

ABSTRACT

DORMAN, MARNI ALEXANDRA. Understanding the Experiences of Underprepared Adult English as a Second Language Instructors: A Case Study. (Under the direction of Dr. Leila Gonzalez Sullivan and Dr. Carol Kasworm.)

Positioned within the social constructivist view of learning that individuals make meaning from their experiences and through their social actions and interactions, this qualitative study explores the ways in which nine instructors of underprepared adult English as a Second Language students made meaning of their classroom experiences. Through semi-structured interviews and a constant comparative interpretation of data, the researcher provides insight into how these instructors, who were not adequately prepared to teach adult ESL when they began their careers, made meaning of, and coped with, their experiences in order to become confident professionals in their field.

This investigation into the experiences of nine underprepared adult ESL instructors resulted in two distinct conclusions. First, the findings suggested that the adult ESL instructors appeared to move through stages of development similar to Frances Fuller's (1969) model of teacher development. Fuller's model indicated that teachers develop their educational behaviors in an orderly manner that forms a predictable pattern as they gain experience. This model was based on an analysis of teachers' concerns and posits three stages of development that begin with (1) concerns about self, then (2) concerns about tasks, and, finally, (3) concerns about students and the impact of teaching. The instructors began with concerns heavily focused on themselves while they were novice, underprepared instructors. Through their experiences, their focus shifted from themselves to being

concerned about the challenges and the tasks they faced. Ultimately, as their relationships with their students grew, their concerns shifted to the impact they had on their students.

The instructors began in the field with beliefs and practices that they based on their own prior educational experiences to guide them. Through their experiences, the instructors learned that their initial beliefs and practices were ineffective, so they sought learning activities on their own to help themselves cope with the challenges they faced. Once they were successful in overcoming challenges and saw their students succeeding, they began to view themselves as professionals who have a positive impact in the lives of their students.

The second conclusion of this study is that the adult ESL instructors developed a sense of self efficacy, and their beliefs and practices were transformed through their activities as learners. The instructors took the initiative to plan their own learning activities once they realized they were underprepared and that there was little or no support from their employers. As the instructors began to critically reflect upon their situations and engage in learning activities, they began to redefine the way they constructed their meanings about teaching, their students, and the field of Adult ESL. During this process, they also began to believe in themselves and evolved from scared, timid teachers into beliefs of themselves as confident, self-assured instructors.

Understanding the Experiences of Adult English as a Second Language Instructors: A Case Study

by
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BIOGRAPHY

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Adult English as a Second Language (ESL) programs teach English to adult learners whose first language is not English, in an environment where English is the native language. The term ESL usually refers to the comprehensive learning of the language: listening and speaking as well as reading and writing, pronunciation and grammar. Depending on the program, the goal typically is to provide the adult learner with skills to function in English in a variety of contexts (social, professional, civic). Courses range from basic ESL literacy for those not literate in their own language to very advanced academic ESL, which prepares adults for postsecondary education (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004).

The United States Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education created the Division of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL) to promote programs to help adults get the basic skills they need in order to be productive workers, family members, and citizens (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). These programs include: Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE) and English as a Second Language (ESL). Adult ESL programs belong to a different continuum from Adult Basic Education (ABE), or Adult Secondary Education (ASE). All three programs aim to serve adult students age 18 and above, but they serve different populations and have different goals. Adult ESL is different from ABE or ASE because it has a separate research base, different curricula, and students with diverse needs. ABE addresses the needs of native

English speakers in reading, writing, and mathematics. ASE provides additional instruction for native English speakers in the secondary school curriculum for those seeking a high school diploma. ESL provides English instruction to those whose first language is not English. ESL students may have college degrees in their native languages, but they need to develop their oral and written English skills. They may understand mathematical formulas or operations, but they do not know the English vocabulary needed to describe the calculation (Crandall & Sheppard, 2006).

ESL programs are typically housed within community colleges, vocational schools, churches, and in a variety of community-based organizations. Community colleges provide the greatest number of ESL programs compared to vocational schools or churches, in part because approximately one in four community college students is an immigrant and the numbers are increasing (Connell, 2008). ESL programs are the largest and fastest growing programs at many colleges (Kuo 2002). One of the largest ESL programs in the United States is offered by Miami-Dade College, where they serve approximately 12,000 non-native English learners each year (Crandall & Sheppard, 2006). While the majority of adult ESL students in the community colleges are immigrants, international students seeking instruction increasingly prefer community college programs because they are less expensive than those offered by either commercial English language schools or universities (Crandall & Sheppard, 2006).

The community college's role varies in the instruction and services it provides to adult ESL learners. In some districts, the community college's focus is to provide non-credit,

free-of-charge adult ESL courses of all levels. In other districts, the focus is on credit-bearing or advanced academic courses that lead to admission to postsecondary education. In these districts, lower-level or less academic adult ESL is provided by local education agencies or nonprofit organizations that are sometimes under contract with the community college (Crandall & Sheppard, 2006). For the purposes of this research study, the focus will be community college programs that offer non-academic ESL courses to non-degree seeking learners age 18 or older, who may be refugees, immigrants, or permanent residents.

The adult ESL population represents the fastest-growing segment of the adult education population. In the 2000 Census, of the over 37 million adults age 18 or older who reported speaking a language other than English at home, more than 15 million reported being less than proficient in the English language (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). Thus, at least 15 million adults would benefit from ESL courses, but this is a number that far exceeds the capacity of currently available ESL programs. According to the most recent statistics for program year 2000-2001, 42 percent (1.1 million out of 2.7 million) of all participants enrolled in state-administered adult education programs were ESL learners (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2002). Due to the rapid growth of ESL programs, many states and territories have appointed an ESL specialist to work closely with the state director of adult education to oversee services to the ESL population.

Adult ESL students are an extremely diverse group. The largest groups of learners are typically from Mexico and other Latin American countries. In 2000, more than one-quarter of the foreign-born population came from Mexico, and over half from Latin America. The

next largest groups come from countries in Asia and Africa and the smallest percentage of learners in ESL courses generally come from Europe, depending upon the location of the program in the United States (Capps, 2003).

The languages the ESL learners speak are diverse as well. The majority of learners speak Spanish (60 percent), and the number of Spanish speakers is more than 10 times the number of individuals who speak the second most prevalent language, Chinese. The remaining eight of the top 10 languages spoken are (in order) French, German, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Italian, Korean, Russian, and Polish (CAELA, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

According to the Center for Adult English Language Acquisition (CAELA) (2007), to be prepared for, and effectively teach English to adult ESL learners, adult ESL instructors need to have formal training in a number of areas. These areas include: the principles of adult learning, second language acquisition, issues related to culture, and instructional approaches that support language development in adults. If instructors do not have formal training in all of the identified areas, they are considered to be underprepared. Because the field of adult ESL is growing so rapidly, it is difficult for program administrators to find qualified instructors, so they will often hire applicants who have not had formal training in all of the identified areas. Program requirements vary, but some of the academic adult ESL programs in community colleges require advanced degrees in appropriate fields such as applied linguistics (Crandall & Sheppard, 2006). In the majority of non-academic ESL programs, the

only qualification required is to have a bachelor's degree in any field; however, some programs will hire instructors with only an Associate of Arts degree (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004).

Many ESL instructors do have a bachelor's degree, but the focus of these degrees are typically from a variety of fields. Those with degrees in education are likely to be prepared to teach children or adolescents rather than adults, while many who hold degrees in reading may have had little preparation for teaching literacy in a second language. Further, until recently most Master's Degree programs for ESL educators focused on the needs of elementary or secondary education, rather than adult students (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004), so it was--and still is--very difficult to find programs focused on training for adult ESL instruction.

Hiring qualified instructors is a challenge not only because the field is growing so rapidly, but also because many ESL programs choose to staff their programs primarily with part-time instructors in order to avoid costly benefit packages, and because part-time staff can provide flexibility in staffing with fluctuating student enrollment. It has been estimated that anywhere from 80-90 percent of the instructors work 20 or fewer hours per week. Because there are so few full-time positions offered, coupled with the fact that ESL programs are rapidly growing in all areas of the country, programs typically will hire instructors without the needed academic or on-the-job training (NCLE, 2003).

Hiring qualified adult ESL instructors is extremely important because there are a host of issues that exist in this environment that do not occur in any other field. According to

Darling-Hammond (2004), studies of underprepared teachers consistently find that they have difficulty with curriculum development, classroom management, and teaching strategies, and these areas can be especially challenging in the ESL environment. In terms of course organization/management, typically there is no set curriculum or guidelines for the instructors to follow, thus requiring the instructor to develop the objectives, methods and materials for the class. Generally, there are no set curricula in these programs because the only result that the instructors need to produce for the program to receive funding is an increase in the students' pre/post test assessment scores. Classroom resources and materials are sometimes difficult to obtain, and often the instructors have to develop their own materials, which can also be very difficult for the underprepared instructor with no experience in materials preparation. Finally, since a major portion of government funding for adult ESL programs is based on enrollment numbers, most programs will have open entry/exit, resulting in a constant stream of students entering and leaving the class. This can be extremely difficult to manage because the instructor continually has to find the balance between advancing the current members of the class, while not leaving the new entrants behind. To deal with these issues, the instructor would need to have experience in a variety of areas that the underprepared instructor is not likely to have (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004).

From an instructional perspective, adult ESL courses are uniquely challenging because the classes are typically made up of learners from a variety of cultures who speak a variety of languages. They are typically at varying levels of proficiency in their own languages, as well as varying levels of proficiency in the English language. There are a host

of skills required to deal with these issues that many underprepared instructors do not have, and that is why instructors need to have formal training in all of the subject areas recommended by the CAELA (2007), including: an understanding of the principles of adult learning, second language acquisition, issues related to culture, and instructional approaches that support language development in adults.

A number of negative consequences may result from placing underprepared instructors in the classroom, for the students and for the instructors themselves. For students, the major concern is that because these instructors do not have the experience or preparation to teach, instruction will be compromised and will result in confusion and frustration for learners attempting to master a new language. For the instructors, being placed in a class that they are not prepared to teach can lead to intimidation, anxiety, embarrassment, self-doubt, job dissatisfaction, and fear of loss of their job (Ingersoll, 2005).

Most of the research regarding the relationship between underprepared instructors and student achievement has arrived at similar conclusions: underprepared instructors are detrimental to students' success. Ingersoll (2005) stated that there is substantial empirical support for the reasonable proposition that student learning is affected by the qualifications of teachers. According to a Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning report (2008), the single most important thing that a school can provide to ensure the student success is a skilled and knowledgeable teacher. Those who know what to teach and how to teach it produce successful students; teachers who are underqualified generally do not produce successful students. Similarly, according to Owston (2007), teacher expertise is the most

important factor in determining student achievement and trained teachers are far more effective with students than those who are not.

There are consequences for underprepared instructors as well. According to Ingersoll (1999), there is an impact on teachers' sense of efficacy in teaching courses for which they have little formal background preparation. Other results show that there is also a decrease in morale and overall commitment to teaching among instructors who teach in an area for which they do not have academic preparation. For the field of adult ESL, this practice could lead to high instructor turnover rates as well as high student dropout rates, both of which can be detrimental to the field.

The purpose of this study was to examine the instructors' experiences, the coping strategies they developed and utilized to help them become proficient teachers, and the beliefs and practices regarding adult ESL instruction they adopted from their experiences. The next section, the theoretical frame of reference, serves to situate this study in a larger theoretical domain, thereby establishing its significance, contribution to, and place in the literature base.

Theoretical Frame of Reference

Constructivism is a philosophy of learning based on the work of Piaget (1977) and Kelly (1991) and rests on the belief that knowledge is constructed by learners through an active, mental process of development; learners are the builders and creators of meaning and knowledge. Constructivists view knowledge as not being 'about' the world, but rather 'constitutive' of the world, they also view knowledge not as a fixed

object, but as being constructed by an individual through his or her own experience of that object (Atherton, 2009).

Piaget (1977) asserts that learning occurs by an active construction of meaning, rather than by passive assimilation. He explains that when we, as learners, encounter an experience or a situation that conflicts with our current way of thinking, a state of disequilibrium or imbalance is created. We must then alter our thinking to restore equilibrium or balance. To do this, we make sense of the new information by associating it with what we already know, that is, by attempting to assimilate it into our existing knowledge. When we are unable to do this, we accommodate the new information to our old way of thinking by restructuring our present knowledge to a higher level of thinking (Gray, 2007).

The constructivist approach to learning emphasizes authentic, challenging projects that include students, teachers and experts whose goal is to create learning communities that are more closely related to the collaborative practice of the real world (Sherman, 2000). In an authentic constructivist environment, learners assume responsibility for their own learning, and they develop metacognitive abilities to monitor and direct their own learning and performance. When people work collaboratively in an authentic activity, they bring their own framework and perspectives to the activity; they are able to see problems from different perspectives and are able to negotiate and generate meanings and solutions through shared understanding. This model of learning emphasizes meaning-making through active participation in socially, culturally, historically, and politically situated contexts. A crucial

element of active participation is dialog in shared experiences, through which situated collaborative activities, such as modeling, discourse and decision-making, are necessary to support the negotiation and creation of meaning and understanding (Perkins 1991).

Social constructivism is a specific area of thought within constructivism. It emphasizes the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society and the consequent construction of knowledge based on this understanding (Derry, 1999; McMahon, 1997). Social constructivism is based on specific assumptions in three areas: reality, knowledge, and learning. The first assumption of social constructivism concerns reality. The basis of this theory is that reality is constructed through interaction with others. For the social constructivist, reality cannot be discovered because it does not exist prior to its social invention. The second assumption of social constructivism involves knowledge creation. To social constructivists, knowledge is also a human product, and is socially and culturally constructed (Ernest, 1999; Gredler, 1997; Prawat & Floden, 1994). Individuals create meaning through their interactions with each other and with the environment in which they live. The third and final assumption of social constructivism relates to learning. Social constructivists view learning as a social process and believe that meaningful learning occurs when individuals are engaged in social activities (Kim, 2009).

Social constructivism is an appropriate theoretical frame through which to view this research on underprepared adult ESL instructors because of the inherently social nature of this type of classroom, as well as the culturally and linguistically diverse dimensions that are prevalent in adult ESL classrooms. In order for this type of classroom to be successful,

members must construct a shared meaning of knowledge, learning and culture through their social interactions with one another. Individual meaning is made as well as shared meaning as a result of these lived experiences. It is the individual meanings made by underprepared adult ESL instructors that are of interest in this research.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The concepts associated with social constructivism offer a lens through which to view and understand the experiences of underprepared instructors in the adult ESL classroom. Within the theoretical framework of social constructivism, then, the purpose of this study was to examine the instructors' experiences, the coping strategies they developed and utilized to help them become proficient teachers, and the beliefs and practices regarding adult ESL instruction they adopted from their experiences.

This study used a qualitative framework to describe the process of how instructors make meaning of their classroom experiences. This method is appropriate because it provided the opportunity to more thoroughly investigate this phenomenon. Qualitative research is personal in nature and focuses on understanding relationships and settings without making assumptions (Crawford, 2003). According to Merriam (1998, p.7):

Often qualitative studies are undertaken because there is a lack of theory, or existing theory fails to adequately explain a phenomenon... Qualitative researchers build toward theory from observations and intuitive understandings gained in the field.

The research questions that guided this qualitative study were the following:

1. What are the experiences of underprepared adult ESL instructors?

2. What are the coping mechanisms the underprepared adult ESL instructors develop?
3. How do the adult ESL instructors' experiences inform their current beliefs and practices?

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the instructors' experiences, the coping strategies they developed and utilized to help them become proficient teachers, and the beliefs and practices regarding adult ESL instruction they adopted from their experiences. Examining the experiences of this type of instructor provided an important insight into an issue that has not previously been studied. Because adult ESL instructional programs are one of the fastest growing federally-funded educational programs in the country, it is extremely important to take an in-depth look into how underprepared instructors cope in this highly challenging environment. This is essential because the successes/failures of these instructors will ultimately affect the students and the entire profession as well.

This study is significant in four major ways. First, there is very limited research of any kind in the field of adult ESL. Not only does this study add to the literature base, but it helps to fill an existing gap because no studies of a similar nature have been conducted on the topic of adult ESL instructors and the effects of being underprepared in this environment. Second, this study serves the broader purpose of contributing to the field of adult education generally by providing information about underprepared instructors of adult learners. Third, practitioners and scholars in the field will be able to see the effects of placing underprepared instructors in the classroom and realize the importance of academic preparation and

professional development in the field. Fourth, with regard to higher education, community colleges and universities will also find this information useful; as the field continues its rapid expansion, there will be an even greater need for trained adult ESL instructors, who may seek to attend colleges and universities for their academic preparation. The study may suggest curriculum approaches for such teacher preparation programs.

Summary

The literature base for adult education is lacking in studies that examine the field of adult ESL, and particularly ones that examine adult ESL instructors. Adult ESL is a federally funded program and is part of the Division of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL), which promotes programs to help adults get the basic skills they need in order to be productive workers, family members, and citizens (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Adult ESL programs provide comprehensive English instruction to adults age 18 or over. Courses are offered by a number of providers including community colleges, vocational centers, and churches. The largest provider of both for-credit (academic), and non-credit (non-academic) adult ESL courses are community colleges, and the underprepared instructors who teach in these non-academic adult ESL programs will be the focus of this study.

The field of adult ESL is growing very rapidly, and often adult ESL programs hire instructors who are not fully qualified to teach these courses. According to CAELA (2007), to be considered prepared or qualified to teach English to adult ESL learners, adult ESL instructors need to have an understanding of the principles of adult learning, second language acquisition, issues related to culture, and instructional approaches that support language

development in adults. If the instructors do not have formal training in these areas, then they are considered to be underprepared. As a result, instruction can be compromised for the students and the underprepared instructors can experience intimidation, anxiety, embarrassment, self-doubt, job dissatisfaction, and fear of loss of their job (Ingersoll, 2005). The next four chapters cover the relevant literature, methodology, findings and conclusions of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of underprepared adult ESL instructors working in non-credit, non-degree programs at community colleges, the coping strategies they developed and utilized to help them become proficient teachers, and the beliefs and practices regarding adult ESL instruction they adopted from their experiences.

The research questions that guided this study were:

4. What are the experiences of underprepared adult ESL instructors?
5. What are the coping mechanisms the underprepared adult ESL instructors develop?
6. How do the adult ESL instructors' experiences inform their current beliefs and practices?

The literature reviewed to provide a background for this study covered the historical/social impetus of adult ESL, immigration trends, and current demographics. The remainder of the literature review addressed general theories of teacher preparation and teacher development. This chapter also presents theories of social constructivism, which guides and informs this study and comprises the theoretical framework. The review of theories of instructor preparation aims to show the skills and qualifications generally regarded as necessary to be considered a prepared adult ESL instructor. The literature surrounding teacher development provides a background to show how instructors develop as they have experiences in their roles. Finally, the literature surrounding social constructivism

provides a perspective of how instructors learn and develop meaning from their social interactions in the classroom.

Background Information on Adult ESL Programs

The Historical Roots of Adult ESL Programs

The first notable period in the development of adult ESL programs was in response to a wave of immigration at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries and began with community-based organizations. The first community-based organizations offering such programs can be traced back to 1884, when the idea of settlements or neighborhood centers took hold in the U.S. as a means to help immigrants adjust to American life. Hull-House was one of the most famous settlement houses and was founded in Chicago by Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr (Knowles, 1977). At the end of the nineteenth century, there were hundreds of thousands of immigrants entering America, most of whom were poor and undereducated and, in response to this mass immigration, approximately four hundred settlement houses were built. These facilities provided basic education including reading, writing, and English-language training, and these houses are widely considered the beginning of modern-day adult ESL instruction (Sticht, 2002).

Immigration Trends and Adult ESL

Between the years of 1887 and 1960, the United States saw the largest influx of non-English speaking immigrants. From 1887 to 1920 more than twenty distinguishable European languages were spoken in the United States. Also during this period, people from various Asian countries were brought into the United States as laborers, and Native-American tribes

spoke more than forty-five distinct dialects (Kloss, 1997). The ten most prevalent languages during this period were: 1) Spanish; 2) Italian; 3) German; 4) Polish; 5) French; 6) Yiddish; 7) Russian; 8) Swedish; 9) Hungarian; 10) Norwegian (Kloss, 1977).

Throughout this period of enormous population growth, legislation dealing with language learning was the most restrictive in the history of education. “English-only” statutes, enforced in most states, prohibited using any language other than English as a medium of instruction in both public and private schools. In addition, American educational objectives were to replace primary languages and cultures with those of the United States. Some in the 1800’s believed that the impetus for language legislation was religious elitism, while others believed that its basis was political loyalty. As “Americanization” took a coercive turn, proficiency in English was increasingly equated with being a “good” American. American attitudes toward language had definitely changed during this period in history, and learning through languages (bilingual education) other than English seemed unpatriotic. Non-English speakers were viewed with suspicion, so they tended to stop speaking their native language and to discourage their children from learning it. The pressure on immigrants to assimilate during this time was tremendous, and so was the need for the immigrants to learn English (Wittke, 1936).

As immigration increased during the latter part of the nineteenth century, the need for educating these large groups continued. During this period, there was a growing concern among civic groups and state and federal policymakers about the large influx of illiterate immigrants entering the country. In 1910, the U.S. Census indicated that 7.7 percent of

adults--more than 5 million people--were illiterate and almost thirty percent of these individuals were foreign-born. In 1917, after the results of the military's standardized tests had confirmed that large numbers of both native- and foreign-born Americans were not literate in any language, the government passed a law that prohibited immigrants from entering the country if they were sixteen years old or older and could not read in any language (Cook, 1977).

At the same time the millions of illiterate foreign-born who were already in the country were "Americanized" through immigrant education programs. Between 1915 and 1919, the Federal Bureau of Education gave extensive professional aid to groups interested in providing Americanization education (Cook, 1977). Many of these programs were provided by public schools in evening classes, and many of the teachers and administrators of these schools were members of the National Education Association. In 1920, the NEA formed a Department of Immigrant Education to provide professional members working in the Americanization movement with assistance. As the movement for adult education began to spread, the NEA in 1924 changed the name of the Department of Immigrant Education to the Department of Adult Education and broadened its mandate beyond concern for immigrant education to include adult education in general (Knowles, 1977).

Employment-based Adult ESL

Because of the tremendous numbers of immigrant workers entering the workforce in the early 1900's, communication problems arose and productivity was negatively affected

(Rosenblum, 1996). There was a great need to improve the communication skills of these workers, thus further driving the momentum of adult ESL instruction. Labor unions have historically been at the forefront of movements to link education and work in the United States, and were the first to address the need for English education in the workplace. Since the early 1900s, unions have operated educational programs to meet workers' diverse needs. Unions with large immigrant populations, such as the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union in New York, began offering night classes in English and citizenship, using teachers from the New York City Board of Education and union staff (Rosenblum, 1996).

From the early 1900s on, then, workers attended union-organized classes to become citizens and learn how to advocate for union issues such as the eight-hour day, labor's right to strike, and laws strengthening safety conditions in the workplace. While ESL was the core of these programs, courses in public speaking, economics, literature, history, and civics were also provided. These classes were integrated with the overall union agenda of meeting the practical needs of members to know English so they could participate in protecting the union and developing themselves in the workplace (Rosenblum, 1996).

Over the next sixty years, classes in citizenship, ESL, and technical skills continued to be offered in union halls across the nation. Then, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, several factors--including an increase in immigrant population, a decline in manufacturing jobs, and a combination of new technology and work restructuring--brought a new urgency to union-sponsored worker education. When dislocated workers from auto, steel, and other

manufacturing industries sought retraining under federally supported programs such as the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) or Trade Adjustment Assistance Act (TAAA), their teachers identified the need for basic skills instruction in reading, writing, and math before workers could access technological training to qualify for positions in the new, increasingly computerized workplace (Rosenblum, 1996).

Legislation Affecting Adult ESL Programs

Today, the majority of immigrants rely on government-sponsored programs to learn English. Many do not have the expendable income to pay for private English classes, which can be quite costly; thus, they will seek out free or low cost programs. The majority of adult ESL programs are federally and state sponsored. Over the last century there have been numerous legislative acts that either directly or indirectly affected adult ESL. For the purposes of this review, only the major legislative acts will be addressed, beginning with the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 was the federal statute that established adult basic education programs. It authorized instruction to eliminate the inability of all students to read and write English, thereby establishing services for English language learners within the federally funded adult education system. Title IIB of the Act established the Adult Basic Education Program. In 1966 the Adult Education Act became Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the primary federal program funding basic education and literacy programs for adults 16 years of age and older. The Adult Education Act was amended several times thereafter to broaden the scope of how states could use the money. Program guidelines were expanded to allow money to be used not only for

direct basic education services, but also for teacher training and workplace literacy instruction. Amendments also expanded the types of programs eligible to receive funds to include nonprofit, for-profit, and community-based organizations (U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2003).

The National Literacy Act (NLA) of 1991 replaced the Adult Education Act of 1966. The NLA was then replaced in 1998 by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and the aim of this Act was to improve the competitiveness of the United States in a global economy. It incorporates the NLA into Title II: the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA). Through the AEFLA legislation, funds are provided to state adult education agencies, which then disburse the funds to local programs through the state-administered grant system (Sticht, 2002). The largest percentage of these adult education programs (46%) are administered through local state education agencies (U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2003).

Current Immigration Trends

The United States has seen a steady increase in the foreign-born population since the year 2000. According to the Center for Adult English Language Acquisition (CAELA) (2007), there were 37.5 million foreign born individuals in the United States in 2006, representing 12.5 % of the total U.S. population, while in 2000 there were 28.4 million, which was 10.4% of the population. Between 2002 and 2006, the level of immigration averaged 1.8 million per year. Naturalized citizens and refugees were two sub-groups of the foreign born. Of the 37.5 million foreign born in the United States in 2006, 15.7 million

(almost 42%) were naturalized citizens (Terrazas, Batalova, & Fan, 2007). In 2007, 48,281 refugees arrived in the United States, with the majority coming from Burma (20%), Somalia (14%), Iran (11%), the former Soviet republics (9%), and Burundi (9%) (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2007).

Hispanics and Asians are the two largest groups represented in the foreign-born population. In 2006, 47% of the foreign-born population was of Hispanic origin; 31% of this population was born in Mexico. Projections for the size of the Hispanic population in the future range from 15.5% of the total U.S. population in 2010, to 24.4% in 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). From 1990 to 2004, the Asian and Pacific Islander population doubled in size; the Asian population rose from 7 million to 14 million, and the population of Pacific Islanders expanded from 500,000 to approximately 1 million (Asian American Justice Center and Asian Pacific American Legal Center, 2006). Other highly represented groups include those from the Philippines (4.4%), China (4.1%), India (4.0%), Vietnam (3%), El Salvador (2.8%), Korea (2.7%), Cuba (2.5%), Canada (2.3%), and the United Kingdom (1.8%) (Terrazas, Batalova, & Fan, 2007).

The educational backgrounds of foreign-born adults vary, but the majority have at least earned a high school diploma in either their native country or the United States (68%); 26.7% of the foreign-born aged 25 and older have a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). The English language proficiency of U.S. foreign-born residents also varies widely. Fifty-two percent of the 37.2 million foreign-born persons age 5 and older reported speaking English less than "very well" in 2006, compared with 51.0% of 30.7 million in

2000. Eighty-four percent reported speaking a language other than English at home, and 31.4% live in linguistically isolated households in which no one speaks English (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

The National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003) provided in-depth information about the different types of literacy abilities found in native- and foreign-born adults living in the United States (Kutner, Greenberg, Jin, Boyle, Hsu, & Dunleavy, 2007). NAAL data disaggregated by native language and ethnicity showed the following:

- Approximately 11 million adults in the U.S. (5% of the total population) were estimated to be nonliterate in English, as defined by their inability to complete a minimum number of questions on the assessment.
- Average prose and document literacy decreased as the age at which individuals learned English increased.
- Thirty-nine percent of adults who learned English at age 16 or older performed at below basic prose literacy, and 63% who performed at basic prose literacy, had attended or were currently enrolled in adult ESL classes.
- Eighty-two percent of adults who learned English at age 16 or older who had never enrolled in an adult ESL class had below basic prose literacy, compared with 63% of adults who had attended such classes and 69% of adults who were currently enrolled.

- Of adults who spoke only Spanish before starting formal schooling, 62% had below basic prose and quantitative literacy, and 49% had below basic document literacy.
- Average prose and document literacy for adults of Mexican and Central or South American origin declined, except for those who were still in high school and those who had a college degree or higher.
- Spanish-speaking adults with below basic prose literacy increased from 35 to 44%.
- Prose, document, and quantitative literacy levels of Asian/Pacific Islander adults did not change significantly.
- The percentage of the U.S. adult population who spoke only Spanish before starting formal schooling increased from 5 to 8 %. The percentage who spoke only English before starting school decreased from 86 to 81% (Kutner, Greenberg, Jin, Boyle, Hsu, & Dunleavy, 2007).

Traditionally, the majority of foreign born have settled in a few states, the top five in 2006 being California, New York, Texas, Florida, and Illinois. In 2007, California, Texas, Minnesota, New York, and Florida were the top five states for initial refugee resettlement (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2007). California led the nation in number of foreign born, and Los Angeles had the greatest number of foreign born of any city in the country; 36% of the 9.9 million residents and 46% of the workforce in Los Angeles were foreign born, and approximately two million residents were considered to have limited English proficiency (Fix, McHugh, Terrazas, & Laglagaron, 2008).

At the same time, many other states have experienced recent growth in foreign-born populations. From 2000 to 2005, 14 states experienced a 30% or higher increase, including Nevada and North Carolina. (Jensen, 2006; McHugh, Gellatt, & Fix, 2007). One reason for this scattering trend is that immigrants are settling in states with employment opportunities in construction, industry, and tourism (Singer & Wilson, 2006).

These statistics serve to show the continual growth of immigrant populations in the United States, and estimates show that the trend will continue in the years to come. These statistics illuminate the importance of English language programs, and adult ESL programs in particular, since in 2007 there were an estimated 11 million foreign-born adults that were not literate in the English language and could benefit from this type of instruction (Kutner, Greenberg, Jin, Boyle, Hsu, & Dunleavy, 2007). There are many factors related to participation in adult ESL programs that will be addressed in the next section of this chapter.

Factors Related to Program Participation

Many circumstances can have an impact on learner participation in adult education programs. *These factors* include work schedules, family responsibilities, opportunities to learn and use English outside of an instructional setting, marital and family status, and personal motivation. *Other program-related factors* include availability of classes, class schedules and locations, instructional setting, type of entry into the program (open or managed enrollment), length of courses and frequency of classes, and training and expertise of the teachers (National Center for ESL Literacy Education, 2003; Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 2003).

An important program factor is availability of classes. The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEAO) conducted a study to examine the wait times associated with popular adult ESL programs across the country (Tucker, 2006). Among 176 adult ESL providers surveyed, 57% reported that their wait list was from a few weeks to more than 3 years. In some parts of the country, such as New York City, waiting lists have been abolished, because the wait has become too long. Rather than put students on waiting lists, some programs place students in available classes even if they do not meet the students' specific goals or are not the appropriate instructional level, in the hope that space in a suitable class will open up.

Adult ESL Student Demographics

There are many students who would like to enroll in adult ESL courses, but they are not able to do so because of personal factors and/or a lack of ESL course availability. However, many adults do enroll in adult ESL programs, as evidenced by program year 2006-2007 statistics. During this program year 1,101, 082 adults of all ages, nationalities, native languages, and English proficiency levels were enrolled in federally funded, state-administered ESL programs in the United States. The five states with the highest number of English language learners enrolled in these programs were California (414, 568), Florida (117,773), New York (77,327), Illinois (70,001), and Texas (59, 174) (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Of those enrolled,

- Forty-eight percent were enrolled in literacy or beginning level ESL classes

- Three percent were 16-18 years of age, 19% were 19-24, 56% were 25-44, 17% were 45-59, and 5% were 60 years of age and older (U.S. Department of Education, p.48 2008).

Further, according to the National Household Education Survey of 2005, 1% of the 211,607 adults surveyed reported taking an ESL class within the previous 12 months (O'Donnell, 2006). The average number of classroom instructional hours learners received in ESL classes in the previous 12 months was 72.

In a related study, combined data from the National Household Education Surveys of 2001 and 2005 found that an average of 54% of adults surveyed (between the ages of 16 and 64) reported participating in at least one formal learning activity during the 12 months prior to the survey. Adults with no high school credential (4.4%) were more likely to be enrolled in ESL classes than those with a General Educational Development (GED) certificate (0.4%), a high school diploma (0.9%), some college (1.0%), or a bachelor's degree or higher (0.6%) (Kienzl, 2008).

Preparation of Adult ESL Instructors

As the number of immigrants continues to grow, there will be an even greater demand for adult ESL programs and instructors. Program administrators and planners will be challenged to find well-qualified and prepared instructors to teach in their programs. Because these instructors work with a population that is diverse in race, culture, native language, economic status, educational background, and motivation for learning the language, there are

many areas of knowledge that the instructor should possess in order to be considered as prepared (CAELA, 2007).

This portion of the literature review will address the skills necessary to be considered a prepared adult ESL instructor. It is the condition of being underprepared as an instructor that is the central focus of this study. Further, this study explored how being underprepared influenced the meanings, coping mechanisms, and understandings that were developed by such adult ESL instructors. It is important to understand what it means to be a prepared instructor in order to fully comprehend the experiences of underprepared instructors. This comparative information helps the reader distinguish between prepared and underprepared adult ESL instructors.

According to the literature, the specifics that constitute what makes an effective or prepared teacher are debatable. Ingersoll (1999) notes that there is little consensus on how to define what makes a teacher prepared. Haertel (1991) also says that there is a great deal of controversy concerning how much and what kinds of training teachers ought to have to be considered adequately prepared. Because teacher proficiency is not easy to measure, and because so many differing views exist as to what constitutes being prepared, many studies resort to looking at measurable inputs in order to determine teacher quality. Linda Darling-Hammond and Deborah Ball (1998) used education, certification, knowledge and experience as measures of effectiveness in their study of well-prepared instructors, while Ferguson (1991) used teacher experience and master's degrees as the measures in another study. While there are no national certification requirements and there are differing opinions as to

competencies and criteria for adequate preparation, the literature reflects general agreement that in order to be considered a prepared adult ESL instructor they must have an understanding of the principles of adult learning, linguistics and second language acquisition, issues related to culture, and instructional approaches that support language development in adults (CAELA, 2007).

Principles of Adult Learning

For adult ESL instructors, knowledge of how adults learn is essential in order to teach ESL learners. Malcolm Knowles' (1973) principles of andragogy, the art and science of facilitating adult learning, are seminal to many of today's theories about learning and instruction. Specifically, adult ESL instructors need to know that:

- Adults are self-directed in their learning;
- Adults have reservoirs of experience that serve as resources as they learn;
- Adults are practical, problem-solving-oriented learners;
- Adults want their learning to be immediately applicable to their lives;
- Adults want to know why something needs to be learned (p. 23).

This picture of adult learners is representative of all adults, whether they are native or non-native English speakers. All adult learners need adult-appropriate content, materials, and activities that speak to their needs and interests and allow them to demonstrate their knowledge and abilities (Burt & Florez, 2001, p.1).

Where this picture of non-native speakers differs from native speakers is that, obviously, ESL learners need help with English at the same time that they learn the content. Also, ESL instructors need to think about how Knowles' characteristics are filtered through culture, language, and experience. It is not uncommon for non-native learners to be hesitant to take charge of their own learning. Their educational experiences in their own countries may have taught them that the teacher is the unquestioned expert. They may be resistant to a learner-centered classroom where they are expected to develop goals and work in groups with other learners (Shank & Terrill, 1995).

Second Language Acquisition

The complexities of linguistics and language learning are essential knowledge for adult ESL educators as well. It is important for these instructors to have exposure to the fundamentals of linguistics, especially as related to ESL learners. In addition, effective teaching also entails a thorough understanding of psycholinguistics—the mental processes involved in language production, comprehension, and cognition. Likewise, an understanding of sociolinguistics—the study of the interaction between linguistic, cultural, and social elements in communication as they impact learning two languages is essential (Menken & Antunez, 2001).

In addition to an understanding of general linguistics, adult ESL instructors also need to have knowledge of language acquisition, specifically second language acquisition. Second language acquisition theories address cognitive issues (how the brain processes information in general and language in particular), affective issues (how emotions factor into second

language processing and learning), and linguistic issues (how learners interact with and internalize new language systems) (Menken & Antunez, 2001).

Specifically, the instructors need to understand the factors that influence how their students will learn English, including: the degree of literacy in the first language, the type and amount of previous formal education, whether the first language uses the Roman alphabet system, the age and cultural background of the learner, and the learner's motivation for learning the second language (Burt & Florez, 2001).

Issues Related to Culture

The third area of critical knowledge for adult ESL instructors' preparation is to have an understanding of diverse cultures and how to work with multicultural groups. Culture and language are closely related; learning a new language involves learning about new ways of thinking, feeling and expressing. This process can be extremely stressful for an adult who has a well-developed sense of self in the native language and culture. Because immigrants are re-configuring their views of themselves in relation to a new social context, they may at times be ambivalent, confused or even hostile to the process of adapting to a new culture (Ullman, 1997). According to Burt & Florez (2001), there are a few items that instructors need to understand in order to be able to assist learners in adapting to a new culture. First, the instructor needs to become acquainted with learners' cultures to better understand their perspectives and expectations both inside and outside the classroom. Second, the instructors need to be sensitive to their learners' cultures when planning classroom activities, to try to avoid offending them or making them feel uncomfortable. Third, the instructors need to have

an understanding of their learners' educational experiences from their countries. For example, many English language learners come from cultures where silence after a question is posed is not uncomfortable.

Instructional Approaches

The final area of formal preparation the CAELA (2007) recommends that adult ESL instructors have is instructional approaches that support language development in adults. Crandall (2004) recommends that adult ESL instructors utilize five approaches in particular, that have proven to be successful with adult ESL students, and they include: Freirean or participatory education, whole language, language experience approach, learner writing and publishing, and competency-based education.

Freirean or participatory approaches revolve around the discussion of issues drawn from learners' real-life experiences (Freire, 1985). The central tenet is that education and knowledge have value only insofar as they help people liberate themselves from the social conditions that oppress them. The following concepts are central to this method:

- Generative words and themes. These are the basis for conversation, reading, and writing activities. Learners begin with encoding and decoding exercises and move to more complex activities.
- Collaboration and dialogue among equals. A traditional lecture format, where the teacher talks and the learners listen passively, is replaced by a *culture circle*, where teachers and learners face one another and discuss issues of concern in their lives.

- Problem posing. Using objects, pictures, and written texts, teachers and learners describe what they see, examine the relationships among the objects and people represented, and talk about how they feel about what they see. Ultimately, they articulate the problem illustrated and propose solutions.

Among adult educators in the United States, Freire's ideas have been adapted to fit diverse learners and educational contexts. The primary revision is the notion of emergent curriculum (Auerbach, 1992), where learners identify their own problems and issues and seek their own solutions. Teachers, freed from doing extensive research to identify problems for learners, become facilitators of class discussions and activities, and learn along with the class (Crandall, 2004).

The second approach recommended by Crandall (2004) is whole language. Whole language is not a specific method or collection of strategies, techniques, or materials. Instead, it presents a perspective on language learning and teaching (Edelsky, Altwerger, & Flores, 1991). Whole language educators emphasize that language must be kept whole when it is learned or it is no longer language, but rules, patterns, and lists; that written language is as natural as spoken language and needs to be integrated with it in learning; that language uses are diverse and reflect different styles and voices; and that language is social and learned in interaction with other speakers, readers, and writers (Crandall, 2004).

Whole language classes consist of communities of learners who work together to develop the curriculum, read and write for and with each other, and evaluate products together. Classroom activities might include extended reading and writing, with both

sustained silent reading and oral reading of a variety of published and student-written works; group development of written texts that grow out of individual or group experiences; direct instruction in effective reading and writing strategies; and ongoing student and teacher evaluation of student work and class success (Crandall 2004).

Third, Crandall (2004) suggests the language experience approach (LEA). Learners' experiences are dictated, and then transcribed, either by the teacher or other learners, and the transcription is used as reading material. Although LEA originated with teachers of elementary school children (Stauffer, 1965), it is used extensively in adult programs. It is ideal for ESL learners with well-developed speaking skills and low-level literacy skills because it capitalizes on their strengths and allows their reading and writing to evolve naturally from their activities and spoken language. LEA also addresses a common concern in adult ESL classes: the lack of appropriate and interesting texts for beginning readers.

Next, Crandall (2004) suggests learner writing and publishing as an instructional approach. A major problem facing adult ESL literacy programs has been the lack of authentic reading materials of interest to adult learners and appropriate for their various levels of English proficiency. Increasing numbers of adult literacy instructors are encouraging adult learners to write about their experiences, and programs internally publish these writings, making them available for other learners to read (Crandall, 2004). Some writing collections have been commercially published and are available for program use throughout the United States and Canada. Writing for publication and reading the writing of peers provides learners many opportunities to reflect on what constitutes good writing. As adult learners find that

others are interested in and can benefit from their thoughts and experiences, their experiences are validated, and they are motivated to express themselves in more interesting, worthwhile, and readable ways; as they work to produce a publishable piece of writing, they manipulate language at all levels, from selecting effective genres and discourse structures to correcting grammar and punctuation (Crandall, 2004).

Educational Opportunities for adult ESL instructors

There are a number of areas in which adult ESL instructors need to have formal training in order to be considered prepared to teach adult ESL. In the past there were not many educational opportunities for the instructors of adults needing to learn English as a second language; however, there are now a growing number of college programs, distance learning opportunities, and certificate programs offered for adult ESL instructors. Many colleges and universities offer degrees in some of the areas recommended for adult ESL instructors such as adult education, or applied linguistics, but according to Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL, 2010), a degree in TESOL is what will fully prepare adult ESL instructors in all of the needed areas including: adult learning, linguistics and second language acquisition, issues related to culture, and instructional approaches that support language development in adults.

According to TESOL (2010), there are a growing number of colleges and universities that offer programs in the subject area of adult ESL. There are 32 colleges and universities that offer a Bachelor of Arts degree in TESOL, including Northwestern University and Brigham Young University. There are 188 colleges and universities such as California State

University and American University that offer Master of Arts degrees in TESOL. There are also 26 colleges, such as Florida State University and The University of Georgia that offer Doctoral degrees in TESOL. Finally, there are numerous providers of post-baccalaureate degree certificates in TESOL, such as Central Piedmont Community College and San Diego State University. Many of these programs are delivered online and offer an abbreviated curriculum, but still provide formal instruction in all of the areas recommended for adult ESL instructors (TESOL, 2010).

There are also professional associations that support the field of ESL, and they provide educational opportunities for adult ESL instructors as well. TESOL is the largest ESL association with more than 13,000 members in 120 countries, and has been in existence for over 40 years (TESOL, 2010). The organization was created out of professional concern over the lack of a single, all-inclusive professional organization that might bring together teachers and administrators at all educational levels with an interest in teaching English to speakers of other languages. TESOL supports both K-12 and adult ESL instructors, holds annual conferences for its members, and offers professional development opportunities through certificate programs and online courses as well. There are also state and local chapters of TESOL such as Sunshine State TESOL in Florida, and Georgia TESOL in Georgia (TESOL, 2010). The information provided in this portion of the literature review serves to establish the formal training that adult ESL instructors need in order to be considered prepared to teach adult ESL and some of the ways this training can be accessed.

The next section of this literature review will focus on general theories of teacher development and learning that are related to this study.

Teacher Development

Understanding how instructors develop through their experiences in the field is an important element of this study. These study participants, who were underprepared when they first began to teach, reported that they changed as a result of their experiences, influenced by their students, and through their self directed professional development learning activities. Literature regarding models of teacher development is presented to provide a background for this important element of the current research study.

Models of teacher development indicate that teachers develop their educational behaviors in an orderly manner that forms a predictable pattern as they gain experience. Several models of teacher development exist in the literature base, but the one that is most relevant to and appropriate for this research study is Frances Fuller's (1969) model of teacher development. This model offers an important foundational understanding for this study because of its frequency of use in the literature base, and because of its relevancy to the underprepared ESL instructors who were the focus of this study.

Fuller (1969) conceptualized teacher development around concerns expressed by teachers at different points in their professional experiences. She believed that these concerns were reflective of strong motivators and of areas of great interest to the teacher (Heathcoat, 1997). Fuller's (1969) model had been widely used in teacher education programs as illustration of the different stages of teacher professional development.

In her studies, Fuller (1969) initially identified two categories of concerns--concerns about self and concerns with pupils. Her initial research focused upon the development of pre-professional student teachers and newly professional teachers in their first year in a K-12 environment. In her initial clinical in-depth research, Fuller found that student teachers and teachers in their first year consistently showed concerns with self, such as focusing upon concerns for personal acceptance by pupils and others (Heathcoat, 1997). As teachers progressed and gained confidence in their role as teacher, they became increasingly concerned with their ability to manage the teaching tasks and their influence on their students' learning and development. In later research, Fuller reframed her initial model of teacher development and theorized that the teachers' concerns could be organized into three categories instead of two. These categories included: concerns about self, concerns about tasks, and concerns for impact. These three areas focused upon the teachers' focus of energy and actions to define herself as competent in the instructional role. These three areas of development represented:

- Concerns about self focus on the individual and their anxieties about their own survival. These concerns were most prevalent when student teachers began their student teaching or other, more intense clinical work. In this stage of concern, the teachers were focused from an egocentric frame of reference; thus their concerns were on whether they could succeed. These expressions indicated a concern about teaching, but with a focus on the teacher rather than on the act of teaching or the

needs of children.(Hall, G. & Hord, S., 2001, Implementing change: Patterns, principles and potholes. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.)

- Concerns about tasks focus upon the duties that teachers must carry out within the school environment. These concerns, noted Fuller and others, showed up when the actual work of teaching becomes central. Thus, the focus was on instructional activities in relation to the learning experience, the “doing” of the instruction. (Hall & Hord, 2001).
- Concerns of impact related to the teacher’s ability to make a difference and be successful with their students and the teaching and learning process (Fuller, 1969). This level of concerns focused on what was happening with students and what the teacher could do to be more effective in improving student outcomes (Fuller, 1969; Hall & Hord 2001).

In Fuller’s studies, she found that:

over two-thirds of the concerns of preservice teachers were in the self and task areas, while two-third of the concerns of experienced teachers were in the task and impact areas. She also observed that at any given time teachers may have concerns at several levels, but that they tend to concentrate in one particular areas. (Hall & Hord, p. 59).

Thus, Fuller’s research and subsequent replications substantiated that as teachers moved through their careers, their concerns moved from self to task to impact concerns. These

categories of concern regarding teacher development created by Fuller (1969) have been cited in numerous studies throughout the years. This research proved to be important for teacher educators because teacher educators needed to understand beginning teachers' concerns and creating a better support for matching the teachers levels of concerns. As noted by Hall and Hord (2001), Fuller found that the pre-service preparation for student teachers did not match the student teachers' concerns. Thus, she proposed that teacher education programs be framed to match these specific stages of concern, thus supporting teacher development. Specifically, she recommended "a personalized approach, based upon providing information when it is most relevant to the students' developing interests and perceived needs" (Hall & Hord, p.60). It was believed that if university teacher education programs and teacher professional development programs in school districts could address these concerns, they would decrease the rates of teacher attrition and aid in the progression of the teachers' professional development (Heathcoat, 1997).

Another important area of research and theory, transformative learning, is also relevant to understanding the situations of underprepared adult ESL instructors and their development through their experiences such as their learning activities. The theory of transformative learning, developed by Jack Mezirow during the past two decades, has evolved "into a comprehensive and complex description of how learners construe, validate, and reformulate the meaning of their experience" (Cranton 1994, p. 22). Centrality of experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse are three common themes in Mezirow's

theory (Taylor 1998), which was originally based on psychoanalytic theory (Boyd and Myers 1988) and critical social theory (Scott 1997).

Mezirow (1991) believes that in order for learners to change their meaning schemes, or their specific beliefs, attitudes and emotional reactions, they must engage in critical reflection on their experiences, which in turn leads to a perspective transformation. According to Mezirow (1991), a perspective transformation is the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrating perspective; and, finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings (p.42).

Perspective transformation explains how the meaning structures that adults have acquired over a lifetime become transformed. These meaning structures are frames of reference that are based on the totality of individuals' cultural and contextual experiences and influence how they behave and interpret events (Taylor, 1998). The meaning schemes that make up meaning structures may change as an individual adds to or integrates ideas within an existing scheme and, in fact, this transformation of meaning schemes occurs routinely through learning (Taylor, 1998). Perspective transformation leading to transformative learning, however, it occurs much less frequently. Mezirow believes that perspective transformation usually results from a "disorienting dilemma" which is triggered by a life crisis or major life transition, although it may also result from an accumulation of transformations in meaning schemes over a period of time (Mezirow 1995, p. 50).

Meaning schemes are based upon experiences that can be deconstructed and acted upon in a rational way (Taylor 1998). From his initial research, Mezirow (1995) suggests this happens through a series of phases that begin with the disorienting dilemma. Other phases include self-examination, critical assessment of assumptions, recognition that others have shared similar transformations, exploration of new roles or actions, development of a plan for action, acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing the plan, tryout of the plan, development of competence and self-confidence in new roles, and reintegration into life on the basis of new perspectives (Mezirow, 1995).

Mezirow (1997) believes that transformative learning occurs when individuals change their frames of reference by critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs and consciously making and implementing plans that bring about new ways of defining their worlds. His theory describes a learning process that is primarily "rational, analytical, and cognitive" with an "inherent logic" (Grabov, 1997, pp. 90-91). More recent research and critique has challenged the focus totally upon the rational, analytic, and cognitive orientation to transformative learning (Taylor, 1998). In addition, a number of authors have suggested seven other frames of understanding regarding transformative learning (Taylor, 2005).

Both Fuller's (1969) model of teacher development and Mezirow's (1991, 1995, 1997) theory of transformative learning relate to this current study and provide related research and theory supports for the development of underprepared instructors in the field. Next is a discussion of literature surrounding social constructivism, which is the theoretical

framework of this study. The purpose of this discussion is to provide a perspective of how instructors learn and develop meaning from their social interactions in the classroom.

Social Constructivism and Making Meaning

This section of the literature review builds on the belief that social constructivism provides a foundational worldview of how underprepared adult ESL instructors make meaning from their experiences, develop coping mechanisms based on their experiences, and manage their current practices as informed by their lived experiences. This discussion begins with an overview of constructivism, then turns to social constructivism which is one form of constructivism and is relevant to this study.

Constructivism is a theoretical worldview that posits learning is an active, constructive process. Constructivism's originators and important contributors include: Vygotsky (1978), Piaget (1972), and Bruner (1990). The basic tenet of constructivism is that learners construct their knowledge in two ways. First, they construct knowledge on their own by associating new ideas with prior information. They also can construct knowledge through experience and reflection upon those experiences.

The learner's interaction with his/her social and physical environment is of significant importance; the learner is at the center of the learning process while the teacher is seen as a guide, facilitator, and co-explorer who encourages learners to question, challenge, and formulate their own ideas, opinions, and conclusions. Learning activities in constructivist settings are characterized by active engagement, inquiry, problem solving, and collaboration with others. (Hamil & Simina, 2005).

Constructivism has many forms, but generally speaking, there are two broad interpretations that can be found among contemporary educators--psychological constructivism, most notably articulated by Piaget (1972), and social constructivism, associated with Vygotsky (1978). Two major issues shape these interpretations: (1) education for individual development versus education for social transformation, and (2) the degree of influence that social context has on individual cognitive development (Hamil & Simina, 2005). Social constructivism is the one branch of the broad framework of constructivism, and provides the theoretical framework for this study, as discussed in the following section.

Social Constructivism

Social or Vygotskian constructivism emphasizes education for social transformation and reflects a theory of human development that situates the individual within a socio-cultural context. Individual development derives from social interactions within which cultural meanings are shared by the group and eventually internalized by the individual (Richardson, 1997). Individuals construct knowledge in transaction with the environment, and in the process both the individual and the environment are changed. The subject of study is the dialectical relationship between the individual and the social and cultural milieu ((Hamil & Simina, 2005). Thus, differing from constructivism, which focuses solely upon the individual engagement in learning, social constructivism presumes an interaction of both individual and environment that shapes the learner and the learning experience.

Social constructivism is strongly influenced by Vygotsky's (1978) work and suggests that knowledge is first constructed in a social context and is then appropriated by individuals

(Eggan & Kauchak, 2004). According to social constructivists, the process of sharing individual perspectives--called collaborative elaboration (Meter & Stevens, 2000)--results in learners constructing understanding together that wouldn't be possible alone.

Social constructivism is based on specific views about reality, knowledge, and learning. Examining these three constructs within a social constructivist framework can shed light on the ways that underprepared adult ESL instructors and their learners are able to construct both individual and combined meanings based on their experiences. The meanings that are developed by the adult ESL instructors through their social interactions, particularly with reference to their lack of preparation, are the focus of this research.

Reality

Social constructivists believe that the discourse and tools by which people perceive and describe the world, including language, are social artifacts (Schwandt, 1994). Because it is believed that reality is created through processes of social exchange, social constructivists are interested in the generation of meaning by groups of people, and they believe that reality is constructed through human activity. They also believe that reality in the abstract cannot be discovered because it does not exist prior to its social invention. According to Kukla (2000), members of a society together invent the properties of the world; it is through the social interactions between the instructor and the learners in the classroom environment that they are able to define their own reality.

Knowledge

Knowledge in social constructivism occurs because individuals make meanings through the interactions with each other and with the environment they live in. Knowledge is thus a product of humans and is socially and culturally constructed ((Eggen & Kauchak, 2004). This view is grounded in the idea that there is no objective basis for knowledge claims, because knowledge is always a human construction. The emphasis is on the process of knowledge creation—meaning making by the social group and the intersubjectivity established through the interactions of the group (Au, 1998). Underprepared adult ESL instructors and their students create meaning through interactions with each other and with the environment in which they live and learn. In an ESL environment, more so than any other classroom environment, numerous cultures and languages exist. It is imperative to the success of this type of classroom that a shared culture is developed, and it is through social interaction with one another that this happens. The knowledge that develops is a result of those interactions and is embedded in their jointly-defined culture.

Learning

Learning is also a social process in the view of social constructivists, who believe that meaningful learning occurs when individuals are engaged in social activities. Social constructivist theory is based on the premise that learning occurs through interactive dialogue and social dynamics (Stage, Muller, Kinzie, & Simmons, 1998). According to Hamil & Simina (2005) learning is a social process. They believe that learning is not a process that

only takes place inside our minds, nor is it a passive development of our behaviors that is shaped by external forces, but that meaningful learning does occur when individuals are engaged in social activities. The group members' inherited symbol systems, such as language, logic, and mathematical systems, can affect the nature and extent of the learning, as can the amount of the learner's social interaction with knowledgeable members of the society (Gredler, 1997).

The process by which group members develop shared meaning is called intersubjectivity and it can be extremely challenging in an adult ESL classroom because of the diversity of languages and cultures that exist. Intersubjectivity is a shared understanding among individuals whose interaction is based on common interests and assumptions that form the ground for their communication (Rogoff, 1990). Communications and interactions entail socially agreed-upon ideas of the world and the social patterns and rules of language use (Ernest, 1999). According to Verhagen (2005), intersubjectivity describes a central characteristic of human communication, and he believes that language is not only a tool for exchanging information about the world, but is fundamentally concerned with "connecting, differentiating, and 'tailoring' the contents of points of view with respect to each other" (p. 4).

Social meanings and knowledge are shaped and evolve through negotiation within the communicating groups (Gredler, 1997; Prawat & Floden, 1994). Any personal meanings shaped through these experiences are affected by the intersubjectivity of the community to which the people belong (Kim, 2008). Intersubjectivity not only provides the grounds for

communication but also supports people to extend their understanding of new information and activities among the group members (Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1987). The construction of knowledge is also influenced by the intersubjectivity formed by cultural and historical factors of the community (Gredler, 1997; Prawat & Floden, 1994). When the members of the community are aware of their intersubjective meanings, it is easier for them to understand new information and activities that arise in the community (Kim, 2008).

Through assumptions about reality, knowledge, and learning, underprepared adult ESL instructors and their learners are able to construct both shared and individual meanings. Developing shared meaning can be difficult in the ESL setting because of the communication challenges that exist. There are a variety of languages and cultures present in any given ESL classroom, and the very essence of developing meaning is based on finding a shared language and culture. Adult ESL instructors develop their own meanings as well, based on their interactions with the group members and the experiences that they have in the classroom. Those individual meanings that develop and how they are applied are at the heart of this research.

Summary

This literature review provided a historical perspective of adult ESL, immigration trends and current demographics, as well as describing existing theories of teacher preparation and teacher development. This literature review also discussed the theoretical framework of this study, social constructivism. All of these topics and theoretical perspectives provide the background for understanding the complex interactive nature of this study.

The review of immigration trends and current demographics shows the continuous influx of immigrants into the United States and emphasizes the need for adult ESL programs. The review of teacher preparation serves to show the areas of training adult ESL instructors need to have in order to be considered prepared to teach in the field. The theories of teacher development show how instructors develop and may be engaged in transformative experiences in the field, and the discussion of social constructivism provides a background of the theoretical framework of this study. Next, Chapter Three will discuss the methodology for this research study.

CHAPTER THREE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

The purpose of this study was to examine the adult ESL instructors' experiences, the coping strategies they developed and utilized to help them become proficient teachers, and the beliefs and practices regarding adult ESL instruction they adopted from their experiences. This chapter provides a detailed description of the procedures used to conduct this research, including: the qualitative research perspective and design, sampling procedures and population description, data collection procedures as well as methods to analyze the data, and a description of the quality assurance process.

Qualitative Research Perspective

The perspective and design of this study are based in the tradition of qualitative research. According to Merriam (1998) "qualitative research is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible (p.6)." A clear description of the design of this study comes from the work of Bogdan and Biklen (1998), who describe qualitative research as having five distinct characteristics. They state:

Qualitative research is naturalistic, it contains descriptive data, it is inductive in nature, it is concerned with process, and it focuses on meaning. Not all studies exhibit all the traits to an equal degree; some may be lacking in one area or more, but may still be considered qualitative. The question is not whether a particular piece of research is or is not absolutely qualitative, rather it is an issue of degree (p.4). Since qualitative research has actual settings as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument, it is considered to be naturalistic. Qualitative researchers go to the particular setting under study because they are concerned with context.

Qualitative researchers feel that actions can best be understood when they are observed in the setting in which they naturally occur because the settings have to be understood in the historical context of the institutions of which they are a part (pgs 4-5). Qualitative research is characterized as being descriptive because the written word is very important both in recording data and disseminating the findings. The data collected take the form of words or pictures rather than numbers, and the researchers do not try to reduce pages of narration to numerical symbols. In their search for understanding, the researchers analyze the data as closely as possible to the form in which they were originally collected so that the true meaning can be interpreted (p.5). The fourth characteristic of qualitative research is that the data gathered are analyzed inductively. The researchers do not search out evidence or prove or disprove hypotheses they develop before entering the study. Qualitative researchers do not know what path they will travel until they begin collecting their data because theory developed in this manner emerges from the bottom up from many disparate pieces of collected evidence that are interconnected (p.6). The fifth characteristic, and the element that guides all qualitative research, is that the “meaning” is of essential concern to the approach. Qualitative researchers are interested in how people make sense of their lives and how they develop meaning from their experiences. Data collection strategies and procedures are purposefully set up to enable researchers to consider experiences from the informants’ perspectives, so that they can gain an understanding of the meaning their participants make of a phenomenon (p.7).

Using qualitative inquiry in the current research study is appropriate and reflects the key characteristics of this research approach. It is naturalistic because the interviews were conducted in the field with the instructors in their setting. The primary source of data for this research was the transcribed instructor interviews; thus, the research is highly descriptive because of the reliance on the written record of spoken words. This research was inductive in nature and concerned with adhering to the process of qualitative research rather than focusing on the outcomes. The data reflected, and were generated from, the interviews, thus determining the flow of the research and the path that the researcher took. Finally, the central element of this study was to determine the meanings the underprepared instructors made from their experiences in the field. Understanding participant meanings is one of the core tenets in qualitative research.

Qualitative Research Design

The case study approach was used to conduct this qualitative study of underprepared adult ESL instructors. A case study is a detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents, or one particular event (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1989; Stake, 1994). According to Merriam (2002) “qualitative case studies share with other forms of qualitative research the search for meaning and understanding, the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, an inductive strategy, and the end product being richly descriptive” (p. 179).

Some researchers define case study research by the process or end product (Yin, 1989), while others define the case in terms of the unit of analysis (Merriam, 2002). Stake (1994) believes that case study research is based on what is going to be studied, rather than a methodological choice. The key element in designing this type of research is defining the boundaries of the case, which Smith (1978) refers to as a *bounded system*. A bounded system is a single entity around which there are boundaries, and it has a finite quality about it either in terms of time or space. The bounded system for this research study is described below.

Method and Procedures

Population Description and Sampling Procedures

The design of this study focuses on one group of underprepared adult ESL instructors. The participants were selected through purposive sampling because, in purposive sampling, information-rich cases are sought and subjects are chosen because of some characteristic they possess. Specifically, this study used criterion sampling. In criterion sampling, cases are

chosen because they meet particular criteria set by the researcher and will be of value to the study (Patton, 1990).

Sample selection criteria. There were three criteria that the instructors had to meet in order to participate in the research study. The first was that the instructors had to have three to ten years of experience teaching adult ESL. This time period was chosen because the research questions focused on both past and present experiences. Instructors who had at least three years of time in the field would have experiences that could be examined for the research project. Ten years of experience was chosen as the limit because beyond that, it might have been difficult for the instructors to recall their beginning experiences in the field. The second criteria focused upon the number of hours per week of instruction in adult ESL environments. Because the majority of instructors in the field are part-time, the instructors also had to work an average of between six and nine hours per week in a classroom environment in order for them to have sufficient time in the field.

To meet the third criterion for this purposeful sample, the instructors had to not have had prior formal training when they entered the field in most or all of the subject areas identified by CAELA (2007). These formal subject areas of expertise included: the principles of adult learning, linguistics and second language acquisition, issues related to culture, and instructional approaches that support language development in adults. If instructors had no prior formal training in all of the identified areas, they are considered to be underprepared.

There were also defined criteria as part of this sampling strategy for the adult ESL programs. The programs had to be non-degree, non-credit programs offered by a community college. The programs had to have at least 20 instructors on staff. The program selection based upon size of the instructional staff was chosen because a program of that size was more likely to have instructors that met the participation criteria. Finally, the program sites for the interviews were based in Florida, because for convenient proximity to the researcher.

Review and Approval of Institutional Review Board. A written narrative of this research study was provided to The Office of Research Compliance of North Carolina State University (NCSU) and was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). After institutional approval was given, the researcher began to identify the community colleges that met the above criteria. The goal was to locate four or five suitable colleges and to find at least two participants from each college, so that there was an ample representation from areas around the state.

Identification and access to site for sample population. The program coordinators for twelve community college adult ESL programs were identified, and Program Coordinator Survey (Appendix A) letters were sent to introduce the research study and describe its purpose to them. The letter asked if the sites were interested in participating in the study, and the coordinator was asked to respond to the researcher to express interest and determine a time for a meeting in person. Twelve community colleges were chosen for sufficient numbers of respondents for the study. However, there was no response from any of the twelve program coordinators. Due to the lack of response, Dr. Gonzalez-Sullivan as co-chair, made

another type of contact request directed to the presidents of five of the colleges. This e-mail provided an introduction the research study and asked for their assistance. Four of the five presidents agreed to have their adult ESL program coordinators contact the researcher, and all four program coordinators set up a time to meet with the researcher to discuss the research study.

In individual meetings with the program coordinators, the researcher provided a detailed outline of the study, and the time required of the potential underprepared instructors who were willing to participate in this study. All four of the program coordinators agreed to allow the researcher to attend a staff meeting to explain the study and request volunteers, and a time and date for the researcher to attend was determined.

Recruitment and participation of individual participants. The researcher attended adult ESL staff meetings at each of the four community colleges, explained the research study and asked for volunteers. A total of nine instructors from the four community colleges approached the researcher after the staff meeting and volunteered to participate in the study.

As an initial part of this study, the nine instructors who volunteered to participate in the study were provided a Participant Informed Consent Letter (Appendix B) which explained that their participation in this research was both voluntary and anonymous. The consent letter also explained that the instructors were expected to participate in a series of three separate audio taped interviews that would last approximately 45 minutes each. Finally, the instructors were informed that they would need to participate in member checks, which

meant they had to read the interview transcripts from all three interviews to ensure that these were an accurate representation of what was discussed.

The potential interviewees were also given a Demographics Questionnaire (Appendix C) to complete. On this survey, the instructors self-reported their length of time in the field and their academic background when they entered the field. All nine met the requirements to participate in the study and therefore became the sample for the study

In summary, the bounded system for this case study was underprepared adult ESL instructors working in non-degree, non-credit ESL programs at four Florida community colleges who volunteered to participate in a research project during Spring 2006.

Data Collection Procedures

The design of this study focused on gathering information about the experiences of underprepared adult ESL instructors and the meaning they made from those experiences, the coping mechanisms they developed based on these experiences to manage situations they encounter, and how their experiences informed their current practices. The main source of information for this study was a series of three semi-structured audio taped interviews with each instructor. An additional source of data was an initial questionnaire in which the instructors provided demographic information before they participated in the interviews.

Each of the instructors participated in three in-depth interviews. The first interview focused on the instructors' past experiences (Appendix D); the second focused on present experiences (Appendix E); and the third interview was informed by the data collected during

the first two (Appendix F). The third interview was useful because it provided an additional opportunity for further discussion based on what was learned during the prior interviews and to clarify any outstanding questions and probe for further insights into experiences and meaning by these instructors.

The initial tape-recorded interview focused on past experiences and lasted approximately 45 minutes. During the interview the researcher took notes, and the interview tapes were transcribed verbatim afterwards. The researcher reviewed each transcript and also had the participants review the transcripts after each interview, as a member check, to confirm that they were complete and factually accurate. This same process was followed until all of the interviews were completed. The second interview focused on present experiences, and the third interview was informed by the data collected during the first two interviews. The third interview served many purposes: it provided an opportunity to further probe into areas discussed during the first two interviews; it also allowed the researcher to clarify any items that were unclear; and, it was used as a quality check to validate the themes and patterns that emerged during the first two interviews.

Data Analysis

Coding. The data analysis phase of this study, in part, coincided with the interview process. After each initial interview was complete, it was transcribed and coded in order to identify themes and patterns that were present. The second interviews focused on present experiences, and again each was transcribed and coded after the interview was completed. The first and second interviews were then coded and analyzed to determine the emerging

themes or patterns so these could inform the third interviews. Finally, the third interviews were transcribed and coded upon completion. All three interviews were then analyzed for patterns that were present, then the comparative examination and further cross-coding process was conducted.

Initially, the researcher chose to use NVivo 8 qualitative software to assist in the coding process. NVivo 8 helps to manage, sort, and arrange information, which then helps the researcher analyze materials, identify themes, and develop conclusions. Computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) such as NVivo 8 and Atlas.ti, automates the coding process which enables the researcher to complete the coding process in a more rapid, organized manner. CAQDAS provides a more complex way of looking at the relationships in the data, and provides a framework for storing notes and thoughts to aid in the analysis of the data. In spite of these pros, there are many criticisms and worries about the software in the literature (Barry, 2001). Seidel (1991) believes that CAQDAS and technological advances in data management is not necessarily a positive thing. Seidel (1991) maintains that using this type of software will distance people from their data, and that it will ultimately lead to qualitative data being analyzed in a quantitative manner because this type of software homogenizes the way that the data is analyzed.

The researcher found that the NVivo 8 software was difficult to use, and after two weeks of use, switched to another process. The researcher then began a manual system for arranging the data in patterns to help analyze the information and identify themes in the data.

This process proved to be much more successful because it was easier for the researcher to visualize the inductive clustering of information.

The information transcribed from the series of three interviews was arranged into groupings based around a particular concept in the data and were coded using an open coding system. Open coding is the naming and categorizing of phenomena through a close examination of the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The process followed to code the data began with identifying key words from all of the initial interviews by reading the transcripts and listening to the audio tapes. These key words helped to identify codes that were then grouped around a particular concept in the data, thus reducing the number of code words with which to work. This same process was conducted for the second and third interviews, and the codes and coding categories that resulted were compared and condensed with those from the first interviews. Finally, categories from the open-coding process were written as code notes in memo format. These memos were written and coding paradigms were created to analyze the data further by asking questions and making comparisons about the content of the interviews. This questioning allowed the data to be opened up by thinking of the categories in terms of their properties and dimensions (Merriam, 2002).

Procedures for Trustworthiness

For this study's findings to be credible, it was important for the research design and reporting methodology to produce results that reliably reflected the experiences studied (Le Compte & Prissle, 1993). A number of measures were used in this study to ensure the trustworthiness of the data collected and the overall quality of the study. Member checks

were used to assure the quality of the data, and both a doctoral committee and a peer reviewed the research to ensure the overall integrity of the study.

LeCompte and Preissle (1993) emphasize the importance of using multiple methods of data collection so that data collected in one way can be used to crosscheck the accuracy of data gathered in another way. The information collected in this study came from multiple sources, which included a series of three separate audio taped interviews and an initial demographics questionnaire that was completed by the instructors. Member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1989) were also used to assure the researcher's understanding of the participants' discussions. This is a process in which the study subjects were asked to review transcripts from their first, second, and third interviews to ensure they were complete and factually accurate.

Also, to assure the quality of the entire study, peer review or debriefing was utilized. Lincoln and Guba (1985) define the peer debriefer as an individual who keeps the researcher honest; asks hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations; and provides the researcher with the opportunity for catharsis by sympathetically listening to the researcher's feelings (p.314). The researcher's doctoral committee served the role as peer debriefers since they asked questions and encouraged revisions and editing in the areas of the study which they thought were insufficient. The researcher also had a peer as a reviewer, who had a PhD in adult education, and reviewed the research and study. Both the peer and the researcher kept written accounts of the sessions, referred to as peer debriefing sessions. The

peer did not have access to the audio taped interviews or transcripts so the feedback was provided from the reader's perspective and identified areas that needed clarification.

To ensure that the audio tapes and transcripts remain secure, they have been maintained in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office at home, and only the researcher has a key to the cabinet. The study participants were notified during their interviews that the tapes and transcripts would remain confidential and would be destroyed after a period of five years, which will be September 2011.

Statement of Researcher Bias

I entered into this study with my own preconceived thoughts and ideas about this topic which I set aside so that my own bias would not affect the way the data were collected or interpreted. I began teaching adult ESL as a part-time evening instructor immediately after earning my Bachelor's degree in Russian Language. A family member, who was an adult ESL instructor, suggested that I give it a try because there was a large Russian population in the program where she taught, and I understood Russian. After a very simple hiring process, I began teaching and soon learned that I did not know how to teach adults and I did not know how to teach English. I also learned how difficult it was to teach English to a group of learners who spoke a variety of languages and had different levels of proficiency in English, all in the same classroom. There was very little lack of administrative support, and there were no advancement opportunities for me either.

I was truly an example of what an underprepared adult ESL instructor is, and I understand the frustrations that exist in this environment because I faced many of them myself. I believe that hiring underprepared instructors may be problematic for adult ESL programs because it is possible that student instruction can be compromised, and I also believe it may be harmful to the underprepared instructors because of the stress, anxiety and uncertainty that they face.

I worked as a part-time ESL instructor from 1995-1999, and for a brief period again in 2003. I no longer work in this field and I currently work in the field of Human Resources. I believe that because I am no longer immersed in this environment, I was able to collect and interpret the data from a relatively unbiased perspective. I understand that bias can affect the credibility of a research study, and so I took a number of steps to ensure the quality and interpretation of the data and to control my own notions about this subject.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the procedures used to conduct this research study. The elements discussed included an overview of the qualitative research perspective and design, sampling procedures and population description, information gathering, methods used to analyze the data, and a description of the quality assurance process. Also included was a statement of researcher bias to fully disclose beliefs and ideas held by the researcher about this topic. Next, Chapter Four will discuss the findings from the data.

CHAPTER FOUR FINDINGS

Community college adult ESL programs that are non-academic for non-degree seeking students often hire instructors who have not been adequately prepared to teach in the field. This type of instruction is particularly challenging due to the fact that the classrooms are comprised of students from multiple nationalities who may understand no English or have only a rudimentary level of the language. Further, using instructors who are not adequately prepared to teach this type of learner in this environment can create challenges. This qualitative study was conducted to deepen our understanding of the experiences of such adult ESL Instructors. Specifically, this study explored the meanings the instructors made from their experiences, and how their past experiences might inform their current teaching practices. The questions that guided this study are:

1. What are the experiences of underprepared adult ESL instructors?
2. What are the coping mechanisms the underprepared adult ESL instructors develop?
3. How do the adult ESL instructors' experiences inform their current beliefs and practices?

The findings in this chapter are presented in three sections. The first two sections are intended to provide background information to the reader so that they are able to gain an understanding of the study and its participants. The first section of this chapter offers a demographic overview of the study participants, and the second section of this chapter

provides a description of community college adult ESL programs that are non-academic for non-degree seeking students. Finally, the third section provides detailed findings of the study.

The findings in section three are presented under several broad themes as follows:

1. The beginning instructors had unrealistic expectations about their new positions as adult ESL instructors.
2. Once the beginning instructors realized they were not prepared for their jobs, they decided to engage in various learning activities for professional development on their own.
3. The instructors' relationships with their students served as a source of motivation to overcome the workplace challenges the instructors faced.
4. The instructors perceived many aspects of their working conditions to be problematic.
5. As the instructors gained experience, their teaching philosophies evolved.

The instructors' own words will be used to illustrate and highlight the findings. Their words were collected through a series of interviews, with each instructor participating in three interviews. During the first interview the instructors were asked to describe their past experiences; in the second, they discussed their present experiences, and the third interview was used to further explore responses from the first two interviews and clarify any lingering questions that existed. Prior to these sessions, the instructors completed a demographics questionnaire that provided personal information about their backgrounds. The transcribed interviews and the questionnaires are the sources of the data reported in this chapter.

Study Sample Demographics

Nine underprepared adult ESL instructors participated in the research. All nine instructors teach in community college adult ESL programs that are non-credit for non-degree seeking students in the State of Florida. To preserve the anonymity of the instructors, the colleges will be referred to as A, B, C, and D and the instructors will be referred to by pseudonyms. All nine instructors had college degrees; five earned Bachelor's Degrees and four had Master's Degrees. The five Bachelor's Degrees were earned in a variety of majors including English, Reading, Spanish, Communication, and Teaching. The four instructors who held Master's Degrees represented the areas of Reading, Teaching, Spanish, and Instructional Design.

Upon entering the field of adult ESL, all nine instructors had little or no formal training in the areas that the Center for Adult English Language Acquisition (CAELA) suggests are necessary to be an effective adult ESL instructor. These areas identified in key literature included: the principles of adult learning, linguistics and second language acquisition, issues related to culture, and instructional approaches that support language development in adults (CAELA, 2007). Knowledge of how adults learn is essential for helping adult ESL students learn English. The instructors need to have substantial knowledge of the principles of andragogy in order to effectively teach adult learners. Knowledge of second language is important because adult ESL instructors must have an understanding of cognitive issues (how the brain processes information in general and language in particular), affective issues (how emotions factor into second language processing and learning), and

linguistic issues (how learners interact with and internalize new language systems) (Menken & Antunez, 2001). The instructors also must have an understanding and awareness of diversity and cultures, due to the fact that their students may be from a number of different countries and represent a variety of cultures. Finally, the adult ESL instructors must know how to deliver information to adults by methods that are effective. Instructors need to know how to utilize interactive methods that engage their learners to transfer information as effectively as possible. After beginning to teach adult ESL courses, all nine instructors attended professional development or credit-bearing courses in these topic areas, and four instructors earned ESL certificates through various sponsoring agencies. Table 1 lists the initial formal preparation of the ESL instructors.

The range of experience among this group of nine instructors varied from three to ten years of teaching in adult ESL. Two instructors had been teaching for three to five years; five instructors had been teaching from six to eight years; and, two instructors had been teaching between nine and ten years.

All nine participants in this study were female. The age range of the group spanned from 34 to 65 years old. Four of the nine instructors were born in other countries and their native language was not English, while the other five instructors' primary language is English. Table 1 containing the participants' profiles appears below.

Table 1***Participant Profiles***

Name/Age	Educational Level	Formal Prep Second Language Acquisition	Formal Prep Adult Learning	Formal Prep Issues related to Culture	Formal Prep Approaches for Language Development	Native Language
Mercedes/36	BA- Spanish	None	None	None	None	Spanish
Janet/40	MA- Communication	None	Yes	None	None	English
Rose/52	BA-English	None	None	None	None	Spanish
Karen/45	MA- Reading	None	None	None	None	English
Kay/38	MA-Spanish	None	None	None	None	English
Lynn/34	BS- Teaching	None	None	None	None	English
Melinda/38	BS- Instructional Design	None	Yes	None	None	Spanish
Jean/65	BA- Communication	None	None	None	None	Swedish
Amy/51	Master of Arts- Reading	None	None	None	None	English

*The study participants' actual names have been changed and pseudonyms are used to preserve their anonymity.

Description of Non-Academic Adult ESL Programs

The instructors who participated in this study were employed in adult ESL programs offered by community colleges in Florida. These programs are government funded and the courses within the programs are not for credit. These courses are for students whose first language is not English that would like to begin learning English or improve their existing knowledge of the language. Most programs offer beginning, intermediate and advanced levels of non-credit courses, and the students progress through the levels based on test scores and instructor recommendation (Crandall, 2004). These programs also do not offer degrees, so students in these programs are non-degree seeking. Adult ESL students who are non-academic or non-degree seeking are typically not interested in an analytic approach to language learning and simply want to learn English for economic or social reasons. These learners are not concerned with theory, nor are they interested in comprehending and speaking better than others. Typically, they want to master the language enough to function in the particular social milieu in which they live and work (Crandall, 2004). Non-academic courses are usually free of charge to the participants, open-entry and -exit, and follow the typical college semester calendar.

Upon enrollment, students are given a placement exam or pre-test to determine which class or level would be appropriate based on their language ability, and the students are placed in either beginning, intermediate, or advanced levels. Such programs also typically have an associated language lab that offers a self-paced learning environment for extra practice. The labs are generally open mornings and evenings and provide computers with

software to help the students learn English. The labs are usually staffed either by full time instructors who need to work additional hours, or by part time lab instructors who work with the students and offer one-on-one instruction. The labs may also have a staff of volunteers or tutors who help the ESL students as well.

Typically, adult ESL courses involve either morning courses offered five days a week (each session for 45 minutes to an hour) or evening courses offered two nights per week (two to three hours each). This schedule accommodates students who work so they can attend evening courses, and those who are available during the day while children are in school.

In order to maintain government funding for the non-academic adult ESL programs, there are two primary tasks that the instructors must complete. First, the instructors must maintain student attendance records and show by semester how many hours the students participate in the program. Next, the instructors must demonstrate that the students have improved their language skills during the course. The students are given a pre-test (tests vary by program) at the beginning of the semester and a post-test at the end of the semester, with instructors reporting scores to the Director of the ESL program at the community college.

ESL course schedules and the number of instructors needed are determined on a semester by semester basis. These course offerings are dictated primarily by the amount of government funding available and the number of students who enroll in the program. In order to mitigate expenses, programs are primarily staffed with part time instructors who are not offered benefits packages. According to Farrell (2006), benefits packages (including health insurance, a retirement plan and other items such as vacation or sick pay) cost employers

between 30% and 45% of total payroll expenses (including salaries and hourly wages). The non-academic adult ESL programs that are offered at the sites in this study had an average of 87% part time instructors and 23% full time instructors. This staffing strategy of employing predominantly part-time instructors-is often used to provide instructional support for non-academic adult ESL programs.

The instructors reported that through their ESL associations and through first-hand knowledge from applying at various community colleges, they found that the pay and benefits are fairly similar from college to college. Also, they reported there were no supplemental forms of pay such as holiday pay or bonuses given to the instructors. Moreover, the part time instructors were usually not given raises; the pay at which they were hired remained the same while they were employed at the particular college. The only way to increase pay was to move to full time status.

ESL programs try to offer the same courses each semester to ensure continuity in learning for the students. Full time instructors are usually given the first choice of the courses they would like to teach and then the rest of the instructors select what they would like to teach from the remaining courses on the schedule. The part time instructors are not guaranteed the type of class they would like to teach, nor are they guaranteed the number of hours they will be assigned per semester. They also typically do not know if they will be teaching at all until the beginning of each semester when enrollment and funding decisions are made.

Community college non-academic adult ESL programs typically recruit their instructors via job postings on the college's employment page on the internet and by referrals. In the past, teachers were typically identified by referrals or by employing graduates of the programs. Qualifications to be eligible for employment vary by college, but all of the colleges in this study required at least a Bachelor's degree in any subject.

Key Findings

Work Experiences of Non-Academic adult ESL Instructors

This section discusses the key findings of the underprepared non-academic adult ESL instructors' experiences in the field. The first part of this section describes the instructors' recollections of their experiences as beginning instructors. For the purposes of this discussion the term "beginning instructors" refers to the instructors' first year in their roles as adult ESL instruction. This section focuses on the instructors' unrealistic expectations for the amount of training and support they would receive and also the skills required to teach adult ESL. The discussion then moves to their beginning experiences related to the instructors' efforts to build their teaching skills on their own.

The second part focuses on the instructors' experiences with and understandings of more recent classroom activities. These discussions surround the motivation that the adult ESL instructors developed through their relationships with their students, and the workplace challenges the instructors faced. As previously noted, the instructors who participated in this study had a range of experience between three and ten years at the time of their interviews. Due to this range of work experiences, the instructors who had more years of experience

were considering a longer time frame when discussing their more recent classroom experiences than those who had fewer years in the field.

Theme 1: The beginning instructors had unrealistic expectations about their new positions as adult ESL instructors

In describing their initial experiences of entry into the work of adult ESL instruction, all of the study participants learned of available adult ESL teaching jobs by word-of-mouth. Five of the instructors knew someone who taught adult ESL and were referred to the community college. Two others worked in the community college in other programs and learned of the open positions in the ESL program through co-workers. The rest of the interviewees knew of the program because they were former students of community-based adult ESL programs themselves.

Recollecting their entry into the field, these instructors described their application and interviewing experiences as both easy and informal. In fact, the instructors recollected that because they found their entry to be so simple, they also assumed that learning their job duties and being an adult ESL instructor would be simple as well. They believed that if the job was a difficult one, then they would have had to undergo a much more detailed hiring process, which was not the case. According to Jean:

I remember thinking that if getting the job was this easy, that the job must be easy, too. The jobs I had in the past made me jump through lots more hoops before I got the job, so I assumed they could teach me how to do it pretty easily.

Mercedes concurred:

I got the job in one day, and I was really surprised. I thought that it was so easy that the job must be, too, and I also thought the job training would be simple as well.

Thus, in the beginning these instructors developed a perception of an undemanding instructional role through this informal and limited review of their qualifications and background during the hiring process.

Lack of Orientation to the Classroom

All of the beginning instructors expected to attend a new employee orientation before they began working at their respective locations. They mentioned that there were four main reasons they had anticipated such training. First, because the hiring process was so informal, they believed that all of the important employment and instructional role information would be covered in an orientation session before they started teaching. They expected that they would be provided information about how to teach adult ESL and also receive employment-related information about their schedules, pay, and benefits. Second, many of the instructors expected a session that would introduce them to the facility and inform them about the processes and procedures of the department that were pertinent to their jobs. Third, the instructors were expecting some form of job training since they had no experience teaching adult ESL. They wanted guidance about how to do the jobs for which they had been hired, and also wanted to know how to succeed in the classroom. Finally, they had hoped to meet their co-workers and supervisors to begin building a support system for their new positions.

As their start dates approached, none of the nine instructors who participated in this study ever received any notification about an orientation or training before they began their

first day. The instructors remembered having questions about how they would know where to go and what to do on their first day, but they assumed that once they arrived on campus, all of that information would be covered by their supervisors. However, this orientation and the development of a mentorship and support system for their new role did not occur.

Initially, all of the instructors were hired to teach courses or work in the language labs in the late afternoon hours starting between 4:00pm and 6:00pm and ending between 7:00pm and 9:00pm. Many of the instructors described their first days in ESL as chaotic. Karen remembered:

On my very first day and my very first class, I was nervous. I was assigned Beginning English I, from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm and I arrived at work at 5:00 pm to prepare.

There was no one there to meet me, and I had to walk into a class and ask the teacher where my portable classroom (A-1) was. She pointed to down the walkway, so I went and found where I was supposed to go. There were no instructions for me, but there were some books on the shelves so I started looking through them to decide what to do, but I really had no idea.

Mercedes described her early days on the job as well:

I was scheduled to work in the language lab from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm. When I got there, the other lab instructor did not know I was coming and it was a mess. I didn't know what to do and I didn't have computer access and I couldn't clock in. I stood around and tried to keep busy, and the funny thing was it was like that the entire first week.

Because the instructors did not receive any initial guidance or orientation, their early days were reported as chaotic and stressful. The instructors believed that since they did not receive an initial introduction to the workplace, later they surely would receive some form of on-the-job training to help them. Lynn recalled:

I remember thinking that someone must be planning something to help me. I was sure I would get some kind of training before I started in the classroom, but that did not happen. Then, I was sure they were going to send me to some kind of class so I could figure this job out, but that didn't happen either.

Lack of Job Training

In addition to expecting a new-hire orientation, the instructors also anticipated that their employers would offer job training once they began in their classrooms. Because they did not have experience in adult ESL and their employers knew this, they assumed they would be provided the opportunity to learn how to do their jobs. The instructors also expected job training because most of their past jobs had provided some form of initial training. Especially after failing to provide a new-hire orientation, the instructors were even more certain that some form of training was on the way. Rose recalled:

All of the jobs I have ever had--even when I worked in fast food in high school--provided some kind of training. Wendy's taught me how to run a cash register, and when I worked at Belk's in customer service they trained me for a week. I was really surprised that I was hired to teach ESL and not trained at all.

Lynn saw it this way:

I went through so much to become a teacher. Four years in college, then all of the testing, and the internship and the interview process, and then I finally got a job. I could not believe that in adult ESL it was so easy and unstructured compared to what I had been through in the past. Even my jobs in high school gave me more training than this. I kept waiting for someone to contact me and tell me what class I would be attending, but after a few weeks I still hadn't heard from anyone, so I figured it was not going to happen.

These sentiments were consistent among all of the interview participants. The instructors' past experiences led them to believe that they would be trained, especially since they were not familiar with how to teach adult ESL. Their expectations for training were not fulfilled, and all of the instructors were surprised by this lack of orientation and training support.

Lack of Administrative Support

The study participants also assumed that they would be provided support from the college's administrative staff. Again, they believed that institutional support would be provided because they were new to the field and their employer knew this lack of knowledge about the organization and the instructional context. In addition, those ESL instructors who had held past instructional positions did have such assistance. These instructors expected a number of administrative supports, including: someone to meet them in their first days to fill out their new-hire paperwork, a point person to ask questions about class-related items such as forms and paperwork, and someone to call when there were general questions or issues.

All of the instructors did have a program coordinator as their contact, but most of these program coordinators worked during the day and the instructors worked in the evenings. They found that their coordinators were not accessible in the evening hours. Kay recalled:

I remember expecting someone to meet me to come fill out my W-2's and that type of stuff, but I ended up having to call the school to find out what I needed to do to get paid. My program coordinator worked during the day, and was not on campus in the evening hours so I really had no one to go to. I had to ask other teachers about the paperwork and where to get it, and I ended up relying on them very heavily.

Melinda stated:

In my past jobs I always had some type of buddy or mentor that would show me what to do during the first few days of the job. I really could have used that with this job because we didn't have it, and I needed to know who to call and what to do because our department did not have someone to help us with all the admin stuff and my coordinator was never on campus for the night-time classes.

Similarly, Janet observed:

Every place I have worked in the past, someone in an admin-type of position came to me to help me learn what to do and who to contact, etc. That was not the case here; I had to figure out how to do everything on my own.

All of the instructors expected to receive some form of administrative support, but received little or none. Because program coordinators worked during the day and were

generally not available in the evenings, most of the instructors had to manage classroom-related issues that arose on their own.

Expectations of Self as Instructor

Initially, the instructors believed that teaching English to adult ESL learners would not be too challenging, and they expected that they would have little trouble helping their students learn the language. They believed this to be true because they thought that since they already spoke English themselves, that it would not be too difficult to teach it to a group of learners who did not know the language. Kay described her early teaching experiences with this paradox:

I really thought that since I spoke English, how hard could this job be? I was teaching a beginning level class so I figured I would start with the basics. First, I had no idea that the students would be from so many different countries. I figured since I was in Miami, most of the students would be Hispanic. In my first class, along with the Hispanic students, I had students from China, Poland, Russia, and Germany, and they all spoke at different levels! I had no idea where to even start, so I thought I would just teach them the alphabet. When I began that lesson, I got a lot of blank stares. I couldn't understand why, and then I realized that most of the students did not have a reference point to relate to, because the Chinese and Russian alphabets are so different from ours. I had planned to do this the entire three hours, but I was stuck and didn't know what to do....I wanted to cry! I knew I need more training to do the job, but I wasn't sure who to ask. Those first few weeks I was extremely nervous and felt

sick most of the time because I didn't know how to manage the class and I didn't know how to teach them English.

Melinda also recalled:

What's funny is that I thought it couldn't be too hard because I had been speaking English for 35 years! I didn't know how to plan lessons, I didn't know what materials were the best to use for which topics, I didn't know what the students needed to know or how to teach it to the different languages in the group. I knew there had to be a way to do it, but I needed someone to help me figure it out. I also didn't know about the community resources for the students. They would often ask about things like where to go for government assistance, or ask passport questions and I usually couldn't help them. I learned that there was a lot that I didn't know!

Rose also explained her early ideas about teaching ESL:

I really thought that since I was an ESL student that I would know what to do, but I was so wrong! Teaching a group of people from all different countries who are at different levels of ability the hardest language to learn is not an easy thing! I was sure that since I had taken the classes and saw first-hand how the instructors run their classes that it would be easy for me. I can tell you for sure that my BA in Reading Education did not prepare me to teach these classes!

These early experiences helped convince the instructors that their expectations that teaching adult ESL would be easy and simple were misguided. They realized that they did require additional training in order to be successful in their roles, and that this training was

not forthcoming from their employers. They also knew that they would not receive any real support from administration to help them in their roles. Since this was the case, the instructors determined that they would need to find ways to learn how to do their jobs on their own.

Thus, the first finding of this study is that as these beginning adult ESL instructors entered the field they had unrealistic expectations about the amount of training and support they would be provided, and they also had unrealistic expectations about how difficult it would be to teach adult ESL. They encountered many difficulties due to the fact that they were not prepared for their roles as adult ESL instructors, and they were not provided administrative support early in their careers. Based on their initial experiences, they desired a structured introduction to their workplace, administrative support, and a training and development plan to assist them with becoming properly prepared to do their jobs.

Theme 2: Once the beginning instructors realized they were not prepared for their jobs, they decided to engage in various self-directed professional learning activities on their own.

The instructors realized through their early adult ESL classroom experiences that they were not adequately prepared for their jobs. They recognized that they needed help through focused training and additional education in adult ESL. From these early experiences of lack of communication and support, the instructors presumed that this help would not be offered by their supervisors. Due to this lack of supports and assistance, the instructors realized they needed to engage in learning activities such as formal classes, informal learning, and networking with more experienced instructors and professional associations. They understood that these activities would help to improve and enhance their understanding of

adult ESL students and their instructional abilities. They also understood that they would have to take the initiative and plan these activities on their own.

Underprepared to be an Adult ESL Instructor

All of the interviewed instructors reported that at the beginning of their new ESL teaching career they had experienced high levels of stress and nervousness. This anxiety and stress caused them to question themselves and their capabilities. They described negative feelings about themselves as competent workers. Their initial experiences included fear, anxiety, nervousness, stress, and self doubt. Once the instructors realized that the reason for these feelings was their underprepared status, they felt they needed to take action to learn how to become effective instructors. Melinda described her reactions:

Wow...I felt like I had all the odds stacked against me. I didn't know how to teach English, and I learned that really quickly. Just because you can speak it doesn't mean you can teach it! Then I realized I didn't know how adults learn and using tactics you would use with children doesn't work. Then I realized I didn't know how to communicate with the students and I didn't know how to provide information to them in a way they could use it.

Rose also talked about her realization of being underprepared:

Even though I learned English as my second language, I really didn't know how to teach; they are really two separate things!

Additionally, Karen talked about her misconceptions:

I have a Bachelor's degree in Education and I teach 3rd grade as my full time job. I had no idea that adults learn so differently than children do and, when I started teaching ESL, I remember thinking that I would be OK because at least I knew how to teach, but I realized pretty quickly that my teaching methods that I use with my day students wasn't going to work with my night students.

Engaging in Learning

There were four areas of knowledge and skills in which the instructors all felt that they were initially deficient, causing them considerable stress and anxiety. These were the primary areas they chose to focus on in learning activities. These four areas of concern included: did not know how to teach English to non-English speakers, did not understand how adults learn, did not know how to manage their classrooms, and did not know how to effectively transfer information to students who were at different levels of ability and limited English competence. As they discussed these four key areas of concern, most of the study participants noted they engaged in formal classes, informal learning such as reading books on ESL instruction and visiting professional websites, and networking with more experienced teachers. For example, Melinda spoke about how she approached her professional development activities:

To deal with the stress, I took it one piece at a time and educated myself in a few areas. I started studying English textbooks so that when the students asked me those "why" questions I would have an answer. Then I started reading about how adults learn and what types of classroom strategies work the best with them. Then I went to

some ESL workshops offered by my local TESOL chapter so that I could learn about ESL learners and how to teach them. What I found was that it was amazing how much I didn't know.

Karen recalled her approach as well:

I started finding some references so I could learn about how adults learn. Next I had to learn how to teach ESL, so I made friends with my other night-time co-workers who were more experienced than me and I would go visit on my breaks and ask for advice, etc. I learned a ton from them back then, and I still use my networks even now.

Jean observed:

I realized pretty quickly that the lectures I planned when I first started teaching really weren't working. The students looked at me with either a 'deer in the headlights look' or they were falling asleep so I knew what I was doing was not working. I decided that if I knew how to deliver information to the students my life might be a little easier, and I had been through lots of training classes in my full-time job where we did lots of interactive activities, so I thought I should try that. I went out and bought a book called *Active Training*, and I started using some of the activities described in the book. Games worked really well, so did group activities and ESL learners are usually really good sports about doing those sorts of things. The other thing that I did was I took a poll at the end of each class. I knew the students were my best critics, so I had them rate on a scale of 1-10 how they liked the activities in the class. The ones they

liked we would use and the ones they didn't, I would scrap...I really can't think of one they didn't like...except for the lecture. Of course some lecturing is necessary, but it can't be for the whole class, and it has to be done creatively for this group of students.

Rose also shared memories of her early days trying to figure out how to deliver information to her ESL students:

Well, I got tired of my students looking puzzled, so I figured I had better change something! I reached out to my fellow teachers and asked them for ideas and everyone was great in sharing some of their strategies for delivering information to their students. They shared games they use, group activities, and lots of other ideas as well. After a while I knew what would work and what wouldn't so each time I had a new topic to teach I could figure out the best way to teach it.

Another area in which the ESL instructors needed and desired education was classroom management. All of the instructors mentioned how difficult it was to facilitate a class full of students from a variety of countries and language backgrounds. In addition, these students all functioned on different levels in terms of their ability to speak English, and they had different culturally-based understandings about how to behave in a classroom. For some of the instructors, this diversity was the most challenging part of the job. Kay spoke of her difficulties managing the class and how she found a solution to this problem:

I remember in my first few classes I had no idea what to do because I had four different pockets of students in my class. All the students from similar backgrounds

would migrate towards each other, so I had a Hispanic group, an Asian group, a Russian group and a group from Viet Nam, and I did not know how to get them to all interact with one another. There was no way I could do four different lessons to the different groups, so I knew I had to find a way to get the class on the same page. The first few days of doing lessons I mostly lectured, and that didn't help to get the students to work as a group, so at that point I was kind of lost. I began asking my co-workers how they broke through with their students, and they gave me lots of great ideas, so I guess the help of my co-workers was my coping mechanism in learning how to manage my classes. The first rule my co-workers taught me was that I had to institute an English-only policy and that worked wonders! Once they knew they had to speak English, they all opened up to one another and it made a huge difference in bringing the group together into one unit.

Mercedes also spoke of how she coped:

It was really hard to teach this group at first for me. There were so many different cultures in the group, and I didn't speak their languages. Especially in the beginning level classes, you have students who can't speak at all, so I was really lost at how to help them. The students grouped themselves by country because I suppose it made them feel comfortable, but it wasn't doing them any good because all they did was speak their own language and they weren't trying to learn English. This made it really hard for me, so I decided I had better learn how to manage the group. I went to the TESOL website to search for articles, but there really wasn't much on how to deal

with this problem. Then I started going to work a half hour early to see if I could catch other more experienced instructors who would share their experiences and that was a really great idea. The other part time night instructors were very willing to give me pointers about how to get the group to work together, so my group of peers was how I coped with this issue.

The instructors soon began to feel stressed and anxious as a result of their initial classroom experiences. As they accepted the reality that their employers would not offer any education or training opportunities, they sought to engage in learning activities such as college courses in adult learning methodologies, second language acquisition, and multicultural topics. Some also participated in certification courses through TESOL and their local professional ESL organizations. Further, some found online workshops and other internet-based ESL educational opportunities, and all reported that they sought out their more experienced co-workers to build a network that would help them improve their knowledge and abilities. All of the instructors reported that they believe the self-directed activities in which they participated were very helpful, but perhaps the activity that had the most significant impact was their networking. They believed this was true because they had a common or shared understanding of their environment and they found others who had experienced some of the same frustrations, so they felt the advice from the co-workers was directly applicable to their particular situations.

Thus, the second finding of this study is that the beginning adult ESL instructors took the initiative to learn how to be more effective in their jobs, primarily by engaging in formal

courses, informal learning activities, and networking with more experienced instructors and professional associations.

Theme 3: The instructors' relationships with their students served as a source of motivation to overcome their workplace challenges.

When the adult ESL instructors began in the field, they reported that they had little knowledge about the learners they would be teaching. The teachers initially were surprised at the diverse makeup of their classes, and they were also surprised that the students' academic abilities varied so greatly within the same class. The instructors found this type of class to be very difficult to manage. However, through interactions with their students, they developed very positive relationships. The instructors reported that their students were the primary reason they sought to overcome the challenges they faced as underprepared instructors. This section will discuss the instructors' initial perceptions of their students, and how the students became the instructors' motivation to become effective and succeed in their roles.

Initial Perceptions of Adult ESL Learners

According to recollections shared in the interviews, when the instructors entered the field of adult ESL, they did not have a full understanding of what they would be doing, or who their students would be. Karen recalled her initial ideas about her students:

I guess I really didn't think about who I would be teaching too much. I suppose I thought they would be at least able to understand and communicate with me. I also assumed the class would be mostly Hispanic because we are in Florida. Wow, was I wrong! In my first class I had students who could speak English, but were illiterate in

their own language. I had students who couldn't speak at all, and I had ten countries represented in that first class. It was really something I was not prepared to do.

Melinda had similar expectations:

I assumed my classes would be mostly Hispanic, and I knew I was teaching a beginning level class, so I thought they might be able to speak a little and would know the alphabet and numbers maybe. On my first day, I quickly learned that I was wrong and that I had students from eleven different countries in my class. I remember that I could not believe the college didn't prepare me for that.

Janet also recalled her initial impressions:

I remember that I was really surprised at how nice and respectful I found the students to be. They were not at all like American students from what I remember from my school days. They listened to me, they raised their hands to speak, they did their work, and it was really a wonderful surprise to me.

The adult ESL instructors were surprised by the diverse nature of their classrooms. They expected that their students would be primarily Hispanic, and they were surprised by how many cultures were represented in their classes. The instructors were also surprised by the varying levels of their students' ability to speak and understand English. They expected that their students would all be able to speak and write some English, but they found some students had a much better understanding of the language than others. Finally, the instructors reported that they were initially surprised at how kind and warm they found their students, and that they were extremely respectful in the classroom as well.

Students serve as Motivation to Succeed

The first few months on the job were very challenging for the beginning instructors. When they thought of trying another career more suited to their educational and work backgrounds, they noted that it was the experiences with their ESL students that kept them coming back to the classroom. The instructors used descriptors such as “fantastic” or “great” when talking about their initial entry groups of learners. They all commented on how kind, thoughtful, and respectful their students were. They also said they felt that they learned as much, if not more, from their students as their students learned from them. For example, Jean spoke of her positive experiences with her first group of students:

My first day I remember being so scared of the group in front of me because I didn't know what to do with them. They were very patient with me and were all very thankful for every lesson we did and everything I taught them. They were all extremely friendly and really wanted to learn. I was surprised about how respectful they were and how much we could communicate even with the language barrier. When I would think of leaving ESL because basically I didn't know what I was doing, I would think of the group and I didn't want to let them down, so I stayed and we worked through it together.

Mercedes admired the students' drive to learn:

The main reason I went to work was because of the students. They were amazing. So many came to this country to find a better way of life and English was the ticket for them. They were so kind, respectful and wanted to learn. Of course there were the

few that skipped class or who messed around, but 99% were good, hard-working people who respected me and the college and the job I was there to do.

Karen recognized that she was learning from her students while they learned from her:

I learned more about different cultures in the first few weeks of class than I had in my entire life. The students were open and wanted me to know about them and their lives. They helped me work through my teaching issues by being patient and kind, and I know that I am a better teacher today because of the ESL students that I have had.

Many of the instructors also spoke of how their students helped them to form their beliefs and practices about teaching and their profession. Jean described her beliefs as related to her students:

ESL students are busy people who have a very defined purpose. They want to learn English so they can earn a better way of life and it is my job to help them do that. I think of myself as a guide to help my ESL learners acclimate in a new country and grow and prosper in their new setting. This is not simply a job to me, I am able to contribute, and I get just as much back from them as they get from me.

Rose also spoke of how her students helped her form her beliefs about her role as an adult ESL instructor:

Because of my students I came to believe that my job was important and I had a purpose. I was not simply a teacher, but I was there to help my students learn a skill that they needed for themselves and their families to survive. At first I did not believe

this, but as I got to know my students and as I learned about their lives, I began to take my position very seriously and it was not just a job because I had the chance to make a difference.

In summary, the third finding of this study is that the instructors' relationships with students have been their primary motivation to succeed as adult ESL instructors throughout their careers. They began with little knowledge of who they would be teaching, and quickly learned that it was a very culturally diverse group whose level of English abilities varied. The instructors also found that the students were kind and respectful and these positive interactions helped to make the classroom environment more enjoyable. The students became the instructors' motivation to overcome their challenges and succeed in their roles as instructors. They found their students to be so motivated and hardworking and were very impressed by the risks the students had taken to create a better way of life for themselves and their families by coming to the United States. The instructors reported that they felt they had to improve their skills and become more effective teachers because they did not want to let their students down. The instructors also reported that they felt a sense of responsibility for their students and that they needed to be successful as teachers so they could help their students learn English so that they could have a better way of life.

Theme Four: The instructors perceived many aspects of their working conditions to be problematic.

The study participants described a number of troublesome issues with their working conditions including: pay, a lack of advancement opportunities, and the overall instability of their positions. The instructors believe that most of the issues were systemic and were

unlikely to change. They identified strategies and ways that they had learned to manage their discontent with these issues so as to continue forward with their careers in adult ESL instruction.

Issues with Pay

A key issue related to working conditions for all of the instructors was compensation. Both full and part time instructors commented about the lack of raises and benefits. Early in their careers, the instructors were very pleased with their pay because they perceived the initial rates of approximately \$20.00 per hour to be very high. However, the only way for a part time instructor to receive a pay increase was to earn an additional degree, and the full time instructors very rarely received pay increases due to budget restrictions. Janet commented:

When I first started I was thrilled to make \$20.50 per hour, but now a few years later, I am not so thrilled anymore. The only way for me to get an increase is to go back to school and get another degree, and that is just not an easy thing to do. I think I should at least get a cost of living increase.

Amy had similar concerns:

I don't even ask for pay increases anymore, because I know that I am not going to get one. I have been at the same pay rate for five years now, and it is a little hard to stay motivated. I suppose I should be happy to have a job, and the medical benefits are good, but I feel I am entitled to some sort of increase because I work hard and do a good job.

The instructors all noted that each year they prepared themselves for the fact that they would not receive an increase in order to avoid being disappointed and upset. Some of the full time instructors mentioned that they considered seeking additional employment to supplement their income, but they said that they were willing to stay because they enjoyed their jobs.

Lack of Advancement Opportunities

The instructors also noted the lack of support for professional development and the lack of opportunities to advance in their careers. These individuals indicated that the lack of training and learning opportunities appeared to have a negative impact upon their ability to perform more effectively in the classroom. Although full time instructors were encouraged to participate in educational activities to enhance their skills as ESL instructors, there was neither an accountability system nor incentives for participation. As suggested by Mercedes:

My program has a requirement that the full time instructors have to take 60 hours of related courses every two years. It is hard to get reimbursed for this type of thing, so unless it is something that is offered by the department at the college, I usually don't go. No one ever checks to see how many hours we have completed.

In contrast, the part time instructors reported that there were very few opportunities for them to learn skills to improve as ESL instructors. All noted that their colleges rarely approved education-related expenses, so they had to pay for these professional development opportunities and participate on their own time. Janet, a part time instructor, stated:

I joined Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) a few years ago because I wanted to learn more about my job. I pay my annual dues and when there are conferences, I go myself. I have to take time off from my full time job to go, but I usually get a lot out of those types of things.

Karen commented:

It is important for part time instructors to grow and develop in our jobs, too. It seems since we work at night we are on our own and kind of forgotten about. I take my part time job very seriously and want to do it the best I can. I have never been offered any training, so I do it on my own. I really wish we were offered classes or some type of mentoring to improve because the students would really benefit from all of us being more informed.

The instructors appeared to be very frustrated by the lack of advancement and professional development activities offered by their colleges. They noted that early in their employment, they were surprised that they were not offered the opportunity to develop their teaching skills but, with time in the field, they say that they began to accept the lack of professional development support. The instructors found ways to develop the needed skills on their own through self-directed learning efforts. They had learned that they could not rely on their employers to help them.

Instability of Teaching Positions

The study participants spoke eloquently about how unsettled they were in their employment as ESL instructors. This problematic employment status was due to the fact that

they usually would not know until the beginning of each semester if their employment was going to be continued, based on the levels of government funding the college might receive. For several of the instructors, their ESL jobs brought in supplemental income that they needed to cover household expenses. For others, it was their primary source of income and they relied very heavily on it. They talked about how difficult it was to remain motivated when they knew they could potentially be out of a job at the end of the semester. Facing these employment continuity issues, they delineated a number of strategies for coping with job instability. Melinda spoke about how being unsettled in her position affected her:

I stayed home with my kids during the day and worked part time at night. It was tough because each semester I didn't know if I would be back or not. Also, there was no communication from the program coordinators about the status of staffing at all. I never knew until a few days before the semester began if I was going to work or not. The only way for me to deal with this was to not think about it. If I did, then it would probably have affected my motivation and I did not want that to happen. I just tried to do the best job I could and at the end of each semester I would be very nervous about whether or not I would be employed the next semester. As my seniority grew, I worried less and less, but I know how the new instructors feel for sure!

Janet also commented on this instability:

I worked and still work full time in the Adult Basic Education program at the community college and teach ESL part time. However, there is very little to no communication about the staffing of the ESL program and I usually am left guessing

until a few days before the start of the semester if I am going to be teaching or not.

The way I deal with this is just to ignore it because it might have a negative effect on me. Now I have been around for a while and I know how the programs go, but when I was new I had lots of stomach aches about it!

Each of the study participants raised the same issues with their working conditions. Many acknowledged that no workplace is perfect, and there were always going to be things that employees disagree with, but the issues the instructors identified were ones that were persistent and left them with feelings of stress and anxiety. The instructors also noted that the before-mentioned issues were beyond their control to change, so they had to learn to manage their discontent in order to continue in their jobs. They reported that their primary strategy was to simply ignore the situations that could not be changed.

Thus, the fourth finding of this study is that the adult ESL instructors perceived many aspects of their working conditions to be problematic, but they understand that these aspects are unlikely to change, so they created strategies such as avoidance and ignoring those areas of discontent to help them manage their situations.

Theme Five: As the instructors gained experience, their teaching philosophies evolved.

As the instructors reflected on their experiences as beginning adult ESL teachers, they believed that their understandings of teaching had changed over time and, thus, these early experiences had informed their teaching philosophies. Many of the participants mentioned that when they began teaching, they did not view themselves as professionals, but rather as just an employee of a college. The instructors also spoke about their early approach to

teaching, and noted that they taught as they had always been taught without putting much thought into their instructional style, because they simply did not know how to teach an adult ESL class.

View of Self as Professional

When the participants began as part time ESL instructors, they did not think of themselves as part of a profession. Most said that they had never considered adult ESL as a career, and they took the job initially because they were offered a high hourly wage. However, with their experiences in teaching ESL and being part of the field, their views began to change. Kay shared her recollections of initial thoughts about her ESL career and how her understandings of ESL teaching had changed:

When I first started teaching ESL it was just a way for me to earn \$20.00 per hour, and I thought it would be more interesting than selling makeup at the mall. I remember a few months into the job thinking that teaching ESL really could be a career for me, and that is when I started really trying to learn how to improve at my job. When I started going to workshops and joined TESOL, I really changed the way I thought about myself and I saw teaching ESL as a profession rather than just a job.

Mercedes also reflected on her perception of herself as a professional:

At first, teaching ESL was just a job for me, really. What really made a difference for me was joining TESOL. Once I started going to the meetings and talking with other ESL instructors I realized this was not just a job, but a profession for me.

Most of the instructors voiced the same sentiments. At the point when they began engaging in activities to improve themselves and their skills as instructors, their perceptions of themselves in their jobs began to shift. Then, they began to believe that teaching adult ESL was more than just a job, and saw themselves as professionals.

Developing a Teaching Philosophy

As the instructors began to view themselves as professionals, they also began to develop their individual approaches or philosophies toward teaching ESL. Most of the instructors suggested that they began in the field without a defined philosophy of teaching and they taught as they had been taught themselves. This practice of teaching based on their own past experiences turned out to be largely unsuccessful in the adult ESL classrooms.

Most noted that once they realized what they were doing was not working, they began to reconsider and make changes. At that point, many of the instructors sought ways to improve their teaching abilities. Their experiences with peers, students, formal education, and on-the-job activities helped them arrive at a more informed and effective philosophy of teaching. The instructors discussed some of the aspects of their philosophies, which included being learning-centered, encouraging active learning, and focusing upon developing life skills in their students.

Kay reflected on the experiences that helped her arrive at her current teaching philosophy and how this has influenced her practices:

I am sure I still have a long way to go, but I know that I have come a long way from where I started! My first few weeks, I remember I lectured to the class because that

was what my teachers always did, and I thought that was how students learned. Now I know that is not the best way to teach ESL students or adults in general, because of what I have learned from my co-workers, students, and from trial and error. I believe that students need to be engaged in the class and they need to be active. The information needs to be reinforced and applied, too. My basic philosophy is that the classroom needs to be learner-centered, not teacher-centered and that guides everything that I do. It's interesting that in the beginning I had no opinions, style or beliefs, but now I sure do!

Jean also spoke about how her experiences have led to her current philosophy about teaching adult ESL students:

I would bet like most everyone else when you first start you don't know what you think or believe, and I know I didn't have any particular type of practices either!

During the first year I would say I began to get my bearings and I started to figure out what worked and what didn't. From practice and speaking with my peers I learned that you can't lecture to adult ESL learners all the time, and I also learned that our activities had to be very active and include everyone. So if I had to define my teaching style or the way I practice teaching it would be interactive and relevant. I say relevant because the information needs to help the students and not be a time filler.

Many of the instructors also spoke of how their students helped them to form their beliefs and practices about teaching and their profession. Rose spoke of how students helped her form her beliefs:

Because of my students, I came to believe that my job was important and I had a purpose. I was not simply a teacher, but I was there to help my students learn a skill that they needed for themselves and their families to survive. At first I did not believe this, but as I got to know my students and as I learned about their lives, I began to take my position very seriously and it was not just a job because I had the chance to make a difference.

The instructors believe that their philosophies have been informed and influenced by the experiences they have had during their careers. These experiences include what they have learned in the classroom, what they have learned from their support networks and the learning activities in which they have participated. The instructors noted that the teaching challenges they faced and the relationships with their students were the stimuli that helped them form their current teaching philosophies. Some of the experiences within the support networks that the instructors noted as being influential included learning teaching techniques from the more experienced instructors, and learning how to manage such a diverse group of learners. The instructors noted that the formal classes they attended and the informal internet-based courses also helped them to develop their philosophies.

The instructors also defined their philosophies through their interactions with their students. They developed individual approaches and philosophies about teaching adult ESL learners over the course of their careers through experiences with their students, such as learning about their native cultures. Other experiences that had an impact on the instructors included growing to admire and respect their students because they were hard workers who

were trying to make a better way of life in a new country. As they continued to teaching in adult ESL classrooms, all of the instructors developed the conviction that, as professionals in an important educational field, they have a real purpose and their work does make a difference. They also believed that what they do is not just a job, but a chance to have a positive effect in the lives of others.

As recounted in their own words, the participants in this study spoke about their experiences in their journey toward becoming professionals in the field of adult ESL. They spoke about their unrealistic expectations as new instructors, and their need to engage in learning activities on their own because they did not have support from their employers. They also spoke about their students as a source of motivation to overcome their challenges, and they discussed the aspects of their workplaces that they found to be problematic. Finally, they discussed how their individual philosophies about teaching evolved through their experiences along their journey to become professional adult ESL instructors

Next, Chapter Five will provide a summary of the study and a discussion of the interrelations among theme. Specifically, the discussion will address the importance and significance of each theme, the common elements among the themes and the ways in which they overlap, and the issues that surround the themes as well. Conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for further research, policy and professional practice regarding adult ESL instructors will also be offered.

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study sought to understand the experiences of underprepared adult ESL instructors who teach in non-credit non-degree ESL programs offered by community colleges. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to examine the instructors' experiences, the coping strategies they developed and utilized to help them become proficient teachers, and the beliefs and practices regarding adult ESL instruction they adopted from their experiences.

Through the use of purposeful sampling, nine adult ESL instructors from non-academic adult ESL programs in Florida community colleges were selected to share their personal experiences and their own understandings of what it meant to be underprepared instructors. The research design utilized qualitative inquiry. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the instructors to explore the meaning they made of their experiences as underprepared adult ESL instructors. In addition, demographic questionnaires supplemented the interview data. The constant comparative method was used to analyze the data. Three research questions provided direction for this study:

1. What are the experiences of underprepared adult ESL instructors?
2. What are the coping mechanisms the underprepared adult ESL instructors develop?
3. How do the adult ESL instructors' experiences inform their current beliefs and practices?

Chapter Four presented the key findings from these research questions, through five themes that emerged from the data. These themes included:

1. The beginning instructors had unrealistic expectations about their new positions as adult ESL instructors.
2. Once the beginning instructors realized they were not prepared for their jobs, they decided to engage in various learning activities for professional development on their own.
3. The instructors' relationships with their students served as a source of motivation to overcome the workplace challenges the instructors faced.
4. The instructors perceived many aspects of their working conditions to be problematic.
5. As the instructors gained experience, their teaching philosophies evolved.

From this study, it was found that adult ESL instructors had a range of initial experiences that were surprising and challenging. In addition, these varied experiences had both positive and negative impact on them as individuals and as instructors. These experiences were the stimuli for the instructors to take the initiative to plan their own learning activities in an effort to become better prepared. They also developed strategies to help manage the difficult situations they encountered in order to become more proficient instructors in the field of adult ESL. With time and experience in the field, the instructors—who began with beliefs based primarily on their own past educational experiences to guide

them—developed new and expanded beliefs about themselves as capable instructors, about their students, and about the nature of adult ESL instruction.

Chapter Four presented the data collected during the investigative phase as themes to provide the reader with the results of the research in a narrative format. The purpose of Chapter Five is to interpret these themes and provide insight into their meanings, and to present an understanding of the themes in relation to the broader literature and the current status of adult ESL instruction in community colleges.

The key themes and related findings presented in Chapter Four have been organized here into two sections that will focus on examining, synthesizing and explaining or interpreting the information. Then, both supportive and contradictory findings related to the literature base are presented, and possible alternative explanations are offered so that conclusions can be drawn from the information. The first section will address the formation of teacher identity and the second section will consider the teacher as learner.

Finally, this chapter will provide a discussion of the major conclusions drawn from the research, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research related to adult ESL instructors.

Formation of Teacher Identity

This first section of Chapter Five will focus on the instructors' experiences and how they ultimately helped the once underprepared instructors view themselves as competent and successful instructors. The first four themes from chapter four are relevant to this concept.

Beginning Instructors' Unrealistic Expectations

The study participants found that they held unrealistic expectations regarding the support and assistance they would receive as they made the transition into the new role of adult ESL instructor. Because their employers did not provide any type of information, orientation or support, they found their early experiences disconcerting. They reported that they were amazed that they did not receive any job training, orientation or support to help them in their new roles. The instructors were further surprised by how difficult they found teaching adult ESL to be, due to the knowledge they lacked and also due to the diverse cultural composition of their classes.

One possible reason why the instructors perceived their early experiences as problematic could be attributed to their experiences with prior jobs. Several of the study participants had worked either in an educational setting or for a government entity in the past, and participated in an orientation and completed new hire training. These earlier experiences could have been the basis for their expectation that they would undergo some form of training as they started work at the community college.

Another possible explanation for why the instructors perceived their early experiences as surprising might be their own preconceived notions about teaching. Knowles, Coles, and Presswood (1994) found that beginning teachers are often shocked by the reality of the classroom due to their own preconceived ideas of what school and students are like. McKenzie (2005) noted that beginning teachers often are under the impression that their experiences will be similar to when they were students themselves. This was also the case for

the instructors in this current study. The underprepared adult ESL instructors discovered that their beliefs about support on entry as well as the ease of teaching were unfounded. After being hired, the participants described their early experiences as adult ESL instructors unexpectedly challenging. The instructors' initial experiences left them feeling isolated, without support, and inadequate as teachers.

Karen summarized many of the instructors' sentiments with the following statement:

I remember those first few months feeling like I was all alone out in my portable. I didn't have anyone I could ask questions and I really didn't know what I was doing. I felt bad for the students, because I didn't know how to teach them what they needed to know. But, I felt bad for myself, too, because I knew I was smart enough to figure it out if I had some help, but there wasn't any offered to me.

The instructors identified a number of challenges that faced them early on, due to the fact that they were underprepared. They did not know how to plan for or teach adult ESL courses, which left them with reported feelings of inadequacy, nervousness, and self-doubt. These challenges, in part, also reflected the current literature regarding teaching adult ESL learners. According to the literature, instructors should understand the principles of adult learning, second language acquisition, issues related to culture, and instructional approaches that support language development in adults (CAELA, 2007) in order to be considered prepared adult ESL instructors. The instructors reported that they lacked this knowledge base when they entered the field. The lack of knowledge and skill in these three areas was believed by the participants to cause challenges in their teaching, including: (1) a lack of

knowledge about effective lesson planning; (2) a lack of knowledge about teaching methods; (3) a lack of understanding of how to teach adults; (4) a lack of understanding of how to teach ESL students; and (5) a lack of understanding of classroom management in relation to the unique context of adult ESL learners. Kay summed up the sentiments of most participants when she stated:

In the beginning, I didn't know how to plan or how to teach. I didn't know what to teach, and I certainly didn't know how to teach to the ESL group. What I did know was that I needed to figure it out pretty fast!

During the interview process the instructors reflected back upon their early teaching activities and, in doing so, most acknowledged that during the first few weeks on the job, they really did not grasp what was happening. They felt badly that they were, in a sense, failing to do the jobs they were hired to do, and they also felt badly that they were unable to help their students. They reported that it took a few weeks on the job enduring the frustrations and negative feelings before they realized that something needed to be done to change their circumstances. They decided to take action themselves because they did not have the support from others that was needed.

There are many plausible explanations for why the instructors perceived their early teaching experiences as primarily challenging. First of all, being a beginning instructor can be difficult. According to Manuel (2003) the teaching profession is unique in its treatment of new members in that the beginning teacher must take on all the roles and responsibilities of an experienced teacher, with few, if any, allowances made for the beginning teacher's lack of

experience. Ramsey (2000) also notes that no other profession has such high expectations of its newest members so early in their introduction to the job and, in part, this provides an explanation as to why the attrition rates of beginning teachers are so high.

According to Ingersoll (2003), the turnover problem, although high for the entire teaching occupation, affects beginning teachers more than others. His research shows that teaching has always lost many of its newly trained members early in their careers. After just five years, between 40 and 50 percent of all beginning teachers, on average, have left the profession for varying reasons.

According to McKenzie (2005) there are many theories as to why more than half of new teachers leave the profession within their first five years. Research suggests that many of the difficulties beginners encounter are environmental in nature, grounded in the culture of the teaching profession. The top four reasons cited for why teachers leave include: new teachers feel overwhelmed by the expectations and scope of the job; new teachers feel isolated and unsupported in their classrooms; new teachers are unclear about expectations; and, new teachers' own expectations don't match the actual job. While the participants in this study contemplated leaving the profession due to many of the reasons listed above, none actually left her position.

Given that there are high expectations set for beginning teachers and there is also a very high attrition rate of beginning teachers, clearly, being a new instructor has its challenges. The adult ESL instructors who participated in this study also faced the complexity of a classroom filled with students of varied cultural backgrounds and different

levels of academic ability, and they were underprepared, in terms of having the knowledge needed to be an effective adult ESL instructor, factors which combined to produce a very challenging situation for the instructors.

Students serve as motivation to overcome challenges

Beyond the instructors' unexpected and discouraging initial experiences, they spoke of many positive episodes as well. Most of these positive experiences centered on their enjoyment of their students and the new knowledge and awareness they gained from working with adult ESL students. All of the study participants spoke of the positive relationships they established with their students and reported how much they admired, respected, and enjoyed these learners. As recounted by Rose:

I have enjoyed each and every class I have worked with. Adult ESL students are kind, caring, and are like an extended family to me. They are so determined to succeed and make a better way of life that they deserve to be respected by us all.

The instructors also reported positive experiences that surrounded the knowledge and awareness they gained from working with adult ESL students. Primarily the instructors spoke about how much they enjoyed their multi-cultural classrooms, and about how much they learned from their students about their lives, countries, and cultures. Janet reported:

Being an ESL teacher has taught me more than I ever would have imagined about the different cultures and about the world.

During the interviews, many of the initial experiences attempting to teach adult ESL were disconcerting for the instructors. However, many of the instructors reported that

because they respected and enjoyed their students so much, they did not want to let the students down by being an inadequate instructor or by leaving the profession, and therefore they sought to overcome their challenges. Mercedes shared the feelings of many of the study participants when she stated:

There were many days when I was alone in my classroom and didn't know what to do, what to teach, who to ask for help, or how to help my students learn English. I knew that I couldn't let them, or myself down, so I decided that I better just figure it all out.

Also, during the interviews there was great excitement in the tone of the instructors' voices and an expression of joy on their faces as they reported their positive experiences with their students. They spoke with great emotion about their strong sense of respect and admiration for their students and were also very emotional when they spoke about the enrichment their students brought to their lives. It appeared that their experiences with students had a greater impact on them and their careers than their challenges and frustrations.

Suslu's (2006) research about the motivation of ESL instructors found that there is a high correlation between intrinsic motivation and teaching ESL. According to Suslu, ESL teachers are primarily motivated by intrinsic rewards such as working with students and perceiving the changes in the students' performance and behavior. Suslu also found that ESL teachers are motivated by working in a field that adds value to the lives' of others, and they are motivated by learning new information to improve their own professional skills and knowledge. Similarly, these findings support Latham's (1998) research on teacher

motivations that showed that intrinsic rewards play an important role in teachers' lives. He further found that seeing the growth and development of students makes a teacher more satisfied when compared to a teacher who does not feel any connection with the success of students. This conclusion, in part, also is supported by Silver's (1982) study of teacher motivation. In her findings, Silver determined that a lack of motivation may cause teachers to be less successful in teaching a foreign language. Silver also found that unreasonable demands by administrators, discouraging team spirit, neglecting rewards, and financial problems of the program are factors related to demotivation. Silver determined that if instructors are without intrinsic motivation, they will not succeed in their jobs and productivity will decrease dramatically. Silver summarized her findings by stating that intrinsic rewards outweigh extrinsic ones in educator motivation and job satisfaction.

Problematic Working Conditions

When considering their work life and their situations, the adult ESL instructors believed that their working conditions caused them difficulties. The instructors reported that their primary dissatisfaction came from the structure of the system in which they work. The instructors were at times left feeling alienated and unsettled in their work life due to the fact that there was a lack of effective communication from their administrators. The instructors cited issues such as ineffective communication about the amount of work they would have (if any) each new semester, a lack of professional development activities, a lack of raises and benefits, and a lack of feeling valued or of being marginalized by their colleagues.

The instructors also reported that they developed strategies to manage these system-related challenges, including avoiding and ignoring the issues that existed. The instructors realized that many of these challenges were beyond their control, since they are unable to change the structure of the systems in which they work. Thus, they simply dealt with the challenges as they came. The instructors acknowledged that no workplace is perfect, and they reported that they had had issues with all of their past workplaces. However, they noted that their workplace difficulties in adult ESL were different because they felt that they had no ability to overcome the issues, and they did not have the opportunity to express their concerns.

Evolving teaching philosophies and practices

The participant adult ESL instructors entered the field with little or no experience in adult ESL instruction. They were admittedly unaware about what it meant to be an adult ESL instructor, and they were also largely unaware about the nature and diversity of the students, the programs in which they taught, and the field in general. Early in their careers, the instructors based their beliefs and practices on their own past educational experiences. The ways the instructors managed their classes, delivered information, and what they believed about how individuals learn were mostly centered on pedagogical practices that were learned from and modeled after their own K-12 and college instructors.

The instructors reported that the methods they used and the way they managed the classroom when they first started teaching were not effective. The instructors said that they managed the classes in an almost authoritarian manner, utilized mostly lectures to deliver

information, and even read books written for children to the adult ESL learners. According to the instructors, the students did not respond well to these practices. This lack of responsive engagement by students was evidenced by the fact that the students were not progressing in their ability to speak English and they were outwardly frustrated. The instructors reported that their job stress grew because they knew their students were not effectively learning the English language.

For these instructors, their mostly negative early experiences were the impetus for reflecting upon what was happening. It was at this point that the instructors began to realize that their initial beliefs about teaching adult ESL learners were misguided. When they realized that they were teaching as they had been taught in their K-12 years, they began to understand that their initial beliefs simply did not work in an adult ESL setting with a diverse group of adult learners. This realization that their initial beliefs and practices were ill-conceived led the instructors to take action and ultimately create new, better informed beliefs and practices to help them and their students succeed.

Many of the instructors mentioned that at first they did not really think of themselves as teachers, and therefore never really put much thought into their instructional styles. They taught without a focused instructional style until they began experiencing difficulty in their jobs and began having feelings of stress, nervousness, uncertainty, self-doubt, and anxiety related to their inability to do their jobs well. The instructors knew that they needed to take action to overcome these difficulties and, as discussed in the prior sections, the instructors

developed strategies to help manage their challenges. These strategies included seeking formal education, studying on their own, and forming networks with other instructors.

The learning activities and networks that the instructors utilized as coping strategies also helped to develop the instructors' beliefs and practices. The instructors began in the field of adult ESL operating from beliefs and practices that were informed by their own past learning experiences. As the instructors attended formal classes and learned about linguistics, adult education, and multicultural and diversity topics, their beliefs and practices began to change.

The instructors learned that second language acquisition is not something that just happens; rather, it is a combination of several sociolinguistic and psychological factors that are intertwined in the case of each learner (Brown, 2004). They learned that the student's prior knowledge, attitudes, personality, learning styles, skills and motivation are all factors related to the eventual outcome of language study and must be considered when planning effective learning activities.

The instructors also discovered that there were a few key differences in the ways that adults and children learn information since adult learners are self-directed, while children are dependent upon their instructors. They learned that the experiences of the adult learners are a rich resource for the classroom, where children do not have the same experiences to share. Further, they learned that adults often experience a readiness to learn based on a change that has occurred in their lives and, finally, they saw that adults wanted to learn information that has relevance to their real life situations. Once the instructors understood these principles, it

helped them create more effective ways to deliver information to their students (Knowles 1977).

The instructors also learned a great deal about diversity and how to manage a multicultural group in a classroom. According to Smith (2005), in order to effectively manage an adult ESL classroom, it is important to create open lines of communication with the students and build relationships with them to understand their lives both inside and outside of the classroom. Further, it is important to learn about the cultures represented in their classrooms in order to understand the student's past educational experiences so that instructors can assist students in acclimating to their new surroundings. Finally, instructors need to understand their students' cultures, in order to avoid actions or words that may be offensive. The instructors noted that they learned these principles in courses they took, and worked to utilize these practices in their classrooms. Overall, the knowledge they gained from their courses helped the instructors to begin defining new beliefs and practices about how to be a successful adult ESL instructor.

In addition, the instructors drew upon social networks of fellow instructors at their workplaces. From these networks they learned very practical, relevant information about how to be a successful adult ESL instructor. They learned how to effectively plan classroom activities, and the more experienced instructors shared specific classroom exercises that they liked to use. They also were able to share their frustrations with instructors who understood their situations and who were even going through the same challenges themselves. The study participants used this network to solve issues they were having with their students, and they

also would ask for feedback about ways to become more successful in their jobs. The instructors all felt that these networks were their greatest source of support because they realized that they were not alone and that others shared similar struggles, and they believed that having these networks was a tremendous help to them in their careers.

During this period of their careers, as they remembered and reported it, the instructors' approaches evolved beyond the initial practices they had used when they entered the field. They reported that they changed from managing the classroom in an authoritative manner to trying to create an environment that was respectful and conducive for adult ESL students to learn and grow. They were able to achieve this by setting their expectations with the students about respecting the view and opinions of others so that the students felt free to express themselves. The instructors encouraged their students to participate in all of their activities, and they also strived to ensure that the feedback they gave to the students was both positive and constructive.

The instructors also changed their practices by utilizing techniques to deliver information that were successful with adult learners. They began to focus on using mostly interactive group techniques that drew upon their students' life experiences, and they avoided lecturing and individual busy work. Finally, the instructors began to embrace the diversity in their classrooms and used that as a basis for many of the classroom activities such as having the students create presentations about their countries or having the groups share food from their cultures. As Janet described:

I remember there being a point where I felt that the clouds were starting to clear, and I knew what to do with my students. I finally felt like I had a plan and my classes and co-workers helped me get there.

The instructors believed that they were successful in overcoming the challenges with the help of coping strategies that included engaging in learning and utilizing their social networks.

They no longer felt the same stress, nervousness, uncertainty, self-doubt and anxiety as in the beginning of their instruction. They also felt that they have been able to more clearly define their beliefs about themselves as instructors, and about their students, their practices and the field of adult ESL. As a result of their experiences with peers, students, formal education, and on-the-job activities, they now felt they were more informed and effective in their jobs, and they have developed a stronger identity as instructors of adult ESL learners.

Research conducted about beginning teacher identity by Sumara and Luce-Kapler (1989) supports these findings regarding experiences and the development of teacher identity. Their study sought to understand how beginning teachers negotiate their identities as they learn to teach. They found that there are three identities that must be negotiated, including: the identity the teachers bring with them, the identity formed during their own education, and the identity formed during teacher training. They also found that ultimately the beginning teacher's identity is formed and molded by their experiences and the environment in which they work.

The participants in this current study began with beliefs and practices based on their own past educational experiences, then came to the realization that their initial beliefs and

practices were probably inappropriate. The findings showed that the instructors developed coping strategies such as forming professional networks and attending formal courses to manage their classroom challenges. Eventually through additional study and experiences, the instructors created a mature identity as self-assured, confident teachers who believed in their ability to teach adult ESL.

The study findings also showed that the instructors began to view themselves as self-assured, confident instructors because of their life history. The instructors mentioned that they drew from their past life experiences in order to equip themselves to deal with the challenges they faced, which ultimately helped them to see themselves as professional adult ESL instructors.

Frances Fuller's (1969) model of teacher development, as previously discussed in Chapter Two, was based on an analysis of teachers' concerns and posits a three stage model of development that begins with (1) concerns about self, (2) concerns about tasks, and (3) concerns about students and the impact of teaching. Fuller describes teachers' development as a general movement from the internal to external, due to the fact that in the beginning instructors are first very concerned with themselves. Then their concerns shift toward their situations and teaching tasks, and ultimately their concerns move to focus on their students. During my analysis of the study findings, I found that the adult ESL instructors suggested their development as coincided with Fuller's model of teacher development.

Fuller describes the first stage of teacher development as one during which the instructors are primarily concerned about themselves, and this stage was supported by the

initial experiences of the adult ESL instructors in this study. Initially, the instructors had expectations about the type of training and support they would receive when they entered the field. When they found that there was no orientation, job training, or support, they were both unsettled and upset. Janet summed up the sentiments of the others when she reported:

I remember thinking...what about me? They put me in a classroom, and just left me. I was worried that they even forgot I was there.

The instructors continued to focus on themselves as they identified the number of challenges they faced and how those challenges made them feel. They vividly described the stress, nervousness, uncertainty, self-doubt and anxiety they felt in their positions. They also described many of the challenges they faced, because they believed they were not adequately prepared to do their jobs. However, as the instructors continued, their focus shifted from how the challenges made them feel to finding a way to overcome those challenges and focusing on the tasks at hand, rather than on themselves. Fuller describes the second stage of teacher development as one during which the instructors' focus moves from being concerned with themselves to being concerned with the tasks and situations they face. The study participants demonstrated a shift to this stage as well. Initially, the instructors were mainly concerned with how their challenges made them feel and described feelings of stress, nervousness, uncertainty, self-doubt and anxiety. Eventually, their focus turned to the actual challenges that faced them, including: (1) a lack of knowledge about effective lesson planning; (2) a lack of knowledge about teaching methods; (3) a lack of understanding of how to teach adults; (4) a lack of understanding of how to teach ESL students; and (5) a lack of understanding of

classroom management in relation to the unique context of adult ESL learners. The instructors knew that they had to overcome these challenges and began to turn their attention toward finding a way to be more effective. During this stage, they sought out training and education on their own, as well as engaging with social networks to identify better instructional practices based on advice from more experienced teachers.

The instructors also turned their attention concerning their workplace issues from how they were personally affected, to dealing with the issues that could be managed. The instructors initially focused on the unease and feeling of instability that was caused by the lack of communication and other systemic problems presented by the workplace. Gradually, their focus shifted from their personal concerns to creating strategies to manage these problems.

Fuller's third stage of teacher development occurs when teachers shift their concerns about tasks and situations to concerns about the impact on their students. The adult ESL instructors also transitioned from focusing on their situations to focusing on their learners, thereby entering into the third stage of development. The instructors were at one point very concerned about the challenges and tasks they encountered, but as their relationships with their students developed, they began to focus on their learners and wanted to overcome these challenges in order to be effective teachers who promoted student success.

In summary, within this first section, I suggest that the adult ESL instructors' moved through stages of development similar to Fuller's model (1969). The instructors began with concerns heavily focused on themselves while they were beginning, underprepared

instructors. Through their experiences, their focus shifted from themselves to being concerned about the challenges and the tasks they faced. Ultimately, as their relationships with their students grew, their concerns shifted and focused to the impact they had on their students.

As the instructors moved through these stages, they simultaneously developed an identity as instructors. The instructors began in the field with beliefs and practices that they based on their own prior educational experiences to guide them. Once they were successful in overcoming challenges and saw their students succeeding, they began to view themselves as professionals who have a positive impact in the lives of their students.

The Teacher as Learner

This second section of chapter five will focus on the instructors' initiative to plan their own learning activities and ultimately how they developed through these activities as both teachers and learners. The relevant theme from chapter four here is that once the beginning instructors realized they were not prepared for their jobs, they decided to engage in various self-directed learning activities on their own initiative.

One of the most frequently referenced concerns the instructors discussed was their lack of new hire orientation, job training, and professional development opportunities. The instructors expected a new hire orientation so they could become familiar with one another and with the college's rules and regulations. They also said they had expected some type of general job training about procedures such as how to track student attendance and complete job-related paperwork. Further, they assumed since their employers knew they had no prior

ESL experience, professional development activities would be offered to help them build their knowledge about adult ESL instruction. However, none of these possibilities were offered to the instructors. The instructors were disheartened by the lack of support and assistance. Kay remembered the time when she realized help was not on the way:

I remember thinking that surely the school was going to help me learn how to do my job, so I waited for them to contact me about the class I needed to attend. After a few weeks of teaching and being such a mess, I still hadn't heard anything so I contacted my coordinator to see if I had been left out. She told me there was no training, and suggested that I visit Dave's ESL Café online to see if that could help me...after that I wanted to cry!

After not being offered assistance in the first few weeks, most of the instructors began by contacting their coordinators to see if there was any training they could attend. None of the community-based adult ESL programs at that time had any classes or training to offer to the ESL instructors in the evenings, but some of the coordinators did suggest reading materials that they believed were useful. Overall, the instructors felt that the coordinators were really not much help for them in learning how to do their jobs.

In reflection, the instructors later acknowledged that perhaps they needed to accept some responsibility for this training problem. Some admitted that more than likely they were not clear with their coordinators about the training and administrative support they expected because they did not know what they needed themselves. Several others also reported that their lack of training might have been due to the fact that they worked the evening shift. If

they had worked during the day along with the more experienced instructors, they might have received more help. Also, most of the participants were not available, due to their own schedules, to go to the campus to meet with their coordinators during the day, so most of their interaction with them was short conversations over the phone. Most of the instructors felt that if they had had the chance to meet their coordinators in person and discuss issues they were having, their situations might have improved.

The instructors knew that they had to do something to change or improve their situations because they were generally unhappy with their jobs. They all considered leaving the profession as one option, but decided against it because they enjoyed their students and they did not see themselves as “quitters.” An additional reason for staying in the jobs might have been that they needed the income. Ultimately, they all made the same decision—they would find ways to overcome their challenges on their own.

As the instructors began to take the initiative to deal with their challenges, they determined that educating themselves would be the best strategy to use. Some of the instructors initially were not sure about what to study, or even where to go, so all of the instructors conducted research via the internet and by speaking with more experienced instructors. Lynn recalled:

I knew I needed an education in ESL, but I didn't know what I didn't know, and I didn't know where to start. I did some online research about classes, but most were for K-12 ESL. Finally, I found some of the teachers that I worked with and they told

me about a great certification program at the University, so I enrolled, I learned a ton, and I loved every minute of it.

The instructors identified and utilized numerous resources to address their lack of ESL teaching expertise. All of the instructors reported that they engaged in multiple forms of learning activities. The instructors reported that they sought reading materials and support via internet sites. All of the instructors also attended classes and workshops offered by local professional organizations such as TESOL. Five of the study participants eventually attended classes to gain TESOL certification. Two of the instructors earned their Master's Degree in TESOL from an online university and two earned their Master's Degrees from local universities. The instructors indicated that the most successful strategy was to seek out more experienced instructors within their workplace and form a support network. They utilized this network for seeking advice, sharing ideas and materials, and building relationships with their co-workers. All of these methods were by the instructors. They determined the action they needed to take and created a way to make it happen.

These findings that the instructors took control of their own learning supports Renyi's (1996) research regarding instructors who take charge of their own learning. In her research on 800 teachers across the country, Renyi found that the nation's schools fail to provide adequate professional development for teachers. Further, she found that teachers are expected to keep abreast of new knowledge, individualize instruction for a diverse population of students, and help students achieve. Renyi noted that most teachers are pressed for time and opportunities to learn, and that most are isolated from their co-workers for most of their

working hours. In summary, Renyi found that teachers generally take control of their own learning and seek their own educational opportunities even under adverse conditions. She also found that the teachers' primary reason for doing this is to improve student learning, and secondarily to sharpen their instructional skills.

One possible explanation for what occurred with the study participants is that taking control is a strategy they had used in the past to deal with challenges they faced. This was implied by a few instructors during their interviews. The instructors noted that they had faced personal and/or professional challenges, and the way they dealt with these challenges was to take control rather than wait for someone else to help them. They were successful with this strategy in the past and used it again in their ESL setting. Janet mentioned that she had sought out a communications course to help her in a prior job and, likewise, Kay mentioned that she had taken an accounting course to help her in a prior career. Therefore, the instructors had taken action in the past to help themselves with their professional challenges, so they could have taken a similar course of action in adult ESL.

Supporting research also addresses the strategies teachers create and use to manage challenges. For instance, Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989) conducted a study of empirical data and created a multidimensional coping inventory to assess the different ways in which people respond to stress. The researchers identified a variety of coping approaches, including: planning, suppression of competing activities, positive reinterpretation and growth, restraint, and acceptance. Additionally, these researchers describe other coping

strategies such as socio-emotional coping, which involves expressing feelings to others and seeking support.

Markham's (1999) research on coping strategies used by ESL instructors also describes how instructors utilize these strategies. The purpose of Markham's interview-based, qualitative study was to provide an account of the stressors that ESL teachers experience in the workplace. The second objective was to examine the kinds of strategies that ESL teachers use to cope with stressful, job-related situations. In his research Markham found that the coping strategies primarily used by ESL teachers consisted of seeking help from others or using self-directed action coping strategies. He also found that these direct action strategies were the most successful for ESL instructors, and that ESL teachers rarely used avoidant strategies to manage a difficult situation.

Self efficacy

As the instructors engaged in learning activities and began having successes in the classroom, they reported that they developed a sense of self-efficacy. The instructors, who as beginning instructors were self-described as timid and scared, doubted themselves and their capabilities. However, the learning activities they sought helped them develop confidence, and they displayed a new tone of assurance and commitment. As they learned, the instructors grew to believe that they were capable of overcoming the obstacles that faced them, and they believed that failure was not an option for them as adult ESL instructors. The instructors were very proud of what they achieved, as noted by Lynn:

I remember how scared I was when I was new, but after I started taking classes I knew that I could do this job, and I could be really good at it. I stopped avoiding the things I didn't know how to do, and instead I saw those situations as challenges I could beat.

According to Bandura (1994) a strong sense of self efficacy requires experience in overcoming obstacles with perseverant effort. Individuals who persevere in the face of adversity rebound and emerge stronger, as was the case with the adult ESL instructors. The instructors faced what seemed to be insurmountable challenges early in their careers, but due to the fact that they took the initiative to plan their own learning activities, they overcame their obstacles and became confident professionals in the process.

Transformative Learning

When considering their work life and their situations, the instructors reported that in the beginning they could sympathize with their students because they were just as scared and confused as the students were. The participants mentioned that they were not sure of what to do as beginning instructors and often felt lost about how to proceed. Mercedes recalled:

When I was a new ESL instructor, I felt just like I did when I came to the U.S. and was new in an ESL class. As a student I was scared and didn't know what to do, and it was the same 10 years later when I started teaching ESL!

The instructors encountered challenging experiences in the classroom, due to the fact that they were underprepared, and those experiences were their impetus to self-examine their

situations. They then took a critical look at their practices and beliefs and realized that they were not effective in their roles. Through the social networks they formed, they realized that they were not alone and that other instructors also faced challenges. They began to explore the options available that could help them change their situations. They decided that planning their own learning activities was the best option, and began to participate in formal education courses, certificate courses, and informal online learning activities as well. Through their educational activities the instructors learned about all of the topics required to be an effective, prepared adult ESL teacher such as adult learning methods, linguistics, and diversity. The instructors incorporated what they learned into their practices, and through these experiences, they modified their entire approach of how they practiced and what they believed about the field of adult ESL. This change is suggestive of adult transformative learning.

This understanding is supported by Mezirow's (2000) theory of Transformative Learning. According to Mezirow, there are a set of phases that people go through when they experience transformation. These perspectives transformation stages included:

- Experiencing a disorienting dilemma
- Self-examination
- Critical assessment of assumptions
- Recognizing that others have gone through a similar process
- Exploring options
- Formulating a plan of action
- Reintegration

Mezirow describes this change of self and understanding of one's world as a learning process of "becoming critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation" (p.4). Mezirow posits that all learning is change, but not all change is transformation. He notes that there is a difference between transmissional, transactional, and transformational education.

Transmissional education occurs when knowledge is simply transmitted to the learner.

Transactional education refers to the recognition that students learn best through experience, inquiry and critical thinking exercises. According to Cranton (1997), transformational learning takes place when the learner through some unexpected event becomes aware that she holds a distorted view. The learner then opens herself to alternatives and consequently changes the way she sees things so that some part of how she makes meaning has been transformed. In this study participants clearly were transformed by their learning experiences because what they gained was much more than a transfer of knowledge from teacher to student. Through their learning experiences these participants incorporated the knowledge they learned through their formal and informal educational activities, and they were truly transformed into confident, self-assured instructors who viewed themselves as professionals who made a difference in the lives of others.

Conclusion

In summary, within this second section of the chapter, I conclude that the adult ESL instructors developed a sense of self efficacy through their activities as learners. The

instructors also underwent a process similar to that of Mezirow's (2000) theory of transformative learning. The instructors began to plan their own learning activities once they realized they were underprepared and that there was little or no support from their employers. As the instructors began to critically reflect upon their situations and engage in learning activities, they began to redefine the way they constructed their meanings about teaching, their students, and the field of adult ESL. During this process, they also began to believe in themselves and developed from scared, timid teachers into confident, self-assured instructors.

Social Constructivism

In the conceptual framework of this study, the underprepared adult ESL instructors' experiences and the meanings made from their experiences were viewed through the lens of social constructivism. Vygotsky's (1978) view that social interaction plays a fundamental role in cognitive development was considered throughout my interpretation of my findings. Vygotsky emphasized the critical importance that interacting with others has in learning, and he believed that people naturally learn and work collaboratively in their lives (Petraglia, 1998).

There were two aspects of social constructivism that affected the extent and the nature of the instructors' learning. According to Gredler (1997) historical developments such as symbol systems, logic, and language can have an impact on what is learned. Also, the learner's level of interaction with more knowledgeable members of society has an impact on what is learned as well, and each played a significant role in the learning and meaning making of the adult ESL instructors. Adult ESL classrooms are comprised of numerous

symbol systems due to the diversity of the students within the group. There are a variety of languages, cultures, and beliefs to be found in ESL classrooms, each having an effect on the learning that takes place. Due to these multiple languages, cultures, and beliefs, there were two actions that took place before learning truly began. First, the instructors and students began to develop relationships and they learned about each others' lives and cultures. Second, the students began to improve their English skills, so they had a common form of communication with which to learn from one another. Through their activities and experiences, the instructors and students were able to develop their own meanings and a shared understanding of their classrooms once they developed relationships and opened the lines of communication.

Next, as beginning instructors the adult ESL teachers felt isolated and alone due to the fact that they were not receiving support from their administrators. However, once they began to form their own networks with more experienced instructors they began to learn and make meaning from their experiences. According to Wertch (1991), it is impossible to acquire social meaning of important symbol systems and learn how to use them without social interaction with those who are more knowledgeable. This study clearly supports this understanding in relation to the adult ESL instructors.

Ultimately based on the instructors' experiences in their working environment, they were able to create new meaning through their social interactions. They were able to create a shared meaning and understanding of their classes with their students once they developed relationships and their culture and symbol systems. The instructors were also able to learn

and create new meanings once they developed relationships with the more knowledgeable instructors through their social networks. The once underprepared instructors were able to create meaning and transform through their learning experiences into confident, self-assured instructors.

Implications for Practice

The field of adult ESL is growing at an extremely fast pace, especially non-academic adult ESL programs. Due to these demands, the program coordinators of these programs are faced with staffing challenges and often have to fill their vacancies with instructors who are not properly prepared to do the job. There are concerns surrounding this practice for the students and the instructors as well. For students, there is the concern that because the instruction is likely to be compromised, they will be confused and not able to master the task of learning English. This practice is also a concern for the underprepared adult ESL instructors, because being placed in a job they are not prepared to do can lead to intimidation, anxiety, embarrassment, self-doubt, job dissatisfaction, and fear of losing their job.

Based on the findings in this study, it can be concluded that underprepared adult ESL instructors would benefit from receiving greater support in various forms. First, the instructors would benefit from administrative support soon after they enter the field. These underprepared adult ESL instructors would also benefit greatly from having a mentor and/or a support network, with continued administrative support as well.

The findings of this study suggest a set of guidelines for adult ESL Program Coordinators, beginning adult ESL instructors, and for college and university program planners and include the following:

I. Guidelines for adult ESL Program Coordinators

Beginning adult ESL instructors should be provided a formal orientation and job training before or soon after they are hired. An orientation designed to provide information to the instructors about the workplace, how and when they are paid, and also to introduce the support staff and co-workers would be helpful. The instructors would benefit greatly from receiving administrative support early on so that they know what resources are available to them and who they can go to when they have questions and concerns. Also, job training should provide instructors with information about how to manage their classes, and techniques for how to effectively teach their courses would benefit the instructors greatly while they are new in their roles.

- a. A. Adult ESL Instructors should have access to continuing professional development and training opportunities. Job-specific seminars or training courses that help them develop and improve their practices would greatly reduce the challenges they face and increase their likelihood for success. ESL instructors should understand second language acquisition, adult learning methodologies, and multi-cultural awareness. Instructors would benefit from formal education courses in these subject areas.

- B. Instructors should be provided opportunities to develop supportive relationships with their co-workers. Whether a formal mentoring program, or dedicated time to develop a network with more experienced instructors, these types of relationships provide underprepared instructors a source of information and support that they need to succeed on the job.

II. Guidelines for Beginning Adult ESL Instructors

- A. Before entering the field, beginning adult ESL instructors should become as familiar as possible with the principles of adult learning, linguistics and second language acquisition, issues related to culture, and instructional approaches that support language development in adults.
- B. Development of specific ESL-instructional competencies can be achieved through taking certificate courses or even self-study online, and would greatly help the instructors as they begin their ESL careers.
- C. Beginning adult ESL instructors should develop a network with more experienced adult ESL instructors in the workplace. This network will serve as a great resource to help them in their careers because they can get advice and suggestions from the more experienced instructors, and the networks can be a great source of support to help with any issues the instructors may face.
- D. Beginning adult ESL instructors should arrange to meet regularly with Program Coordinators in order to open the lines of communication. This time would be

useful because the instructors and coordinators could discuss teaching challenges and other workplace issues they face and try to find a solution together.

III. Guidelines for College and University Program Planners

- A. It would be beneficial to expand the existing K-12 ESL curriculum to include college courses for adult ESL educators as well, for those programs that do not already offer this emphasis. There are few options for adult ESL educators to take courses or earn degrees in this subject area, so it is important for program planners to consider this and add these courses to their curriculum.
- B. Due to the fact that many adult ESL educators are part-time and have other jobs, it would be beneficial to offer online courses, as well as evening and weekend courses to accommodate their schedules.

Suggestions for Future Research

There is very little existing research, qualitative or quantitative, in the field of adult ESL, and there are many worthwhile studies that could be conducted. As US immigration trends continue and ESL programs continue to grow, there will be a need for studies that support expanded programming and funding. Based on this, I suggest five future studies that will strongly enhance understandings and potential strategies for strengthening the impact of adult ESL programs.

- First, a qualitative inquiry from the adult ESL learner's perspective would be useful to determine if these programs help them. Research should explore the

ways the students make meaning of their instruction and the programs in which they study.

- Second, a qualitative study of the program coordinators to investigate their perspectives about adult ESL and the effectiveness of the programs they manage will provide useful information.
- Third, a qualitative inquiry into the experiences of academically prepared adult ESL instructors could provide insight into the challenges that even those who are considered to be prepared face.
- Fourth, an investigative look into adult ESL instructor certification programs would be worthwhile in determining if they adequately prepare the instructors for service.
- Finally, an investigative study of adult ESL learners and the impact that attending ESL courses has on their ability to obtain employment would help to determine the effectiveness of the programs they attend.

The Future of Adult ESL Programs

Adult ESL programs offer a very valuable service. By helping immigrant students learn English, the programs help the students gain employment so they can provide for their families and reach their dreams of attaining a better way of life in the United States. The demand for adult ESL courses is greater than the supply, and shortages of available seats in courses to meet the demand are often reported (Kim, Collins, & McArthur, 1997). Some

immigrants who want to learn English may have to wait for months or years to get into ESL classes.

Participation numbers in adult ESL are increasing at a faster rate than any other type of adult education. In 2005, 1,139,965 adult ESL learners were enrolled in programs that received funding from the U.S. Department of Education. This represented 44 percent of all those enrolled in all adult education courses. That is a number almost equal to the combined total of those enrolled in adult basic education (1,009,706) and those in adult secondary education (394,282) as well (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005).

Still, there are many more who would like to participate, and approximately 3 million adults expressed interest in ESL classes but were not participating for a variety of reasons (NCLE, 1995). The reasons cited included that either there was no room in the courses, that they were unaware of where the courses were offered, or that there were no classes offered at all (Kopka, Schantz, & Korb, 1998).

Adult ESL courses will surely continue to grow in the future. The results from this study will help to show the importance of preparing instructors for their roles as teachers of adult ESL. It is essential that the teachers have the needed preparation, not only to avoid the negative experiences that these study participants endured, but also to ensure that the students receive the most effective education possible. Properly prepared instructors will also help ensure that the non-academic ESL programs are successful in preparing their learners to obtain employment, contribute to their communities, and reach their dreams of living a better life in the United States.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
PROGRAM COORDINATOR SURVEY LETTER

Spring 2007
Program Coordinator
ESL Program
Florida, 20000

Dear Program Coordinator:

My name is Marni Dorman and I am a doctoral student in Adult and Higher Education at North Carolina State University. As a former Adult ESL instructor for seven years, I sense that there is a great need for research in all areas of Adult ESL and I have chosen to focus my dissertation in this field. I am conducting research to investigate the experiences of instructors in Adult ESL programs. For my study, I will be interviewing a total of 10-12 participants from four different ESL programs, and I would like to request your assistance in recruiting a few of your instructors to participate.

As I am sure you are aware, hiring qualified instructors is an extremely challenging task in Adult ESL for a variety of reasons. First, because the field is growing so rapidly and is struggling with budgetary constraints, it is difficult to meet hiring demands. Also, because there are few academic programs offered in colleges and universities to prepare Adult ESL instructors, it can be challenging to find instructors with a background specifically in Adult ESL. Many instructors, including myself, enter the field with academic preparation in areas other than Adult ESL, and because of that, they have experiences in the classroom that shape their activities in distinct ways. It is these experiences that interest me and are the focus of my study.

I believe that this study will be important for you as a program coordinator because the results may help to better understand the experiences of instructors who enter the field without formal preparation. They may be of use in planning professional development activities as well. If you and your instructors choose to participate, the findings will certainly be made available to you.

I sincerely hope that you will choose to have your site participate in this study. If you would like to do so, please email me at marnidorman@smag.com or call me at 813-943-8144 in order to determine a time when we can meet to discuss the study further. I would also request that I be allowed to attend a staff meeting for approximately 15 minutes to present my study to your instructors and make a request for volunteers. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Marni Dorman

Appendix B
PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Winter 2008

Study Participant
ESL Program
Florida, 20007

Dear Research Participant:

I would like to thank-you for agreeing to participate in my research study, and the purpose of this letter is to inform you of the two things that will be asked of you as a participant in this study of English as a Second Language instructors. First, you will be asked to participate in an interview that will be scheduled based on what is convenient for you. The interview will focus on your past teaching experiences and on present experiences as well. You may be asked to participate in a follow-up interview so that I can ask any additional questions that I might have based on the findings from the first interview. Second, I will have our tape-recorded interviews transcribed, and will ask that you review the transcripts to ensure the accuracy of the content.

Statement of Confidentiality:

All information will be handled in a strictly confidential manner, subject to the disclosure requirements of Florida Sunshine Laws, so that no one will be able to identify you when the results are recorded/reported.

All information is subject to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974, which is designed to protect the privacy of educational records.

Statement of Voluntary Participation:

Please be aware that your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may feel free to withdraw at any time for any reason. Also, you may choose to refuse to answer any interview question that you are not comfortable answering.

If you have any further questions about your participation in this study, please feel free to contact me at (813) 943-8144, or at marnidorman@hotmail.com.

Sincerely,

Marni Dorman

I understand the study described above and have been given a copy of the description as outlined above. I am 18 years of age or older and I agree to participate.

Signature of Participant

Date

I am at least 18 years of age and completing this [survey] constitutes my informed consent.

Appendix C
ADULT ESL RESEARCH STUDY
DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTIONNAIRE

I. PERSONAL INFORMATION:

First Name _____

Middle Name _____

Last Name _____

Street Address _____

City, State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number-Day (____) _____

Phone Number-Evening (____) _____

II. EDUCATION: Graduate Degree

Name and Location Of School - Degree/Major - Graduation Date

EDUCATION: Undergraduate Degree

Name and Location Of School - Degree/Major - Graduation Date

III. ESL-SPECIFIC EDUCATION:

Please indicate if you have had formal training in the following areas:

Topic	College	Length of Study	On-The-Job Training	Comments
Adult Learning Theory				
Second Language Aquisition				
Cultural/Linguistic Diversity				
Principles of Teaching				

IV. SPECIAL ESL QUALIFICATIONS/CERTIFICATIONS: Licenses, Skills, Training, Awards

V. EMPLOYMENT HISTORY:

Present Or Most Recent Position:

Employer: _____

Address: _____

Supervisor: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Position Title: _____

From: _____ To: _____

Responsibilities: _____

Previous Position:

Employer: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Position Title: _____

From: _____ To: _____

Responsibilities: _____

Appendix D
INTERVIEW GUIDE-#1 (Past Experiences)

1. How did you learn about the field of Adult ESL, and what made you want to teach in this type of environment?
2. What experience or education did you have prior to entering the field that you felt prepared you to teach these types of learners?
3. Please describe your job duties as an ESL instructor when you first entered the field.
4. Please describe the first ESL class that you were assigned.
5. Please describe some of your most enjoyable past experiences as an ESL instructor.
6. Please describe some of your most frustrating past experiences as an ESL instructor.
7. What support did the college/program provide as you began your work?
8. Tell me about any professional development activities that you have attended since entering the field.

Appendix E
INTERVIEW GUIDE- (Present Experiences)

1. What past experiences have had an impact in your current practices?
2. In what specific way(s) have the experiences mentioned above informed your current practices.
3. Please describe your job duties as an ESL instructor in the present.
4. Please describe some of your most recent enjoyable experiences as an ESL instructor.
5. Please describe some of your most frustrating recent experiences as an ESL instructor.
6. Tell me about your current professional development activities in which you participate.

Appendix F
INTERVIEW GUIDE- (Third Interview)

1. Based on your years of experience, what type of work experience do you feel would have been beneficial to have had when you first entered the field?

2. Based on your years of experience, what type of knowledge do you feel would have been beneficial to have had when you first entered the field?

3. At what point did you consider yourself to be prepared or qualified to teach adult ESL and why?