KEY ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE HYBRID ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS

Approved:  (Ann Krebs Byrne, MSE) Date: May 10, 2015

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A Seminar Paper

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

University of Wisconsin-Platteville

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In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirement for the Degree

Masters of Science

in

Education

Adult Education

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by

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2015

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor Ann Krebs Byrne for her dedicated assistance in editing my paper and in giving me encouragement throughout the writing process. Furthermore, I would like to thank Dr. Patricia Bromley for her guidance in the MSE program. Also, I would like to thank the students at Latino Academy who participated in the distance-learning hybrid ESL program, who have inspired me to dig deeper into this subject matter. I would like to thank my beloved husband, who has supported me throughout the entire process with patience and love. I will be grateful forever for your love and support

Abstract

KEY ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE HYBRID ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS

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The rapid growth in the number of adult immigrants in the U.S. who need to learn English in order to be employed, coupled with decreased funding for adult education institutions to teach ESL, necessitates a thorough consideration of best practices for ESL instructional delivery. Traditional face-to-face classes provide a needed social and communicative component for learning but are not cost-effective when teaching large numbers of students. Also, due to geographic limitations as well as time conflicts, not all students have access to programs that offer face-to-face instruction. Distance learning programs have been developed and have proven effective in many studies. But distance learning alone lacks the needed face-to-face aspect. A blended or hybrid approach that couples the benefits of communicative interaction with the convenience of distance learning has gained popularity in recent years in many states, but research on its effectiveness is still lacking. In planning hybrid ESL programs, key elements must be considered and incorporated.

Key Terms: distance education, distance learning, blended learning, hybrid learning, adult education, ESL, ELL.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Adult Immigrant English Learners

English as a Second Language (ESL) instructors offer courses to enhance the lives of adult immigrant English learners. Many of the adults in ESL programs receive benefits in many ways, including better access to employment and education (Huang, Tindall, & Nisbet, 2011). However, during the time they are enrolled in these ESL programs, few adult immigrant English learners reach a high enough proficiency level to greatly improve their prospects for employment and to further their education (Chisman and Crandall, 2007). According to the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of 1998, nationally only 39% to 44% of the 1.24 million English Language Learners (ELL) advanced one or more educational levels. Furthermore, only about 8% of ELLs transitioned to higher education of any kind (Chisman & Crandall, 2007). These data were provided by the staff at the National Reporting System for Adult Education (NRS), a state-administered, federally-funded program with staff who have managed learner-outcome reporting systems (US Department of Education, 2011).

An increase in the immigrant population (US Census, 2012) resulted in the need for state and federal governments to provide vital funding necessary to educate this population who have limited English ability (Gambino, Acosta & Grieco, 2014). According to a report by the National Council of State Directors of Adult Education (NCSDAE) in March, 2013, 40% of current federally-funded, adult education program students were English Language Learners (ELL) in various adult educational programs in public, private, religious, and community-based organization settings (NCSDAE, 2014). The ESL courses in these programs centered on four core language skills: reading,

writing, speaking, and listening. The ESL curricula mainly focused on life skills for immigrants to practice and use at work and in everyday life (Chisman, 2008). Martinez and Wang (2005) noted that there existed a 46 percent wage difference between the immigrants who were fluent English speakers and those who were not (Martinez and Wang, 2005). Despite the desire of immigrants to improve their English skills to obtain better wages and a higher standard of living, many barriers prevented their advancement to higher levels.

Since it is imperative for ELLs to improve their English proficiency, what were the difficulties that prevented them from achieving success? Attending traditional face-to-face ESL classes requires a significant time commitment as well as personal persistence to reach educational goals. The reasons that some of the adult immigrant English learners did not complete ESL programs might have included their work schedules, family obligations, difficulty in accessing classes due to distance or lack of easy access to convenient transportation, and the need to attend to other life responsibilities. Chisman (2008) noted the main factor that contributed to limited achievement of most adult ESL students was that immigrants struggled to find the necessary time required to attend face-to-face ESL classes and other types of adult academic and/or vocational education courses due to work and family responsibilities (Chisman, 2008). Many of these adult immigrants desired to gain communicative fluency for employment and job advancement, yet the prospect of a strenuous journey with many possible life obstacles along the way prevented them from persisting in ESL programs (Becker, 2011).

According to Stiles (2013), educators in distance learning (DL) programs in California provided significant and meaningful alternative educational options for adults who:

- needed more practice of skills to achieve mastery;
- had work and family obligations that made attending a regular class time difficult;
- lacked the full confidence to participate in a large classroom setting in front of other students;
- wanted the participation, assistance, and support of their families in their learning;
- lived in locations without convenient access to traditional classes;
- lived in areas where there was no space in traditional classes;
- learned more effectively from video, audio and Web-based media when moving at their own paces; or
- could not access traditional classroom programs on a regular basis (Stiles, 2013).

Distance learning programs, coupled with a traditional face-to-face component, offered busy immigrant English learners some flexibility and autonomy (Askov, Johnston, Petty & Young, 2003). This combined model, the DL hybrid program, would include both much-needed class instruction in a community-learning environment along with some independent and flexible study time. The adult educators and the funders considered expanding learning opportunities for the hard-to-reach and non-traditional adult immigrant population of students. There were learning opportunities for some adult immigrants in existing adult ESL programs; yet alternative programs with flexible options needed to be in place for adults who could not participate in traditional educational settings (Silver-Pacuilla, 2008).

Adult Education Institutions

ESL program planners, nationally, faced important challenges in the development of strategies and program models to help more students increase their English proficiency in a timely manner (Chisman and Crandall, 2007). With reduced funding and budget cuts in adult education, many administrators and educators turned to cost-effective and more efficient program delivery models (Finn, 2011). Much of the time, these innovative and alternative delivery models utilized some sort of available media and technology. According to Askov et al. (2003), in 1999, administrators in the U.S. Department of Education Office of Vocational Adult Education (OVAE) began to urge states to investigate new ways to increase the number of adults being served in Adult Basic Education (ABE) and ESL programs. Distance education was identified as a potential model to serve the hard-to-reach adult learner population—adults who were unable to attend traditional classroom programs or who might otherwise not have enrolled in formal educational programs that involved attending classes.

Federal policy makers and state directors of adult education programs explored distance educational delivery models and internet-based approaches that were successful in the business world and post-secondary institutions. Federal and state educational policy makers wanted to implement best practices that utilized various models to meet the needs of adult learners (Askov, Johnston, Petty & Young, 2003). To meet the demand from federal and state policy makers, adult educators in California developed successful distance educational programs in the ESL and ABE fields. Gungor and Prins (2011) reported that the California Department of Education realized the need for

alternative programs to accommodate the complex responsibilities of ESL adult immigrants and established DL ESL programs (Gungor and Prins, 2011).

Founded in 2002, Project Improving Distance Education for Adult Learners (Project IDEAL) was a consortium of states working together to explore the potential of distance education to reach adult basic learners. In the Handbook of Distance Education for Adult Learners (2008) by Project IDEAL, the authors stated that to deliver instruction using DL models, each educational institution needed to choose the best model for its student population (Johnston & Petty, 2008). Institutions also needed to consider the state and federal guidelines set by the funding source when choosing an instructional model. According to the NRS policy regarding distance education published in June 2007, face-to-face, proctored assessments were required for federal reporting purposes. In addition, the NRS also required a minimum of 12 hours of face-to-face contact in every DL ESL program per reporting period (Johnston & Petty, 2008). In order to meet the needs of ELLs through distance learning and to fulfill the requirements of federal sources for face-to-face contact, a blended or hybrid method seemed to be a logical instructional model that also included language practice in a classroom community setting.

ESL distance learning programs were widely used in many states where increased numbers of immigrants resided. Initially, DL ESL program instructors in California used a supported distance education model by Petty (2008) in which students attended face-to-face intake, assessment, and orientation activities, but the instruction and study happened at a distance (Johnston & Petty, 2008). More and more distance learning programs were designed to include the blended/hybrid distance learning model that combined limited

face-to-face interaction with instructional technology tools for students to preview and review the instructional content (Gungor and Prins, 2011). According to the Massachusetts Guidelines for Effective Distance Learning in Adult Basic Education (2013), two blended/hybrid models for DL were established based on the following two key components. First, regardless of where primary DL instruction occurred, programs needed to provide DL students with ongoing and regularly scheduled individual face-to-face interaction for instructional support. Support might have included, but was not limited to, individual tutoring, small group drop-in sessions, conversation groups for ESL students, meetings at off-site locations, and other opportunities for group learning as needed. Second, hybrid programs also included a class with a group of students. This type of class might have consisted of a cohort of students enrolled in a face-to-face classroom as well as an online component taught by the DL instructor (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2013).

In summary, DL ESL blended/hybrid programs might have the potential to meet the needs of administrators in the organizations that provide instruction and the adult immigrant English learners who need instruction. The authors of the Handbook of Distance Education for Adult Learners (2008) by Project IDEAL stated that since learning languages requires opportunities to converse, hybrid programs, in which distance study is combined with group meetings or instruction, are likely to be the most effective model (Johnston & Petty, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

In what ways can literacy agencies with limited funding help adult immigrants achieve English language literacy? What might be the advantages and the disadvantages of hybrid programs over the traditional face-to-face programs for adult English language learners? What are the essential components of successful adult, hybrid, ESL programs?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to identify key elements of effective hybrid ESL programs for adults. In addition, this research was done to advise adult ESL educators who need to both provide cost-effective programs and to help busy, adult students to achieve their English proficiency goals. This study provides a review of the literature to overview current instructional delivery models of ESL curricula in order to suggest an alternate delivery model that best meets the needs of adult ELLs in order to yield higher English proficiency growth results.

Significance of the Study

It is important to identify best practices for designing high-quality, cost-effective, adult ESL programs. Many immigrants who are not able to attend ESL classes full-time at their local adult schools or literacy agencies need an alternative to traditional ESL classes. With the increase in the immigrant population in many metropolitan and rural areas in the last decade (US Census, 2012), program planners need to redesign adult ESL programs for busy adult immigrants to successfully learn English with shorter face-to-face instructional time.

Having tools to teach effective hybrid ESL programs is important for practitioners in the ESL field. Those desiring to identify best practices for high-quality, and cost-

effective program planning for adult ESL students might be concerned about the issues discussed in this paper. Many immigrants, upon arrival in this country, must work full time and thus are not able to attend ESL classes full time at their local adult schools or literacy agencies. Would hybrid ESL programs be appropriate for hard-to-reach students who work full-time and also attend to many other life responsibilities? With an increasing immigrant population (US Census, 2012), could a hybrid ESL model be a good option for practitioners helping busy, adult immigrants to learn English skills with much shorter face-to-face instructional time along with their own independent study time, and gain the English language skills they need? It is important to examine and to evaluate the current ESL instructional delivery models in seeking information related to best practices.

Definition of Terms

Distance Education (DE): Distance Education is an instructional mode in which the teacher is not in the same place at the same time as the student (Casey, 2008). In the literature, many terms regarding distance education types and models were used interchangeably depending on the discipline of study and research. Kraemer (2008) pointed out that distance education was delivered in many ways as shown by the following terms: online learning, e-learning, open learning, distributed learning, teleconference or video-conference learning, blended or hybrid learning, life-long learning, or independent study. To carry out course models, educational media such as print, audio, video-based, computer-based, or Internet-mediated sources, and/or chat with or without sound, are used (Blake, 2009). According to National Reporting System (NRS) implementation guidelines, Distance Education is a formal learning activity where

students and instructors are separated by geography, time, or both, for the majority of the instructional period.

Distance Learning (DL): Distance Learning is structured learning that occurs when a student and a teacher are not physically present at the same place for the majority of the instructional time. Distance Education takes the position of educators and Distance Learning takes the position of students (Askov et al., 2003).

Online Distance Education: Online Distance Education is education in which all or part is built on resources available through the Internet and provides interactive experiences as well as "anytime, anyplace" learning (Askov, et al., 2003).

Hybrid Courses: Hybrid Courses are classes in which instruction takes place in a traditional classroom setting augmented by computer-based or online activities that can replace classroom seat time. These types of courses are becoming more and more the norm in higher education (Scida & Saury, 2006).

Hybrid Learning: Hybrid Learning is learning in which online and other outside-of-the-class activities replace 45-80 percent of face-to-face class meetings (Gruba & Hinkelman, 2012).

English as a Second Language (ESL): ESL refers to English courses that students take to improve English language skills.

English Language Learner (ELL): An ELL is an adult immigrant English learner who is enrolled in a noncredit ESL program.

Delimitations of Research

The Karrmann Library at the University of Wisconsin – Platteville between June 2014 and April 2015, provided the references used for the review of literature for this study. Several online search engines provided by the EBSCO host were used. Key searches were: "Hybrid ESL," "Distance Learning," "Distance Education," "Adult ESL Learners," "Study ESL at Home," "Computer Assisted Language Learning," "Instructional Design for Distance Learning," and "Language Learning with Technology."

Method of Approach

The first review of literature was conducted on the history of distance education in general, followed by more focused reviews on the advantages and disadvantages of traditional face-to-face instruction versus distance learning hybrid instruction. Furthermore, a literature review on designing and developing distance learning ESL hybrid programs was conducted. The findings were categorized into key elements affecting the success of hybrid courses: Adult learning theory, recruitment, intake and orientation, assessment of learner needs and progress, learner retention, learner support services, curriculum and instruction, and staff professional development, supervision, evaluation and support. In chapter 3 of this study, the findings were summarized and recommendations were made.

Chapter Two: Related Literature Review

A Brief History of Distance Learning in Adult Education

Distance education today is one of the most commonly used types of educational delivery methods and its popularity has been increasing (Silver-Pacuilla, 2008). Kraemer (2008) defined distance learning as planned learning that took place whenever there was a distance between teacher and student in time and/or space. The purpose of distance education was to deliver learning to those who were not able to attend courses in person. Regardless of the subject taught, almost every major university offered several types of distance learning services: online learning, e-learning, open learning, video and teleconference learning, blended or hybrid learning, life-long learning, and independent study (Blake, 2009). The distance learning hybrid model was the focus of this study. This model required students to attend classes for selected lessons but the major part of learning was done outside of class using technology, such as electronic media and/or printed materials, that allowed communications among students, and between the students and the instructor (Taskin, 2009).

The early educators of distance education used the available technology of their day to educate people who were not able, or allowed, to attend traditional schools. Bourdeau and Bates (1996) described four generations of media used in distance education. The first generation started in the late 1800s in England and in the United States with postal mail service, known as Correspondence Education. At the beginning of the last century, a second generation of media utilized radio and telephones as cost-effective means of delivering education to a large and widely dispersed population. During the 1950s, television and satellites provided crucial visual information for certain

content and skills in the third generation of distance education. In the fourth generation, DL students gained easier access to information and communication with the increasing spread of computer usage in the 80s and 90s. As technology changed, videotaped lectures were the main means to teach language courses in distance education (Bourdeau and Bates, 1996). Overall, 31 percent of higher education students were enrolled in at least one online course learning at distance in 2010 (Allen & Seaman, 2011). Also, in a report prepared by the same authors, Allen and Seaman indicated that more than three-quarters of the academic leaders at public educational institutions reported that online education was as good as, or better than, face-to-face instruction (Allen & Seaman, 2010).

This study focused on an application of the fourth generation of distance education described in Bourdeau and Bates (1996) in relationship to second language learning specifically with ELLs in hybrid ESL courses. In the 21st century, new media and technologies could be used to provide new learning opportunities for ELLs. Through the use of laptop computers, videos and the Internet, learning might be enhanced in ESL instruction. With new technology, ESL instructors had opportunities to improve the quality and impact on second language lessons and have added new dimensions in offering best practices to ELLs (Ball, 2011).

Traditional Face-to-Face versus Distance Language Learning

Traditionally, second language learners attended face-to-face classes. Primarily, learning was done in the classroom environment with mostly drill-style activities that required teacher presence (Larson-Freeman, 1998). It was believed that language learning in traditional face-to-face classroom settings in a communicative environment

with a group of learners was needed in order for ELLs to reach the highest competency in a target language (Scida & Saury, 2006). Blake (2011), in his journal article entitled "The Use of Technology for Second Language Distance Learning," stated that even though interest in distance learning language delivery was growing, no language professionals, not even the most technologically inclined researcher, would disagree with the idea that to advance to proficiency, second language students needed to interact face-to-face with native speakers, preferably in a country where that target language was spoken (Davidson, 2007; Blake, 2009). The traditional concept was that learning a new language was best accomplished by face-to-face interaction.

In comparing traditional face-to-face courses with some form of distance learning delivery, with respect to cost-effectiveness, differences were seen depending on the enrollment size. One study done in 2001 by the California State University System indicated that unless the institutions operated large DL courses with high enrollments, cost savings had not been possible. For example, cost savings would have been realized by using DL courses in courses with enrollments of over 500 students which would have required many face-to-face sections. For smaller enrollments, it had been more cost effective to teach smaller groups in a traditional setting because the institutions had not run many face-to-face sections. In recent years, institutions have saved more money by using DL, because in general, DL program managers found using technology was more cost-effective due to the drop in cost of technology equipment over time. The startup, maintenance, and personnel costs must be factored in when implementing new distance learning programs (Carr, 2001; Valentine, 2002).

In a study in the same vein a decade later by Carol Twing through the National Center for Academic Transformation (NCAT), researchers on cost savings through DL found that traditional face-to-face courses could be redesigned to increase enrollment, lower costs, and improve learning outcomes by incorporating a DL component. In this study, 30 institutions received grants to redesign courses accompanied by a solid plan to lower costs and to document improved student learning. The 30 curriculum designers of those institutions lowered the costs by an average of 37 percent, with a range from 15 percent to 77 percent. This reduction brought in a savings of $3.1 million per year in operating costs (Meyer, 2008). Bartley and Golek (2004) presented a comprehensive cost matrix tool to evaluate the costs associated with online distance learning as compared to those associated with face-to-face learning. Program designers and coordinators in higher education institutions who had considered starting new distance learning programs might have been able to benefit from this tool (Bartle & Golek, 2004).

With respect to academic performance and learning outcomes of students when comparing traditional face-to-face courses to distance learning courses, several studies showed that DL course learning outcomes surpassed the traditional course learning outcomes. One group of meta-analysis researchers compared the final grades and scores of distance education course students relative to students enrolled in traditional settings over a twenty-year period, from 1990 to 2009. The data included over 20,000 participating students. This research clearly demonstrated that in 70 percent of the cases, students who had participated in DL courses outperformed their student counterparts in the traditionally instructed courses. Students studying in English, German, French, Spanish and Italian languages were included in this research. The researchers predicted

that the outperformance of distance education learning outcomes over face-to-face course outcomes would continue to increase (Shachar & Neumann, 2010). It was interesting to note that earlier researchers in the 90's didn't believe students in DL programs would outperform those in conventional educational programs. Showing no significant difference between these two models of instructional deliveries was already a high accomplishment of DL at that time. Thomas Russell, who developed the first technology-based distance education system at North Carolina State University in the early 90's, stated that no matter how a course was produced, how it was delivered, whether or not it was interactive, low-tech, or high-tech, students would learn equally well with each technology and learned as well as their conventional face-to-face counterparts (Russell, 2001). Studies done in more recent years showed the efficacy and effectiveness of alternative and innovative educational delivery (Reuter, 2009).

According to McCain (2009), California Adult Education had the most valuable learner statistics and outcome track record of DL research since 1995. Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) standardized pre- and post-test data showed that ELLs, on average, obtained increased proficiency using DL programs. According to educational outcomes from 2006 to 2012, DL students showed similar gains in all three language skills: reading, writing and listening, in CASAS post-tests when compared to those who attended traditional face-to-face classes (Stiles, 2013). Furthermore, if the students were enrolled in DL blended or hybrid classes, the language skill gains were the greatest. Also, learner persistence (the length of time the learner spent in active instruction in ESL programs) increased over a 10-year period (Stiles, 2013). The Promising Practice Award sponsored by CASAS and California Department of Education

was presented to ESL and ABE adult education providers who had implemented the best practices for students' success in learning outcomes and persistence. The distance learning ESL program at San Juan Unified School District in California received a Promising Practice Award in Technology and Distance Learning in 2012. Because the San Juan school district covered 75 square miles with a diverse student population, the DL ESL program served students who otherwise might not have been able to take traditional ESL classes. Students were required to have weekly face-to-face instruction and assessment time with a teacher and classmates. Even with large budget cuts in the district, DL ESL programs continued to show student success rates in persistence and performance. San Juan DL ESL students exceeded the overall state performance for all ESL levels in two consecutive years. There were added benefits for program participants. For example, the parents of the ESL students become motivated to improve their English skills through their increased participation at local elementary schools in connection with community involvement (California Department of Education, 2011).

The Impetus for Hybrid ESL Programs

Researchers at the Center for Applied Linguistics (2010) pointed out that not only the high level adult ELLs, but students at all ESL levels, could benefit from hybrid programs by improving their language skills, but also by learning to use technology. This was important because of the increasing role that computers and the internet played in the lives of adult ELLs (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2010). Educators in Distance Learning hybrid ESL had served not only highly motivated or goal-oriented ELLs, but also the students with low levels of literacy and proficiency (Silver-Pacuilla, 2008). An anecdotal example from Austin, Texas community college's hybrid ESL pilot classes

confirmed that ESL students at all levels were able to succeed if they were motivated to learn, in spite of instructors' initial concerns about the lower level students not being ideal candidates for hybrid courses. In these ESL courses, adult immigrants with low literacy levels logged in to complete their assignments over 60 hours a month, well exceeding the 16-hour per month requirement (Gusler, 2010). Also, from 2009 to 2010, Texas adult education administrators reported gains in the number of programs offering distance learning classes, in the number of students enrolled in DL both in online and hybrid classes, and in learning outcomes and level completions (Molinari, 2010). To follow, are some of the gains reported.

- In 2009, 15 Texas adult education programs were offering DL classes; in 2010, there were 27 programs.
- In 2010, 3,830 students were enrolled in Texas distance learning as compared to 855 in 2009, representing a 350% increase.
- Distance students were doing as well as, or better than, students overall. In 2009, 69% of students for whom distance education was the predominant form of instruction completed a level, compared to 53% of all students. In 2010, 54% of the distance students completed a level, compared to 54% of all students (Molinari, 2010).

In high-quality hybrid ESL programs, adult ELLs took advantage of easier access to instruction while still attaining high learning outcomes, regardless of their entry levels in ESL classes. Many educators embraced the benefits of blending technologies with face-to-face classroom settings. Gruba and Hinkeman (2012) stated that hybrid courses were generally composed of 20-55 percent class meeting time with 45-80 percent of the

learning activities done outside of class. The percentages of activities were defined according to the taxonomy of terms related to blended learning (Gruba & Hinkeman, 2012). In these hybrid courses, students could save travel time while learning to be independent within the instructor's structured guidelines.

Due to an increased interest from both ESL students and ESL educators in learning and teaching English using available technology, DL might be a good choice for educating Wisconsin's growing immigrant population (A Nunez, personal communication, November 19, 2014). In a report entitled "Immigrants in 2010 Metropolitan America: A Decade of Change," it was reported that there had been a greater than 40 percent increase in the immigrant population in Madison, Wisconsin, in the previous decade (Singer & Wilson 2011). A local community-based literacy agency in Madison, Latino Academy of Workforce Development (LAWD), invested in a hybrid ESL program with funding from the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) in the spring of 2014. NCLR received a grant from the Walmart Foundation to fund the Bienvenidos Project. LAWD and nine other NCLR Affiliates were selected to receive this grant for ESL programs to participate in research efforts to find effective methods and best practices for teaching English to Spanish speakers. In the Bienvenidos Project, one hundred LAWD students participated in the hybrid format DL curriculum. The enrolled students studied at home with workbooks and instructional, online videos. Hybrid classes met for two and a half hours each week for 16 weeks. During the face-to-face classes, the ESL instructor reviewed the workbook unit, answered questions, and explained the grammar points presented in the units. The students had opportunities to interact with their classmates to practice skills learned from the video lessons. Students also took a

weekly unit test. Results of 75% or higher on each test indicated unit mastery. Students who viewed the videos at home and came to class once a week demonstrated increased English proficiency as shown in the TABE Class E pre- and post-reading and writing test results. Of the 81 students who completed the Bienvenidos hybrid program, 93 percent had higher scores on their TABE post-test either in reading or writing, and nearly 64 percent had higher post-test scores in both reading and writing skills. On their post-program surveys, students also indicated increased functional English skills in that they had increased comfort with speaking English in a number of settings- at work and at their children's schools. Subsequent to this hybrid program, LAWD students gained confidence in English skills and enrolled in Madison College summer ESL classes to further improve English language skills (Moore, 2015).

Key Essential Elements to Consider in Designing Effective Hybrid ESL Programs

By utilizing available new technology in education, hybrid ESL program planners and instructional designers are able to offer new learning possibilities to ELLs who desire to increase their English language skills. However, it is important to identify the key elements that affect the success of hybrid courses. Before starting a hybrid ESL program, administrators, curriculum designers, and instructors might consider these key elements. As of 2014, no governmental, national ESL standards had been established to guide instruction for adult learners (Eyring, 2014). However, vital information on ESL program key components and standards, regardless of the delivery models, were found in the Standards for Adult Education ESL Programs written by Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) educators (2008). The following are program key components adapted from Standards for Adult Education ESL Programs (2008) for

this study:

- knowledge of adult learners;
- learner recruitment, intake, and orientation;
- assessment of learner needs and progress;
- learner retention;
- learner support services;
- curriculum and instruction; and
- staff professional development, supervision, evaluation, and support (Rodrigues, Burt, Peyton & Ueland, 2009).

Details for each of these components are explained below.

Knowledge of Adult Learners - Principles of Adult Learning in ELL Context.

Andragogy is the theory of how adults acquire knowledge (Knowles, 1980). Adult learners are defined as older learners who return to school after an absence but are often still gainfully employed. Sometimes they are called "non-traditional learners." Regardless of instructional setting and program focus, instruction must be approached and designed from an adult perspective (Knowles, 1980). Based on Knowles' adult learning theory, it is crucial that adult educators consider the following principles in the design and development of program curricula for adult learners.

Knowles found the adult learning principles to be (Knowles, 1980; Finn, 2011):

- Adults are self-directed.
- Adults draw from life experiences.
- Social roles help determine an adult's readiness to learn.
- Adults are more problem-centered than subject-centered.
- Adults are internally motivated to learn.
- Adults need to know why they need to learn what they are learning (Knowles 1980; Finn, 2011).

In an adult ELL context, it is essential to examine the principles of adult learning in designing effective instructional environments. For example, the common external goal of adult immigrants participating in adult educational programs might be to improve their English proficiency to obtain and/or advance in their jobs, but their internal motivations might be more important. For example, activities that build a sense of accomplishment and self-esteem like formative weekly unit assessments in a sequence might help motivate learners to complete their courses (Fidishun, 2005). In designing ESL curricula, adult educators need to center on what motivates adult immigrants internally and they need to design instructions and activities accordingly (Finn, 2011).

Learner Recruitment, Intake, and Orientation for ESL Hybrid Programs.

The processes of adult immigrant student recruitment, intake, and orientation are important because some ELLs might not be accustomed to the educational system in the United States or even to their own countries' systems (Rodriguez, et al., 2009). Recruitment strategies for identification of potential distance learning participants might

include reaching out to traditional students first who desire to participate in non-traditional educational services (Johnston & Petty, 2008). DE practitioners can provide innovative and alternative content delivery and are thus able to attract hard-to-reach adult students who might not attend traditional education institutions (Gungor & Prins, 2011). It might be more difficult to recruit non-traditional, under-served and un-served, immigrant adults. In partnership and collaboration with local businesses, local religious organizations, and cultural community centers, program recruiters at educational institutions could identify potential adults who might be interested in hybrid instruction. By being creative in marketing and advertising, literacy agency personnel might be able to effectively recruit the immigrant population for participation in hybrid ESL programs.

After a student shows interest in enrolling in a hybrid course, it is crucial to provide the prospective student information on curriculum, academic goals, and prerequisite skills. A face-to-face orientation session is a crucial first step (Johnston &Petty, 2008). According to Comings, Soricone, and Santos, (2006), organized recruiters should consider the following recommendations:

- Make use of new and existing networks and partnerships with businesses and other organizations.
- Employ a variety of recruitment strategies (e.g., community needs assessment, media, and personal contact).
- Clarify the nature of the program and its requirements and provide potential students with the information necessary to make appropriate choices.
- Include recruitment approaches that are suited to the target population and that reflect their languages, cultures, and interests.

- Use data on recruitment success and feedback from students to improve recruiting practices (Comings, Soricone, Santos, 2006).

Johnston and Petty (2008) stated that orientation was a key component of retention (Johnston & Petty, 2008). Comings et al (2006) strongly suggested a program should have an organized approach to intake and orientation that included the following:

- an assessment of each student's goals, skill levels, and support needs;
- a presentation to each student of a realistic assessment of his or her skill level and the time and effort required for achieving his or her goals;
- an individual learning plan for reaching the student's goals that include ways to address persistence support needs;
- information about students' rights and responsibilities;
- a clear picture of program services; and
- clear expectations of participants in the program (Comings et al., 2006).

Also, Comings et al (2006) suggested that programs should have procedures to accommodate students who might be placed on wait lists, and these procedures may include provision of limited services, opportunities for self-study, or referral to other services (Comings et al., 2006).

Face-to-face orientation meeting facilitators should prepare students to be successful, according to Johnston & Petty (2008). The orientation could include descriptions of DL programs available, pre-assessment of language level, assessment of computer skill level, and a tutorial of independent learning skills, online communication skills, and time management skills needed for success. Orientations should also include

personal and academic goal setting, and an introduction to student support services. (Johnston & Petty, 2008).

Assessment of Learner Needs and Progress.

Learner assessment is a crucial part of adult education. Many ESL program coordinators have used various assessments to place ELLs in level classes, to instruct learning content, to evaluate learning progress, and to report outcomes (Rodriguez et al., 2009). ESL instructors might also use informal assessments to evaluate ELLs in order to track their progress with teacher-made tests, projects, reports and portfolios. However, formal assessments have been used to meet the NRS guidelines for accountability reporting purposes related to funding. Planners of hybrid ESL programs for adults may need to determine an appropriate formal assessment tool for their programs.

According to the National Center for Family Literacy & Center for Applied Linguistics (2008), pre- and post-standardized tests, were crucial for data tracking purposes. ESL adult programs might be funded from various financial resources and planners of adult hybrid ESL programs might need to investigate which standardized tests are required for reporting purposes. Those at the U.S. Department of Education have chosen the following standardized tests for ELLs (Rodriguez et al, 2009):

- BEST Plus (www.best-plus.net)
- BEST Literacy (www.cal.org/topics/ta/bestliteracy.html)
- CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System-English; www.ctb.com)

In addition to learner progress, hours of attendance are often reported to funding source administrators. It might be difficult to measure instructional time for ELLs in hybrid courses because, in face-to-face classrooms, attendance is often reported for the physical presence of the students. However, in hybrid courses, instructional time is not the same as classroom attendance hours. "Proxy hours" are attendance hours the students accumulate outside of class time while using a program-approved curriculum to study and learn while not physically in the classroom. NRS administrators outlined the following three models for determination of proxy contact hours that were acceptable for reporting instructional time (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2013).

- Clock Time Model: This model was used with online or stand-alone software programs that tracked the time that a student was engaged with the curriculum and which logged out students after a pre-determined period of inactivity. Typically, one hour of time in the program was accepted to be one proxy contact hour.

- Teacher Verification Model: This model was well-suited to multi-media curricula where students received instruction from a variety of sources. In this model, a fixed number of proxy contact hours were given for completion of each instructional activity in the curriculum. The assignment of hours was based on a teacher verifying that the assignment was completed.

- Learner Mastery Model: In this model, the degree to which learners had mastered instructional content was connected to the assignment of proxy

> contact hours. A fixed number of proxy contact hours were assigned when the learner passed a test on the content of each lesson. Students had to score at a pre-determined level (typically 70%-80%) to earn the credit hours attached to the lesson (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2013).

According to the Massachusetts Guidelines for Effective Distance Learning in Adult Basic Education (2013), DL teachers entered student proxy time attendance according to the Learner Mastery Model. If a student passed the weekly unit test with a certain percentage, the designated hours of attendance were granted (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2013). Designers of new hybrid ESL programs for adults will need to determine how proxy hours will be assigned for purposes of reporting attendance.

Learner Retention.

Many factors affect retention of adult learners, including availability of classes that meet the needs of ELLs who lead complex lives with multiple jobs and family responsibilities (Rodriguez et al., 2009). Historically, adult education program administrators referred to "persistence" as "retention" and kept attendance records in face-to-face classes and/or tutoring sessions (Comings, 2007). Comings et al (1999) proposed the term "persistence" because adults could have persisted in learning through self-study or distance education when they stopped attending classes, and then could have returned after a certain period of time when the demands of their lives allowed. The term "persistence," then, referred to the decisions of the students to continue with their education, and the term "retention" referred to a program success quality.

According to Comings (2007) “persistence” was composed of intensity and duration, and one took the point of view of students who persist in learning, inside and outside of a program, until they had achieved their goals (Comings, 2007). Because of the limited literature base for persistence study, in 1996 the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and literacy (NCSALL) began a multiphase study of the factors that supported and inhibited persistence. Comings (2007) and the persistence study team summarized the implications of its findings by the identification of four supports to persistence (Comings, 2007):

- The first support to persistence is to establish the student’s goal. The staff of the educational program should help the potential adult student to identify the educational goal and understand the many instructional objectives that need to be accomplished in the process of meeting that goal.

- The second support is to increase a sense of self-efficacy. Program staff should introduce new students to role models, adults just like them who have already been successful at learning. Program staff members should also: design their curriculum in such a way that it challenges students but does not overwhelm them, help students address their feelings of anxiety about failure or slow progress, and provide students with encouragement so that they can be successful.

- The third support is to help students manage the positive and negative forces that help and hinder persistence. Program staff should help students develop an understanding of the negative and positive forces that might affect their persistence.

- The fourth support is to ensure progress toward reaching a goal. Program staff should provide services of sufficient quality that students make progress, and programs need assessment procedures that allow students to measure their own progress (Comings, 2007).

Hybrid ESL program instructors need to help their students establish short and long-term goals, increase self-efficacy, manage different barriers they might face, and ensure progress toward reaching their goals. By adapting these four support strategies identified by Comings and his research team (2007), ELLs participating in hybrid programs might persist and complete their ESL programs.

Learner Support Services.

Unlike children, adults often must overcome significant barriers to enroll in educational programs. According to Comings (2007), adult educators should provide support services to their students so that learners will persist long enough to accomplish their educational goals (Comings, 2007). Various service areas should be identified for students with many different needs. For academic support services, the students should be encouraged to access libraries, academic advising, supplemental instruction with tutoring services, study groups, test accommodations, counseling and self-study resources (Rodriguez et al., 2009). Also, program administrators need to collaborate with service providers in the community to create access to other needed services, including health care and social and cultural services. It is important to advise students who enroll in hybrid ESL courses, who might not have computer or internet service, to access technology at nearby community centers or public libraries (Moore, 2015).

Curriculum and Instruction.

Historically, innovations and new inventions of technology influenced educational designs, developments, and deliveries of curricula. ESL instructors could better prepare and equip immigrants for workplace English use by employing these technological resources (Ball 2011). For the outside-of-the-class activity components, instructors needed to establish sound guidelines for students working independently. The Sloan Consortium suggested the following list for instructors who designed DL courses, regardless of academic discipline (Moore, 2009).

- Orient students on how to learn online and help them adjust to their new role as more self-directed and independent learners.
- Write clear learning objectives at both the macro (i.e., syllabus) and micro (i.e., day-by-day) levels of curricular planning.
- Ensure that the quality of the online course materials is comparable to that of traditional classroom materials.
- Provide ready help of a technical and content nature and respond to student questions within 24 hours (or sooner if possible).
- Minimize technical difficulties to obtain the necessary plug-ins and software; include course activities that feature interactions between instructors and classmates at all possible moments.
- Include student feedback in shaping the instructional goals for specific activities.

- Recycle instruction, materials, topics, concepts, and practice throughout the course.
- Allow students to practice before taking exams so as to ensure positive outcomes.
- Demonstrate to students that progress is made throughout the course (Moore, 2009).

In the Handbook of Distance Education for Adult Learners (2008), two types of curricula were found for ABE and ESL students: multimedia curricula with a combination of DVD/online videos and print material, and online and/or computer-based online curricula (Johnston & Petty, 2008). For the multimedia curriculum, a structured format with unit modules and video viewing schedules, and organizational materials like binders and workbooks encouraged students to approach their learning experience in a systematic way. For computer-based online curricula, students worked on computer-mediated assignments, multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and true/false quizzes and exams. These types of exercises and practices reinforced the learning of language grammar and mechanics. However, they were not participative or communicative in nature (Coryell, 2010). Presently, in many states, the following ESL curricula are being used: Putting English to Work, USA Learns, English for All, Side by Side Video Series, Skills Tutor, Rosetta Stone and Reading Horizons (Johnston & Petty, 2008). The states implemented the above-mentioned software programs with activities and assessments for students to interact with language at their own paces, but students lacked in communicative practices where they learned to negotiate meaning and practice social interactions. Hybrid models feature the face-to-face component where the students not

only learn the language mechanics with the computer software programs or online programs, but also learn to communicate in social and interactive ways. Hybrid ESL program instructors in the face-to-face sessions, then, use supplemental, authentic materials to encourage real-life communicative practices (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2013).

Staff Professional Development, Supervision, Evaluation and Support.

Teaching a hybrid course might pose challenges for instructors who only have classroom teaching experience. Typically, teachers structure the learning experience, make assignments, provide feedback on student work, and provide encouragement and motivation. However, hybrid course instructors have an added role to serve as a facilitator or guide for independent student learning outside of their classroom instructional time.

As with hybrid course students, instructors need to be comfortable with the multimedia and technologies being used, so professional training must be a crucial component to carry out a successful hybrid program (Johnston & Petty, 2009). TESOL Technology Standards should be used in technology training and providing guidance to hybrid instructors in DL programs (TESOL, 2013). Hybrid ESL instructors can reflect on and improve their teaching practices through participation in ongoing professional development opportunities. Also, instructors might need ongoing professional training in the motivation and support of students in hybrid ESL program formats (Johnston & Petty, 2008).

Culturally diverse learner populations were seen in all adult ESL programs. Thus,

instructors who are linguistically and culturally diverse might be ideal teachers for ESL programs. Instructors trained in cross-cultural communication, and who are aware of the needs of the immigrant population, also might be optimal candidates for teaching hybrid ESL programs (Rodriguez et al., 2009).

Summary

The rapid growth in the number of adult immigrants in the U.S. who need to learn English in order to be employed, coupled with decreased funding for adult education institutions to teach ESL, necessitates a thorough consideration of best practices for ESL instructional delivery. Traditional face-to-face classes provide a needed social and communicative component for learning, but are often not cost-effective when teaching large numbers of students. Also, not all students have access to face-to-face programs because of geographic challenges or time limitations. Distance learning programs have proven effective in many studies and can be developed. However, distance learning programs, alone, might not provide students opportunities to participate in the needed face-to-face aspect of language learning. A blended, or hybrid, approach that couples the benefits of communicative interactions with the convenience of distance learning has gained popularity in recent years, but research on its effectiveness is limited. Key elements must be considered and incorporated in program design in order for students to benefit most from hybrid ESL programs for adults.

Chapter Three: Conclusions and Recommendations

To follow are conclusions and recommendations based on this literature review. Although anecdotal evidence suggested that learning outcomes and persistence rates might increase in distance learning programs, research and data for the hybrid model were not readily available. Through a review of the literature, it was clear that more research must take place to measure the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of distance learning hybrid delivery models in ESL programs.

The educational research on hybrid course delivery was generally positive and showed the benefits of blending face-to-face instruction with independent learning tasks done outside the classroom (Harrington, 2010). New technology and communication methods have made it easier for adult learners to access distance education and receive increased academic support. In general, researchers who compared online and classroom face-to-face courses have indicated that there were few differences between the two delivery models with respect to satisfaction and quality of the learning experience as measured by test scores, course grades, and student ratings (Askov, et al., 2003). Many educational researchers have proclaimed hybrid delivery as the "best of both worlds": a combination of the crucial face-to-face instructional interaction and convenient, technology-based activities. Nonetheless, although there exists a large amount of literature on the benefits of technology for language learning, research on the exact effects of hybrid delivery on ESL students was minimal (Harrington, 2010).

Future research that analyzes the validity and effectiveness of various computer-based ESL curricula is needed. Also, research on what grammar points should be taught in class and what grammar points would be best to learn and practice with computer

technology might be helpful for hybrid ESL instructors.

Research focused on persistence, self-motivation, and self-reflection of hybrid ESL students also might be useful. For example, for student persistence in hybrid classes vs. traditional classes, researchers might ask the following questions: What are the factors that cause students to withdraw from programs of various models? What are some of the different reasons for withdrawal? Additional research topics might include: the best technology to use for hybrid ESL courses, the connection between computer literacy and English literacy, and what computer literacy skills are needed in order to successfully participate in hybrid ESL classes.

There is a great need for effective and efficient ESL program models that combine technology and conventional classroom instruction. Principles of andragogy should be considered in the design of all programs for adults. Key elements should be incorporated in the design of hybrid ESL programs in the areas of recruitment, intake and orientation, learner retention, learner support, curriculum design, assessment and attendance, and professional training of the instructors.

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