developed.

This particular course offered by TWU incorporated techniques of Freire’s popular education and critical service learning, diverging from traditional community service and educational programs (Ingersoll, 2001; Rabin, 2011; Solórzano, 1989). The classes taught Spanish-speaking immigrants English while combining practical and political knowledge fundamental to life in the United States. The classes met twice a week for two hours each, lasted from September until mid December, and averaged about ten students per class. Teachers used English as much as possible, but the majority of the class was held in Spanish. After only one semester, I began to see subtle changes among the students and teachers that implied minor ideological transformations from their original thoughts about the class, the culture of the United States, and the English language. Students appeared to be more accepting of the U.S culture and the English language, and also seemed motivated to continue learning. From the teachers, I noticed increasing excitement in class with the students’ growing drive, and also a mounting desire to educate the students about life in this country. With these recent experiences in mind, I decided to construct a detailed investigation with the students and teachers beginning in the spring of 2011 in order to document any possible changes in ideologies, expectations, or motivations in a more concrete fashion.
Almost all of the students involved in the ESL class were recent immigrants from Central America who had come to the United States within the last ten years. Government officials and citizens alike realize that immigration has a large influence on the population of our country. In July 2009, the Census Bureau estimated that the percentage of foreign-born persons living in the United States was 12.5%, a 1.4% increase from the 2000 Census (Federation for American Immigration Reform [FAIR], n.d.). The 2010 Census determined that the number then grew to 13%, a 0.5% increase in only one year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). The foreign-born population is constantly growing at an exponential rate, with increases of about 800,000 persons annually: 29% of the nation’s entire annual population increase (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The 2009 American Community Survey determined that 59% of the foreign-born population had entered the country in the previous 20 years, with 55% being immigrants from Latin America. According to 2010 Census data, there are about 21.2 million people from Latin American living in the United States, which constitutes 53% of the foreign born population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). The large magnitude of immigration in this country has led to increasing opinions about immigrants and how they should behave after entering the U.S.

Government surveys are constantly examining the immigrant population to see how they compare with native citizens, and stereotypes and ideologies are frequently based on this data. For example, from the 2000 Population Survey, the Center for Immigration Studies found that 44% of immigrants and their children live in or near poverty, compared to 27.8% of native-born residents (FAIR, n.d.). Of the foreign-born
population, 30.9% of immigrants and their children do not have health insurance, and 19.7% of immigrant-headed households receive welfare. Additionally, the 2005-2009 American Community Survey ascertained characteristics of speakers of certain languages, including Spanish (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). The survey found that 21.2% of persons who speak Spanish at home are below the poverty level, compared with 11.6% of English speakers. Of the Spanish speakers, 41.4% did not graduate from high school and only 25.7% are high school graduates, compared with English speakers at 11.7% and 30.7%, respectively. The National Assessment of Adult Literacy from the National Center for Education Statistics (2003) determined that 11 million adults were illiterate in English: 7 million could not answer simple test questions, and 4 million could not complete the test due to language barriers. From those who succeeded in taking the test, 30 million people were determined to have less than the most simple and concrete literacy skills, 39% of which were Hispanic. These surveys show a relationship between literacy levels, level of education, and poverty among native Spanish speakers. Harsh statistics such as these help form the negative thoughts that Hispanics or Latinos are less intelligent, lazy, poverty-stricken, and welfare dependent, or generally are illegitimate members of society (González and Melis, 2001). Of course, this sort of discourse can create firm ideological divisions between immigrants and natives. Instead of building a cohesive living environment for our country, it is filled with aggression.

In an antagonistic setting such as the one presented in the U.S., so often immigrants are misunderstood and judged simply for being different, when they are ultimately trying to live the best possible life for themselves and their families.
Unnecessary discomfort is created when immigrants entering the United States expect a vast array of opportunities that they did not have in their native country, but are instead greeted with hostility. In addition to the stigma associated with being an immigrant, those who cannot speak English are doubly derogated. For this reason, I find ESL classes, in particular those programs that incorporate information about culture in the United States, to be of the utmost importance for immigrants regardless of the amount of time already spent living in this country. With classes such as the ones provided by TWU, immigrants can learn about how the government and social structure of the U.S function, and can begin to understand the language while incorporating plenty of opportunities to practice. This investigation hopes to offer valuable insight as to how helpful immigrants find the ESL classes to be, both for their personal knowledge of the English language as well as a means to help them integrate into society.

As immigration grows exponentially, so does the number of students enrolled in English classes and, likewise, the availability of these courses for immigrant language learners. ESL courses are offered within the public school system for children of all ages and through universities and community organizations for adults of limited English proficiency (LEP). In 2004, the U.S Department of Education determined that more than 40% of the 3 million students in government regulated adult education programs were registered in ESL classes (Cronen, Silver-Pacuilla, and Condelli, 2011). In 2008, 2.4 million students were enrolled in federally funded adult education programs (Condelli, Cronen, Bos, Tseng, Altuna, and Ali, 2010). Of the 2.4 million, 44% were ESL students, with about 185,000 students at the beginner level. These numbers show that immigrants
are participating in ESL classes and are putting forth an effort to learn the language, contrary to the belief that immigrants are resistant to learning the culture of the United States (Tse, 2001). Because this increasing demand for ESL programs is relatively new yet continues to grow, researchers are still determining how these classes function and what techniques are the most effective.

Naturally, our lives are constantly changing, and new discoveries are continually altering what was previously believed to be successful. Although certain tendencies are visible when drawing from the recent statistics of ESL classes and immigration, more research is necessary to apply those trends to present day classes of English as a second language to allow students to be as successful and as motivated as possible. Moreover, as language ideologies vary throughout the years, it is imperative to study how they transform over time and if the learning process causes the change or if it may be affected. Additionally, better language assessment and implementation is essential for language learning and teaching, and for literacy and biliteracy education and training. Within this context, this study seeks to provide useful information to help answer the following questions:

- How do adults respond to non-traditional ESL classes?
- How do class expectations and language ideologies change after a period of language education?
- How do the backgrounds and language ideologies of teachers affect language learners?
- How do ideologies influence class satisfaction?
To respond to the previous questions, the following pages provide a review of the most relevant literature regarding language ideologues and the discipline of English as a second language. This review is not meant to be exhaustive, but instead summarizes the most fundamental data of these topics to contextualize and develop the present study. Methodologies and analyses are explained in chapters 3 and 4, followed by a discussion of results and proposals for future studies in chapters 5 and 6. The appendices contain the consent forms as well as survey and interview questions given to students and teachers, which can be found in the final pages of this work.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) define the term language ideology as a belief held by a group of speakers about a language. This ideology can justify or rationalize a linguistic structure or use, or may have a specific social meaning. Language ideologies are important not only to allow for fast analysis of a language, but also the social significance of the ideology may link a language to a particular social group, a personal identity or moral ethic, a determined esthetic, or an epistemology. Language ideologies are to blame for the social inequalities between speakers of different dialects or languages, and a common agreement between many researchers is that language ideologies form in response to a life experience or social position. This mutual understanding implies that the opinions and ideas behind many language ideologies are not concrete and can vary greatly between different social groups or from person to person (Thompson, 1984; Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994). Often, a language ideology is linked with the ability or inability to dominate others, and usually is defined in opposition to another ideology, with the rejection or acceptance of a particular belief or opinion (Thompson, 1984). For this reason, language ideologies contribute to the concept of the “other,” implying that another group, person, or language exists that may affect or weaken the status of someone else. As Williams explains, a language or dialect is what
defines, implicitly or explicitly, the people of the world (as cited in Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994, p. 56).

Language ideologies can often explain relative popularity or prestige of certain languages or dialects. For example, in an Inuit community in arctic Quebec, children are initially taught in their native language, Inuktitut, but after the first three years classes are taught in either English or French, the more prestigious languages, usually with no prior scaffolding (Crago, 1992). The Inuit families raise their young with their mother tongue, Inuktitut, to allow for a strong identity formation, but when the children are mature enough they are expected to learn a more practical language to have prosperous futures. In Japan, business is an important economical aspect of the country, so businessmen find bilingualism in both Japanese and English to be an asset. Because these languages are so respected and functional, even Japanese natives who speak only a bit of English, or foreigners who just speak a little Japanese are more respected than monolinguals (Urciuoli, 1995, p. 535). Urrieta (2005) focuses on Chicanos’ opinions of the distribution of power in the United States. Interviews provided the belief that in order to “win” in the U.S. society, it is required to speak English only. Respondents agreed that those who do not speak English or who learned English as a second language do not stand a chance at achieving hierarchical success in this country. With these examples, one can see that specific languages are associated with particular functions based on the respective language ideologies. Many countries, like Japan, feel that English is a language for business; therefore, it is recognized as an international language of power, and some imagine that those who speak English have the highest success rates.
Numerous individuals associate a language with a border and believe that the differences between languages symbolize the cultural differences between groups of speakers. Urciuoli (1995) describes this relationship as a belonging: people feel that a language is their property, which allows them to participate or belong to a specific group. The persons of these groups may share certain characteristics, such as nationality, race or gender, but the similarities are merely based on the perceptions of the group members and are not firmly structured. Because the border that limits a language is not a fixed entity, each language has basic rules that can be modified over time to create varieties: as Friedrich summarizes, a language is not a strictly ordered structure, but instead a mutable concept (as cited in Urciuoli, 1995, p. 531). For this reason, it is not known where a language or a related ideology begins or ends, nor to whom it belongs.

Many believe that researchers became aware of language ideologies and began to study them in the 18th century, either with German Romanticism or in France during the Illustration period (Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994). Initially, the creation of language ideologies demonstrated the existence of linguistic nationalism, defined as the Western influence that demands one language per nation. Nationalism indicates power through unity and undermines other nations with more than one official language. Opinions on immigration and official languages in the United States have changed multiple times throughout the last two hundred years. In 1807, the U.S. focused on the elimination of indigenous languages, and in 1889 the Hull House was developed to teach English to recent immigrants (Ullman, 2010). At this time, the preservation of immigrants’ native languages and cultures was still accepted, and organizations that taught English as a
second language promoted bilingualism. At the end of the 19th century, immigration rates began to soar and anti-immigration movements amplified, along with the anxiety that immigrants would not assimilate to the culture and language of the United States (Leeman, 2004). By 1906 all new citizens were required to speak English (Uriciuoli, 1995). During that time, the connection between the United States, whiteness, and English became very strong, and the ultimate goal was to “produce Americans,” forming a strong conviction about anti-immigration (Ullman, 2010). During World War I, use of all foreign languages was prohibited in public, and even a slight accent was viewed as disloyalty to the country (Leeman, 2004). In the early 1960s, many immigrants were expelled back to their native countries, but merely five years later the immigration policy was restructured in 1965 with the Immigration Reform Act, welcoming immigrants once again into the country (Ullman, 2010). For the second time, citizens were worried about the toll immigration would take on the American identity and the English language. Today, as immigration continues to escalate, these worries still persist in our current society. Additionally, throughout the last thirty years in Canada, there has been a battle over the national language, which currently includes both French and English. In 1977, French was declared the official language in the territory of Quebec, but in 1982 was changed to also include English (Uriciuoli, 1995). Clearly, the matter remains unresolved about what is more important: one national language to demonstrate power, or multiple languages to accommodate a diverse population.

Although nationalism is a very prominent ideology throughout the world, there are still many programs worldwide that promote the revitalization of disappearing
languages of the indigenous people and other minority groups (Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994). Despite the pressure of large nations, multilingualism and the mother tongue are both valued concepts, and some believe that an identity cannot exist without one’s native language (Citrin, Sears, Muste, and Wong, 2001). King (2000) determined that native speakers of Quichua from the Andes in Ecuador who speak Spanish with more frequency—the language considered to be more prestigious—see the importance of their mother tongue because it connects them to their roots, and for this reason they are proud when they speak it. On the contrary, those who speak Quichua only and have not needed to learn Spanish believe that Spanish is more important and more useful, and because of this they feel ashamed when they speak Quichua in public spaces. In another example, citizens of Bóly, Hungary feel that if someone does not speak the language of one’s region, they cannot possibly claim to be from that area (Gal, 1993). In Bóly, although there are very few speakers of standard German, and despite the lasting resentment towards the Germans for overtaking their language and culture, most feel standard German is beautiful and persuasive for those of authority. Even though the residents still view Hungarian as indispensable for their history and education, they do recognize that their native language is not associated with power or strength outside of their region.

Despite the prestige associated with several languages, not every ideology is positive for all languages, though it frequently depends on who is offering their opinion. The U.S. society promotes contrasting ideas to students regarding foreign languages other than English: native English speakers are encouraged to travel abroad and learn foreign languages to aid them in future endeavors, but the mother tongue of non-native English
speakers is often seen as a hindrance and disadvantage, even if students are bilingual in English (González and Melis, 2001). Immigrant families whose native tongue is not English are frequently viewed as “needy” or “lacking”— needing to learn English and lacking adequate housing and knowledge on how to raise children (Villenas, 2001)—or are associated with such negative characteristics as stupidity, laziness, poverty, and lack of patriotism (Gónzalez and Melis, 2001). In U.S. communities where residents are predominantly Spanish speaking, the ideologies are the contrary: Spanish use is required, as it demonstrates respect for elders and connects speakers to their culture (Urciuoli, 1991).

Recently, researchers have determined that the ever-growing number of Spanish speakers in the U.S. has caused an increasing panic for some Americans that the security of English as the country’s principal language is being threatened (Citrin et al., 2001; Citrin, Lerman, Murakami and Pearson, 2007; Fillmore, 2000; González and Melis, 2001; Leeman, 2004; Olneck, 2009; Tse, 2001; Uricuioli, 1995). This fear may be the cause of various negative ideologies associated with the Spanish language. Information from the U.S. Census stated that in 1990, 25.5 million U.S adults age 18 and older spoke a language other than English at home (Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2008). From a survey of native languages spoken at home, the number of native Spanish speakers living in the U.S. rose from 54.5% in 1990 to 59.6% in 2000 (FAIR, n.d.).

Parallel with the increasing number of immigrants and Spanish speakers is the number of English language learners (ELLs), displaying a definite correlation between immigration and ESL classes. Evidence from past Censuses and surveys indicates that
throughout the generations, immigrants are in fact learning English (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010, 2011). Although English may not be the preferred language at home, many adults are highly motivated to learn the language. While multilingual educational programs do promote bilingualism, immigrants still recognize that English is required to progress in the United States, so the need to learn the language is tangible. (Citrin et al., 2007). In fact, as immigrants enter the U.S. and choose to learn English, some are not only using their native languages less, but also are becoming monolingual English speakers and losing their native tongues altogether.

Although many feel that Spanish speakers are a potential threat to the English language, another problem is the primary language loss that occurs when immigrants acquire English (Fillmore, 2000). Researchers feel that instead of learning an additional language, English-language learning has become a subtractive process, removing students’ native tongues from the equation. In public schools, parents are often afraid that their children are not learning English rapidly enough and so are choosing not to place children in bilingual programs to allow for quicker assimilation (Monzó, 2005; Olneck, 2009). In addition to identity confusion, a weakened sense of belonging with the family, and a diminished feeling of personal worth due to the inability to communicate with older generations, the language barrier may also estrange parents and grandparents if this lack of communication becomes an embarrassment (Fillmore, 2000; Monzó and Rueda, 2009). Support for a student’s native language at any age provides a stronger identity and connection to heritage, future job opportunities, and access to information in multiple languages (Tse, 2001).
In addition to community and familial ties, Cummins (1979) proposed that language learners would likely have more success in learning their second language (L2) when their native language (L1) is highly developed. He also tested the threshold hypothesis, which states that the level of L2 learning is dependent on the L1 competence at the time of L2 exposure or, more simply, that students have more difficulty advancing in their second language beyond what is already known in their mother tongue. This relates to his theory of a common underlying proficiency, which all language learners possess and on which they base new information when learning their L2 (as cited in Rivera and Huerta-Macias, 2008, p. 7). When learning a second language, the higher the level of literacy in the native language, the greater the potential there is for the student to transfer this knowledge into a second language (Ingersoll, 2001; Rivera, 1999).

Furthermore, Cummins found that certain levels of linguistic competence are needed to prevent cognitive disadvantages that may affect academic abilities in other areas. By continuing to build knowledge in their native language, students can create connections between cultures, instead of divisions.

Students learning a second language need to take many factors into account: not only the grammatical rules and word meanings, but also the possible multiple language ideologies, culture, and social structures associated with that language. Diverse studies about language socialization have shown connections between theories of language learning, linguistic practice, and the cultural ideas of an identity. Fischer defines language socialization as learning to use a language in such a way as to maintain or change one’s position in society (as cited in Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986, p. 164). As well as learning
the linguistic structures of a language, language learners must determine when and how to use a specific type of language in a particular social situation, in accordance with the ideologies of the people. For example, the type of language that one would use at home or with friends cannot always be used in every situation (Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986). Each interaction is a possible social experience, and the language learner and members of society are constantly conforming and responding to each other.

Since language learners frequently understand social behaviors better than the academic material, students may begin to act as if they comprehend perfectly, or “pass,” when in reality they do not fully understand the lesson or what is required of them. Passing may include waiting for others to answer first to ensure that replies are socially acceptable, and then providing a similar response based on the reaction previously offered (Rymes and Pash, 2001). Of course, this does not signify that students completely grasp the material, but instead means they understand the social repercussions of an incorrect answer. Students who avoid giving an inappropriate or wrong response can evade the stigma associated with being foreign or remedial (Monzó and Rueda, 2009). Perhaps by passing as English proficient, they can escape the ridicule from peers and the pressure from society to quickly assimilate.

Most prior research on the second language acquisition of children can also be applied to adult language learning in many ways, such as Cummins’ threshold hypothesis and theory of common underlying proficiency, as well as the idea of “passing” in social situations. However, it is very important to consider the differences between child and adult education. Frequently, adults learning a second language enroll in an ESL class out
of personal motivations, not because of governmental requirement (Allen, 2006; Krashen, 1976; McArthur, 1998; Rabin, 2011; Ullman, 2010). Though perhaps the adult chooses to attend class, there is a unique, complex reason why one must come: often times, the adult learner needs to learn the language because he or she is already living in a position where it is necessary to communicate with other speakers of the language (Allen, 2006). With this in mind, Beder developed four common reasons why adults do not attend class: low perception of need, high perception of effort, mere dislike for classes, and situational barriers (as cited in Allen, 2006, p. 56). Of these explanations, all but one are based on personal opinion. Furthermore, in a 1995 adult ESL interest survey of adults who did not speak English in the home, 25% of the sample population indicated that they had never attended an ESL class, but expressed interest in doing so. When asked why they had not yet done so, the main factors that prevented them from doing so included costs of the ESL class and lack of time, child care, or transportation (McArthur, 1998). For these reasons, when working with adult language learners in an ESL class, it is necessary to keep in mind possible external life obstacles for these adults, who may have already established jobs, perhaps have children and families, and definitely have day-to-day responsibilities. However, it is also essential to keep them motivated and aware of the necessity of the language.

In an investigation of adult ESL learners, Allen (2006) studies students and teachers of ESL programs to see how students respond to the class setting, how the personal beliefs or opinions of students affect their progress, and how the curricula affect the personal beliefs of the students. Although the majority of students participating in the
study were Spanish speakers, the class represented 13 countries, not all of which were Spanish speaking. Class sizes were large: several of the classes contained as many as 90 students, and through surveys and interviews, teachers expressed their opinions that there were far too many students to allow each to learn the language adequately. However, the students did not demonstrate a similar perspective and instead voiced their satisfaction with the personal attention provided by the teachers and the friendships made from the class. Overall, students were very grateful for the teachers’ efforts. Both students and teachers were dissatisfied with testing measures, class organization and focus, and the lack of practical conversation opportunities during and outside of school. Nonetheless, students claimed they were very pleased with the classes, and teachers were content with their jobs. As one teacher stated, she felt her job allowed her to see the world without ever leaving the school.

The history of language ideologies and immigration in the United States, along with the increasing demand for ESL classes, have confirmed a need for more information regarding how ESL students and educators perceive languages, and how these opinions influence classroom behavior and language learning. Although the following study does not complete the research about second language learning for adults, it does offer significant data for the field of adult ESL education, as well as valuable suggestions for future investigations.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Context of the Study

The Culmore area of Falls Church, Virginia is home to an increasing population of Spanish speakers. Many immigrants have moved to the Northern Virginia region to be with their families and friends, creating cultural pockets where immigrants from the same background reside together. Although there are a wide variety of cultures and languages present in northern Virginia, Spanish speakers constitute the vast majority of the population in the Culmore community. According to the 2010 Census, in Fairfax County, 15.6% of the population was Hispanic, a 0.5% increase from the previous year. In Culmore and the nearby Bailey’s Crossroads zone, the Hispanic population neared 40% in 2010 (Fairfax County Government, 2010). The 2009 Census compared Hispanic populations of the surrounding counties: in Arlington County, home to the initial Tenants and Workers United office, 17.1% of the population was Hispanic, while in Loudoun County 10.7% was Hispanic (Cooper, n.d.). In areas such as these with large Hispanic populations, businesses and other services primarily speak Spanish, and the residents create social groups and assist each other with daily functions. They also often work with other members of their communities or with friends, so Spanish is the prime language in the workplace.
In these locations, day laborers that perform a number of occupations—commonly construction, moving or hauling, landscaping, painting and carpentry—are the most common type of workers (Valenzuela, Gonzalez, Theodore, and Melendez, 2005). In a 2005 study of day laborers in the D.C./Metro area, the average reservation rate, or the lowest amount a worker would accept, was $10 per hour. Sadly, many workers have experienced abuse from their employers, including refusal of payment, a reduced payment, denial of lunch or breaks, outright harassment, and abandonment at job sites. Of those surveyed, 58% claimed they had at one time either not been paid by employers or had received a bad check. More than half (57%) also stated that employers had ultimately paid them less than the amount they had agreed upon. An additional 8% experienced theft and 6% became involved in a fight while searching for work. Although day laborers migrate to Northern Virginia for the countless job opportunities, it is well recognized that this sort of work has the potential to be very dangerous.

Within the past 40 years, community organizations have grown rapidly in order to assist residents in areas such as Culmore who constantly face adversity. In 1986, residents of the Arlandia community, those living on the border of Arlington and Alexandria counties, fought for the rights of low-income tenants on the brink of eviction in a nearby housing development (Tenants and Workers United, n.d.). Ten years later, those fighting won the battle, and set up the Chirilagua/Arlandia Housing Cooperative. From this point of initiation, the organization expanded, and in 2004 those residing in Arlington and Alexandria created the first office of Tenants and Workers United (TWU) in Arlandia, Virginia. TWU, a nonprofit association with offices in Alexandria and Falls
Church, has since developed into a regional organization with a budget of $1.5 million, with expenses of approximately 22%. Funding for this organization comes from individual donors, local governments, and member dues. TWU presently strives to recover low-income workers’ unpaid wages, fights for immigrants’ rights and equal treatment, and works to improve education, housing, and health care for those who are struggling in Prince William, Fairfax, Loudoun and Arlington counties. TWU also offers community classes to aid public development, which include classes on computer skills, citizenship information, and English as a second language. In the past, Spanish language literacy classes were also offered for native speakers who needed to improve language skills in their mother tongue.

Classes for ESL at TWU in Falls Church were very popular for members of the community who desired to learn English for any reason. During the 2010-2011 school year, the ESL classes were offered Tuesday and Thursday nights from 6:00PM to 8:00PM. The course began the third week in September and ended the first week of May, with four weeks vacation in December and January. In recent years, teachers have been volunteers from the community or the organization, and in the past two years college students or faculty from the nearby college, George Mason University have also volunteered. Classes were free for students, and although a textbook was suggested, many students were not able to afford the additional costs. Therefore, class materials were limited to two whiteboards, several dry erase markers, a small television, and a computer. Although the course followed a strict weekly schedule, attendance was not
mandatory for students: new students could join at any time and, conversely, students could leave the class when necessary with no punishment.

Participants

Participants of this case study included English language learners and volunteer teachers attending the ESL classes at the Falls Church office of TWU. The ESL classes at TWU in Falls Church were chosen because the vast population of Spanish speakers present in the area offered a diverse sample. Additionally, the organization had been associated with GMU for two years, and a trusting relationship was already established between students and teachers of the classes, the researcher, and the directors and workers at TWU. The language-learner population at TWU was comprised of approximately twenty native Spanish speakers, all adult immigrants of age 15 to 60. The average class attendance was eight students per class, but the number of students attending class varied day to day, as did the individuals who attended. English teachers were all volunteers pursuing a Bachelor’s degree from GMU who would all be graduating in May of 2011. At the time, all teachers were enrolled in classes through the Spanish department and spoke the language fluently. At the beginning of the new ESL semester in January 2011, four volunteers continued to teach from the previous semester and one new volunteer entered the program, totaling two male and three female teachers. As the number of students and teachers involved in the TWU class was relatively small, the research sample included all present and willing subjects.
Procedure

The present study was conducted during the spring semester of 2011. The research protocol was developed during the winter and early spring of 2011 and approved by the GMU Human Subjects Review Board in March of 2011. Classes were observed throughout the semester of the course, from January 11 until May 5, 2011. In preparation, four questionnaire forms were developed for the ELLs and teachers of an ESL course at TWU in the Culmore region of Falls Church, Virginia. Two each were made for students and teachers at the beginning of the semester, (Appendices A and B, respectively) and two each for students and teachers at the conclusion of the semester (Appendices C and D, respectively). The research sample included all students and teachers present in class on the day of the questionnaires and interviews who were willing to participate in the study, and anyone present on the days of observation. Observations were recorded through the entire semester, initially beginning with Thursday classes only, and after a month, incorporating Tuesday classes as well to see if any differences were present. As different teachers taught class on Tuesdays than Thursdays, variations in teaching styles were expected.

Introductory questionnaires were administered to all students and teachers present in class on March 8 and 10, 2011. All questionnaires were simultaneously given to participants by the principal researcher, as well as consent forms for each member to sign and return (Appendices I and J). Questions were based on the topics of research, first determining the demographic information of the students and teachers: their age, level of education, where they were born, how long they had lived in the United States, whether
or not they had learned other languages in the past and, if so, how. Teachers were additionally asked if they had any prior teaching experience. No other identifying information was included in the questionnaires in order to preserve the anonymity of the respondents. Further questions were based on desires, ideologies, and expectations of the subjects, to see if these would change from the beginning of the semester to the end, after three months of language instruction. Students and teachers were asked their opinions about certain languages and the people who speak them, and their reasons for attending or teaching the English class. Students received an additional question of whether they desired to learn other languages. Finally, both students and teachers described their expectations of the class and of themselves, such as what students anticipated they would learn and what teachers hoped to convey in class. Questionnaires for both students and teachers included closed questions, but all closed questions also contained open space for description.

Structured initial interviews were performed during the following class periods, March 15 and 17, to compensate for variable attendance and to allow more students to participate. All interview questions were open, allowing respondents to fully express themselves (Appendices E and F). For students, one additional question was added to determine if students would continue to use their native language, Spanish, after learning English. Questions were asked in the native language of the speaker, and answers were recorded to ensure accuracy and later transcribed.

Final questionnaires and structured interviews were given the last week of class, April 28 and May 5, 2011. Exit questionnaires included similar questions to the initial
surveys to easily detect a change in response from the beginning of class to the end. Additionally, each incorporated a section about class satisfaction and overall language comprehension. All questionnaires contained closed questions, and additional space was provided for explanations. Final interview questions were all open questions (Appendices G and H). Subjects were asked directly if they noticed any personal changes in their beliefs or ideologies since the class began several months before. They were then questioned about their satisfaction level with the progression of the course and the exchange of ideas. Finally, suggestions for future classes were requested to inform the public of what is desired for subsequent courses.

Throughout the semester, two volunteer teachers were offered course credit through the university for participating in the ESL program providing that they wrote weekly journal entries for the professor describing their experiences. These essays were made available to all GMU students and teachers involved in the project at TWU by a private wiki accessible by username and passcode, and were used as a means to share information and advice with current and future volunteer teachers. The two participating teachers wrote fourteen weekly accounts, beginning the second week of the GMU semester, the week of January 31, 2011, and ending with the last week of ESL classes, the week of May 2, 2011. Although both students were native English speakers, all reports were written in Spanish. The GMU Human Subjects Review Board approved the use of these journals for this study in October of 2011.
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Questionnaires

All eleven students who attended the classes on March 8 and 10, 2011 completed the initial questionnaires. Of the eleven students, six were male, one was female, and four did not leave a response (see Figure 1). Five were between 18 and 25 years of age, three between 26 and 33 years of age, and the other three students did not specify their age (see Figure 2). One student responded that he or she had lived in the United States for three to five years, two answered that they have lived in the U.S. for six to eight years, and eight did not respond to the question (see Figure 3). Of the eleven students, nine were born in Guatemala, one was born in Honduras, and one did not respond (see Figure 4). Students had various levels of education, but none indicated that they had attended school higher than secondary school: four students had attended school up to primary school, one had attended an intermediate school, and three had attended secondary school, all with or without completion. Three students did not give their education level (see Figure 5). Although all students were native Spanish speakers, six stated that they spoke other languages: one spoke K’iché and two spoke Mam, both indigenous languages from Guatemala (three did not specify which language they spoke). Two students admitted they did not speak another language, and three students did not respond to the question (see Figure 6). When asked where they learned their second language, students could
check all applicable answers: three learned a second language in school, one at home, and one on the streets. Three students did not specify where they learned their second language, and two did not leave a response to the question (see Figure 7). Students stated that, in addition to learning the English language, they would also like to learn other languages in their future, including French and Italian. One student did not specify which language they would like to learn, three added English again, and four did not leave an answer to the question (see Figure 8).

**Figure 1.** Percentage of students of each gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2.** Percentage of students of each age group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>45.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-33</td>
<td>27.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>27.27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NUMBER OF YEARS IN THE U.S.

- 2 or less: 9%
- 3-5: 18%
- 6-8: 73%
- No Response: 9%

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

- Guatemala: 82%
- Honduras: 9%
- No Response: 9%

EDUCATION LEVEL

- Primary: 37%
- Intermediate: 27%
- Secondary: 27%
- No Response: 9%

SECOND LANGUAGE SPOKEN

- None: 1
- K’iche: 1
- Mam: 2
- Not Specified: 3
- No Response: 3

Figure 3. Number of years that students have resided in the United States.

Figure 4. Country of origin of students.

Figure 5. Students’ highest level of education.

Figure 6. Second languages spoken by students.
When asked why the students were choosing to learn English, they responded for communication purposes, out of necessity, for work, or for a better future (see Figure 9). Nine students believed that learning English was easy to do, one stated that it was not, and one did not respond (see Figure 10). When asked why it was easy to learn, four students answered that if one would try they could learn anything, three felt they had plenty of opportunity to practice, one felt the grammar was easily understandable, and three did not answer (see Figure 11). All eleven students replied that English was important to know and use, but for various reasons: four felt it was essential for work, three stated it was important to communicate with others, three said it was necessary in general, and two did not say why it was important (see Figure 12). Students were then asked if they associated any particular characteristics with an English speaker. Three
denied that there were any differences between speakers of the English language and any other language. Two claimed they connected kindness with an English speaker, one stated that they associated communication, one stated they related a hard worker, and four did not respond (see Figure 13). Finally, students desired to learn a number of subjects from the English class: work vocabulary, social or cultural concepts, literacy, and language enrichment. Two students left invalid responses (see Figure 14). Students expected to learn how to read, write, and speak better in English, to be able to practice often, and to learn cultural concepts of the U.S., vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Two did not provide an answer (see Figure 15). From the teachers, students anticipated patience, games, practice, and generally good teachers. One student left an invalid response, and two students did not respond (see Figure 16).

INITIAL AND FINAL PURPOSE OF ENGLISH

![Pie Chart](image)

*Figure 9.* A comparison of why students chose to take an ESL class. Answers included from initial and final questionnaires.
FACILITY OF LEARNING ENGLISH

**Figure 10.** Percentages of students who feel English is or is not easy to learn.

INITIAL AND FINAL REASONS FOR FACILITY

**Figure 11.** A comparison of why students feel English is an easy language to learn. Responses included from initial and final questionnaires.
INITIAL AND FINAL IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING ENGLISH

Figure 12. A comparison of why students felt English was important to learn. Answers included from initial and final questionnaires.

INITIAL AND FINAL CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ENGLISH SPEAKER

Figure 13. A comparison of students’ associated characteristics of an English speaker. Responses included from initial and final questionnaires.
INITIAL DESIRES OF STUDENTS AND FINAL SATISFACTION OF LEARNING

Figure 14. A comparison of what students initially desired to learn out of the class and final satisfaction with what they learned.

INITIAL EXPECTATIONS AND FINAL SATISFACTION OF ENGLISH LEVEL

Figure 15. A comparison of students’ initial projected expectations for themselves their final satisfaction of their levels of English.
By the end of the course, only the four students who regularly attended class were available for surveying and interviewing. Students were asked many of the same questions from the initial surveys, and the responses received were far less broad. Students admitted they still desired to learn English for communication purposes, to benefit their future, and for work (see Figure 9). All four students felt learning English was easy: two said this was because they put effort into it and desired to learn the language, one believed it was because they practiced so much in class, and one left an invalid response (see Figure 11). All four still agreed that it was important to learn English for the following reasons: it was necessary because they lived in the United States, to communicate with others, and for work (see Figure 12). Students still found
difficulty with the question about associating certain characteristics with an English speaker: one student’s response did not answer the question, one did not leave an answer, one associated perfect English, and one claimed they are privileged (see Figure 13). When asked about their satisfaction with the class, three students said they were happy with their learning throughout the class, and one said he or she was “more or less” satisfied (see Figure 14). All four said they were content with their current level of English at the end of the class (see Figure 15), and all four said they were pleased with the class overall (Figure 16).

For the teachers’ initial questionnaire, I was able to survey four of the five English teachers because one teacher did not volunteer regularly: two males and two females consistently taught classes. Three teachers mentioned that they were born in the United States and had lived here for more than twelve years, and one did not declare the place of birth but stated he or she had lived here for more than twelve years as well. Based on previous discussions and knowledge of the Spanish programs at GMU, I knew all teachers were currently pursuing their Bachelor’s degree from George Mason University, and most were planning to graduate in May of 2011. In the surveys, two stated that they had a Bachelor’s degree, while two stated they had some college. Although all teachers were native English speakers, all four also spoke Spanish, and one spoke Portuguese. Teachers stated that they learned their second language(s) in in many or multiple places: in school, abroad, at home, on the streets, and with friends (see Figure 17). Only one of the teachers had previous experience teaching English before they came to work at Culmore, and all but one teacher had taught the English classes at Culmore.
throughout the previous semester. Two said they were teaching the English classes for community service experience, one was teaching for fun, and one was teaching solely for course credit offered through the university. Teachers guessed that students were learning English for simple communication, for work, and because it was generally necessary in order to live in the U.S. (see Figure 18). Three teachers felt that English was not easy to teach because it is difficult to explain, and because the students are at different levels of language acquisition. One did not respond, and one felt it was easy to teach, as it was his or her native language (see Figure 19). All teachers agreed that English is not easy to learn, based on multiple word meanings, lack of opportunities to practice, or difficult pronunciation. One teacher did not provide an answer (see Figure 20). All teachers were in agreement that English is necessary to learn because it is used worldwide, because it is the language used most frequently in the U.S., it is needed for assimilation, and it is necessary for work (Figure 21). Teachers believed English speakers are expressive, intelligent, educated, wordy, and fun, while one considered there to be no difference between an English speaker and a speaker of another language (see Figure 22). Teachers expected that by the end of the English class, students would know how to speak better, read, write, understand the vocabulary, grammar, culture, and be able to practice what they already know (see Figure 23). They also hoped that students in the class would walk away having learned something, participate in class, come prepared, respect the teachers and each other, not be afraid or ashamed, and understand more of the culture (see Figure 24).
WHERE L2 WAS LEARNED

Figure 17. Where teachers learned their second language(s).

PURPOSE OF ENGLISH

Figure 18. Teachers’ reasons for why students want to learn English.

FACILITY OF TEACHING

Figure 19. Percentage of teachers who felt English is or is not easy to teach.

DIFFICULTIES OF LEARNING ENGLISH

Figure 20. Why teachers feel English is difficult to learn.
The Importance of English

**Figure 21.** Why teachers feel it is important to learn English.

**Figure 22.** Teachers’ associated characteristics of an English speaker.

**Figure 23.** A comparison of what teachers initially expected students would learn from the course and their final satisfaction.
By the last week of the course, only three of the original teachers still participated regularly in the class and were hence questioned. Each teacher responded differently to whether the students reached their expectations: one said yes, they have mastered the basics; one claimed yes, but the students could always advance more; one admitted no, they could have retained more information if they had more opportunities to practice (see Figure 23). One teacher was overall satisfied with the class because, although each lesson did not go as planned, each focus point was conveyed and understood. Two, however, were not satisfied because there was no real plan, attendance was lacking, and it was difficult for students to advance without structure (see Figure 24). All teachers felt that
the students were at least partially satisfied with the class because they were in a comfortable environment free of judgment, but teachers still noticed that students became frustrated, could not practice enough, or did not attend class with frequency.

**Interviews**

Four of the initial eleven students attended class the day the interviews were performed, two males and two females. Students stated that their reasons for attending the English classes were to learn to read, write, speak a little, practice what they already knew, learn the language correctly, and to be able to speak at work or communicate in general. During the interviews, students better understood the questions associating an English or Spanish speaker with particular characteristics. The associations for an English speaker were someone who speaks “correctly,” who can easily communicate, and who can learn easily. For a Spanish speaker, they described someone who is easier to understand and economical. They also mentioned here that Spanish is spoken how it is written. One student insisted that there were absolutely no differences between speakers of any language, so associations could not be made. When asked why anyone should learn English, students responded that it is important for work, doctor’s visits, and the hospital. One stated that it is a beautiful language, and fun to use to meet new people. They also claimed that it is necessary in order to express their desires, because the entire world speaks English. Finally, one student admitted, “sin inglés aquí no se puede hacer nada” (without English, you can’t do anything here). The students were then asked about the importance of retaining their native Spanish language, in which the students all responded with an enthusiastic yes; the language ties them to the community, their
family, friends, and is even used in the workplace between coworkers. One student simply stated, “claro, que es la lengua mía” (of course, it’s my language).

The same four students who completed the exit questionnaires also participated in an exit interview. Students saw changes in their comprehension of the language and knowledge of the culture. One student claimed that speaking at work was much easier, and one admitted that buying things in stores was now possible. All said they were very satisfied with the class: one had not expected to learn anything, but instead learned plenty of vocabulary. For the teachers’ performance, they felt all questions were answered and that they did “lo que podían a ayudarnos [sic]” (what they could to help us). Students were then asked if their current level of English was what they had expected it would be at the end of the course. Two students claimed they met their own expectations, but would continue because they understood that language learning takes time. One said he or she had surpassed the original expectations, but had learned more about reading and writing than how to speak. One student confessed “no tanto” (not so much), but that there were plans to continue, and expressed overall happiness. Ultimately, students had various recommendations for future classes and teachers: one, after some hesitation, suggested more activities and games to help learning; another requested a larger class so there could be more practice with other students; also mentioned was a review of previous topics to remind students of what they have learned; the last student expressed complete satisfaction and that, “para mí, todo está perfecto” (for me, everything is perfect). This student also added that the classes were great because the teachers could always give an explanation as to why the language was a certain way, in grammar or vocabulary.
All four teachers that completed the initial survey participated in initial interviews, and all but one had been teaching the ESL class for more than six months. All teachers felt that students were learning English to fit in, find a good job, communicate with others, and make their lives easier. One teacher added that the United States is filled with discrimination, and many feel that those who do not speak English do not belong in this country. They also all concurred that English is the most dominant, common language across the world. Additionally, all four teachers mentioned that English was not an easy language to teach: due to its variable pronunciation and lack of any real spelling rules, it functions differently from any other language. One teacher also noted that the students were all at different stages of language learning, so it was difficult to reach every student or to really progress. Though they all felt English was difficult to teach, they did not feel that English was as difficult to learn from a student’s perspective. For children or for learners immersed in the culture, “you just kind of absorb it,” where as for adults living in Spanish-speaking communities or for students learning abroad, it would be difficult to become accustomed to the sounds or to practice. One teacher then added, “Every day is a learning process”. Teachers were asked why they chose to teach English if they thought it was difficult to teach and perhaps difficult for students to learn, to which there were several responses: two said they wanted to help in the community and felt they could improve their own language abilities by practicing Spanish; the other two confessed they initially signed up for the university credit, but have grown to really enjoy teaching because they can practice their Spanish, and because they feel the students enjoy the classes and “actually want to be here.” It was expected that students would learn to
better understand the teachers’ English, both oral and written, to learn cultural aspects of the American society, such as how to fill out a job application or a medical form, and to learn to use some key phrases. Several teachers expressed their belief that students would not be able to acquire many aspects of the English language in such a short amount of time, but they hoped they would eventually be able to apply their knowledge to society. Teachers associated an English speaker with an educated, monolingual male, and one teacher narrowed it down to “blonde hair, blue eyes.” Another teacher suggested that ignorance, intolerance, and a “closed mind” all described English speakers. Three teachers felt that Spanish speakers were dedicated to their jobs and lives, and motivated, while one thought of an immigrant with a lower income job, who was “struggling on a day to day basis.” After the interviews, one teacher admitted to having a very open mind, and that education in Spanish teaches individuals to have compassion for others instead of discriminating.

For the final interviews, only two of the remaining four teachers agreed to participate based on personal time constraints and availability. These two teachers noticed several changes in themselves at the end of the course, most of which were related to their teaching abilities. One said it was now more comfortable to speak Spanish and teach English, but that original ideologies towards speakers had not changed because this teacher was “already pretty open-minded”. The other declared that motivation was lost after seeing the lack of dedication of the students so, “I learned to lower my expectations.” Both stated partial satisfaction with the class, in that they expected more effort from the students in both participation and attendance, but neither would have
changed anything they had done in the class. One teacher recognized that the students’ lack of education in their native language, or in general, may have been a contributing factor to the issue of class participation; the other claimed that the students’ age was a cause, in that students were less confident than children would have been. Both teachers hoped that students would continue their studies because, although there was an improvement, they would have liked them to learn more. Both also had suggestions for future classes: for the teachers, one recommended arriving with a lesson plan because it helps to build the knowledge from class to class, and the other suggested patience and dedication, and to “work one-on-one with those students who struggle the most.” For the students, one advocated asking questions if a topic was unclear. In general, it was suggested that the class be held at a later time so those students who work late could attend more regularly and punctually.

**Observations**

During Thursday classes, teachers did not normally come with specific lesson plans or topics that they wished to discuss, but instead allowed the students to ask questions or present any subjects that they wanted to learn. Oftentimes, this included functional phrases, jokes or commands they heard from coworkers, such as “can you get that for me?” or sometimes the difference between phonetically similar words, such as “bat”, “bet”, “bit” and “but.” The students would then spend time learning each word or phrase and how it should be pronounced, and then would take the words previously learned and apply them to new hypothetical situations. Teachers provided games such as Bingo and Taboo to help students to learn U.S. culture and English vocabulary in an
interesting way. Students became competitive during games and attempted to understand
the vocabulary and purpose of the game in order to be the winner. Teachers also strived
to include practical knowledge in these classes that did not solely revolve around English
language learning. For example, they taught mathematical skills in English with the coins
of the U.S. monetary system. One teacher drew a ruler on the chalkboard to educate
students about fractions and measurements, which was useful in the everyday workplace
for many students. Students filled out applications for job interviews and were also given
medical forms to complete, which are a common requirement at Emergency Room visits
or doctor appointments.

The Tuesday teachers had a set structure of class that was followed most days, as
well as lesson plans and major topics for each class. One of the teachers outlined
preferences about class structure, in that every class began by correcting the homework
from the previous class, which led to practicing the topics and vocabulary learned in the
last class. After, a new topic would be introduced, which they would practice for the
majority of class. For the last fifteen minutes, everyone sat in a circle to speak in English,
and Spanish was “not allowed.” The teacher admitted that it was easier to arrive prepared
with a plan than to let the students determine the topics of the day. Classes included
subjects such as the rooms and furniture of the house, domestic chores, body parts, and
foods, and would always cover a grammatical concept, such as the present, past and
future verb tenses. On the particular day that students and teachers discussed the home,
everyone was laughing, and students shouted out to participate in the discussion. Students
practiced diagramming sentences, and were required to write phrases on the board and
determine errors. In January, students also mentioned how they used cards with different
words and parts of speech to combine different nouns, verbs, prepositions and articles to
form multiple phrases and sentences. By doing this, students could see how English
words function together to form sentences instead of learning each part as a separate
entity.

In both Tuesday’s and Thursday’s classes, general observations were made
despite the differences in teaching styles. From January to mid March, new students were
continually coming to the classes, bringing the average number of students per class to
about eight. When new students did attend, teachers had difficulty teaching new material,
as the new students would complain that they did not understand, and instead preferred to
learn basic phrases. The veteran students would never protest at the time, but would later
mention that they desired to learn new material instead of simply reviewing previous
lessons. Additionally, as there were several advanced students in the class, the new
students would wait for the advanced students to answer questions first, and then nod
their approval and provide their own responses. Students commonly showed their
gratitude to the teachers by bringing food and drink to class, and always made sure to
thank the teachers as they did so. Beginning in late April, workers were required to stay
later at their jobs to complete their tasks, and attendance decreased rapidly. Still, it
seemed that attendance on Tuesdays was almost always higher than on Thursdays. By the
last week of the semester, only four students showed up with consistency, and on
Thursdays, having just one or two students was a common occurrence.
Immediately following one interview session, students informally conversed about the differences between the Spanish and English languages. One student claimed that in English, “los sonidos y los vocales cambian con cada palabra, pero en español puedes leer la palabra y pronunciarla igual” (the sounds and vowels change with each word, but in Spanish you can read the word and pronounce it the same). Another stated that language learning “es más fácil para los niños. Mi hijo habla muy bien, y cuando yo hablo en inglés siempre dice “¿Qué dices?” porque no hablo correctamente” (it’s much easier for children. My son speaks very well, and when I speak in English he always says, “What are you saying?” because I don’t speak correctly).

Before the final day of class, the director of the TWU organization at Culmore came to discuss future programs with the teachers and students to determine if any changes could be made. Teachers happily provided responses to all questions, such as their opinions on why attendance was so low. It was suggested that the classes begin later so that students could arrive on time for class after work. It was also added that classes should include tests, quizzes, and assignments so as to seem more official. However, when students were asked for information or recommendations, no one wanted to provide an answer except that they were happy and thankful for what the teachers had done. Students were hesitant to elaborate more than a yes or no answer on all questionnaires, interviews, or discussions involved with the study.

Journals

Volunteers’ weekly submissions to the GMU wiki were found to be exceedingly useful, as they contained unique insight that was not otherwise revealed during class
time, or in the questionnaires or interviews. As early as the first essay, volunteer teachers noted that the students were all at different levels of the language learning process. Teacher A stressed how important it was to support the students and provide a friendly, positive atmosphere because, “ellos no quieren venir a una clase donde el profesor siempre insulta” (they do not want to come to a class where the professor always insults). Teacher A also stated the desire that students would speak with more confidence, because they had the ability. It was added that many of the students do not have a firm base in their native language nor much prior education, which is believed to make second-language learning more difficult. In the first journal entry, teacher B expressed excitement to be helping others to converse, but mentioned that students should take the class more seriously so they could progress quicker.

By the fifth entry, some changes were becoming visible related to teaching experiences. Teacher A was thrilled to teach, and believed anyone studying a second language should take a similar course or volunteer in a comparable fashion because it creates new perspectives about others and demonstrates how to cooperate in daily life. It was also added that this class is so important to the ELLs as it gives them an opportunity to practice what they have learned in an informal context, unlike the real world where people are constantly making judgments. Teacher A stated:

“Siempre tenemos vergüenza porque no queremos parecer estúpidos. A veces cuando una persona no habla bien en una lengua, el mundo ve esa persona [sic] como imbécil pero no debe ser así. Tenemos que respetar a estos inmigrantes que vienen para trabajar aquí. Merecen respeto porque sólo quieren una vida mejor para su familia y a sí mismos. Si les damos respeto, sería mucho más fácil para ellos integrar en la sociedad y quizás querrían aprender el lenguaje.”
(We are always ashamed because we do not want to seem stupid. Sometimes when a person doesn’t speak a language well, the world sees that person as an imbecile, but it should not be this way. We have to respect these immigrants that come to work here. They deserve respect because they only want a better life for their families and themselves. If we give them respect, it would be much easier for them to integrate in the society and perhaps they would want to learn the language).

A description was then included of one particular student, who put forth strong efforts regardless of the nervousness expressed by other classmates. In this case, Teacher A mentioned that the student’s determination showed that there was a significant desire to learn the language.

Teacher B quickly became frustrated. In the fourth essay it was mentioned that the attendance was very poor, students were not completing their assigned homework, and they were making excuses because of their long work hours. For Teacher B, finishing the homework was the best way for the students to benefit from the class, and also facilitated the teachers in discovering what the students had learned, or perhaps had struggled to understand. It was confirmed that the students needed to advance, but with their limited education in their native language, it was unlikely to occur this semester. Teacher B then added, “No me doy por vencido [sic], solo tengo que ser más creativa” (I am not giving up, I just have to be more creative).

Towards the end of the semester, the journalists noted that the students could more easily understand spoken English, and some of the more advanced students even assisted the teachers in difficult lessons by explaining the concepts in Spanish to those who did not comprehend. Teacher A continually referenced that the lack of education in
students’ native language seemed to be a limiting factor for those who frequently had difficulty. Although teachers mentioned their pride that the students were advancing, they also noted their frustration with attendance. In entry eleven, teachers noticed that fewer students were able to come to class because more work was available and they had to take advantage of the job opportunities. The students that did arrive would come late or would suggest that the class begin at a later time so they could attend.

In the final journal entries, the volunteers added their closing thoughts. Teacher B felt that changing the time of the class or enforcing exams and assignments would not be sufficient to evoke an adequate feeling of necessity in the students, as the students in the current course did not complete their homework. Teacher A felt that more volunteers who could dedicate additional time to the task would provide a better learning environment for the students. Finally, Teacher A asserted that this experience conjured a passion to assist more in the community and with less-fortunate people: “quiero hacer una diferencia en el mundo” (I want to make a difference in the world).
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Survey and interview results as well as observations from the semester of classes provided information that suggests possible responses to the research questions of study:

- How do adults respond to non-traditional ESL classes?
- How do class expectations and language ideologies change after a period of language education?
- How do the backgrounds and language ideologies of teachers affect language learners?
- How do ideologies influence class satisfaction?

In addition to answering the research questions, further discoveries were made that were not previously expected, including falsified information, changing answers based on the instrument of study, and unwillingness to provide responses in general. As a whole, this study offered a number of interesting elements for analysis, not only in the surveys and interviews but also in the general observations made during class time.

At first glance, it is clear that adults respond well to classes of English as a second language. The students of this study demonstrated through their survey and interview responses that there is definitely a demand and a need for ESL classes, but other considerations needed to be taken into account to give this research question a more complete answer (see figures 9 and 12). At the start of the new semester, attendance was
very high, showing that students were extremely motivated to learn the language and had intended on participating in the program. As time passed, however, students appeared to lose their steam based on final attendance, the few days in which only one student came to class, and the number of students who would arrive late to class each day. The attendance and tardiness may have been related to work engagements, childcare, or external conflicts outside of their control, in accordance with McArthur’s (1998) findings as to why adult ESL students miss classes. Nonetheless, even in class most adults were hesitant to perform written assignments and to complete their homework. Survey answers suggested that the students’ lack of formal education might contribute to their difficulties in task completion. Most students had not participated in a proper class environment in many years, and perhaps did not understand what was required of them in such a setting. Interestingly, when new students attended class, they would wait for the veteran students to answer questions first before providing their own responses. In this case, students were “passing” as proficient during class by checking with peers before responding to ensure their answers are socially acceptable (Monzó & Rueda, 2009; Rymes & Pash, 2001). When the lessons became less formal, such as conversations or games, students appeared more relaxed and more eager to learn, and would readily participate. In final interviews, students recommended more activities to help students in future classes. This could be due to the more comfortable, natural environment similar to what was customary for students in their everyday lives: interaction between friends. These situations allowed students to learn and practice the language without the stress of formal assignments and lectures with which they were not familiar.
Unexpectedly, students constantly showed gratitude to the teachers for their efforts. If a teacher had trouble explaining a topic to a class of confused students, the students who did understand would try to help out so the teachers would not struggle alone. Teachers often brought snacks or candy on game days to make the experience more enjoyable for students, and a few times students ran to the store during the class break to buy something to share, also. Otherwise, students would make foods from their native cultures to give to the teachers, or would bring art or personal crafts for the teachers to say thank you. During the interviews, appreciation was expressed verbally when others asked how the teachers were doing, and when the TWU director came at the end of the year to ask for suggestions, students would not willingly offer recommendations and said nothing except their gratitude for the effort the teachers had displayed. Perhaps a reason for this appreciation is that students knew the teachers were volunteering their time and effort, and were not otherwise compensated. Thus, students felt their small tokens of appreciation were the best form of payment they could provide. This finding corresponded to Allen’s (2006) study, in which students expressed gratitude toward their ESL teachers regardless of their dissatisfaction with class organization and opportunities for practice. Overall, this evidence demonstrates that despite the plummeting attendance, the students found the ESL class to be beneficial, and for that they were very grateful to the teachers.

Due to the changes in the student population, it was difficult to determine whether there were concrete changes in students’ beliefs and opinions over the course of the ESL program. Although in many cases responses changed when comparing initial and final
surveys and interviews, it cannot be assumed that this was due to a transformation in opinion or ideology, but instead might have been because different people responded or simply chose a distinct group of words. Additionally, students did not seem to understand the questions about language ideologies, so no firm conclusions could be drawn. Several students initially stated there were no differences between speakers of English and any other language, and although that concept was not mentioned in the final surveys it could not be assumed that students no longer felt that way based on closing survey responses.

Aside from language ideologies, there was a clear change in motivation in the students. At the beginning, it appeared that most students started the class very driven to learn based on their expression of necessity and desire for English (see figures 9 and 12). Although the four that remained at the end of the semester did express their enthusiasm to continue learning the language, the majority of students had dropped out by the end of the year, indicating a decrease in motivation. One change that was easily perceivable from interviews and surveys is that students began with very high expectations (see figures 14 and 15), and at the end the final four students were not 100% satisfied with what they had learned: one clearly stated he had expected to learn more, but now understood that language learning was a slow progression that would take time. What happened for this student may have occurred for others who dropped out: although no one voiced an expectation for fluency in English by the end of the semester, students had figured they would rapidly progress during the course. After a few months of language learning they either realized that the learning process was much more difficult than predicted and required time and patience, or students dropped the course.
For one teacher, I noticed a very drastic change in behavior and motivation from the beginning of the semester to the end. This teacher began the semester very enthusiastically, and with high hopes took the lead of the classes one day a week. Through the weekly journals, I was able to see the thoughts of this teacher and the regression throughout the semester, from excitement to utter disappointment and frustration. I believe the teacher had good intentions and expected to make a large impact on these students by providing knowledge of the English language and the American culture; however, when the attendance plunged and when students did not complete their assignments, the teacher quickly became frustrated. Attempts were made to stimulate the students, but when the efforts were futile and students continued dropping, the teacher seemed to give up: the final few weeks of this class went unplanned, and movies were brought to entertain the students instead of teaching lessons. This dramatic difference over the five-month period demonstrates how students’ actions and beliefs greatly affected the teacher and influenced the direction of the class.

Just as students’ actions can weigh on teachers and the class outcome, teachers play an enormous role in what is learned and how students acquire that information. It cannot be said whether the frustration of this one teacher was an effect of the decreasing attendance rate of the class or if it was a cause, but it is clear that these two are interrelated. Something I found to be very interesting was the difference in attendance between the Tuesday classes and the Thursday classes: Tuesday’s teachers always arrived with a firm lesson plan that followed a particular order, while Thursday’s teachers usually did not have a plan but instead followed the interests of the students. I noticed that many
more students consistently attended the Tuesday classes than the Thursday classes, possibly indicating that students preferred to have a lesson plan. Perhaps the loose format of the Thursday classes did not provide enough structure for the students; instead of viewing the class as serious and necessary, it was seen as too flexible and even unimportant. It is also conceivable that the more formal environment and order of lessons gave students a clear vision of what needed to be done, and therefore made task completion easier.

I also feel that students may have been able to perceive the frustration of the Thursday teachers, and as a result became more easily discouraged themselves. This situation created a causality loop, in which the attitudes of the students affected the actions of the teachers, which in turn influenced the outlooks of the students even more. Towards the end of the semester, attendance on Tuesday dropped dramatically with the improving weather, but students still attended class. However, oftentimes only one student would attend the Thursday class while four to six would arrive on Tuesday. Although decreasing attendance rates can naturally occur throughout the period of a course, if students felt their efforts were not sufficient and the teachers were dissatisfied with their learning attempts, they may have been more inclined to resign and admit defeat than to persevere without signs of encouragement. I do not believe that the teachers intended to influence the students in such a way, nor do I imagine that they knew how the students felt. Nevertheless, I do feel the low attendance rates were an inadvertent consequence of a combination of negative emotions and a loosely structured class, as well as external factors such as work or personal conflicts.
Once again, a solid answer to how ideologies affect class satisfaction was difficult to formulate based on the anonymity of the surveys and the changes in attendance throughout the semester. However, according to class observations it seemed that the students who began the class with the most motivation or with firmest reasons for attending class followed through on their intentions and finished the course. These motivations included learning English to maintain their jobs and to communicate with their children, as students stated in informal class conversations. The students with such reasons perceived English as a necessary aspect of life and therefore were more inclined to complete the course even when other factors made the class more challenging. This rationale agrees with Allen’s (2006) proposition of language necessity, that oftentimes those who register for and finish out the ESL course are the students who genuinely need to learn the language. At the end of the course, students’ responses ranged from somewhat to completely satisfied with what and how they learned in the class and their final levels of English (see figures 14, 15, and 16). As all four students ended the class fairly pleased with the class, this suggests that those students with the highest motivations finish with the highest satisfaction levels. On the other hand, the rest of the students may have only seen English as a skill they should acquire, but not an essential part of their future; for these students, dropping out when the class became more difficult to attend posed minimum risks because they could always start classes again at a more convenient time when the situation allowed. This postulation would agree with Beder’s common reasons for missing class, more specifically the low perception of need (as cited in Allen,
Conversely, the students who continued to attend class were in a position where they viewed the English class as a necessity.

Several other interesting findings were made in addition to those intended by the study. A key issue of the study was that so many subjects did not provide answers to the questions, so concrete conclusions could not be made. At first glance of both initial surveys of the students and teachers, respondents left numerous questions blank instead of providing an answer on difficult questions about opinions and beliefs as well as simple demographic questions (see figures 1, 2, 3 and 11 for students, and figure 20 for teachers). Surveys and interview questions were intended to be clear and simple, were written or asked in the native language of the respondent, and surveys had space for extra comments if needed. I was also available during the time of the survey and answered students’ questions regarding some of the more difficult questions. Nonetheless, students had difficulty answering several of the survey questions, and even hesitated with frequency when answering interview questions. In casual conversation outside of interviews and surveys, students freely expressed their opinions about language learning because we were merely chatting, but in a formal survey setting students appeared nervous and confused, and even talked amongst themselves to determine appropriate responses. There are multiple possible explanations for the students’ behavior, including the likelihood that students simply did not understand the questions. I had inferred based on class interactions and assignments that all students were literate in their native language and hence had presumed that students could read proficiently in their mother tongue. This assumption may have been incorrect: even though students did not verbalize
issues with reading or writing in class, it is possible that students were embarrassed to admit they did not understand or were afraid to request help to avoid seeming uneducated. During the surveys, instead of confessing their difficulties, it was easier just to leave the space blank. Further evidence that students could not comprehend the questions was that various invalid responses were provided, which included phrases that did not address the question or even relate to the topic (see figures 11 and 16).

Additionally, as students did not have formal education past secondary school, it is unlikely that they had previously been involved in a research study or understood what exactly an investigation demanded. Prior to the initial surveys, a description of the study explaining the procedures and the purpose of the investigation was read to the students (see appendices I and J). Nevertheless, if subjects were unfamiliar with research collection, it is improbable that a simple explanation of one isolated study would be sufficient to illustrate the implications of research as a whole. In this case, the importance of the research may not have been understood, so they assumed blank answers would not affect the results of the study. In the initial description, I also stated that this research was being done through George Mason University, was completely unrelated to Tenants and Workers United and the English program, and that all results would remain anonymous. Despite this disclaimer, students also seemed to associate the study with the English class and the teachers. They may have been hesitant to respond honestly in case answers would offend the teachers or the program director, or produce unequal treatment to any student during class time. For this reason, instead of answering in an offensive or unpleasant manner, it was preferable to not respond at all.
Conversely, it is possible that subjects did understand the implications of the study and what the questions were asking, but just did not care to help. In the initial description of the study, it was made clear that the surveys would be anonymous and there would be no way to know who provided which answers. This statement was made so subjects would feel more comfortable offering honest answers and would not feel judged. However, the anonymity may have provided an excuse for some respondents to not answer, in that I had no way of knowing which subject had left answers blank. I inferred that this was the case with one teacher, who left the majority of the initial survey blank and did not agree to participate in the final interview. After handing in the initial survey to me, this teacher stated that he normally was “horrible” at completing surveys, so I inferred that the incomplete survey belonged to this teacher. When asked in front of the class and peers if this subject would participate in the study, the teacher would happily oblige, but in an anonymous environment or when asked privately was unwilling to comply. I do believe this teacher understood the questions of the survey and comprehended the importance of the study, but did not feel the study would provide any personal benefit. Instead of opting not to participate in the study, this teacher elected to take part but not contribute to the full potential.

Another interesting discovery related to the unwillingness or failure to provide answers to the best of their ability was that students’ answers would change based on the instrument of research. Occasionally, when students would leave answers blank on the surveys, they would provide elaborate responses during interviews. It is not certain if this was because it was necessary to read and write on the surveys, and students might not
have had the capacity to perform well at that, but in interviews they simply were required to listen and speak their response. Another possible reason could be that the anonymity of surveys permitted an escape from responding, while the face-to-face nature of interviews placed more pressure on respondents to offer more reflective answers. The best illustration of this situation was the difficult question about ideologies associated with speakers of different languages. At the time of the surveys, students consistently asked me what type of answer I was seeking, to which of course I could not respond so as to not guide them to a particular answer. I did try to explain the question better, but in students’ answers some provided invalid responses that did not relate to the question and several left the space blank. During the interviews, students easily offered answers, all of which related to the question.

Finally, the last unexpected result from the surveys and interviews was that respondents did not always give truthful answers. In teachers’ initial surveys, they were asked what was their highest level of completed education. Although I was aware that all teachers were in the process of completing their Bachelor’s degree from GMU, two teachers claimed they already had completed a Bachelor’s degree. Oddly, both students verbally conferred their decision to falsify this information to me as they completed the surveys, although the two surveys were performed on different days. Their explanation for this answer was that they were almost done with their degree, and thus were justified in stating that it was completed. I believe that by providing this answer, teachers felt more confident about themselves, as if the difference between the “some college” response and the “Bachelor’s degree” response gave them a higher status among the other
participants. Conversely, I caught one case of a student omitting information in the question about how long students had been living in the United States. I knew from previous conversations that one particular student had been living in the U.S. for fourteen years. However, although I had no way to know which student belonged to which survey, not one student stated that they had lived in this country for more than eight years (see figure 3). Reasoning for this behavior produced by both students and teachers alike was that subjects wanted to appear as intelligent and as respectable as possible; by omitting or altering information that perhaps would not be seen as satisfactory, they felt they could create a more impressive image.

Although this study produced multiple results that were not previously expected, all observations of this study do help to answer the study’s research questions. Furthermore, some of the outcomes correspond to other studies and prior research on language learners, corroborating these discoveries. Results of this investigation that do not relate to previous studies are not viewed as erroneous or only unique to this study, but further research will be necessary to confirm and verify any findings.
CHAPTER SIX: PRESENT LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Although this study did present useful information that can be applied to future ESL programs, it is necessary to consider the research setting before drawing conclusions to be associated with other research populations. Results from this investigation cannot necessarily be generalized to all ESL classes, language learners or teachers, as this was a unique but narrow case study. In order to relate this research for future studies, there are four principal limitations that need to be addressed: a small research sample, a brief time frame of study, an involved researcher, and unsuitable research instruments.

The TWU classes began with an average of eight students and three teachers each, and although there was no way to predict that attendance and volunteers would drop so dramatically, more accurate results could have been produced by observing more than one class in the same area. As it turned out, nearly all of the student subjects were from the same country, even down to the same city in some cases, and most were within the same age group. Therefore, the student research group was quite homogenous. By seeking ESL students of multiple programs, a larger and more diverse population of students could be studied. When subjects did not agree to participate or would not provide answers to questions, there would be sufficient participants and answers to counteract what was lacking. Additionally, in this case, volunteer college students managed the class, whereas ESL programs directed by more experienced teachers may
have produced very different results. By increasing the number and diversity of the research sample, a better representation of the ESL population could be demonstrated.

In the semester that I volunteered prior to the study, I noticed subtle changes in the students and teachers after only four months of English classes. During the time of the study, only four months of time were again allotted to demonstrate changes in ideologies and motivations, producing minimal differences and much uncertainty about the reliability of the results. A research study that began the first day of the new school year in the fall and ended the last day of classes in the spring, or even a multiple-year longitudinal study, would likely yield more drastic changes with a higher degree of confidence supporting them. More time would also allow for more reflection from students and teachers as to not only what they truly desired to gain from the ESL class and what they felt about the language as a whole, but also why they had such feelings.

As the researcher of this study, I attempted to be very objective and to remain an observer of the classes, as opposed to my role the previous semester as a volunteer teacher. Due to my previous position in the class, some students were already familiar with me, knew that I associated with the other teachers outside of the ESL setting, and were aware that I had a relationship established with the university and the TWU organization. For this reason, students may not have been as willing to freely admit their feelings and opinions in fear that they would be judged, or that their responses would be shared with the ESL teachers, TWU, or the professors involved in the program from GMU. In future studies, a more objective, uninvolved researcher might offer students a
more confidential environment in which to candidly deliver their true emotions, without worry or hesitation.

Finally, research instrumentation could be greatly improved for future studies. Despite the efforts to ensure clarity and conciseness of survey and interview questions, there was still much difficulty in understanding the questions, the purpose of the study, and why they were being questioned. Instead of assuming all subjects are proficiently literate in their native language, verbal questionnaires or more extensive interviews may prove to be the most effective means of data collection. If written surveys are utilized, researchers must be fully certain that subjects comprehend the questions, or should be willing to explicitly explain each entry so it is universally understood. It would likely also be beneficial to reform many of the questions into more simple statements, so that the language of the survey questions is easier to understand.

Despite the limitations of this study, much information is offered for the field of second-language acquisition, and results add to the very shallow pool of knowledge regarding adult language learners. Information from this study also proposes unresolved questions that could serve for future studies:

• How do students and teachers respond in ESL classes that do require payment, as opposed to gratuitous classes?
• Is there a significant difference in students’ reactions to structured classes versus non-structured classes?
• How do teachers’ satisfaction levels vary with training in education or even with student’s interests?
Along with recommendations for future studies, this study signifies that adult language learners need great encouragement to remain motivated throughout the course of language class. Through this study, it was determined that the students who were obligated to learn English remained the most motivated and, in turn, were satisfied with the outcome of the class; however, those that did not see the class as a necessity ultimately dropped out. If adults are attending class simply because they feel they should but no need is driving them, it is probable that their enthusiasm to learn will diminish over time along with their interest in going to class. Hence, it is important to encourage students by finding their source of inspiration and emphasizing it.

Related to this topic is the effect that teachers can have on their students. Results of this study displayed that teachers’ emotions, both positive and negative, can be transmitted to their students over time. If teachers have negative attitudes or are easily frustrated by students, the students are likely to perceive that negativity and even emit it themselves, as may have been the case with Thursday classes. For negative students, it is probable that they will lose focus and forget the reasons that brought them to the class initially. Likewise, if teachers are positive and show their own interest to students in class, the enthusiasm can be contagious, as seemed to be the case in Tuesday classes. Positive students enjoy the class and are ultimately satisfied with their efforts in the course. In order to keep adults motivated, recognizing students’ efforts in class as well as keeping an optimistic attitude can help guide students in a positive direction and empower them. With empowerment comes the likelihood of continuing to stay active in the class.
Unrealistic expectations are inevitable when dealing with language learners of all ages, but it is possible to avoid the disappointment associated with failing to achieve goals. Instead of letting students determine their own reasonable expectations, it is helpful to offer students a notion of what they can anticipate from the class during the first few class periods. If a summary is given of what topics will be covered and what skills will be stressed in the course, students will know what results are typical before they can make any assumptions. Otherwise, students may expect to gain complete proficiency in a language in a matter of several months, when that belief is clearly impractical. This scenario is a possible explanation for the loss of students in the present study: students were not satisfied with their progress, so they simply stopped trying. By explaining what one can reasonably expect from the class, students can avoid placing extreme demands on themselves, which can cause rapid disappointment and loss of motivation when goals are not quickly attained. This can be done along with informing students that they can voice any concerns to teachers, instead of holding their frustrations in. This way, students can see steady progress, as anticipated, and know that they are gradually reaching what they aspired to accomplish. If students are not satisfied with their progress, they know they can express their worries to someone who can help them to reach their maximum potential.

At the same time, it is important to instruct teachers on common occurrences in the ESL classroom, as well as what is often achieved by the students, so that teachers are aware of possible outcomes of the course. It is uncertain how much prior training in education the volunteer teachers had completed before the start of the ESL course, but it
is certain that they did not expect such high dropout rates, which is a very normal occurrence in community ESL programs such as this one. Just as students need to understand what is acceptable in such an environment, teachers should be forewarned of both the positive and negative consequences of an ESL class. With such instruction, teachers will know how to react when there is an issue in class, or from whom to seek advice when unplanned events occur.

Although results of this study are only valid for this individual case due to the limited scope of the research, conclusions drawn from this investigation do bring us closer to understanding how ESL courses are executed and what fields of study still need to be developed. Of course, further research is necessary to verify the validity of this information and to help answer other underlying questions that this investigation has prompted. With additional knowledge, educators can ensure that they are offering adult students the most effective learning environment for language acquisition, in which individual language ideologies play a minimal role.
APPENDICES

A.

Initial Student Questionnaire

I. Ponga una X en la casilla correcta o escriba la respuesta en el espacio en blanco.
1. Sexo: [ ] Varón [ ] Hembra
2. Edad: [ ] 18-25 [ ] 26-33 [ ] 34-40 [ ] Más de 41
3. Número de años en los Estados Unidos:
[ ] Menos de 2 [ ] 3-5 [ ] 6-8 [ ] 9-11 [ ] 12 o más
4. País de nacimiento: ____________________________________
5. Nivel de educación:
[ ] Escuela primaria [ ] Escuela intermedia [ ] Escuela secundaria
[ ] Escuela técnica [ ] Universidad [ ] Estudios de posgrado
[ ] Otro: _______________________

II. Ponga una X en la casilla correcta o escriba la respuesta en el espacio en blanco. Si contesta ‘sí’ a una pregunta, por favor explique con detalle.
6. ¿Tiene experiencia previa con el aprendizaje de una segunda lengua? Si la tiene, explique. _______________________________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________.

7. a. ¿Habla otra(s) lengua(s) aparte de español e inglés? [ ] sí [ ] no
b. ¿Si habla, cuál(es) es/son?________________________________________________
c. ¿Cómo aprendió la tercera lengua (si aplica)? Marque todo lo que corresponda.
[ ] en la escuela [ ] en la casa [ ] en la calle [ ] en el trabajo
[ ] en otro lugar:_________________
d. ¿Dónde habla la tercera lengua? Marque todo lo que corresponda.
[ ] en la escuela [ ] en la casa [ ] con amigos
[ ] en el trabajo [ ] en otro lugar:_________________
e. ¿Cómo aprendió la cuarta lengua (si aplica)? Marque todo lo que corresponda.
[ ] en la escuela [ ] en la casa [ ] en la calle [ ] en el trabajo
[ ] en otro lugar:_________________
f. ¿Dónde habla la cuarta lengua? Marque todo lo que corresponda.
[ ] en la escuela [ ] en la casa [ ] con amigos [ ] en el trabajo
[ ] en otro lugar:_________________
SI SABE MÁS LENGUAS, CONTESTE EN ESTE ESPACIO: __________________________________

g. ¿Si no habla, tiene ganas de aprender otra(s) lengua(s)? [ ] sí [ ] no
h. ¿Cuál(es)? [ ] francés [ ] ruso [ ] italiano [ ] chino [ ] árabe [ ] portugués [ ] alemán [ ] otra: ___________________________
III. Ponga una X en la casilla correcta o escriba la respuesta en el espacio en blanco. Si contesta ‘sí’ a una pregunta, por favor explique con detalle.

8. ¿Por qué quiere aprender inglés?

9. a. ¿Cree que es fácil aprender inglés?  
   [ ] sí  
   [ ] no

   b. ¿Por qué?

10. a. ¿Cree que es importante/ útil hablar inglés?  
    [ ] sí  
    [ ] no

   b. ¿Por qué?

11. ¿Cuál(es) característica(s) asocia Ud. con un hablante de inglés?

IV. Ponga una X en la casilla correcta o escriba la respuesta en el espacio en blanco. Si contesta ‘sí’ a una pregunta, por favor explique con detalle.

12. ¿Qué quiere aprender en la clase de inglés?

13. ¿Qué espera lograr al final de la clase? Marque todo lo que corresponda.
   [ ] escribir en inglés  
   [ ] leer en inglés  
   [ ] hablar un poco mejor  
   [ ] aprender la cultura  
   [ ] aprender más vocabulario  
   [ ] aprender más gramática  
   [ ] practicar lo que ya sabe  
   [ ] fluidez  
   [ ] otro: _______________________________________

14. ¿Cómo/Qué desea que enseñen los maestros?

Otros comentarios:
B.

Initial Teacher Questionnaire

I. Place an X in the box by your answer or write the answer in the space provided.
1. Gender:  [ ] Male  [ ] Female
2. Age:  [ ] 18-25  [ ] 26-33  [ ] 34-40
3. Number of years in the United States:
   [ ] Less than 2  [ ] 3-5  [ ] 6-8  [ ] 9-11  [ ] 12 or more
4. Country of origin: ____________________________________
5. Highest level of education:
   [ ] High School  [ ] Some College  [ ] Bachelor's Degree
   [ ] Some Post-grad  [ ] Graduate Degree  [ ] Technical/Trade School
   [ ] Other: ______________________

II. Place an X in the box by your answer or write your answer in the space provided. If you answer 'yes' to any questions, please provide a detailed explanation in the blank.
6. Why do you want to teach English?___________________________________________
7. a. Do you speak any other language(s) besides English?  [ ] yes  [ ] no
   b. If yes, what language(s)?_________________
   c. How did you learn the language(s)? [ ] in school  [ ] at home  [ ] on the street
      [ ] at work  [ ] somewhere else: ______________________
8. a. Have you taught English or any other languages before?  [ ] yes  [ ] no
   b. If yes, what language(s) and where? ________________________________________

III. Place an X in the box by your answer or write your answer in the space provided. If you answer 'yes' to any questions, please provide a detailed explanation in the blank.
9. Why do you believe the students want to learn English? _______________________
   _________________________________________________________________________
10. a. Do you believe English is easy to teach?  [ ] yes  [ ] no
    b. Why? ________________________________________________________________
11. a. Do you believe English is easy to learn?  [ ] yes  [ ] no
    b. Why? ________________________________________________________________
12. a. Do you believe it is important/useful to speak English?  [ ] yes  [ ] no
    b. Why? ________________________________________________________________
13. What characteristic(s) do you associate with an English speaker?______________

IV. Place an X in the box by your answer or write your answer in the space provided. If you answer 'yes' to any questions, please provide a detailed explanation in the blank.
12. What techniques would you like the students to learn? _______________________
13. What do you expect the students to achieve in English? Mark all that apply.
   [ ] ability to write  [ ] ability to read  [ ] to speak a bit better  [ ] to learn the culture
   [ ] to learn more vocabulary  [ ] to learn more grammar
   [ ] to practice what they know  [ ] fluency  [ ] other: _______________________
14. What would you like to happen in class? ____________________________________
C. Final Student Questionnaire

Estudiantes:
I. Ponga una X en la casilla correcta o escriba la respuesta en el espacio en blanco. Por favor explique cada respuesta con detalle.

1. ¿Por qué quiere aprender el inglés? ____________________________________________

2. a. ¿Cree que es fácil aprender el inglés? [ ] sí [ ] no
b. ¿Por qué?

3. a. ¿Cree que es importante/ útil hablar inglés? [ ] sí [ ] no
b. ¿Por qué?

4. ¿Cuál(es) característica(s) asocia Ud. con un hablante de inglés? ______

II. Ponga una X en la casilla correcta o escriba la respuesta en el espacio en blanco. Por favor explique cada respuesta con detalle.

5. ¿Ha aprendido lo que esperaba? Explique. [ ] sí [ ] no

6. ¿Sabe inglés al nivel que quería? Explique. [ ] sí [ ] no

7. ¿Está satisfecho/a con la clase? Explique. [ ] sí [ ] no
D.

Final Teacher Questionnaire

Teachers:
I. Place an X in the box by your answer or write your answer in the space provided. Please explain each response with details.

1. Do you feel the students have achieved the techniques and level of English that was expected of them? Please explain. [ ] yes [ ] no

___________________________________________

___________________________________________

2. Did the class go as planned? Please explain. [ ] yes [ ] no

_____________________________________________________

3. Do you feel that the students are satisfied with the class? Please explain. [ ] yes [ ] no

_____________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________
E. Initial Student Interview Questions

1. ¿De dónde eres?

2. ¿Por cuántos años has vivido aquí en los Estados Unidos?

3. ¿Qué esperas aprender en esta clase?

4. ¿Qué características asocias con un hablante de inglés?

5. ¿Qué características asocias con un hablante de español?

6. ¿Por qué piensas que es necesario aprender inglés?

7. ¿Crees que todavía es importante hablar español? ¿Por qué?
Initial Teacher Interview Questions

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. Why do you think the students want to learn English?
3. Why do you think it’s important to learn English?
4. Do you think English is easy to teach? Why?
5. Do you think English is easy to learn? Why?
6. Why do you want to teach English to these students?
7. What do you expect them to gain from this class?
8. What characteristics do you associate with an English speaker?
9. What characteristics do you associate with a Spanish speaker?
G.

Final Student Interview Questions

1. ¿Había unos cambios en tus pensamientos, ideas, o perspectivas desde el principio de la clase hasta ahora?

2. ¿La clase fue cómo pensabas? ¿Correspondió con tus expectativas?

3. ¿Los maestros hicieron lo que querías?

4. ¿Tú nivel de inglés es lo que pensabas antes que iba a ser?

5. ¿Tienes unas sugerencias para las clases futuras, los maestros futuros, u otros estudiantes?

6. ¿Piensas que deben cambiar algo en el futuro?
H.

Final Teacher Interview Questions

1. Were there any changes in your thoughts, ideas, or perspectives from the beginning of the class until now?

2. Did the class go as you thought it would? Did it fulfill your expectations?

3. Do you feel you performed as a teacher the way you thought you would?

4. Would you have done anything differently?

5. Did the students respond the way you expected they would?

6. Do you have suggestions for future classes, teachers, or students?

7. Do you believe anything should change about the class in the future?
Informed Consent Form for Language Studies

RESEARCH PROCEDURES
This research is being conducted to for a Masters thesis. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to answer any questions provided in a survey of about 10 minutes and participate in a recorded interview of approximately 5-10 minutes. Confidential observations will be recorded that will not affect the progress of the class.

RISKS
There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research.

BENEFITS
There are no benefits to participants other than to further research in language education and ideologies.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The data in this study will be confidential. Names and other identifying information will not be included on any collected data and instead the use of an identification code will be used to link all collected data to your identity. Only the researcher will have access to this identification code.

PARTICIPATION
Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.

CONTACT
This research is being conducted by Rachel Hatcher through George Mason University. She may be reached at 703-403-1266 for questions or to report a research-related problem. The research is advised by Esperanza Roman Mendoza, who may be contacted at 703-993-1232. You may contact the George Mason University Office of Research Subject Protections at 703-993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

CONSENT
I have read this form and agree to participate in this study.

[ ] I agree to be audio taped.          [ ] I do not agree to be audiotaped.

________________________________  ________________________________
Name                                Date of Signature
Formulario de consentimiento para investigaciones

PROCEDIMIENTO DE INVESTIGACIÓN
El propósito de esta investigación es para un tesis de maestría. Si se participa, se debe contestar a las preguntas de un cuestionario de no más que 10 minutos y responder a una entrevista grabada de aproximadamente 5 a 10 minutos. Se va a hacer observaciones confidenciales durante la clase que no van a afectar el progreso del curso.

RIESGOS
No hay ningún riesgo asociado con la participación en esta investigación.

BENEFICIOS
No hay ninguna ventaja asociada a este estudio excepto la posibilidad de reflexionar más sobre las lenguas e ideologías.

CONFIDENCIALIDAD
La información del estudio es confidencial. Los nombres y otros identificadores suyos no se incluyen en la información del estudio y se usa un número para conectar la información a su identidad. Nadie tiene acceso a este número salvo el investigador.

PARTICIPACIÓN
La participación es voluntaria y se puede retirar del estudio en cualquier momento por cualquier razón. Si decide no participar o decide retirarse, no hay ninguna penalización, multa o pérdida de beneficios.

CONTACTO
Rachel Hatcher es la investigadora del estudio y está asociada con la Universidad de George Mason. Puede contactar con ella en el 703-403-1266 si tiene preguntas o problemas. La asesora del estudio es Esperanza Román Mendoza y su número de contacto es el 703-993-1232. También se puede llamar al Departamento de la Protección de los Participantes en Investigaciones de la Universidad de George Mason al 703-993-4121 si tiene preguntas o comentarios sobre sus derechos de participación en el estudio.

La Universidad de George Mason ha repasado esta información y está de acuerdo con los procedimientos de su participación en el estudio.

CONSENSIMIENTO
He leído el formulario y decido participar en el estudio.
[ ] Doy mi consentimiento par ser grabado.  [ ] No doy mi consentimiento para ser grabado.

__________________________
Nombre

__________________________
Fecha de la firma
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


CURRICULUM VITAE

Rachel Hatcher graduated from Osbourn Park High School in 2004. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Spanish and Bachelor of Science in Biology from James Madison University in 2008. She took a year off after graduation to pursue additional studies in Dentistry, before realizing Spanish was the missing piece in her life. After completing her Masters degree, Rachel intends to continue teaching Spanish to beginner language learners in order to share her contagious love of the language with as many students as possible.