

ABSTRACT

Jensen, K. ADULT SUDANESE STUDENTS IN TRANSITIONAL ENGLISH CLASSES: FACTORS THAT MAY CONTRIBUTE TO ACADEMIC WRITING READINESS (2008)

Transitioning from ESL classes to college courses can be an onerous task for adult learners of English. Post secondary students need to attain satisfactory writing skills to achieve at the academic level. This study explores the writing problems and accomplishments, as well as the educational background of five adult Sudanese students who are preparing for academic study. The participants were interviewed to find out past educational experiences in Sudanese schools and refugee camps. Journal entries and essays were analyzed to discover factors that were characteristic of their writing. The results of the study showed diversity in the type and quality of education the participants received. Their writings demonstrated strengths in writing sentences and using vocabulary and a lack of focus in attempting to write cohesive paragraphs and essays.

ADULT SUDANESE STUDENTS IN TRANSITIONAL ENGLISH CLASSES:
FACTORS THAT MAY CONTRIBUTE TO ACADEMIC WRITING READINESS

by

Kathleen Ann Jensen

A Capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in English as a Second Language

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

December, 2008

Committee:

Betsy Parrish, Primary Reader
Kimberly Johnson, Secondary Reader
Susan Grove, Peer Reader

Copyright by
Kathleen A. Jensen
2008
All Rights Reserved

To my dear husband, Ron, and children, David, Nathan and Karisa:
Together we have lived in and experienced varied cultures and countries,
yet all places have been home with you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This journey of graduate school could not have happened without the unfailing love and support of my husband, Ron, who has been a part of my being for almost 40 years. Because of his technical expertise and patience, I was able to accomplish this dream of studying what I have been teaching for so many years. The five participants were extraordinarily helpful and willing to be asked questions about their sometimes-

painful past. They are courageous men and women whom I admire and thank for all they have taught me. I am grateful to Kris Holt, my sister-in-law, for her expertise and diligence in transcribing the interviews. I would also like to thank Betsy Parrish and Kim Johnson, two very busy, competent women, who have been so knowledgeable and helpful in this endeavor. Finally, thank you to my peer advisor, Sue Grove, a longtime friend and colleague, who first showed me the joy of teaching English to refugees so many years ago.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: Introduction 1

 My Experiences 4

 Sudan..... 6

 Refugees..... 7

Inconsistent Schooling	9
Transitioning to Post Secondary	10
Guiding Questions	11
Summary	11
Chapter Overview	12
Chapter Two: Literature Review	14
Introduction.....	14
Education in Sudan	15
Refugees.....	18
Resettlement challenges.....	23
Transitioning to Post Secondary	29
Challenges of Writing in a Second Language.....	33
Challenges of Academic Writing.....	35
Summary	38
Chapter Three: Methods	40
Qualitative Research Paradigm.....	40
The Study	42
Data Collection Techniques and Procedures	43
Data Analysis	47
Verification of Data	50
Ethics.....	50
Summary	51

Chapter Four: Results	52
Introduction.....	52
Interviews.....	53
Journal Assessment.....	66
Essay Assessment	69
Discussion.....	77
Interviews.....	77
Writing Assessment	79
Summary.....	87
Chapter Five: Conclusion	89
Major Findings.....	89
Implications for Teachers	92
Limitations of the Study.....	95
Further Research.....	96
Closing Thoughts	97
Appendices.....	98
Appendix A: Student Interview Questions	98
Appendix B: Test of Emerging Academic English Writing Rubric	101
Appendix C: Writing and Grammar Class Objectives.....	103
Appendix D: Final Essay Assignment	105
References	10

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1	Student Participants	43
Table 4.1	Participants' Educational Background.....	54
Table 4.2	TEAE Assessment: Tungeer	72
Table 4.3	TEAE Assessment: Omot	73
Table 4.4	TEAE Assessment: Manyang	74
Table 4.5	TEAE Assessment: Nada.....	75
Table 4.6	TEAE Assessment: Ajulu	76
Table 5.1	Factors Leading to Academic Readiness	

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In a lifetime one is fortunate to meet a few people who seem to light up from within when they speak. Benjamin, a tall, Sudanese student in his late thirties is such a person. He had studied English at a local community center for three years before attending my English classes at the community college for four semesters. Although his enthusiasm was admirable, his English skills, especially writing, were still very low. I was disturbed by his lack of progress in tests and writing. One day, before class, he told me he wanted to become a pastor. Benjamin has a grin that radiates and entices a listener to smile back, but I am sure my smile quickly faded trying to imagine him succeeding in eight years of academic study. I thought, here is a compassionate, ambitious man with

wonderful qualities but without the English skills to accomplish his dream. Even working with a tutor after class had not improved his ability to write anything beyond a simple sentence.

This was a puzzle to me that consumed my thoughts. As an instructor of transitional English classes, my objective is to prepare intermediate level non-native English speakers for academic courses. What could I do as an instructor of transitional grammar and writing English classes to better train Benjamin for academic writing? Precisely what was lacking in his understanding or my teaching of writing? How could I change my teaching to help him improve, or was there something missing in his educational background that was hindering his progress as an adult student? My interest in Benjamin's schooling history first led me to contemplate learning more about the past educational experiences of Sudanese refugees. Benjamin has been followed by several other Sudanese men and women who are having an equally difficult time passing into academic classes at the college level. Every year, one or two college instructors of college classes tell me that a refugee student in their class is having serious difficulties in writing and the student is headed for failure in the class. The instructors ask me for advice on how to help the students.

Exactly what are the problems and what should I be doing at the pre-college transitional level to optimally help students prepare for academic writing? My concerns about their writing difficulties and my desire to do everything I can to help my students have led me to pursue the topic of this capstone. Though we have a strong, established Somali community, the Sudanese population is relatively new to our area of Minnesota,

and beyond stories of the ‘lost boys,’ I knew little of the people coming from the country of Sudan. I did not find any research studies on adult Sudanese in transitional English classes and factors that would enable them to write at the standards needed for academic classes. Consequently, I believe that my research question is both relevant and worthwhile: What factors may be indicators of academic writing readiness of adult Sudanese who are currently in transitional English classes?

The purpose of this study is to find writing characteristics that contribute to the readiness, or lack thereof, of five Sudanese adults who are currently in my transitional English classes and wish to continue into academic classes at a college. By researching their educational background as students who have had diverse experiences, readers may have a better understanding of refugee students and the educational needs they have in learning academic English. In particular, I analyzed their writing skills. I wanted to see if there were connections between their educational backgrounds and their current academic writings skills. Acquiring good writing skills is paramount for students who hope to succeed in college. It is my hope that the information in this study will be useful to community college instructors who teach transitional classes to refugee English language learners (ELLs) in their developmental English courses, as well as those who teach English for Academic Purposes (EAP) to adults.

I have selected this capstone topic because of my genuine desire to know more about the Sudanese refugees who have come to this country to begin life in a land that is utterly dissimilar from anywhere they have lived. They have hopes and dreams for productive lives here. They want to understand and be understood. From my experience,

refugees seem to regard education as their door to success. On the other side of the open door, they see good jobs, opportunities for their families and money to send home to relatives in their native country.

I have found very few studies on homeland educational experiences of refugees, and I have not encountered any articles on Sudanese adults and their attempts to learn English after a history of gaps or inconsistent education. Educators can improve teaching and learning of students with interrupted or inconsistent education by collecting, analyzing and synthesizing information that will provide an accurate picture of the challenges involved in educating this growing population (Decapua, Smathers & Tang, 2007). Related studies (Cassidy & Gow, 2005; Brown, Miller, & Mitchell, 2006; Miller, Mitchell & Brown, 2005) focus on the literacy development of Sudanese high school students who have resettled in Australia. While these studies provide useful information about high school students, they do not give insight into adult academic experiences. I hope to present a worthy contribution in the area of teaching adults through an in-depth case study of five Sudanese refugees with a surprising variety of backgrounds.

This chapter introduces general background information of my experiences and specific areas of the capstone question: Sudan, refugees, interrupted education and transitioning to post-secondary education with regard to the challenges of writing at the academic level. Following these main topics, I will reveal significant guiding questions and my plan to answer them. Finally, I will outline a summary of this chapter and subsequent chapter overviews.

My Experiences

This capstone touches on two of my passions: Africa and teaching. I lived and taught in Africa for nine years and have experienced raised eyebrows and shaking heads when I tried to speak the native language. I have experienced the separation of not fitting in because I was (in Madagascar) a “vazaha,” a white person. Not being able to speak the language well brought the most difficult isolation of all. When one cannot adequately express thoughts, feelings and desires, one’s personality changes into some quiet being who is not you. As my ELLs have said of themselves, “I am quiet here; [in the U.S.] it is not me.” To know students’ needs, teach to those needs and bring out their ‘me’ is a priority in my teaching.

During my 18 years as a professional teacher to learners of English, the students have had diverse needs. I have taught students who have settled in the U.S. from 35 different nations and have come to the U.S. for various reasons. International students have come because of educational opportunities at a university. They are visitors who stay a few years before returning to their families in their home country. Immigrants have come to the U.S. to join family or in search of better occupational opportunities. Many of my students, however, have been refugees who have left their homes on the run because their lives have depended on it or they were ordered to leave. These students are very likely mourning the sudden loss of family, job, country, and their own language: their identity. This makes their concentrating on the task of learning a new language all the more difficult (Parrish, 2004). A further complication for adult learners is that they often have jobs and a family to care for, which leave them with less time and energy to devote

to learning English. Because of these complex circumstances, the task of learning English is rendered that much more difficult.

I am currently teaching EAP at a community college at two college settings, as well as English in the workplace at two companies in southern Minnesota. Though the students have had varying levels and quality of education, writing is difficult for almost all of them. Many of my students, young and middle aged, are striving to improve their English in order to be admitted to college classes. The classes I teach at the college are transitional courses: reading, writing and grammar classes. Students take these classes from one to four semesters depending on progress. They are tested at the end of every semester using a specially designed English as a Second Language (ESL) version of the Accuplacer, a college placement test. Those who score at a college level are allowed to take college courses. Good writing skills (as do reading, listening and speaking skills) make it possible for these students to succeed in a college class. Very few students, even though they may pass the Accuplacer, are able to write well enough to pass the college classes, thus, there may be factors or gaps in their writing experiences.

I have not found any research about adult Sudanese learners and the writing demands they encounter transitioning from ESL classes to academic courses. I have chosen to research their past educational background and in particular their writing experiences to discover writing characteristics, behaviors and attitudes. In researching these areas, I am uncovering practical information that can help steer an EAP writing course to contend with gaps in writing skills. It is my desire that an awareness of the

diverse educational backgrounds of these adult students and potential writing characteristics will enlighten all those who seek to teach refugees.

In order to understand why acquiring adequate academic writing skills to transition to post-secondary education can be difficult for this population, I begin with a brief overview of four key topics: the country and people of Sudan, their situation as refugees, a description of inconsistent schooling, and transitioning from ESL classes to college classes.

Sudan

Sudan, the largest country in Africa, is approximately one-fourth the size of the U.S. (Flaitz, 2006). Located in the central northeast of the continent, Sudan is bordered by Egypt and Libya on the north, Chad and Central African Republic on the west and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and Kenya on the south. To the east are Ethiopia, Eritrea and the Red Sea (American Heritage Dictionary, 2000).

There are 10 different ethnic groups and 597 subgroups in Sudan. The languages Arabic, Bedawi, Nuer and Fur are the most commonly spoken languages. In addition, there are 130 distinct languages and some 400 regional dialects with English as the common second language in the south (Flaitz, 2006).

Since Sudanese independence in 1955, war has raged in Sudan with only a few significant breaks. The wars have pitted southern Sudanese groups against the government dominated by the northern Sudanese. The tensions between the north and south are the result of cultural and religious differences, as well as historical and present day inequalities between the two (Holtzman, 2000).

A half million Sudanese were displaced from southern Sudan and were living as refugees in southwestern Ethiopia by the 1990s. When these camps closed, many Sudanese chose to move to Kenyan refugee camps rather than return to their insecure homeland. These new camps offered safety and had implemented programs that helped refugees resettle permanently in Australia, Canada or the U.S. By 1996, 3,888 Sudanese refugees had been admitted to the U.S. (Holtzman, 2000).

Refugees

When refugees flee their homes, they desire to travel to a place of safety, which is often an entirely different country. Sometimes because of lack of provisions or space, they may have to move again. Some wait in refugee camps for many years with the hope of being resettled in a country where there is peace and security.

Migrating to a different country, refugees' lives are changed in significant ways. They may leave family, home and their old way of life for the unknown. Emotionally there are many changes that need to be made for a successful transition. Resettlement for refugees can cause three different types of stress: migration stress, acculturative stress and traumatic stress (Adkin, Sample, & Birman, 1999). Migration stress is experienced when a family moves from a place where everything is familiar to live in a new environment where the location, and neighbors are alien to them. For many refugees, resettlement on another continent means never being able to return to their homeland. Acculturative stress occurs when the family tries to learn and become a part of a new and very different culture. Language, behavior and traditions in their new home are monumental changes from their accustomed life. Those refugees who suffer from

traumatic stress have experienced some horrific situations. Torture, rape or the witnessing of the executions of loved ones are some examples of causes for this type of stress. Many refugees have suffered physical pain and mental strain as well. Moving a family to a new country is often an exhausting, frightful experience. Their cultural expectations and assumptions of the new country may be entirely different from the reality they find. Many may have hoped and dreamed of an easy life, yet they are suddenly faced with obstacles of a different kind.

These obstacles are described in “What is the What?” (Eggers, 2006), the autobiography of Valentino Achek Deng, a refugee of the Sudanese War. Deng tells of fleeing from his village, becoming one of the “Lost Boys,” and living in refugee camps in both Ethiopia and Kenya. After six years, his application for a visa to the U.S. is finally accepted. When he arrives in the U.S., his dreams of a college education are soon shattered when he faces more obstacles. Because of his lack of education and English skills, he cannot go to college and has to take the most menial jobs.

Refugees are usually men and women who have dreams of rebuilding their lives by taking advantage of the educational opportunities offered in the U.S. They may not realize that many huge roadblocks await them. The students in this study may also have many hurdles to jump over and English may be the highest. This may be especially true when the student’s education has been inconsistent.

Inconsistent Schooling

We usually think of schooling as a continuous process. Ideally, children begin formal school at about five years old and continue for twelve straight years breaking only

for holidays. Students, who have attended school intermittently because of moving, lack of schools, tuition or teachers, war or natural disasters disturb their regular school routine and opportunity for consistent learning.

In a study entitled *The Impact of Interrupted Education on Subsequent Educational Attainment* (Meng & Gregory, 2002) researchers examined the extent that Chinese students were able to overcome an interrupted education due to the ceasing of schools for six years during the Cultural Revolution. They concluded that “across-the-board school interruption had a substantial impact on later educational attainment, especially when the interruption occurred at the high school level” (p. 953). They also claimed that a lapsed time between high school and attending the university was not as important as the years and level of the previous schooling missed. It seems that it is difficult to ‘catch up’ even in one’s own country when one has had to stop attending school for a period of time.

When refugees arrive in the U.S. and seek to begin classes in a new school, placement is often difficult because the correlation of age and grade level is radically different. These students may be teenagers and put into high schools regardless of skills. DeCapua et al. (2007) state that there are a growing number of immigrant students with interrupted formal education and that they are at the top of high-risk students. In this study, I examine the range of past schooling adults may have when they enter as students in transitional English classes.

Transitioning to Post Secondary

Adult refugees arriving in the U.S. come with very diverse educational backgrounds. Some have not only finished high school, but have had some years of college study in their home or neighboring countries. Others have had insufficient education and have not been able to attend classes consistently. For many adult refugees, their first priority upon arrival in the U.S. must be to find a job in order to support a family. Sometimes their education in the U.S. is delayed for many years while they work. Those who are able to proceed with their education can be tested and placed either in Adult Basic Education (ABE), or if their English skills are higher, they may be placed in a transitional English program to prepare them for college classes. The program may have the name of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). In this capstone, I look in depth at several writings by five of my Sudanese students in transitional English classes to find the problematic characteristics or gaps in their writing pieces.

Guiding Questions

In my quest to find what factors contribute to academic readiness in a group of adult Sudanese at the transition level, I used the following questions to guide me:

- How much writing instruction did the students have before resettling in the U.S., and how does it differ from the writing instruction they have had in the U.S.?
- What aspects of writing are the most difficult for the students?
- What are the students' attitudes toward their writing and the importance of writing?

To answer these questions, I used a case study approach to interview five adult Sudanese students currently taking classes in our EAP program. I also analyzed the students' journal entries and academic writing using the Test of Emerging Academic English (TEAE) Writing Rubric. After careful analysis, I used the data from the case study interviews and the writings to connect the students' background and their current writing behavior. This gave insight to the academic writing needs and skills of the student participants. The data collected for this qualitative research helped unravel my research question: What factors contribute to the academic readiness of five adult Sudanese students at a transition level?

Summary

In this study I focus on the educational background of adult Sudanese, their experiences as refugees in their own country and in refugee camps in Ethiopia, Egypt and Kenya. The background information shows that refugees face many difficulties before resettling in the States. One of these obstacles is inconsistent education in their own language or studying in a second language due to moving, lack of schools or teachers. When refugees are finally resettled in the U.S. they begin a long process of learning English, which is made more difficult by a lack of continuity in their native schooling or the extended period of time between the time they arrive in the states and the time they actually begin English classes. Many students would like to continue their education and attend college; however, moving from the transition classes into college level classes is extremely difficult due to poor writing skills. The importance of identifying and improving writing skills in transition classes is necessary for achievement in college level

classes. This study will present specific writing behaviors of the students, which could lead to ways to assist those students to become more proficient writers.

Chapter Overview

In Chapter One I have introduced my research problem and established the purpose, significance and need for the study. Information on Sudan, refugees, inconsistent schooling and transitioning to post secondary schools was introduced. Through this reflection of the research question and background information, I am convinced that this is valuable study, which will benefit those who want to assist adult immigrants and refugees in transitioning to post-secondary settings. In Chapter Two, a literature review provides a research overview of the topics relevant to the factors affecting refugees' successful academic writing. I show a gap of research material of adult students who have experienced diverse schooling and are transitioning into post-secondary classes in the U.S. Chapter Three defines the qualitative case study that guides this study. Chapter Four presents the description and results of the study and Chapter Five discusses the results of the data collected. I will look for connections or differences between the literature review and the research I completed with my participants, and I will also discuss implications for adult ELLs learning to write and recommendations for teachers.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

“So what did your friends tell you about life in the U.S.?” I asked Buom, a young Sudanese refugee. He replied, “You can get a good job, get a car, man!”

(Holzman, 2000, p. 64).

This conversation between Holtzman and a young Sudanese resonates with my own experience when speaking to refugees. Arriving in the U.S., refugees often have the notion that getting jobs, cars and homes will be a simple matter. Yet learning a new language and living in a new culture is not simple. Finding employment which requires little communication often means working menial jobs for minimal pay resulting in never getting the ‘good job.’ Many strive to attend community colleges, but find their English skills inadequate and often drop out. This study will pursue a topic where there is little information: the refugees who arrive as young or middle-aged adults with diverse educational backgrounds and attend transitional English classes with the goal of attending college. One of the most difficult and most important obstacles a refugee student faces is learning to write academically. To succeed academically, English language learners need to be proficient in listening, speaking, reading and writing, with writing being the most difficult to master (Malia, 2006). My research hopes to answer the question: What factors contribute to the academic readiness of five adult Sudanese students in transitional

English classes? I hope to uncover both their strengths as writers, but also the gaps that need to be addressed as they transition to post-secondary education.

This literature review begins with the educational system in Sudan followed by the education available in refugee camps where many Sudanese subsist. I will then review information on resettlement in the U.S. with respect to three characteristics: trauma, acculturation and interrupted education as they relate to literacy. I will discuss the transitioning from developmental English to college classes and the particular characteristics needed to be successful. Finally, I will look at the challenges of writing in a second language and conclude with particular difficulties of academic writing.

Education in Sudan

“When elephants fight it is the grass that suffers.” - *African proverb*

When there is war, it is those who cannot fend for themselves who suffer the most. Children who cannot speak for themselves and live in the insecurity of war often find themselves without a stable means of education. By looking at the educational system in Sudan during the last two decades and the reasons it is suffering, we can get a clearer picture of educational environment of Sudan during the time my students were in Sudan. The discussion includes the plight of the schools due to war, Islamization of education and establishment of Arabic as the official academic language. This section concludes with the need for support and hope for the future of Sudanese students.

War affects all areas of a country’s infrastructure; this undoubtedly includes schools. When survival itself is precarious, education cannot be regarded as a priority. Due to the turbulence caused by the 21-year civil war in Sudan, schools have suffered

greatly. Because of the war, many of the southern schools have been destroyed, teachers have left and public spending for education has been severely restricted (Rutter, 2003). Millions of Sudanese boys and girls, especially from southern Sudan, have lost years of schooling due to the civil war (Flaitz, 2006).

In Sommers' book, "Islands of Education: Schooling, Civil War and the Southern Sudanese 1983-2004" (2005), the author describes Sudan as an "educational disaster" where the majority of Southern Sudanese children have had either no access to any education or have had little education of poor quality. Sommers claims that schools in southern Sudan are like islands surrounded by oceans of educational barrenness. Describing the circumstances of the schools in southern Sudan, Sommers paints a disturbing educational picture. He states that the access to formal schooling is minimal, attendance is irregular with high dropout rates, and that trained teachers, textbooks, supplies and school buildings are rare commodities.

Brophy (as cited in Sommers, 2005) analyzed available data giving us further awareness of the seriousness of the educational system in Sudan. Among the most notable was that only 0.3 percent (one out of 300) school age children finish all 8 years of primary school with only around 30% of primary school-aged children attending. In addition to poor access, teachers lack adequate qualification, with only two percent of the teachers holding a college diploma and forty-five percent lacking any teacher training. The civil war has destroyed virtually all school buildings and forty-three percent of all classes are taught outdoors. Many schools have no textbooks, and there is no secondary curriculum for the 22 secondary schools of southern Sudan. Thus, the war has had a

profound, disastrous effect on school structures and the futures of those striving to obtain an education in Sudan.

Government policies have also damaged the educational system for southern Sudanese. One of the political goals of the war is manifested in the ideology the government seeks to promote through the educational system. The regime of al-Bashir has required the Islamization of education (Rutter, 2003). The government is also attempting to reform the educational system by the Islamization of the textbooks in public schools (Flaitz, 2006). This means the government would like all children to be brought up in the Islamic traditions. This is not agreeable to southern Sudanese who are predominately Christian, and it may keep parents from sending children to schools even when there is the opportunity (Bredlid, 2005).

Another obstacle the educational system faces is the language used in schools. With the imposition of Islam education, Arabic is now used as a medium of education in southern Sudan (Rutter, 2003). The establishment of Arabic as the official academic language also has educational implications for South Sudanese who must use a foreign language in their native schools. Using an unfamiliar language in reading at primary level produces poor results (Williamson, 2003). Nyombe (1997), gives three reasons why learning in a second language is not optimal: children do not learn as quickly in an unfamiliar language, the use of a different language may put a communication barrier between children and parents, and children may not feel a part of their own culture since it is through the language of a community that children acquire culture. Thus, even when children are in their own homeland, their education is slowed, they are distanced from

their parents and their relationship to their own culture is weakened when they are forced to learn in Arabic.

The educational system in Sudan is in need of change and the aid to make it possible. Yet the system lacks funds and support of their own government as well as international help. Flaitz (2006) states that Sudan ranks last in the world in regard to their own government funding of education. Education is unsupported because of government restrictions and intimidation along with donor fatigue, disastrous humanitarian situations, instability and poor infrastructure (Sommers, 2005). An unsupported educational system has little hope of giving students the adequate schooling they need for academic success.

Since the peace accord was signed in January 2005, some progress in rebuilding schools and educating teachers has been made. Simon Strachau, UNICEF's director in southern Sudan has launched a "Go to School" initiative (U.N. News Service, 2007). Teachers are receiving training, schools are being rebuilt and school supplies have been delivered. Michael Hussein, the southern Sudanese Minister of Education, Science and Technology, claimed that southern Sudan has already lost a generation to the war and that it certainly cannot afford to lose the next generation to illiteracy (U.N. News Service, 2007). It seems that there is some hope for more educational opportunity in Sudan for the future.

Refugees

"Greet Kahella [cow with abundant milk] when she comes

The sound of Nura [cow grazing in pasture] when she bellows

The hay in the waterways in is in heaps

All is gone.

Sand devastated their lives, forcing people to leave their village

which was like a mother to everyone.”

Hakkama, rural woman poet and singer (as cited in El Mahdi, 2007, p.1)

While many must seek new habitats during the perilous time of war, it is not the only explanation for a population to leave their homes and become refugees. Some migrate in search of a place that can sustain life. Cattle are the main source of income, food and pride for rural Sudanese families, and when pasturelands are dried up, families can no longer sustain themselves on the land. Increasing desertification has taken pastures from Sudan’s villages and families have been forced to leave homes and schools (El Mahdi, 2007).

When people must leave the life and home they are accustomed to, either to find food to sustain their families or in search of safety, they often travel to refugee camps where provisions and living conditions are substandard and educational opportunities are nonexistent or minimal. This section looks at refugees, and the conditions and schooling in the refugee camps.

What are Refugees

After WWII, the care and protection of refugees became an international responsibility. Policies and strategies were developed to protect refugees from deportation, hunger, disease and homelessness (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2006). Yet, refugees who are internationally displaced lack the protection of any state (Preston, 1991). These stateless people no longer have the

privileges associated with being a citizen of a country, and that includes a national education system (Waters & Leblanc, 2005).

The services provided to refugees vary a great deal depending on the host country and camp. This may reflect the interests of the donors, media attention or the ability of the UNHCR to represent the interests of the refugees (Waters & Leblanc, 2005). The camp administrators determine the kinds of educational opportunities offered by the host government, and take into account the agency objectives and the need to have structured activities (Preston, 1991). A pseudo-state creates the educational system (Waters & Leblanc, 2005). Refugees have little input into their own education and its accessibility.

Education of Sudanese Refugees in Camps

Due to the civil war, a growing number of Sudanese refugees are relocated to camps. According to Drumtra (as cited in Abusharaf, 2002) war, causing political and economic collapse, plus the adoption of Islamic sharia law, has caused massive movements of the Sudanese population making Sudan the largest exporter of migrants in Northeast Africa. Drumtra, of the U.S. Committee for Refugees, claims that while there are 350,000 Sudanese refugees in Kenya and Ethiopia, there are also four million southern Sudanese who are internally displaced. According to an editorial in The Christian Science Monitor (“Unique new arrivals,” 2000) the orphaned children of Sudan have grown to young adulthood in refugee camps in East Africa.

Some go to Egypt, but the Sudanese refugees who have settled there have encountered legal and economic problems when trying to obtain an education (Moro, 2002). They are technically allowed to attend schools the same as Egyptian nationals.

They are required, however, to show their birth certificates, last school certificates, identity documents with legal residence and letters from the Sudanese Embassy. These impediments along with the lack of financial means make it nearly impossible for refugee Sudanese children to attend Egyptian schools. Therefore, Sudanese refugees often wait for the opportunity to resettle in the U.S., Canada or Australia (Moro, 2002).

In other refugee camps, primary schooling is the most extensive of the educational programs with little or no education for young adults (Preston, 1991). Erlichman (1997), in an account of her four-week visit to Camp Camaboker, Ethiopia, near the Somali border, states that even though the UNHCR mandates the provision for primary education in refugee camps, the right to education is severely restricted, especially for girls. The camp supports schooling for fewer than four percent of school-aged children. Erlichman calls the schooling only symbolic so the refugees won't forget the importance of education all together while they wait for resettlement. A secondary reason for a more extensive program for the children may be for their mental health. Educating the children is good because being with other children and doing something productive helps to relieve trauma from leaving home and it is good for the children to have a routine (Waters & Leblanc, 2005).

In contrast to primary education, there is no obligation to establish secondary schools. However, UNHCR does provide grants to selected individuals. The educating of refugee adults has been mostly for specific purposes such as enabling employment. Adults may be given a short language program to enhance resettlement prospects (Preston, 1991).

At his 1994 presentation at the Conference of East African Refugee Providers, Peter Hayward described the teen and adult educational program for Somali, Rwandese and Sudanese refugees in Kenya. The program is a pre-resettlement preparation, which includes eight hours of cultural orientation and sixty hours of English training for refugees sixteen years and older. Hayward notes that the refugees are fed only once a day, and their hunger makes it difficult for them to concentrate in classes (Hayward, 1994).

Along with insufficient food supplies, camps lack the funding for teachers' salaries and school supplies (Erllichman, 1997). Sometimes refugees will start setting up schools on their own before receiving any outside resources. Settlement administrators may train adult refugees as teachers if they are needed. Those trained to teach in the camps may have had little education in their own country or have received all of their education in the refugee community (Preston, 1991).

Because of the lack of trained teachers and inconsistent, haphazard schooling in refugee camps, especially for secondary students, it is a huge challenge for the Sudanese refugees to become successful students in the schools of the western world. Young Africans in School Project researched the school experiences of 65 recently arrived Sudanese high school students from three different high schools in Australia (Cassidy & Gow, 2005). The data was collected through an arts-based approach. The students created a portfolio of their collages, paintings, plays and drawings. Two of the project themes were transitions of school from Africa to Australia and future pathways. The study aimed to assess how they were adjusting to high schools through learning of their

past schooling and their hopes for the future. Researchers found that the students had all lived in refugee camps in either Egypt or Kenya and in a total of four different countries before migrating to Australia. Those who lived in Cairo worked long hours with only a few of them attending a high school. One student who arrived in Australia at 19 years old with no schooling was placed in year 10 in school because of his age. Those refugees who had come from Kenya said they had no formal schooling in the camps because it was so infrequently provided. The results of this study showed that transitioning to the school system in Sydney was not working well for these young people due to disturbing memories of the past and limited formal education. Education in refugee camps was poor or non-existent for many secondary students. Their plans for the future revealed tensions between wanting to further their education and obligations to help support the family. Yet these students expressed high expectations of college and well-paid jobs for the future.

Resettlement Challenges

“Education is my mother and my father.” - Lost Boys (cited in Denny, 2007 p. 1)

While language classes can help refugee students with adapting to their new culture, many have difficulties with this new but necessary task. It is all the more challenging when adult refugees have not completed education in their own country or native language or their education has been interrupted. They often experience stress related to trauma, acculturation and interrupted schooling. This section looks at the effects these can have while learning a new language.

Trauma and Literacy

When learning a new language is compounded by a traumatic experience, it may seem like an insurmountable undertaking. A recent study exploring the trauma experienced by 63 resettled Sudanese adults in Australia (Schweitzer, Melville, Steel, & Lacherez, 2006), focused on their premigration trauma and post migration living difficulties. Semi-structured interviews were administered through five questionnaires. The average period of transit in refugee camps was 4.4 years. The study found that twenty-five percent of the group had high levels of psychological distress.

A part of the distress students feel may be due to stopping the routine of attending school. Experiencing trauma before arriving in the U.S. can cause continued or even compounded stress after relocating.

The complexities of trauma and dislocation associated with living in refugee camps, plus the problems of English in a new and very different educational system can make achieving academic success very difficult (Brown, Miller & Mitchell, 2006). In addition, the effects of trauma have the potential to be a learning disability. Physical health, as well as poor mental health, manifested in panic attacks or feeling out of control, can distract or prevent the student from learning (McDonald, 2000). Concentrating long enough to learn a new language can be very challenging for the refugee (Parrish, 2004).

The disruption of life experienced by refugees may cause feelings of insecurity, which can also cause helplessness in adults. Even those who have been the most confident and strongest adults in the past will feel demoralized if they feel like a helpless child because of their loss of all that is familiar (Vaynshtok, 2002).

Williamson (2003) writes about the process of learning after one has gone through extreme experiences such as war, prison camps and migration. He believes all learning touches people in different ways according to the circumstances of their lives. Sometimes trauma can enhance writing creativity. Hoffman in “Lost in Translation” (as cited in Williamson, 2003) writes about her migration from Poland to Canada. She became a successful writer even though she cannot forget the dark moments of her life in Poland. In fact, it is those very memories that have provided her with literary inspiration. Though trauma may cause poor physical or mental health, it may produce a creative, passionate writer.

Acculturation and Literacy

Acculturation is the understanding of the beliefs and behaviors of the dominant culture but at the same time, not forsaking the first culture (Parrish, 2004). It is a process that involves two cultural groups and results in a change in both groups, the former and the new cultures (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits (as cited in Berry, 2001).

The influence of the student’s former culture has a profound effect on the way a learner thinks and behaves (Vaynshtok, 2002). The Sudanese cultural life is mostly based on the extended family. When there is the loss of emotional and instrumental support from the extended family, trauma may be ongoing (Schweitzer et al., 2006). In a study comparing Kenyan and American self-concepts, Ma and Schoeneman (1997) demonstrated the cultural differences between a pastoral African society (similar to Sudan) and the U.S. The African pastoral participants exhibited collectivistic characteristics while the American university students confirmed an individualistic

society. While an individualist perceives a clear boundary between him/herself and others and gives priority to personal goals, a collectivist perceives his/her identity is defined by relationships with others and belonging to the family group (Ma & Schoeneman, 1997). A collectivistic refugee may find difficulties adjusting to a society that is individualistic.

For Sudanese refugees, resettling in the U.S. means adjusting to a very different culture. Those who leave their own culture, move to a second culture (as refugees in Africa) and then finally find themselves in the totally different American culture, often have difficulty understanding their educational experiences here (Mosselson, 2007). To acculturate, the refugee must experience the new culture. At the same time, the dominant group is transformed through the years by the refugees (Berry, 2001). The process of education itself will assist in acculturation. Education and doing well academically contribute to the reintegration of identity in the new culture and can give students a feeling of success in their new lives through optimism and a sense of accomplishment (Mosselson, 2007). Thus, Mosselson calls education a coping strategy.

Learning a new language can put tremendous burden on the adult learner who already has a clearly defined sense of self in his/her own language and culture (Florez & Burt, 2001). Adult refugees with interrupted schooling and multiple cultural moves can lose their sense of self.

Interrupted Education and Adult English Literacy

Hakuta, Bulter and Witt's study (as cited in Miller et al., 2005) estimates that it takes four to seven years to develop academic English proficiency in the best of circumstances. Some studies suggest that it takes up to ten years for disadvantaged

children, those in poor schools and those with interrupted schooling, to acquire academic proficiency (Garcia (as cited in Miller et al., 2005). The two students from my study who have experienced interrupted education came to the U.S. as young adults, have been in the U.S 16 and 12 years and are still striving to reach a level sufficient to succeed academically. More than 95 percent of the Sudanese who arrived in the U.S. between 1990 and 1997 were younger than 42 and nearly half were in their twenties or early thirties (Shandy, 2000). Sudanese young men and women who have permanently resettled have had only a smattering of schooling (“Unique new arrivals,” 2000).

Freeman stated that there is a growing number of students who have interrupted formal education (SIFE) (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, (as cited in Decapua et al., 2007). There are particular indicators that may signal that a student has experienced interrupted schooling. They include: poor or no education records, reports of absence from school for extended periods, poor attendance records, poor grades, very weak grasp of academic content and poor performance on standardized tests (Decapua et al., 2007).

In a study on Sudanese refugees’ experiences with interrupted schooling and the acquisition of literacy, Brown, Miller, and Mitchell (2006) looked at the implications for literacy of 8 high school students who had recently moved to Australia and had experienced interrupted education. They found that no student had had more than six years of education, and most of their schooling was in refugee camps. The study showed problems with academic language and literacy in the area of assumed cultural knowledge of content subjects, and a reluctance to participate in small group activities. The

schooling of my participants in the refugee camps was inadequate or nonexistent. The classes were very large and anyone with a high school diploma could be the teacher.

Other problems related to interrupted schooling were found in a similar study in Australia that focused on the perspectives of eight teachers and nine of their Sudanese students (Miller, et al., 2005). The purpose of the study was to gain insight into the social and academic experiences of refugee students who had previously experienced interrupted schooling after they had entered an Australian high school. The teachers found that students' and their families' lack of schooling, as well as their pre-migration experiences, had severe consequences on this group's literacy development. There are other consequences of interrupted schooling that become evident in the classroom. Garcia (as cited in Miller, et al., 2005) speaks about the effects of interrupted schooling on the students' learning. She notes that students from an interrupted school background lack the topic specific vocabulary, cultural background, social understandings and learning strategies to excel in the classroom. Often the students do not have sufficient literacy in their first language to aid them in acquiring a new language.

When refugees arrive in the U.S. as adults, they often have high expectations for their futures. Holtzman (2000) writes about adult Sudanese refugees in Minnesota. He states that many younger Nuer (Sudanese) men who are past high school age want to attend community college, but their lack of previous education makes learning in a new language and culture a struggle. Because they have neither diplomas nor transcripts, they cannot prove their educational background. Community colleges, however, will allow adult refugees to attend in order to take classes to improve their English.

Sudanese students have a great desire to get more education and overcome their past (“Unique new arrivals,” 2000); however, attaining a college diploma is a frustrating and difficult procedure for adult Sudanese refugees (Holtzman, 2000). Through student interviews, researchers (Brown et al., 2006) found that the Sudanese in Victorian Australian secondary schools all had high aspirations for their futures. However, with the current language and literacy abilities of these students, researchers noted that the challenges of academia confronting these Sudanese students would be daunting.

Not all refugees have experienced interrupted schooling. Some are able to live at boarding schools or at home while completing twelve years of schooling and may even have the opportunity of going to two years of college. The subjects in my study have had varying degrees of schooling, yet they have all had tremendous difficulties with writing and transitioning into post secondary education.

Transitioning to Post Secondary

The majority of American students seeking admission to community colleges have completed 12 years of structured elementary and secondary school. They have known one language, English, spoken in their home and used in all of their classes. The majority of adult refugee students have had an entirely different experience and no two are alike. Because of age and level of education in their own countries, some adult immigrants and refugees come directly to the college hoping to enroll. However, many are in need of fundamental English instruction as well as adjusting to an American school system. Hence, many new adult refugees begin their English studies in Adult Basic Education (ABE), which serves the community by enrolling students in ESL classes to

prepare them for transitional EAP classes or employment. ABE programs may also assist native and nonnative English speakers in General Education Development (GED) instruction to prepare students for postsecondary education or to help them qualify for better work opportunities (Alamprese, 2004).

The curricula of the adult literacy programs, such as ABE, in comparison to programs to transition English learners to academic studies, such as EAP, are different in three ways: purpose, content and context (Rance-Rony, 1995). While the purpose of adult literacy programs is to teach functional, personal expression and survival skills, the academic program's goal should be to seek proficiency in all skills, a focus that is less personal. In an academic program, language can be context-reduced where there are few clues within the text to understand it or context-embedded where the reader can look at the clues in the surrounding text to find the meaning of a word or phrase (Rance-Rony, 1995). Being able to discern meaning from a text may be a challenge for the student learning English who will not only need to understand the meaning of a text but may be asked to write about it.

Before students may begin transitional English classes at most community colleges, they must show some level of proficiency in English language skills. In some colleges a successful score on the Combined English Language Skills Assessment (CELSA) will admit immigrant students to the EAP program at a community college. This type of transitional program, for those wanting to continue into academic study, emphasizes skills that help the learners enter and be successful in an academic program (Mathews-Aydinli, 2006). The skills in a transitional program should:

- Focus on language accuracy and careful use of language
- Include extensive reading and genre-based writing
- Develop a vocabulary centered on less-frequently used academic terminology
- Develop conceptual and critical thinking skills (Mathews-Aydinli, p. 2)

Critical thinking may be demonstrated by the way students logically express themselves about a topic and by reasoning or argument that leads to a conclusion (Guest, 2000). It requires practice to become coherent thinkers, so students need to have the opportunity to work with the process and the product (Roberts & Billings, 2008). At the University of Luton, England a program entitled *Access* serves to bridge non-traditional students into college. Critical thinking is integrated into the curriculum as a skill that prepares students for higher-level learning (Guest, 2000). Reasoning skills are extremely important for writing at the academic level and should be at the core of the transitional courses.

Students preparing for college may have to learn how to manage their time, as well as learn study skills. Other challenges to effective transitioning are difficulty understanding a college textbook and writing college-level papers (Santos, 2004).

Some students remain in EAP classes for several years. This may be especially true when physiological or psychological factors as well as cultural and linguistic background may be related to the successful transitioning of the student (Schwarz, 2005). Schwarz found that her seven young Sudanese male students were not progressing in reading and writing. After an interview with them she found that their language, Dinka,

is not a written language and their culture would never allow them to voice opinions directly or ask or answer direct questions. Also, they would never reply to questions when the answer was obvious. Schwarz felt that their cultural attitudes had become a barrier to learning. After giving the students a choice of topics, their performance changed dramatically.

Attitudes toward writing and goals for improvement may also be a part of successful transitioning. In a multi-year study project, (Zhou, Busch, Gentil, Eouanzoui, and Cumming, 2006) goals for writing improvement were investigated among 45 ELL students who were in an ESL class preparing to enter academic studies in Canada. All of the participants had high school diplomas from their own country and had lived in Canada up to three years. Through questionnaires, interviews and writing samples, the researchers found the top three student goals for writing improvement while they were in transitioning classes were: (1) language (appropriate vocabulary and grammar), (2) rhetoric (text structures), (3) composing process (planning, drafting and editing). After the students had been in academic classes for one to two years, they were again interviewed and their writing goals had changed. Their top three goals were: (1) to focus on reading as an activity for writing improvement, (2) to occupy themselves with their immediate writing assignments rather than developing writing skills in general and (3) to be concerned with transferring their writing abilities to new genres. Although the research set out to study goals, the researchers felt that the research verified the value of an intensive ESL studies program to prepare ELL students. The goals the students

formulated while in the ESL program prepared them for successful writing at the university.

When students are transitioning to academic studies, instruction in writing skills is very important. This program should include teaching rhetorical organization of American writing, sentence structures, cohesion, punctuation and becoming familiar with academic writing tasks (Mathews-Aydinli, 2006). There are unique challenges when writing in a language and culture that is dissimilar from one's own.

Challenges of Writing in a Second Language

Even though ELLs may be able to articulate their thoughts well verbally, writing skills may be at a much lower level. This section will discuss some of the obstacles writers have due to cultural differences and how those become evident in written texts. This is followed by information on the difficulties of switching between the student's first language (L1) and the new second language (L2) and its possible ineffective results.

Many countries have an oral tradition of passing on history and stories. Writing as personal expression is a new skill for many from developing countries (Spaeth, 1997). Putting words into grammatically correct phrases may be a novel concept to students who are used to telling stories with no breaking or punctuating of the phrases. Furthermore, many ELLs may not have learned the skills to write well in their own language.

While writing in L1 requires basic motor skills and cognitive strategies, writing in L2 increases the cognitive burden and the social complexity (Leki, 1992). A writer should have a good grasp of vocabulary and be able to put thoughts together that make sense in a new cultural context. To write intelligibly, a writer must comprehend the

words and thoughts according to the culture in which it is written (Spanos, 1991).

Someone from another culture will have a different sense of relevant/irrelevant material and logical/illogical ideas that may not fit within the context of the new culture (Leki, 1992).

Kaplan (as cited in Reid, 1993) first used the words ‘contrastive rhetoric’ to define how culture affects the organizational patterns of written material from culture to culture. In 1987, Ostler (as cited in Reid, 1993) investigated the specific differences in rhetorical organization between English and Arabic (the official language in Sudan). She found that looking at the continuum from oral to written communication, Egyptian Arabic students writing in English use organization and language that places the writing close to the oral end of the continuum. The evidence she found was the use of long sentences joined by conjunctions, syntactic balance and repetition. In addition, Arabic speakers’ sensitivity to politeness is represented by their indirectness when writing. They naturally talk around the point (Hayward, 2004).

According to Hayward (2004), cultural differences may show up in a written context in the following ways:

- in a paper’s organization (such as inductive or deductive reasoning patterns)
- in a preference for a particular sentence style
- in the forms of address or register (issues of formality)
- in apparent lack of cohesive ties
- in the amount or type of information that is included (p. 8).

Switching between L1 and L2 may also cause difficulties when writing. One of the most salient characteristics of L2 writing is the switching between L1 and L2 while in the process of composing (Wang, 2003). Using data taken from students' interviews, questionnaires and written compositions, Wang's qualitative and quantitative data showed insight into the participants' writing processes. The participants were eight Chinese adults learning English who appeared to benefit from switching to their L1 for rhetorical choices and ideas and discourse. Switching may have helped the students to process information and increase control over their languages choices. However, their exchanging often failed to use the L1 effectively to produce comprehensible and coherent compositions (Wang, 2003). Translating words or phrases from L1 to L2 often causes misunderstandings or totally unintelligible writing.

Challenges of Academic Writing

Acceptable academic writing requires focused effort for native and nonnative speakers alike, but overcoming the challenges of writing in a second language takes persistent determination. In this segment I will present the particular difficulties, strategies, and benefits of academic writing.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, U.S colleges enrolled almost 1,800,000 immigrant students - which is 6% of all college students (Hinkel, 2004). College instructors who have ELLs in their college writing classes have their own challenges. Zamel (1998) surveyed instructors concerning their experiences working with non-native speakers of English. The greatest concern of the instructors was the students' writing.

The faculty saw ELLs writing as “deficient and inadequate” (p. 250) for performing the work in their courses.

Success in a college classroom requires skills in reading, listening, speaking and writing. Writing is the most difficult to master and not just for ELLs (Malia, 2006). “In the case of students in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) academic writing courses, the complexity of writing itself is thus compounded by the complexity of acquiring proficiency in a foreign language” (Widdowson (as cited in Katznelson, Perpignan, & Rubin, 2001, p. 144). A study analyzing written discourse use in nonnative speakers (NNS) showed that even after many years of L2 learning and practice, NNS advanced students may have difficulty with uses of tense, aspect and the passive voice in written academic prose. NNS chose to avoid using the more complex verb phrase constructions and instead used the past tense (Hinkel, 2004).

ELLs may not understand that writing academically requires more than choosing the correct verbs. Students may put too much emphasis on grammar and give little value to writing comprehensibly. A study at the University of Southern California in a mainstream college found that the ELLs in a college writing class were more concerned about grammar errors than the teachers (Malia, 2006). The instructors felt that grammar by itself was of little importance and that writing students should focus on the whole piece emphasizing support, cohesiveness and control. Malia states that students who are overly worried about grammatical problems in a second language could hinder their writing progress because their focus is on surface errors and they are not as concerned about content.

It is sometimes necessary, when learning to write, to put grammar on the 'back burner' and concentrate on becoming an articulate writer through continuous practice. Jun Liu, a Chinese university professor, tells of his struggle to write English well. When he arrived in the states, he was a Ph.D. student in foreign and second language education. He did not feel competent in L2 writing even though he had taught English for ten years. Through personal journal writing, where he could forget about grammar and practice constantly, he was able to develop his own L2 identity. He maintains that L2 literacy and L2 identity co-exist and enforce each other and thereby, helped to establish him as a good writer (Liu, 2001).

Just as Liu found that continuous practice benefited his writing skills, there are other learning strategies that are important for ELL's academic success. Writing strategies involve particular techniques to improve writing (Baker & Bookit, 2004). In a quantitative study, Thai EAP undergraduate students identified their five most frequently used learning strategies. Strategies identified were writing in their own language, reading feedback from previous writings, writing in a quiet, comfortable place and using a dictionary to check unfamiliar words. Most interesting was the claim by the participants that the use of background knowledge in creating ideas in writing was their primary strategy (Baker & Bookit, 2004). This demonstrates the importance of using relevant, familiar subjects to motivate and interest writers. To link new information taught to refugees along with the existing, relevant schema from the learner's backgrounds helps to provide an exceptional educational program for refugees (Vaynshtok, 2002).

Students can use their own background information to write literacy biographies which become one way to develop a reflective, first person account of one's development as a writer in an L2 classroom (Steinman, 2007). If a student is going to acquire writing in a meaningful way, it should be through a personal approach. One such personal approach is through journals. Learning to write personally through journals can provide an important link in the process of becoming a proficient writer of academic text (Mlynarczyk, 2006). Students who can write freely and regularly about familiar topics gain confidence in their writing and routine journaling can help build fluency, making the process of writing academically less formidable.

There are personal as well as academic benefits to writing. Students who can find a voice in their writing can create a safe place to respond on a personal level to tensions between cultures. Writing can assist students in creating a positive image of themselves (Garfield & Brockman, 2000). While academic writing is difficult for ESL students, proficiency is a necessity for academic success.

Summary

The literature review has given an overview of available research of schools and education in Sudan, education in refugee camps, resettlement and trauma, acculturation, interrupted education with regard to literacy and transitioning students to post-secondary education. Finally, the challenges ELLs face when writing and in particular with academic writing were investigated. The research showed that civil war in Sudan has caused great disruption in the educational system. There is a lack of suitable schools, books and qualified teachers, and in addition, students must learn a second language to

attend school. In the refugee camps there may be schooling for primary students, but basic survival is the priority and few older children are able to obtain secondary schooling. The disruptions of moving to a new country, along with interruptions of schooling cause insecurity at a time when the student needs to adjust to a new culture and learn another language. Many refugee students may have been taught that learning grammar is the most important skill needed for good writing. However, adults who want to go to post secondary schooling in the U.S. must be especially determined to acquire the demands of writing content and form, as well as develop the critical thinking skills needed in a college classroom. Cultural differences in articulating thoughts, along with the expectations of writing in an American college class will need to be learned to be a successful college student. The research showed that the goal of transitional English classes must be to help adult refugee students gain experience and proficiency in the areas of developing accurate academic language, genre based writing and critical thinking skills so they may proceed successfully into academic classes.

In this study I hope to find out precisely what the five adult Sudanese students in the study need to do to improve their writing to an academic level. What are they doing well already, and what do they need to improve in order to transition into post secondary classes? Chapter Three is an in-depth discussion of the methods I used to answer my question. The participants, setting, method, data collection and procedures are discussed.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Attaining writing fluency in a second language is a complex task for most adults. Adult immigrant/refugee students come from a diverse background of education, skills, languages and attitudes. However, there are common attributes that may be essential for successful academic writing. In the present research, I want to determine what factors contribute to academic readiness for a group of five Sudanese students in a transitional writing program. To accomplish this, I used a case study approach implementing three means of collecting data: student interviews, student journals and essays.

This chapter describes the methodology used in the study. First, the rationale and description of the research design is presented along with an explanation of the qualitative paradigm used in this study. Second, there is an account of the data collection with descriptions of participants, setting and techniques. Third, the procedure itself is described, detailing how the collection of data was completed. Then, the data analysis is presented to show the methods that were used to examine the retrieved information. Next, verification of data shows the dependability and consistency of the data. Finally, I have stated ethical considerations used to protect my participants.

Qualitative Research Paradigm

A qualitative research paradigm allows the researcher to understand the phenomenon from the participants' point of view. It uses the researcher as the primary

gatherer and analyzer of data and observes behavior in a natural setting such as students in a classroom or families in their homes. Qualitative research builds theories and produces a richly descriptive research using words and pictures instead of numbers to express the new data (Merriam, 1998). It tries to establish an understanding for the readers through “rich description” to show the reader what experience itself would express (Stake, 1995).

I have chosen qualitative research because the students are the only ones who know about their personal backgrounds. The best way to find out about their past educational and writing experiences is through in-depth interviews where students can give their own stories. Qualitative research is concerned with understanding individuals’ views of the world (Bell, 1999).

Case studies are one type of qualitative research. They lend themselves well to educational research because there is a naturally “bounded system” of teachers, students or classes (Merriam, 1998). I chose to do a case study because I could use my own students in the context of my classroom, and I was interested in the insight and interpretation of the experiences of the students. When there is a research question that needs general understanding and a desire to get insight into that question by means of studying a particular case, the inquiry may be called an instrumental case study (Stake, 1995). This case study is instrumental because it accomplished something more than understanding the information I collected about the educational backgrounds, writing practices and skills of the participants. By analyzing my findings, I was able to build a

theory of factors that contribute to the academic readiness of these Sudanese transitional students.

The Study

Participants

The participants in this study were five adult Sudanese students, three men and two women. The interviewees are students at the community college where I teach. Two participants have lived in refugee camps and have experienced interrupted schooling and the other three have not. They have all taken previous English classes in the U.S. and have a desire to continue study in English. The participants tested into the EAP program at the community college and were in my Writing and Grammar III class, which is at the low-intermediate level. They were able to express themselves well enough to give me a detailed account. I carefully explained to the Sudanese students about my research and their contribution to the project.

Before the interviews began, I asked each participant to choose a name that I could use in this research. They enjoyed this task with one participant changing his name three times. He finally settled on his nickname in Sudan, Tungeer, which was the name of the cow given by his uncle for his mother's dowry.

Table 3.1 presents introductory information about the participants.

Table 3.1

Student participants

Name	Age	Gender	Number of Years in U.S.
Tungeer	37	M	16
Omot	53	M	11
Manyang	41	M	8
Nada	24	F	3
Ajulu	33	F	12

Setting

This study took place in a community college in a rural mid-sized town in Minnesota. The college began English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at this campus in 2000 for students who had surpassed the studies offered at our local Adult Basic Education program and had not yet obtained the level needed to attend academic college classes. A substantial percentage of the students in the program desire to continue into the academic programs offered at the college. The program's name changed in 2007 from ESL to EAP (English for Academic Purposes). This gives the students recognition of their progress out of community ESL classes and advancement toward college classes. The EAP population is diverse, with students last year from Somalia, Mexico, Jordan, Ukraine, Guatemala, China and Sudan.

Data Collection Techniques and Procedures

Interviews

Interviews are a method used in educational research to obtain participants' perspectives. For the interviews in this study, the initial questions of the interview were

structured in order to obtain sociodemographic data about their pasts. The balance of the interview was semi-structured; even though the questions were thoughtfully drafted, many of the answers were open ended. This was the best way for me to find out personal information about the participants' backgrounds. Merriam (1998) stated that it is necessary to interview when we are unable to observe behavior, attitudes, or how people interpret the world around them. To ask students about their past is the best way to gather this type of information. Besides hearing the words, I was able to hear vocal expression, observe gestures and facial expressions, as well as note pauses that a written text would have not allowed. A second advantage of interviews is that they are adaptable: an interviewer can probe responses, follow up on ideas and investigate feelings or motives (Bell, 1999). Through the student interviews in this study, I was able to discover their educational backgrounds, as well as the students' opinions and attitudes toward writing (see Appendix A for interview questions).

I interviewed five Sudanese students in February 2008. In January, I talked to the Sudanese students about this research, the interview process itself, and asked for questions about the procedure. A human subject consent letter was given and read to the students and then signed by those wishing to participate. Because the participants were a little apprehensive about being able to respond to the questions, I gave them a copy of the interview questions so they could take them home to read and think about prior to the interview. The participants scheduled an interview time with me, which was conducted in our unoccupied classroom. A second meeting took place for further clarification and questions.

Before the interviews, I field tested the questions with two colleagues to find out if the questions were clear and received their feedback on the efficiency of the interview questions. I was able to ask them if there were additional questions needed or if there were those, which served no purpose. On the technical level, it was important that I practiced using my recording equipment. The interviews were audio recorded. I took a few notes during the interview when I observed interruptions, reluctance or emotions.

The interview began with general personal background information and ended with questions, which were more specific. The first few questions put the participant at ease and established rapport. The questions asked about educational experiences in Sudan, schooling in the refugee camps, and experiences since arriving in the states including their opinion of their own writing in English.

Journals

Journals were a second source of data. They were useful because they provided a better understanding of the participants' attitudes about writing, and I was able to note repetitive writing problems. They were able to freely write their thoughts without undue concern for grammar. Journals engage students in "non-threatening exploration" while developing their ideas (Reid, 1993). The prompts I gave them were familiar information.

Student journaling served two purposes: to detect repetitive problems in their writing, and to find out more information about their writing attitudes, which may have reflected their opinion of their success or lack thereof. The same five Sudanese participants were given notebooks to use for journaling. All of the students in the class had been journaling all school year, so writing personal thoughts in a journal was not new

to them. I usually give them prompts, although they are encouraged to write about any topic they would like. During the data collection time, February through May, I gave specific topics that aided my study. Even though all the students participated in journaling, I, of course, analyzed data only from the five participants.

During the twelve weeks of gathering data from their journals, the participants wrote on one topic per week. There were four intentional prompts and two of a more general nature, such as keeping in touch with someone. The four intentional writing prompts were:

1. What was your favorite subject in high school? Why? What did you do in the class?
2. What is your favorite part of learning English? What is the most difficult?
3. Write about learning to write in your own language. How often and when did you use writing in your home country?
4. How is writing in English different than in your first language?

We briefly brainstormed the journal subject as a class. I wrote the prompt on the board and encouraged them to write at least one page. They wrote in their journals at home. Journal assignments were given on Tuesdays and I collected their notebooks on Thursdays; giving the participants two days allowed them to do some reflecting. I made a copy of each of the six weekly journal entries.

Academic Writings

To collect a second genre of the students' writing, I asked the entire class to write two essays, one-to-two pages each. The students handed in an outline, first and second

draft. I assigned familiar topics so that they did not need to do research. I carefully explained the topics and gave them one week and two weekends to complete the task. One essay was assigned in February, at the beginning of the research, and the other toward the end of the research period, in April. While journal entries are free writing of thoughts with little concern for grammar and organization, a sampling of academic writing gave insight into accuracy of language and organization of ideas. The students needed to organize the essay into five paragraphs using an introduction, body and conclusion. Focusing on academic writing skills of organizing a topic, using relevant ideas, writing about positive and negative aspects of a place and giving ways and reasons to reach a goal gave me a clearer picture of their critical thinking abilities. The writing topics were as follows:

Essay 1: Write about a place where you have lived. Describe what it looks like, what it is/was like to live there, the positives and negatives of living there.

Essay 2: Write about your future. Describe what you would like to do in the future, what you need to do to reach that goal and what you hope for your children.

Data Analysis

This research used deductive analysis to find data that corresponded to six categories: education in Sudan; education in refugee camps; resettlement trauma and adjustment; pre-migration writing in their first language; pre-migration writing in English and post migration writing in English. To make sense of the data collected, a process involving consolidating, reducing and interpreting information from the interviewees should be used to determine meaning (Merriam, 1998). As the researcher, it is my duty

to study the puzzle, connect it with what is already known, then find new connections and search for ways to make the new ideas comprehensible to readers (Stake, 1995). The data from each of the three procedures was analyzed individually shortly after it was collected. Through data analysis, I identified common factors or gaps in academic writing readiness within each category by assessing student interviews, student journals and essays.

Student Interviews

After listening to the tapes of the interviews, I recorded them onto a CD. This made it easier for them to be transcribed. My sister-in-law and I transcribed the interviews verbatim into a script. Notes that I wrote during the interviews were added to the transcription. Immediately after each of the interviews, I wrote a brief summary of the overall impressions I had of the interview. Secondly, each case was looked at separately according to the six themes. Examining each participant individually for pertinent information is a case analysis. Writing a case analysis is the most appropriate way to highlight each participant and the way each differs from the others (McKay, 2006). I found key information from the themes and designed a table to record the background information for each participant. This made it easier to analyze important information without rereading all the transcripts. From each of these themes I looked for patterns among the five interviews and drew comparisons.

The instrumental case study researcher is a biographer who writes more for the illustration of an idea rather than for understanding of an individual's life (Stake, 1995). I categorized events to show how past experiences or attitudes relate to current skills. This

interpretation began to answer my key question: What factors contribute to academic readiness for five adult Sudanese transitional students?

Student Journals

Each participant's six journal responses were read and copies were made. First, I looked for and made notes on attitudes and experiences the students had in writing that were not revealed in the interviews. Some students may feel less intimidated by journaling their feelings and this could add description to my case studies. Second, each writing was carefully analyzed and categorized. While I did not expect mechanical accuracy on the journal, the entries did reveal insight into focus and organization. They showed vocabulary use and language production. Using the Test of Emerging Academic English (TEAE) Writing Rubric, (see Appendix B for TEAE) each journal entry was scored 0-5 using the 5 categories: language production, focus, description/elaboration, organization and mechanics (Minnesota Department of Education, 2007). The journal entries were carefully read to find the characteristics and then labeled. The writings were analyzed as separate cases and then in a cross-case analysis to find common threads. Cross-case analysis is organizing the data according to the topics (McKay, 2006). In this case, the writings were analyzed using the five categories in the rubric.

Academic Writings

I again used the TEAE Writing Rubric to analyze each essay. All of the writings were rated 0-5 in the following categories: language production, focus, description/elaboration, organization and mechanics. I compared the two essays of each participant since they were written with differing amount of direction. The writings were

read several times and then difficulties and strengths were noted before each writing was rated.

Verification of Data

It is vital to be accurate in research. To strengthen internal validity, I used three strategies as suggested in Merriam (1998). Triangulation is the use of more than one source of data. I used interviews from my students to give background information and perspectives on their writing. Student journal and essay writings gave them the opportunity to express themselves by printed word and I was able to note writing habits. The second strategy was member checks. I talked to the participants after I had analyzed the interviews and writings to ask them for validity and intended meaning. Third, I asked my colleagues, who also teach English to Sudanese students, to provide feedback on my interpretations.

Ethics

This study analyzed student interviews and writings with both personal and private information. It is imperative that this paper is written as truthfully and respectfully as possible. “We, as researchers, have ethical obligations to minimize misrepresentation and misunderstanding” (Stake, 1995, p.109).

To ensure the privacy and protection of my students, I carefully explained the research project to perspective participants and assured them that it will in no way hinder their status as a student in my class if they declined to participate. Together we read the human subject consent form that agreeable participants signed. The interviews were recorded and transcribed to prevent the possibility of my enhancing or forgetting

significant discourse. All writings were used only with their permission. Students chose new names to be used in this paper in order to protect their identity in the study.

Summary

In this chapter I have explained the collection of data process through the use of student interviews and writings. The interviews gave valuable information of the participants' educational background, their resettlement experiences and their perspectives on writing. Their journals provided samples of writing to analyze and evidence of common themes in writing behavior. Essay samples provided me with data showing the participants' academic writing skills.

Chapter Four presents the detailed results from the data. I discuss the interview findings and present an analysis of the participants' journaling and essays.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to find factors that may be indicators of academic writing readiness of five adult Sudanese who are currently in transitional English classes. In this section, I present the results of this case study from three sources of data: the interviews, journals and essays. First, I give a brief summary of each participant's story and then I summarize the interviews using six main themes: education in Sudan, education in refugee camps, pre-migration writing in first language, pre-migration writing in English, resettlement adjustment and trauma, and finally, post-migration writing in English. Next, I look at the journals and essays and reveal the results of my examination of them using the TEAE tool. Finally, I discuss the results of the research.

This study took place in a classroom of a small community college in Minnesota. The school serves several surrounding communities, and there are many immigrants and refugees in the area who would like to attain a two-year degree at the college. The students I serve are taking transitional English classes, which ideally will lead to college admission. I am the instructor of the EAP course, writing and grammar (see Appendix C for course objectives), and the Sudanese students from this class are the focus of my capstone.

Interviews

I would have guessed that young adults coming from the same country in the span of fifteen years of one another they would have many similarities. However, the interviews revealed that these five Sudanese students have amazingly different stories to tell about their education in Sudan. Despite these differences, they all experience tremendous difficulties in academic writing which was why they were subjects of my study.

Educational Background

Table 4.1 shows a summary of the educational backgrounds of the five participants.

Table 4.1
Participants' Educational Background

	Tungeer	Omot	Manyang	Nada	Ajulu
First Language	Nuer	Anuak	Dinka	Arabic	Anuak
School Language	Nuer English	English	Arabic	Arabic	Arabic Amharic
Prior Years of Schooling	13	14	14	14	9
Interrupted Schooling	yes	no	no	no	yes
Years of English Classes Before U.S.	5	14	5	7	4
Years Lived In U.S.	16	11	8	3	12
Interval Between Arrival and Beginning English Classes	13 years	9 years	7 years	3 months	5 months
Length of English Classes In U.S.					
ABE:	none	none	5 months	4 months	18 months
EAP:	1.5 years	2 years	1 year	2 years	1.5 years

Educational History and Attitudes

The interviews provided a rich picture of the participants' educational history and attitudes regarding writing. This section begins with a brief summary of each participant, followed by an analysis of all the participants' histories in relation to these six themes:

- Education in Sudan
- Education in Refugee Camps
- Pre-migration Writing in First Language
- Pre-migration Writing in English
- Resettlement adjustments and trauma
- Post-migration Writing in English Classes

Three key points that were revealed in the interviews were the amount of education most of the interviewees were able to receive in Sudan, the opportunity they all had to learn some English before coming to the U.S. and finally, the emphasis on learning grammar in their English studies as opposed to learning how to write.

Tungeer

“I remember one day, that was a day I wouldn't forget, when the problem began to occur.... On that day, I left the country.” It was the last day Tungeer went to school in Sudan. Tungeer's story is an account of a man whose education is very important to him, who at the age of 14 ran from his school and town after military broke into the school during classes and killed five of his friends. He escaped to a refugee camp in Ethiopia, but he was not allowed to begin school until he learned some English. Missionaries taught him his first lessons of English, along with ninety-five other children,

outside, under trees in the afternoons. It was almost three years before he was permitted to continue his formal schooling again and began secondary education at an Ethiopian government school. All classes were taught in English, but writing consisted of copying from the board and “making our handwriting look good, that’s what writing is.” After five years, he graduated from the Ethiopian secondary school, and then he spent a year in a refugee camp in Kenya teaching young Sudanese children Bible stories in his own language of Nuer. Upon arrival in the U.S. fourteen years ago, Tungeer worked in Texas for a few months, attended a Bible college in Tennessee for two years, and finally moved to Minnesota, where he began English classes and found work at a local factory. Tungeer is a bright, curious man who has his heart set on graduating with a four-year degree in social work. He would like to write a book about his experiences.

Omot

Omot was the oldest of the participants and the most talkative. Often he would answer a question and proceed to go into some depth. For instance, when I asked him if his classes were in English he said, “Yes, even history,” and then gave a detailed account of how WWII began. I did not transcribe this part of his conversation, which did not pertain to the question, but I did learn that he is eager to talk about things he has learned.

Omot’s first language is Anuak, and he never learned Arabic. His story is unique in that he began learning English from his first day of school at age seven. He attended government schools in Sudan first through twelfth grade where all subjects were taught in English. His English lessons consisted of dictations and learning verbs and parts of speech. When I asked him if his teacher taught them how to write compositions, he

replied, “They teach us how to do grammar.” He graduated from secondary school and attended two years of college in Khartoum, the capital city, studying agriculture.

Following his studies, he worked for the Sudanese government. He began to work upon his arrival in the States, hoping that his education and English language background would suffice for high-quality employment. Unable to get a fulfilling job, he has begun English classes in hopes of getting a business degree.

Manyang

Manyang is also from southern Sudan and was able to attend 12 consecutive years at boarding schools, moving to northern Sudan for his last three years of secondary school because of the war. He was away from his parents six months at a time throughout his schooling. His first language is Dinka. However, only Arabic was used in the schools he attended. He even read the Bible in Arabic, from right to left. It was necessary for Manyang to learn some English in order to get his diploma; he was required to write a composition for his high school completion test. During his English classes, his teacher gave dictations, and grammar was emphasized during his lessons three times a week. After receiving a scholarship, he attended two years of business college in Egypt where he got a degree in accounting. Upon graduation, the Sudanese government accused Manyang and other students of supporting the Sudanese People Liberation Army, and as a result, Manyang and his classmates were not allowed to return to Sudan. He waited for ten years in Egypt to come to the U.S. Since his arrival eight years ago, he has lived and worked in South Dakota and Minnesota and just recently started to study English.

Nada

Nada's experience was different from the other participants in that she lived and studied only in Khartoum during the entire 21 years she lived in Sudan. She is the only Muslim in the group and spoke solely Arabic both at home, as well as at school, and never learned a tribal language. In primary school, she studied some English and in high school she took two years of French classes and three years of English. Her English classes consisted of writing letters and dictations, and she did not need to take an English test to graduate from secondary school. She continued her education in a business college for two years before coming to the U.S. She was the youngest participant, and because her husband is a practicing doctor in the U.S., she did not need to work, and she was able to start English classes soon after her arrival.

Ajulu

Ajulu is a young mother with four children. Her educational background is the most inconsistent and incomplete. She spoke Anuak at home, but did not learn to write it since it is not a written language. She began school at age ten and was able to go only two years in southern Sudan before tragedy struck her family. Her two sisters died of disease, and Ajulu was taken from her family in Sudan to live with an uncle in Ethiopia. While in Sudan, her two years of schooling were in Arabic; in Ethiopia, Amharic was used in her uncle's home and in school. She began as a first grader at age twelve and completed seven years of school. Upon completion of primary school at age 19, Ajulu married and had a baby. She was sent to a refugee camp in Kenya where she lived for two years while her husband went to the U.S. to begin work and the process of bringing her to the

States. She did not have any secondary schooling at the camp. Ajulu and her baby stayed in a tent waiting for word from her husband, who was Ethiopian. Ajulu said she found someone to translate his letters from Amharic to her native language so that she could understand what he was writing to her. She did not have any English classes while at the camp. There was only an orientation class for those immigrating to the states led by an American and translated into Amharic. Since arriving in the U.S., Ajulu has started English classes several times but has had to stop due to the responsibilities of caring for her children. Unfortunately, during the time of my collecting writings for this study, she had to take a leave for some months.

Below are the six significant themes related to my thesis question, which pertain to the participants' past educational backgrounds and their writing experiences.

Education in Sudan

Three of the participants graduated from high school in Sudan. Tungeer completed seven years of primary school during his fourteen years in Sudan. Ajulu attended two years of school in Sudan. Both Tungeer and Ajulu walked long distances every day to attend classes all morning and return home in the afternoons, while Manyang and Omot attended boarding schools. Nada lived with her parents within a short distance from her schools in the city. Omot, Manyang and Nada were able to attend two years of post-secondary school in Sudan.

Tungeer used his first language, Nuer, during all six years of his primary schooling. Nada's home language, Arabic, was the language she also used during all of her years in school. Omot's first language was Anuak, but when he started school,

English was used during all of his classes. Ajulu's first language was also Anuak, but during her two years of school in Sudan, she was taught in Arabic. Manyang spoke Dinka at home, but his school language was Arabic.

Education in Refugee Camps

Two of the participants lived in refugee camps. Tungeer lived in refugee camps in Ethiopia and Kenya for eight years. Upon arrival at the camp, he studied English with a large group for a few hours a day for more than two years before being admitted into the government school. At the school, the students were divided into two groups: the Sudanese were taught in English and the Ethiopians were taught in Amharic. There were 96 students in his ninth grade classroom. He completed his high school requirements in five years while in Ethiopia, where all of his classes were taught in English. He took no further classes during his year at Camp Walda in Kenya, but became a teacher for other Nuer refugees, teaching Sudanese history and the Bible. The only book he owned was a Bible.

Ajulu was also in Ethiopia, but she was able to stay with relatives and not at a refugee camp during those years. During her seven years at the primary school there, her classes were in a new language, Amharic. After finishing primary school she was married and sent to a refugee camp. During Ajulu's two years in the refugee camp in Kenya, she did not take any classes. She heard Swahili and English and many other languages spoken by refugees of different countries while waiting to get the necessary papers to leave.

Pre-migration writing in first language

Both Ajulu and Omot's first languages were Anuak and since, according to Ajulu, it is not a written language, neither of them wrote in their first language. Ajulu, at age ten, learned to write in Arabic during her two years of schooling in Sudan. She said she learned to write words but no stories.

Although Manyang's first language is Dinka, he did not write it, but learned to write in Arabic at age seven. In his classes, they had notebooks and were given dictations of a paragraph to write. Their teacher was very concerned about leaving two-inch margins, double-spacing and grammar. He says in Arabic, grammar is very important, but it is simple and each letter is always pronounced the same way. Nada also learned to write in Arabic, which was also her first language and the only language used in her schools. She memorized grammar and there was a strong emphasis on grammar and pronunciation. She learned to write paragraphs, but not essays, using 'insha' which were rules concerning the handwriting and presentation of the paper.

Tungeer said that his teacher taught the students the alphabet and the students wrote on the ground in the dirt using their fingers as pencils. He learned to write in Nuer, his home language, and continued to do so the first seven years of his education. When they wrote, they filled in the blanks or wrote dictations, but most of their writing consisted of copying from the board and using what they had written to study. Since they didn't have any books, they were essentially writing their own textbooks. He says that writing is so difficult for him because he didn't learn to write papers in his first language. The priority during his years of writing in Nuer was to make his handwriting look good.

Pre-migration writing in English

When Nada was ten years old, she began English classes a few times each week during her school day. Her teacher was Arabic/Sudanese. English classes continued through secondary school and mostly consisted of learning grammar rules, how to fill in the blanks and writing paragraphs. She learned through dictations and did not find it difficult to switch between Arabic and English. In business college, she learned some practical English such as writing letters and filling out applications.

Manyang first studied English in intermediate school. He had English three hours a week for three years. He said they did not teach any writing, but reading was important. However, to earn his high school diploma, he was given three topics to choose from and told to write a composition in English, even though he was never taught how to write a paper. Manyang also studied at a business school and had some practical English. In those classes they were taught how to begin and conclude a letter.

Ajulu had English classes a couple of days a week from 3rd to 7th grades in Ethiopia. The teacher wrote on the board and the students copied. Also the teacher had a book and would point to a picture and say the word in English. She was asked to write stories in Amharic but never in English. Tungeer said he did not learn any writing of paragraphs or essays while in Ethiopia, even though his classes were all taught in English; only grammar was important.

Omot, who had all of his classes taught in English, had a British teacher who taught English grammar in high school. Omot was taught through dictations and copying off the board. He said the most important thing was to learn the verbs. They never wrote

stories. His national exam was in English. It was multiple choice with no writing essay component.

Resettlement adjustments and trauma

Ajulu's husband was waiting for her in the U.S., and he was well established when she arrived, so making the adjustment to life here was not difficult for Ajulu. She said the weather was bad, but otherwise, coming to the U.S. was very good for her after her two years of waiting in a tent. The biggest trauma in her life had happened in Sudan when her sisters died and she was abruptly taken away to live with her uncle, thus leaving Sudan forever. She tearfully spoke of this grief. Ajulu began classes at ABE shortly after she arrived in the U.S., but she had to stop after five months due to a pregnancy.

Manyang's adjustment circumstances were the reverse of Ajulu's. He arrived by himself, and it took four years to obtain the necessary papers to bring his wife to the U.S. During his wait, he was able to stay with friends. He thought that Americans were very nice to him, but they spoke so fast that everyone was difficult to understand. It was important to him to get established and ready for his wife's arrival. Therefore, he worked for several years in various places saving money for his own apartment while adjusting to life in the U.S.

Omot said that coming to the U.S. was not difficult for him. He said, "I don't think so much about the past; I opened a new page." He had read an orientation booklet, which said that some Americans would be helpful and some would not, so that is what he expected. The cold weather really bothers him. I never saw him without a stocking cap on, even during our warm May classes. He stated that English was okay. He worked in

the U.S. nine years before taking any English classes. Now he realizes that he needs more education to get a better job.

Nada's biggest adjustment has been communicating in the English language. She says that everyone speaks so fast and she doesn't understand. Her husband speaks English well and is a medical doctor, so financially they are not struggling with expenses like so many refugees. Nada is able to have someone watch her child enabling her to study. She also has the support of the medical community in her small town.

Tungeer may have had the most traumatic experiences and difficult adjustment of the five participants. While the other four talked about problems adjusting to the weather or language, Tungeer says his first two years were especially hard and he felt depressed and confused when he thought about the difficult time he had living in the refugee camp and leaving his country of Sudan. The missionaries in Kenya helped him learn something about America before he came. They told him about the importance of being on time. Concerning learning the English language, Tungeer says that pronunciation is the most difficult thing for him.

Post – migration writing in English classes

Tungeer has a family with five children, and because of the demands he has for supporting his family, he did not start taking English classes in the states until thirteen years after his arrival. With his dream of becoming a social worker and helping others, he has now started to study English. He never enrolled in ABE, but began English classes at the community college in spring of 2006 and has completed three semesters of

reading, writing and grammar classes. Tungeer feels that this is the first time he has learned about writing. “To put English in the right order, that is the hard one,” he said.

Omot began English studies in the EAP program after being in the U.S. for nine years. He did not enroll in ABE, but has taken four semesters of transitional writing and grammar at the college. He says he has been away from school so long he has forgotten how to write and spell. Also he states, “Organization is the most difficult thing, but grammar is still the most important.”

Manyang worked for seven years in the U.S. before beginning English classes. He has completed two semesters of English at the college and previously five months of ABE. Manyang said, “The most important thing for me is to learn grammar. I need to know grammar to use the correct word. I got an accounting diploma, but it is nothing here.”

Nada, who has been in the U.S. three years, was able to begin English classes only three months after her arrival, taking four months of ABE and continuing with four semesters of English at the college. Nada says she must write all of her assignments now and she finds it difficult to write more than one-page essays.

Ajulu has had a difficult time consistently attending English classes. Since coming to the U.S. twelve years ago, she has completed five-inconsecutive semesters of English, two at ABE and three at the transition level at the college. She says during the weeks when she has been able to attend ABE, her classes were reading and grammar, but she did not have any writing lessons. The reading, writing and grammar classes she has

taken at the college have given Ajulu her first experience in writing paragraphs in English.

Journal Assessment

Journal writings gave a wealth of information about the past experiences of the participants as well as particular characteristics of their sentence writing skills. The journal entries were written during a three-month span, and they averaged a page long. I chose journal topics that coincided with the interviews: past school experiences, my favorite subject, how I learned to write, how writing in my first language is different than English, my favorite part of learning English and communication – how I keep in touch with my family. Reading their thoughts gave me more detail of their past educational experiences, plus the journals were delightful to read. Through the journal writing a few more observations emerged about their backgrounds. Some were able to express a clearer picture of the struggle to get an education, and I also found out more about their attitudes about the importance of learning English grammar and writing.

Tungeer

Tungeer wrote that his schooling experience in the refugee camp “was bad because to learn was difficult for lack of food. Food was not enough many times you went to bed hungry, you didn’t feel like you need studied.” The alphabet of English and Nuer (Tungeer’s first language) look the same, but there are twenty-nine letters in the Nuer alphabet. When he was able to write the alphabet well enough with his finger on the floor, his teacher gave him a pencil and a notebook to use. This was difficult, resulting in him breaking pencils and making holes in his notebook. He says, “To have something to

write it, was a big issues.” Concerning his schooling, he writes, “My educational background I was struggled so much, that why I make it.”

Omot

Omot was from an area in southern Sudan, which had been colonized by Britain; hence, he was taught entirely in English. He left Sudan because of the war, but expressed a desire to return when there is peace and go back to his job as an executive officer for the government. He said the only difference between his first language of Anuak and English is that English is spoken around the world, and that he loves the English language for speaking, reading and writing.

Manyang

Manyang remembers writing dictations, and compositions at school at a young age. The teacher corrected his compositions and he rewrote them many times to get them correct. When he first arrived in the U.S. he wrote everything in Arabic, then he had problems especially writing phone numbers from right to left. He says writing in English is not easy, but adds, “Now I’m willing to work hard with great commitment and study hard to have more vocabulary to help me how to write well.”

Nada

It was necessary for Nada to go to preschool at age five to learn to write her letters in Arabic before being accepted into a private primary school. When she was in her third year of high school, the teachers decided if her aptitude was high enough to continue in the area of sciences or arts. She was put into the arts and eligible to go on to a business college. Her favorite subject in high school was French, she admits, mostly

due to the teacher. She says of her English studies in Sudan, “I study English in my country, but the basic things. When I am in my country, I am not worry about it, but now I am worry because I have to study college, and I want to do a lot in my studies.”

Ajulu

As I indicated in the interview section, Ajulu had to drop out of class before she had done the writing portion of this study. I gave her the journal topics and she took them home to write them. When she brought them back, the writings were short, and she did not do all of them. Because she did not write in her first language, she did not do the entries “How is Writing in my First Language Different that in English” or “How I learned to Write.” Thus, I have two journals and two essays. After I read through her writings, I wrote her a letter thanking her, and I asked her to just write as much as she could about herself and her family and send it to me in the self addressed stamped envelope I left her. I did not hear back from her. From the entries I received, I learned that Ajulu likes to learn new words, but she says it is difficult to put the words into sentences, her favorite subject was math and that she would someday like to become an accountant. From Ajulu’s journal entries, I see that she has limited vocabulary. She is able to use subject and verb into a coherent thought, however, she has difficulty dividing her thoughts into sentences, so her writings become many thoughts divided by commas. I have watched her write and I know that actually forming the letters is a tedious and awkward process for her.

Essay Assessment

The participants along with my entire writing and grammar class wrote two essays during spring semester. The process of writing the first essay, “A Place I Have Lived,” took three weeks in February. During the first week, we discussed brainstorming and clustering of ideas and then practiced narrowing topics using the broad topics of sports and cars. Next, we talked about places they had lived and brainstormed as small groups reasons that place was special to them. I assigned the students to bring a clustering diagram on “their place.” The next day we talked about narrowing the topic down into three main focuses. We worked on interesting introductions and the inclusion of the three topics into the introduction. They were then assigned to write the introduction. They read their introductions to each other, and their partners helped them with areas of focus. Each student showed me the introductions they had written. I did not correct grammatical errors at that point. I wanted to evaluate the organization of the essay. Then we worked on the three-paragraph body of the essay using one paragraph for each of the focuses. They were told then to write the body of the essay. At that point, I had an individual conference with each student to evaluate their organization and writing process thus far. Finally, there was a lesson on conclusions. I asked the students to give me their brainstorming assignment and all drafts. I corrected the essays looking for coherence problems and mechanical errors and then gave them back to the students. The students then wrote the final draft.

The first essay was a “rehearsal” for the second. While the essay “My Place” had the benefit of direction and guidance along every step of the process, the instruction and

conferencing was minimal for the second essay. I thought it would be most useful to draw writing behaviors from the second essay for two reasons: first, they had already gone through the process once and were familiar with steps of organizing, and secondly, I hoped that this writing, without my intrusion, would give a more accurate picture of their writing behaviors. Their second essay, “What are my Goals and Dreams for my Future,” was due in early May and was assigned as their final test for the class. We did some brainstorming as a class, and then I asked them to think about three goals that they would write about. They talked to a classmate about their goals. I told them that they would be writing a five-paragraph essay using the goals they had determined and gave them a handout with instructions of what I expected them to do for this final writing assignment (see Appendix D for final essay assignment). The participants, with the exception of Ajulu, were a part of all of these lessons.

Naturally, all entries, journal or essay, written by the same person did not exhibit the same writing traits. However the analysis revealed writing characteristics common to both genres. Each writing was assessed using the TEAE Writing Rubric, which seemed most appropriate since I was looking at the academic readiness of these students who are currently in transitional English. The TEAE analyzes five categories of writing: language production, focus, description/elaboration, organization and mechanics. It uses a score rating of 0-5 in the first four categories (a score of five being proficient) and 0-2 in the final category of mechanics (two being the most proficient). Because there were six journal entries, and each entry was analyzed, I needed to average the six scores giving each category one number. Following are tables for each participant showing writing

characteristics and the score that was apparent (J: journal entries and E: essays) in each of the categories listed in the TEAE rubric.

Table 4.2
TEAE Journal and Essay Assessment - Tungeer

<u>Scores</u>	<u>Journals</u>	<u>Essays</u>
Language Production J: 3 E: 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a variety of sentence lengths and structures • uses appropriate topic-specific vocabulary • obscures overall meaning occasionally by second language learner indicators (word order omission or grammatical errors – verbs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a variety of sentence lengths and structures • uses appropriate topic-specific vocabulary • obscures overall meaning occasionally by grammatical errors or word choice
Focus J: 2 E: 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shows lapses from main point • lacks topic sentence • writes unclear main point • may lack an ending or ends abruptly • uses multiple positions without a unifying statement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses multiple positions with a unifying statement • uses sentences related to topic but with no topic sentence • infers main point • has a beginning, middle, and end
Description/Elaboration J: 3 E: 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses specific description • supports some important points with detail • writes with some depth • uses appropriate nouns/verbs/adjectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a mix of general and specific description • writes with some depth • supports some important points with detail
Organization J: 3 E: 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses inferred order • connects some ideas logically to the whole • may lack transitions • shows minor lapses in flow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses easily discernable order • connects most ideas logically to the whole • writes easily inferred ordered paragraphs
Mechanics J: 1 E: 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrates some understanding in punctuation, spelling and capitalization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrates some understanding in all areas • errs in comma use

Table 4.3
TEAE Journal and Essay Assessment - Omot

<u>Scores</u>	<u>Journals</u>	<u>Essays</u>
Language Production J: 3 E: 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a variety of sentence lengths and structures • uses some non-specific repetitious vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses repetitive, confusing sentences • uses repetitious vocabulary • obscures overall meaning by word choice
Focus J: 1 E: 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writes unclear main point • writes with minimal relation to prompt topic • uses multiple positions without a unifying statement • lacks topic sentences • uses an ending that is reiteration of opening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writes unclear main point • uses multiple positions without unifying statement • uses sentences related to topic but lacks topic sentences • lacks an ending
Description/Elaboration J: 3 E: 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a mix of general and specific descriptions • makes some important points supported with detail • uses some depth • uses repetitive nouns and verbs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses general description • uses few important points supported by detail • uses limited depth
Organization J: 1 E: 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses minimal order • uses ideas not logically connected to the whole • uses ideas not logically connected to each other • lacks transitions • shows major/minor lapses in flow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses minimal order • uses ideas not logically connected to the whole • lacks transitions • uses few ideas logically connected to each other
Mechanics J: 2 E: 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrates obvious understanding of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrates understanding of all three areas

Table 4.4
TEAE Journal and Essay Assessment - Manyang

<u>Scores</u>	<u>Journals</u>	<u>Essays</u>
Language Production J: 3 E: 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses topic specific vocabulary • uses variety of sentence structures • obscures overall meaning occasionally by word order or verb tenses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a variety of sentences • uses some confusing sentences • obscures meaning by word choice
Focus J: 2 E: 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writes unclear main point • uses multiple positions without a unifying statement • lacks topic sentences • shows some lapses from main point 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses multiple positions without a unifying statement • uses ideas related but no topic sentence • ends abruptly • writes unclear main point • writes with minimal relationship to prompted topic
Description/Elaboration J: 4 E: 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses specific description • supports most important events with detail • uses some depth • uses appropriate nouns/verbs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writes with some depth • uses a mix of general and specific description • uses appropriate nouns and verbs • supports some important points with detail
Organization J: 3 E: 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses discernable order • uses ideas logically connected to the whole • shows major/ minor lapses in flow • uses few transitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses inferred order • uses ideas logically connected to the whole but not each other • shows many major lapses in flow • lacks transitions
Mechanics J: 1 E: 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses commas instead of periods • uses run-on sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses run-on sentences

Table 4.5
TEAE Journal and Essay Assessment - Nada

<u>Scores</u>	<u>Journals</u>	<u>Essays</u>
Language Production J: 3 E: 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses vocabulary appropriate to topic • uses some variety in sentence structure • obscures meaning occasionally by wrong word choice or grammatical problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attempts to use topic specific words • shows variety of sentence links and structures • obscures overall meaning by word choice
Focus J: 2 E: 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • infers main point • shows some lapses from main point • relates sentences to topic, but no topic sentence • uses a weak ending • uses multiple statements without a unifying statement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • infers main point • uses multiple positions without unifying statement • shows some lapses from main point • relates sentences to topic, but no topic sentence
Description/Elaboration J: 2 E: 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses limited depth • uses repetitive nouns, verbs • uses general description • uses few important points supported by detail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses general description • uses few important points supported with detail • uses limited depth
Organization J: 2 E: 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses inferred order • connects most ideas logically to the whole • connects some ideas to each other logically • lacks transitions • shows major/minor lapses in flow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses discernable order • connects most ideas logically to the whole • includes some lapses • shows easily inferred paragraphs • lacks transitions
Mechanics J: 1 E: 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • errs in spelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • errs in spelling • uses run-on sentences

Table 4.6
TEAE Journal and Essay Assessment – Ajulu

<u>Scores</u>	<u>Journals</u>	<u>Essays</u>
Language Production J: 2 E: 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses some variety in sentences • uses some specific vocabulary • obscures overall meaning by word choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses simple sentences • uses non-specific vocabulary
Focus J: 1 E: 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writes insufficient amount • may be prompt dependent • uses words related to the topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is prompt dependent • shows some lapses from main point • uses words related to topic • writes insufficient amount
Description/Elaboration J: 1 E: 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses minimal amount of description • uses limited depth • writes insufficient amount 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses a list with no details • uses limited depth • writes insufficient amount
Organization J: 1 E: 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses minimal order • writes ideas logically connected • writes insufficient amount 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses few ideas connected to whole • writes insufficient amount
Mechanics J: 0 E: 0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrates little knowledge of punctuation or capitalization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrates little knowledge of punctuation • uses run-on sentences

Although the essays were given as assignments that would receive a grade, and there was more class time explanation and planning spent on the essays, the scores of the journal writings and essays were not very different. All of the participants were able to write sentences; because of poor use of mechanics, however, run-on sentences were particularly common and this caused unclear meaning of some sentences. Also, every one of the participants showed difficulty in focusing on a topic and making a main point.

Discussion

Although there are many differences in these students' backgrounds, there are some important similarities; they are all Sudanese adults coming from a country in turmoil, they each have a strong desire to succeed in the U.S. and they have decided that getting further education will allow them to do that. These students are in transitional English classes preparing themselves so they can succeed in college classes, which leads to the research question: What factors may be indicators of the academic writing readiness of these five adult Sudanese who are currently in transitional English classes? The following summary of my data collection assisted me in determining some of those factors.

Interviews

All of these participants have uniquely remarkable stories of their life journeys that have led me to the following observations. First, I am astonished at the amount of education they were able to get while living in a country upset by war. This discovery led me to change my topic from my initial hypothesis that writing difficulties may be due to an interrupted education, since only two of the participants lived in a refugee camp and had interrupted elementary or secondary schooling. A commonality may be that their lives revolved around trying to find some normalcy while living in an unpredictable situation. Most of them had the opportunity to continue their educations and attend a school regularly, which may have given them a sense of security at an unstable time.

Secondly, I am struck by the diversity of languages they have used in their homes and schooling process: Anuak, Nuer, Dinka, Arabic, Ahmaric and English. English is

Ajulu's fourth language, Manyang's third and the second language for Nada, Tungeer and Omot. It seems with so many language changes, that Ajulu has not had the opportunity to learn to write any of the four languages well. She uses Anuak, her first language, with her children at home, but it is not a written language.

Next, there was a noticeable difference in the availability and convenience of the schools they attended in Sudan. Ajulu and Tungeer said they walked ten miles to and from their primary schools, and because of the distance they were able to spend only four hours a day in classes. Manyang and Omot were at boarding schools during all of their schooling and Manyang was not allowed to return home after college. Nada alone was able to live with her parents and live close to the private and public schools she attended.

Although it was difficult to judge or compare the type of education each one received, there seemed to be inconsistency in quality between the schooling each if the participants was able to obtain. Tungeer said of the teachers at the refugee camp, "They are not well teachers. If somebody complete 12th grade, he is fit to be a teacher." There were forty-five in his high school classroom and they shared books, took notes and left the books at the school. Those participants who were not in a refugee camp also had large classes of at least fifty, but they each had books they could use for homework during the school year. It is impossible to know the precise situation and atmosphere of each one's schooling experience, but it seems to have been less than ideal.

I was surprised that they all had studied some English before they arrived in the U.S. For most of them it was a few hours a week for several years. It is difficult to know the value of their experiences or if they were able to advance beyond a beginner level, but

it gave them exposure and a beginning knowledge. I gathered that their English instruction consisted of mostly learning how to say and write the alphabet, grammar lessons (especially verb tenses) dictations, copying off the board, and writing sentences, but little on organizing and writing paragraphs or essays.

Finally, all of the participants wanted to improve their writing, but continued to place their emphasis on the importance of “knowing grammar” in order to write good sentences rather than looking at writing as a piece of interrelated thoughts. I also found this to be true in my research; in the study at the University of California, ELL students were more concerned about grammar mistakes rather than focusing on writing as a cohesive piece (Malia, 2006).

Writing Assessment

After some consideration, I felt that discussing the second essay would be more valuable than a comparison of the two or taking an average score. Since the first essay was written with the aid of three weeks of instruction with much direction and correction of drafts, it was not surprising that as a whole they were more successful in their organization of it. A second reason for the higher scores may have been the topic. All the students were excited to write about a place they had lived; schema certainly was an aid to this essay. Writing about goals for the future, as they did for the second, took more critical thinking and contemplation. The second essay was assigned as a final exam with explicit instructions, but without the benefit of step-by-step instruction or correction of drafts, and I believe that it will give a more accurate picture of their writing traits. It is the second essay, along with the six journal entries, on which I will focus my comments.

Ajulu's educational background was radically different from the other four participants; she did not attend any secondary schooling. She has also been the least consistent to attend English classes in the U.S. She needed to drop out during the semester, and consequently, she was unable to do her writing as class assignments like the other participants who had the advantage of guidance and encouragement from me and the other students. However, she may have had some help at home. I feel that it would be unfair to compare her journals and essays with the other participants, so I will address her unique characteristics as an entity itself after my analysis of the four other subjects.

Using the five categories used in the TEAE as guidance, I will provide examples taken from the journals and essays to give further explanation of the characteristics of the other four participants.

Language Production

Journals

The participants used simple, compound and complex sentences successfully in their journals. They were able to write about their topics using vocabulary that was appropriate. For instance, in the journal entry about past school experiences words such as educated, promoted, grades and entrance examination were used. They had occasional problems with word choice, omission of words or word order. An example of this is, "I was transferred to Northern Sudan before war started at high school." I noted that none of them used predominantly correct grammar, which is a criterion for a score of four in the rubric. I checked and recorded every entry for sentence level errors using the list of

typical ESL errors likely to appear in advanced ESL writings (Leki, 1992), which helped me to identify the most common grammatical errors. The most frequent errors were with verbs, in particular: inappropriately switching between past and present, improperly forming and using the passive voice and incorrectly forming infinitives. Each of the four participants scored an average of three in this category leading to the conclusion that they were able to produce a variety of well-written sentences with a suitable range of vocabulary, but there may be misunderstandings in their word choice that could lead to an ambiguous or confusing sentence or idea.

Essays

In the essay all of the participants showed the ability to write a variety of sentences; however, sometimes they were confusing. Munyang wrote, “It seems clear that our attention and desire affect the way we feel about the topic.” An example from Omot’s essay reads, “When I go back home, with all my hopes in belief my children will be qualificat people.” Word omissions or incorrect words occasionally distorted the sentences and made them incomprehensible. They used appropriate vocabulary in the “goals” essay, using such words as career, financial, dreams, achieve, degree and accomplish.

Focus

Journals

Focusing on the topic was the most difficult area for all four participants in the journal writing. Three of them scored two and one student scored one in this category. For two of the participants, the main idea of their journals was unclear. There were many

ideas without a unifying statement. For example, in the entry of “My Education,” Omot wrote the first paragraph about his past education, the second paragraph gave reasons he came to the US, third about having a passport, the possibility of returning to Sudan and about the geography of Sudan. Although they all wrote some type of conclusion, they were weak, or a verbatim reiteration of the introductory remarks. An example of a weak closing was Nada’s “Educational Experience” which ends, “This the education in my country Sudan.”

Two characteristics of focus that all participants had in common were lapses from the main point and sentences that were related to the topic, but were not tied together with a topic sentence. In the journal entry “How and When I Learned to Write,” Nada began by saying that her family sent her to preschool to learn how to write letters. Next, she wrote about playing and the necessity of going to preschool. Her focus drifted to many things that happened during her preschool, and she lost focus on the topic of learning to write. Manyang began his entry on education with “In 1974 I was started first grade in place called Jonglei Province in south, after six year I finished primary and . . .” He went on to give more dates and details but never wrote a sentence that bonded the sentences together into a cohesive piece. It seemed to be a difficult task for all the participants to write a topic sentence and concentrate on the topic throughout the writing. Sometimes they were able to focus throughout a paragraph, but then changed to an unrelated topic in the next paragraph.

Essays

After reading Manyang's essay several times, I am still wondering what the main point is. He spoke mostly of the benefits of education. In Nada's paragraph about the dreams she has for her education, she wrote about studying pharmacy and having a good career, but she lost focus when she continued the paragraph with the dream of building a big house and living near her family and there were other lapses from the main point. Omot's main point was unclear with many ideas without a unifying statement. Tungeer's main point was easily inferred, but not clearly stated in a topic sentence. All of them wrote conclusions, however Omot's did not summarize, rather he chose two sentences from the essay that were not an appropriate ending. His last statement read, "Before I left Sudan, I was working as a local government officer."

Description/Elaboration

Journals

This category had a wider range of abilities. Tungeer used specific descriptions writing with detail and some depth. He wrote, "When I learned how to write I began it on the floor. Teacher begins hold my finger, touch the floor to learn how to capital 'N' until I wrote all the alphabets on the floor. When teacher knew that I did well all the floor, he gives a pencil and a note to write." Nada did not use many details and wrote more simply with few important points. For example, "I study English in my country but the basic things. My favorite part is reading because I like to read." Manyang most consistently used specific details and supported the details with explanations. For example, "Geography is good because it shows where the countries located and how many

resources they have and you can learn too about the industrial countries like United States, Canada, United Kingdom and other European countries too.” The participants typically used the correct noun or verb, but often the verb was not in the correct tense. Nada wrote, “For me, I like to study French in high school, because I think we learn the basic rule of French and I found that easy for me, and in final exam I have a high score in every exam in French.” This category had a wider range of abilities.

Essays

Again Nada showed a limited depth in her writing; her essay was shorter than a page long, but it was typed. There were few important points supported with detail. For example, “I want to see the world. At least I want to go on a vacation.” The others used a mix of general and specific details. Tungeer elaborated on his first goal, but his second and, particularly, third lacked detail with a mere sentence pertaining to his financial goal. Manyang showed some important points supported with detail and depth. He concluded his essay with these words, “Finally education will challenge my present beliefs or expand my limited awareness and help me to make sense of my life of the way I lived before and my responsibility to it as an educated person.”

Organization

Journals

I was surprised at how much each person’s writing differed between entries. Some topics may have been easier to organize than others. For instance, “My Education” lent itself to a chronological order so may have been easier to structure. However, with the broader topic of “Communications-Someone I Keep in Touch With,” there were so

many possible directions to go, that it seemed to be more difficult to organize the entry. Omot wrote the words 'journal, entry, outline, brainstorming, introduction' and 'body' on the top of every journal entry and he added the words 'in conclusion' above the last paragraph even after I explained and showed him he could simply write the date and title. I think this may have been his way to show his organization.

The organization of the majority of Manyang's journal writings was easy to discern; however, some of the entries had many run-ons, making an entire writing one long sentence, and using commas to separate his thoughts instead of organizing them into sentences and paragraphs. The other two participants had an inferred order. In Tungeer's entry about keeping in touch with his mother, the paragraphs were not in any particular order and some of the ideas were not logically connected to the whole.

All participants lacked the use of transitions, which would help the flow between sentences and paragraphs. A paragraph would end and a new one began without using words such as then, next, following or a second reason to make the piece more cohesive.

Essays

Because we had spent a chunk of class time on organizing a five-paragraph essay, I expected all of the participants to have a well-designed essay with an introduction, three-paragraph body and a concluding paragraph. Nada and Tungeer organized theirs very well into the five parts, although Tungeer forgot to put the conclusion in a separate paragraph and stuck it on the end of paragraph four. Manyang's developed into an introductory paragraph, one long paragraph with several lapses in flow and then, the concluding paragraph. Omot had five paragraphs but they were not in any type of order.

He mentioned that he would like to go back to Sudan in all five paragraphs. I could not find three goals in neither his nor Manyang's writing, yet both of them were able to produce an organized first essay when we worked closely in class. In this area all participants were lacking in transitions. One paragraph would end and a new idea would 'pop-up' with no type of lead in. Along with this were major and minor lapses in flow. An example of lapses in flow can be found in the sequencing of sentences found in Tungeer's introduction. He wrote, "I lived in this country almost sixteen years. These are all my goals I set up for tomorrow, and look forward, how I will achieve them in the future. This is a great land of opportunity, you can be what you want."

Mechanics

Journals

It may be because journals are less formal pieces of writing that there are more errors with punctuation and spelling. Nada, in particular, found spelling difficult. The main punctuation error was using commas instead of periods, thus writing long run-on sentences. Capitalization was not a problem for these four participants when there were not run-ons.

Essays

The participants gave their essays titles and remembered to capitalize the important words. There was a good knowledge of commas especially with Omot, however, there were occasional errors with everyone's papers. Manyang had the most difficulty with using end punctuation marks, but rather, he stuck in a comma and kept going.

Finally, I have a few findings in Ajulu's writing. Ajulu was able to write simple sentences, which were prompt dependent; in the journal entries, she used the prompts as if they were simply questions to be answered with no further elaboration. Her essay on her future was very short, although she made some good points. The entire essay was one long sentence which read, "in the future I want to become a accountant I want to have a good job that I will like and appreciate doing I hope that my children finish school and do something that will benefit them in the future." Although the writing was insufficient, the few ideas that she had were logically connected to the whole. She did not use capital letters on most of the beginnings of sentences. I really think that Ajulu could make a leap of progress if she were able attend a full year in the EAP program without interruptions.

Summary

In this chapter I described the results of the interviews of each of the participants, and furthermore, placed significant information pertaining to their educational background and writing experiences into six themes. The interviews showed that two of the participants experienced interrupted education in Sudan, four of the participants graduated from high school and three were able to go on to college while in Sudan. Three of the participants did not learn to write in their first language. All participants learned some English while in Sudan where grammar skills were stressed, and none of the students learned the process of writing paragraphs. All participants stressed the importance of learning grammar well. Using their writings from six journals entries and essays, and comparing them to the TEAE, I found writing traits that the participants have

already accomplished, as well as those they have yet to attain in order to be at an academic readiness for college classes. The rubric showed strengths in vocabulary, description and sentence production and weaknesses in the areas of focusing on a topic and organization of the writing piece. The final chapter, the conclusion, summarizes what I learned through all the information I gathered in this research, and considers implications and the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Chapter Four gave detailed accounts of the interviews and writings. I presented tables of the results using the TEAE rubric as my guide and discussed the outcomes. The results helped me to answer my research question: What factors may contribute to the academic writing readiness of five adult Sudanese students who are in transitional English classes? This chapter summarizes the major findings of the research, offers some implications for teachers, and explains the limitations of this study and suggestions for further research.

Major Findings

One area that was significant to the research was educational experiences in the refugee camps and impediments to gaining an education. Tungeer and Ajulu's descriptions of the lack of qualified teachers, textbooks and food at the refugee camps are supported by the accounts in the literature review given by Erlichman (1997) and Hayward (1994). For Tungeer, in Ethiopia these bleak circumstances made trying to gain a satisfactory secondary education an extraordinarily difficult feat. Neither Ajulu nor Tungeer were offered any schooling while living at the Kenyan camp, which is affirmed in Cassidy and Gow's study (2005). Manyang's legal problems with the government during his educational experience in Egypt, resulting in his ten-year detainment, resonated in the observations of Moro (2002).

Through the interviews I noted three significant attitudes. First, there was a respect for education and gratefulness expressed by the participants for the opportunity to attend classes in the U.S. Secondly, all of the participants wanted to improve their writing skills. Thirdly, they expressed their belief that in order to write well, they needed to learn grammar. From their interviews, I learned that, in their opinion, knowing grammar was the most important aspect of writing and if they used correct grammar, their writing would be good. My findings support those of Zhou et al. (2006), who found through their study that the students' number one goal in improving writing while in transitioning classes was using appropriate grammar and vocabulary. The attitude of the participants in my study seemed to be a reflection of what they had been taught early on in their English lessons before arriving in the states. It is also echoed in the attitudes in the classroom, where often the students' chief desire is to study grammar and learn the rules. I think that the attitudes of the participants concerning their writing skills play a significant role in the success of their actual writing. This coincides with Malia (2006), who found that students' writing progress could be hindered when their focus was on grammatical errors instead of content. Since the participants placed the most significant factor of writing on appropriate grammar, it may be difficult for them to see beyond the sentence to the entire essay.

I found that four of the participants did not learn to write at all in their first language, or there was a lack of writing instruction, and they are struggling to reach an academic level. This resonates with Garcia's study (as cited in Miller et al., 2005), which noted that students may not have enough literacy in their first language to help them in

acquiring a second language. Even though all participants had some English instruction in their schooling before coming to the U.S., they all said they did not learn how to write a composition or even paragraphs. This lack of emphasis on writing beyond the sentence level in English may have persuaded the students to think of organization as a lesser skill to obtain as opposed to grammar.

Next, the writings themselves show particular factors that are valuable for successful writing. The participants were able to write complete, complex sentences with some description that expressed a good knowledge of vocabulary. Generally, especially in the essays, they showed a good beginning knowledge of organizing paragraphs and writing sentences that were logically connected to the main topic.

One problem that showed up with my three participants who had studied using Arabic was using long sentences joined by conjunctions. These findings were supported by Ostler's study (as cited in Ried, 1993).

The major area that I found was lacking in the writings of the participants was focus. The participants need to concentrate on one main point per paragraph and produce relevant supporting sentences to tie the paragraph together. Because they lacked transitions, their writings seemed to jump from one idea to another without letting the reader know of a change of direction, and therefore, it could be difficult to comprehend the intent of their thoughts.

Table 5.1 shows the characteristics of the participants' writings that I found using the TEAE as my guide that need strengthening and would contribute to their academic readiness.

Table 5.1
Factors Leading to Academic Readiness

- Writing topic sentences which guide the paragraphs
- Focusing on the topic by using sentences that support the topic
- Using transitions to help the flow between sentences and paragraphs
- Using correct word choice that gives a clear understanding of the idea intended
- Writing a strong conclusion that ties the writing together

Competence in these five areas should enable the students to write a more cohesive and coherent text and prepare them for writing in community college classes.

Even though an adult is immersed in a country for an extended period of time, it does not mean that writing English skills can be ‘picked up’ the way speaking and listening skills may be. I found, as did Leki, (1992) that we cannot assume that a student’s writing ability correlates with the length of time spent in an English speaking country. Four of the participants have been in the U.S for many years, yet writing essays is still a challenge. It is through an organized program of concentrated English writing instruction that that one can best learn the skill and be prepared for academic study.

Implications for Teachers

As a result of this study, I have the following suggestions for teachers of adult refugee students who may have backgrounds similar to those in my study. First, we are teaching men and women who have had an extremely wide range of experiences, so it is beneficial to find out about the background of our students. Just because students may be refugees does not necessarily imply that their educational background was inferior or that they have not studied any English. I was amazed to find out during the interview process that Omot had been educated using the English language. Now, I understand why he is vehement about not wanting to start ABE classes. After using English for so many years,

he may feel demoralized starting classes with those who have less experience with English.

From the comments in the interviews and journal entries I found that the participants had received little training in writing English beyond the sentence level and that using correct grammar was most important in their writing. These factors may have led to their lack of focus on the topic and the inability to support a topic with cohesive sentences, which were apparent in their writings. As teachers we must make fluency as important a goal as accuracy. Of course, it is easier to correct surface sentence errors; they are fairly obvious and quick to fix. However, giving more attention to the content will impress the students with the importance of writing ideas that are connected into a unified piece. When we as teachers do not stress the value of a coherent and cohesive text, the students will naturally conclude that accurate grammar is of prime importance and will see their writings as individual sentences rather than a whole. This needs to be taught at the transitional level since writing fluent essays will certainly be necessary for success at the college level.

I also found organization of the essays to be problematic, especially in the use of transitions and writing a conclusion that binds the piece together. I did not conference with the students during the second essay, and I saw a much less organized piece than the first essay when I had conferenced with them. If students are to learn how to organize their essays, teachers should guide them by showing them ways to logically connect

paragraphs in their own assignments rather than just presenting examples to the class from a textbook. Teachers and students can work together to find ways to organize a topic and stay on focus. Through supportive feedback, teachers can compliment them on all they have accomplished, but discuss how they can improve their writing.

Fourth, learning to write well enough to achieve competence that is acceptable in a college class takes a tremendous amount of practice. The transitional classes must have numerous opportunities to practice writing that will help the students to gain confidence. We have used journals for the last two years and when the students become accustomed to writing using this non-threatening, non-graded tool, it seems to take some of the apprehension out of writing, plus the students look forward to sharing ideas. In my writing/grammar class we have three textbooks: a grammar book, workbook and a writing book. However, the amount of material to cover is overwhelming. We often end up doing more grammar exercises than writing practice. I think it would be beneficial to use only a writing textbook, and integrate grammar into the writing lessons as grammatical errors or questions arise, hence keeping the focus and practice on the writing.

Last, transitional teachers of English should dialogue with the instructors of developmental and freshman classes to find out the types of writing they require students do in their classes. In the EAP classes, students can benefit from the guidance that they may not receive in the academic classes while writing a variety of genre. The transitional

class writings need to be very useful and relevant. While it is easiest to have students write narratives (e.g. My Family), college classes will expect them to use some critical thinking. In the journal writings the topic “How is writing different in English than in your first language” allowed the students to compare and contrast the two languages as did the essay on “A Place” which asked students to write the positive and negative aspects about a place they had lived. Writing essays in such genres as cause and effect, compare and contrast, problem and solution will help transitional students begin reflective thinking and give practice in the vital areas of organizing and focusing on a topic.

This study showed a lack of skills in the areas of focus and organization. To improve in these areas, transitional students would benefit from more guidance from the instructor before and during the writing assignment. It is not enough to assign writing tasks and correct them. The teacher’s input during the process would broaden the students’ understanding and attitude of the importance of writing well. Instructors at the community college need to work together so that the English learning adults gain the experience they will need to succeed in the academic classroom.

Limitations of the Study

This study in no way gives a picture of all adult Sudanese in the process of learning English. It shows the educational background and writing skills of a small group of transitional English learners in rural Minnesota.

We must also keep in mind that the nature of journaling is to write what comes to mind without undue concern to organizing thoughts, and there is also the knowledge that the teacher will not correct it for errors. Journaling gives a picture of their informal writing, but possibly not their best writing skills. Also, there is always the possibility a student may have had some help in their writing since they were all assignments done at home, thus skewing the results.

Scoring the writings using the TEAE was difficult. I ended up assessing the entries four times for organization and coming up with different results each time. At times it was difficult for me to separate characteristics of focusing and organization. At the end, I was able to see more of a clear distinction. The wording in the scoring especially between 2 and 3 was very similar; I had to choose between ideas such as, “may be occasionally repetitive” 3 and “may be repetitive” 4; “few ideas logically connected to each other” 2 and “some ideas logically connected to each other” 3. The scoring was indeed subjective, but I read each of their entries countless times to get as true a picture as possible. It would have been a tremendous help to have a colleague read the writings in order to get a second opinion.

Further Research

Perhaps a worthwhile area to study would be to research the types of writing required in Minnesota community college settings and the types of writing taught in the transitional classes to find the gaps and needs of the students. It would then be good to

develop a writing curriculum that is well suited to prepare the adult Sudanese English language learner who seeks a college education. One could also do a comparison of essays written by native English speakers and nonnative speakers in a college classroom to look at the role of critical thinking.

Closing Thoughts

It would seem that immersion in an English-speaking culture for several years, with 12 –14 years of past educational experiences does not indicate that a student's writing skills are sufficient in an academic environment. Students sometimes spend several years in transitional English classes hoping to prepare themselves for a successful academic experience at the community college. As teachers of transitional students, we must look at our English learners as individuals with diverse skills and needs. I am humbled by the awesome responsibility we have as instructors to help prepare these students to be successful in their endeavors.

APPENDIX A

Student Interview Questions

I. General Background Information

1. What name would you like to use in this interview?
2. How old are you?
3. Where were you born?
4. How long did you live there?
5. Where else have you lived before coming to the U.S.?
6. How long did you live there?
7. What languages do you speak?
8. What language did you speak at home with your parents?
9. What language did you speak in school?

II. Education in Sudan

1. How many years did you attend primary school?
2. Where did you go to primary school?
3. Describe your primary school experience.
4. Describe your secondary school experience.

III. Education in Refugee Camps

1. How many refugee camps did you live in?
2. How long did you live in each camp?
3. How old were you when you lived in each camp?
4. Describe your schooling at the refugee camp.
5. How many hours a day, days a week, months a year did you

attend?

6. Who were your teachers – other refugees/trained teachers?
7. In which language did the teacher teach?
8. What subjects were taught?
9. Did you have books?
10. How many students were in the classes with you?

IV. Writing Experiences Before the U.S.

1. When did you learn to write?
2. What language did you learn to write first?
3. Tell me how you learned to write.
4. What kinds of writing did you do in Sudan - stories, essays?
5. What was the most important thing to do when you wrote?

V. Education in the U.S.

1. How old were you when you came to the U.S.?
2. Where have you lived in the U.S.?
3. How long have you lived in each place?
4. Describe your schooling in the U.S. so far.

VI. Writing in English

1. Tell me how you feel about writing in English.
2. What do you think is the most important thing to do when you write?
3. What would you like to do better in your writing?

APPENDIX B

Test of Emerging Academic English Writing Rubric

APPENDIX C

Writing and Grammar Class Objectives

Writing and Grammar Class Objectives

The student should be able to do the following:

- Write short paragraphs with all sentences relevant to the given topic.
- Write short essays (1-2 pages) with basic introductions and conclusions.
- Demonstrate knowledge of grammatical structures in speaking and writing.
- Use simple sentences with few errors and show beginning mastery of compound and complex sentences.
- Apply standard punctuation to all written work.
- Demonstrate an ability to edit own work and that of others.

APPENDIX D

Final Essay Assignment

FINAL ESSAY
SPRING SEMESTER 2008

Write an essay about your goals, hopes and dreams for your future. It should be 5 paragraphs: an introduction, 3-paragraph body and conclusion. Each paragraph in the body must have one central point. This central point will help you develop and arrange the details of your description. The body could include what you would like to do in the future, what you need to do to reach those goals and what you hope for your children. Use specific, concrete details to describe them.

1. Prewriting - gathering ideas (10 points)

What descriptive details will I include?

What is the overall point I want to make?

Brainstorm and write these phrases, words, and ideas on a paper.

2. 1st draft (10 points)

Write the paragraphs with a topic sentence.

Edit: correct, check spelling, punctuation, verb tenses, and verb agreement.

3. Final Draft (20 points)

Title - capitalized important words. Body - double-spaced, indented paragraph, neatly typed or written. In summary, you will be handing in 3 items- a brainstorming page with ideas and phrases, a 1st draft with corrections on it, and a neat, final draft.

REFERENCES

- Abusharaf, R. (2002). *Wanderings: Sudanese migrants and exiles in North America*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Adkin, M., Sample, B., & Birman, D. (1999). *Mental health and the adult refugee: The role of the ESL teacher*. ERIC Digest. Washington, D.C: National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 439 625)
- Alamprese, J. (2004, November). Approaches to ABE transition to postsecondary education. *Focus on Basics*, 6 (D) 26-30. Retrieved July 6, 2008, from <http://www.ncsall.net/?id=184>
- American heritage dictionary of the English language* (4th ed.). (2000). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Baker, W., & Boonkit, K. (2004). Learning strategies in reading and writing: EAP contexts. *Regional Language Centre Journal*, 35(3), 299-313.
- Bell, J. (1999). *Doing your research project* (3rd ed.). Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Berry, J. (2001). A psychology of immigration. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57(3), 615-631.

- Breidlid, A. (2005). Education in the Sudan: the privileging of an Islamic discourse. *A Journal of Comparative Education*, 35(3), 247-263.
- Brown, J., Miller, J., & Mitchell, J. (2006). Interrupted schooling and the acquisition of literacy: Experiences of Sudanese refugees in Victorian secondary school. *Australian Journal of Language and Literature*, 29(2), 150-162.
- Cassidy, E., & Gow, G. (2005). Making up for lost time: The experiences of southern Sudanese young refugees in high schools. *Youth Studies Australia*, 24(3), 51-55.
- DeCapua, A., Smathers, W., & Tang, F. (2007). Schooling, interrupted. *Educational Leadership*, 64(6), 40-46.
- Denny, D. (2007, June 22). *Resettled refugees tell of hardship and hope*. United States Department of State. Retrieved July 2, 2007 from <http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200706260057.html>
- Eggers, D. (2006). *What is the what?* San Francisco: McSweeney's.
- El Mahdi, N. (2007, June 14) *Cruelty and hunger in the desert*. Panos. London. Retrieved July 2, 2007 from <http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200706141144.html>
- Erlichman, S. (1997). Camp Camaboker, Ethiopia, *Peacekeeping & international relations*, 26(6), 7-11.
- Flaitz, J. (2006). *Understanding your refugee and immigrant students: An educational, cultural, and linguistic guide*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

- Florez, M. & Burt, M. (2001). *Beginning to work with Adult English: Some consideration*. ERIC Digest. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. Ed 458 837)
- Garfield, S. & Brockman, S. (2000). Students find their voices in writing. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 43(5), 484-489.
- Guest, K. (2000). Introducing critical thinking to non-standard entry students: The use of a catalyst to spark debate. *Teaching of Higher Education*, 5(3), 289-299.
- Hayward, N. (2004). Insights into cultural divides. In S. Bruce, & B. Rafoth (Eds.), *ESL writers a guide for writing center tutors* (pp. 1-15). Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers.
- Hayward, P. (1994). Pre-resettlement preparation: Needs and issues of refugees. *Proceedings of the conference of East African refugee service providers*. Arlington, VA.: Ethiopian Community Development Council and Center for Applied Linguistics. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 407 480)
- Hinkel, E. (2004). *Teaching academic ESL writing*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Hinkel, E. (2004). Tense, aspect and the passive voice in L1 and L2 academic texts. *Language Teaching Research*, 8(1), 5-29.
- Holtzman, J. (2000). *Nuer journeys, Nuer lives: Sudanese refugees in Minnesota*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

- Katznelson, H., Perpignan, H. & Rubin, B. (2001). What develops along with the development of second language writing? Exploring the “by-products.” *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 10(2), 141-159.
- Leki, I. (1992). *Understanding ESL writers: A guide for teachers*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers.
- Liu, J. (2001). Writing from Chinese to English: My cultural transformation. In D. Belcher & U. Connor (Eds.), *Reflections on multiliterate lives* (pp. 121-131). Clevedon, UK: Cromwell Press Ltd.
- Ma, V., & Schoeneman, T. (1997). Individualism versus collectivism: A comparison of Kenyan and American self-concepts. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 19(2), 261-273.
- Malia, J. (2006). ESL college writing in the mainstream classroom. *Academic Exchange*, 10(1), 28-32.
- Mathews-Aydinli, J. (2006). *Supporting adult English language learner' transitions to postsecondary education*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.
Retrieved July 6, 2008, from
www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/briefs/transition.html
- McDonald, S. (2000). Trauma and second language learning. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 56(4), 690-697.
- McKay, S. (2006). *Researching second language classrooms*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

- Meng, X., & Gregory, R. (2002). The impact of interrupted education on subsequent educational attainment: A cost of the Chinese cultural revolution. *Economic Development and Cultural Change, 50*(4), 935-959.
- Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.
- Miller, J., Mitchell, J., & Brown, J. (2005). African refugees with interrupted schooling in the high school mainstream. *Prospect: The Journal of the Adult Migrant Education Program, 20*(2), 19-33.
- Minnesota Department of Education (2007). Test of emerging academic English. Retrieved October 29, 2007 from <http://education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/groups/Assessment/documents/Instruction/00473.pdf>
- Mlynarczyk, R. (2006). Personal and academic writing: Revisiting the debate. *Journal of Basic Writing, 25*(1), 4-25.
- Moro, L. (2002). *Refugee education in a changing global climate: The case of Sudanese in Egypt*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. Ed 479 095)
- Mosselson, J. (2007). Refugees and education in the United States: Developing a critical understanding of Bosnian refugee experiences in New York City schools. In R. Goldstein, (Ed.), *Useful theory: Making critical education practical* (pp. 193-208). New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

- Nyombe, B. (1997). Survival or extinction: the fate of the local languages of the Southern Sudan. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 125, 99-130.
- Parrish, B. (2004). *Teaching Adult ESL*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Preston, R. (1991). The provision of education to refugees in places of temporary asylum: Some implications. *Comparative Education*, 27(1), 61-81.
- Rance-Roney, J. (1995). *Transitioning adult ESL learners to academic programs*. ERIC Digest. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. Ed 385173)
- Reid, J. (1993). *Teaching ESL writing*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Roberts, T., & Billings, L. (2008). Thinking is literacy, literacy thinking. *Educational Leadership*, 65(5), 32-36.
- Rutter, J. (2003). *Supporting refugee children in 21st century Britain: A compendium of essential information* (Rev. ed.). Staffordshire, UK: Trentham Books.
- Santos, M. (2004). Helping adult English language learners transition into other educational programs. In *Practitioner toolkit: Working with adult English language learners part 4*, pp.71-75. National Center for Family Literacy. Louisville, KY. Retrieved July 8, 2008, from www.cal.org/caela/tools/program_development/elltoolkit/part4
- Schwarz, R. (2005). Taking a closer look at struggling ESOL learners. *Focus on Basics*, 8 (A), 1-6. Retrieved July 14, 2008, from <http://www.ncsall.net/?id=994>

- Schweitzer, R., Melville, F., Steel, Z., & Lacherez, P. (2006). Trauma, post-migration, living difficulties, and social support as predictors of psychological adjustment in resettled Sudanese refugees. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 40(2), 179-187.
- Shandy, D. (2000). Nuer refugees in the United States. *General Anthropology*, 7(1), 1-9.
- Sommers, M. (2005). *Islands of education: Schooling, civil war and the southern Sudanese 1983-2004*. Paris, France: International Institute for Educational Planning (ERIC Document Reproductive Service No. Ed 4595403)
- Spaeth, C. (1997). Can there be writing without reading? *Notes on Literacy*, 23(2), 17-56.
- Spanos, G. (1991). *Cultural considerations in adult literacy education*. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 334 866)
- Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Steinman, L. (2007). Literacy autobiographies in a university ESL class. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 63(4), 563-573.
- Unique new arrivals. (2000, November 7). *Christian Science Monitor*, p. 8.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2006) *Helping refugees: An introduction to UNHCR*. Retrieved August 11, 2007 from <http://www.unhcr.org/basics/BASICS/420cc0432.html>

- U.N. News Service. (2007, April 3). *School enrollment rates double in Southern Sudan, reports UN children's agency*. Retrieved July 2, 2007 from <http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200704030899.html>
- Vaynshtok, O. (2002). Facilitating learning and transition among the refugee population. *Adult learning, 12/13(4/1)* 26-28.
- Wang, L. (2003). Switching to first language among writers with differing second-language proficiency. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 12*, 347-375.
- Waters, T., & Leblanc, K. (2005). Refugees and education: Mass public schooling without a nation-state. *Comparative Education Review, 49(2)*, 129-147.
- Williamson, B. (2003). Learning beyond extremis. *Adults Learning, 14(10)*, 7-10.
- Zamel, V. (1998). Strangers in academia: The experiences of faculty and ESL students across the curriculum. In V. Zamel & R. Spack (Eds.), *Negotiating academic literacies; Teaching and learning across languages and cultures* (pp. 249-264). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Zhou, A., Busch, M., Gentil, G., Eouanzoui, K., & Cumming, A. (2006). Goals for academic writing: ESL students and their instructors. In N. Spada, & J. Hulstijn (Series Eds.) & A. Cumming (Vol. Ed.), *Language learning and language teaching: Vol. 15. Students' goals for ESL and university courses* (pp. 29-49). Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co.