PURSUING ACADEMIC LITERACY FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

IN

THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE SETTING

by

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

"You will need to know this when you get to your content-area classes!" Oh, how

many times I have spoken those words to my students! Being passionate about helping

students use the English language for success in all areas of their lives has defined me as an

English educator for many years, and as I move into teaching English to English language

learners (ELLs) at the college level, the sense of urgency is even greater. Having taught

reading and writing to native speakers of English (NSE) over a span of eight years, I realize

the difficulty students have when they try to transfer their language skills knowledge to other

classes, and the English language learner is no exception. Helping students make the

connection between their English as a second language (ESL) classes and what lies ahead is

always a goal for me as I teach, but teaching language skills in isolation from content-area

courses can make attaining that goal challenging. NSE are usually already taking content-

area courses and there is no delay between learning the reading and writing skills in their

English course and applying them in other courses. The ELL who is a college student must

often wait for months to apply the language skill while he or she completes the required ESL

courses, thus making the leap from language learner to academic language user even bigger.

My own experience as an adult language learner helped me realize just how big such a

leap would be. In 1991, my husband and I, with our three children, moved to

France for my husband's work. None of us spoke any French nor had any idea of the difficulty of the task before us as we began to learn language and culture. Our children attended French schools while my husband and I were in an intensive French language program for five to eight hours a day. The goal of the French language program was not to produce students who could further their university studies in France, but the goal was to give us communication skills. The school was an institution whose entire focus was what I would later come to understand as Jim Cummins's basic interpersonal communication skills or BICS (1980).

Since my time as a language student in France, I have often reflected upon my language acquisition process and thought how I could not have entered a university in France and succeeded even though, after a year of intense, immersed-in-the-culture-study, I was fairly fluent in my spoken French. What would I have needed in order to become academically literate in French? That is, what would it have taken to get me to the point of being able to perform tasks assigned to me in a university, using French as the language of communication in listening, reading, writing and speaking? Cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) was also defined by Cummins (1980) as a level of language requiring the formal language skills in speaking, listening, reading, and writing that is needed for academic learning and even now, after over fifteen years of speaking French, five of which were spent in France, I would need very specific help with my academic language skills. I would especially need instruction in academic writing, if I were to succeed in a university setting in France, and I don't think that I am very different from many of the multilingual students whom I now teach.

I remember sitting in my French classes and being intrigued by the process our teachers used to teach us. I also remember thinking that if I ever returned to the United States, I was going to learn how to teach people who needed English, thus beginning the journey that has led me to this point. I don't think that at that time I fully understood the complexities of teaching someone a new language. I certainly understood the complexities of learning a new language and am aware that as an adult learner, the mastery of the French language will continue for the rest of my life. At the time of my own language acquisition, I did not fully understand the amount of mental and emotional space required to absorb a new language and culture. This realization has since led me to appreciate the enormous task that adult ELLs in this country have, since precious few can devote an entire year to intensive language studies as I did.

The immigrants who come to the United States often need to study in colleges or universities in order to provide for themselves and their families. Many arrive with very limited English skills and not only need to learn basic interpersonal communication skills, but they also need to achieve cognitive academic language proficiency, or CALP (Cummins, 1980). According to research done with K-12 English language learners, BICS can be achieved in six months to two years after arrival in a new country, whereas CALP takes at least five to seven years to achieve (as cited in Peregoy & Boyle, 2001)! According to Cummins, CALP can take as long as fifteen years, depending on a learner's previous educational experiences and literacy in his or her first language (L1) (as cited in Parrish, 2004). How are colleges and universities dealing with an influx of ELLs who do not have an academic level of English needed to succeed in their courses?

Many colleges and universities in the United States have realized the need to have a plan for non-native speakers of English (NNS) who wish to attend their post-secondary institution. Some offer courses to ELLs in academic English. Some offer intensive English programs (IEPs) for students who do not achieve a certain score on entrance exams, while others turn students away until they can achieve a certain score on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). A number of post-secondary institutes have realized, however, that it is beneficial to both the college, as well as the students, to offer some form of English program (usually in the form of an IEP) to their students who are developing English skills.

For many years, IEPs could use curricula and methodology that was intended for international students who would come to the United States for a time and then return to their countries of origin with polished English skills. Today's clientele for IEPs are often students who have immigrated to the U.S. either during their high school years or not, who are not wealthy, who may have had an interrupted educational experience in their home country, and who may be already working. Because these immigrants come with varying levels of formal education in L1, a program designed for an international student who has a very high level of education in L1 does not meet the needs of the immigrant language learner. Academic success for immigrant students is imperative since their need to succeed in their studies is not just to have polished English skills, but rather it is a matter of survival.

After visiting several websites connected to the American Association of Intensive English Programs (AAIEP), one can conclude that the typical approach of an IEP is to

provide the students with a sequence of courses in reading, writing, listening, speaking, and grammar. These courses are typically taught in isolation from content area courses. Some IEPs add a more advanced writing class just before a student exits the IEP. For IEPs who hold a membership in the AAIEP, there are certain standards to be maintained, but there are no required exit assessments for the students (www.aaiep.org).

I am intrigued by the fact that IEPs found in various locations across the nation have vast differences in their approaches and desired learning outcomes for their participants. Possibly the strongest similarity that they all have is that the courses of study have multiple levels that can be completed within a certain time-frame. Because I have spent some time teaching in some programs that were designed to prepare ELLs for the level of English they would need to take their content-area courses, I am deeply interested in studying a program that succeeds in giving its students the tools they need to thrive in their content-area courses in college. While individual teachers can greatly impact student learning outcomes, the bigger picture of a program's philosophy and its intentionality in implementing that philosophy can further enhance academic literacy, that is, knowing English, knowing about the content topic, and understanding how assigned tasks are to be accomplished (Echevarria, et al., 2002). If the IEP does not have an overarching design with academic literacy as its goal, the lack of consistency found in the individual classes will not completely promote it.

My own experiences have confirmed that a program lacking a stated goal of academic literacy will flounder in its direction and produce frustration for both teachers and students. In one program, I was teaching a semester-long reading and writing course

for the highest proficiency level in our program. These were students who were about to step out into their content area courses and at the beginning of the semester, most of them could not even write a coherent paragraph. Because I had previously taught in a TOEFL preparation course, I knew that the TOEFL writing requirement (which many colleges and universities use as an entrance requirement for ELLs) was a well-constructed five-paragraph essay that used somewhat fluent English language. Although this goal was not a part of the program guidelines, I determined that my students would be able to write five-paragraph essays by the end of the semester as well as solid stand-alone paragraphs. My goal was to have them produce essays that would have received a five (on a scale of six) had they been taking the TOEFL. In order to score a five on the TOEFL, a student must write an essay that responds to the topic in a well organized, developed manner using a variety of syntactic structures and broad vocabulary, and the thesis is stated and supported.

While I in no way believe that this level of writing is sufficient for the ELL who is a college student, it is the measure many colleges and universities use to determine ELL readiness for academic work. Students can be accepted into both undergraduate and graduate programs based on a satisfactory TOEFL score. I chose this goal because I needed to be realistic, given that the vast majority had come from very interrupted educational experiences in their L1 and were very far away from being able to produce an academic level of writing.

So many questions pummeled me about this situation. How can an IEP best prepare ESL students for academic success? What philosophy was driving our program?

Was it even possible to take students who started at the lowest proficiency level (level 3 in our program) and get them to a point where they could function in a content area class in just two semesters? Was it even part of our program's plan to teach English for academic purposes? As I began to ponder these questions, my desire for finding a solution that would work in a community college setting grew stronger.

In general, the students in the high-intermediate class were capable of reading and understanding the materials in scaffolded ESL textbooks, and while the reading units were theme-based, they seemed to be very unrelated to the actual lives of my students. Because I have a strong belief in content-based instruction, I began to challenge them with more difficult readings selected from magazines and newspapers that were related to some of the fields of study they were planning to pursue. While my reading selections were not as easy for them as those in the textbooks, if given enough time they could use these readings to have discussions and to respond with related writing tasks. I knew, however, that the rigors of their content area classes were going to require much more detailed readings and responses. How could I help them achieve the needed level of academic readiness required in such a short time? I kept having the overwhelming feeling that we as an IEP were not using our limited time in the most effective way to get these students in even close proximity of where they needed to be. It seemed as if our approach, which is typical of traditional IEPs, was not intentional in its overall plan and that we were mainly trying to develop BICS with a little academic prep included. As a group of teachers, we could not even agree on the purpose of our teaching.

Were we just teaching basic English language skills or were we actually teaching English for academic purposes? Because the program seemed to lack an intentional plan, we were, as a group of educators, left to grapple with what to do about content-area teachers who were unhappy with our department for sending students to them who could not meet the academic rigors of their programs because they could not use the English language in an academic way.

Rather than find fault with various programs around the country, I had a strong desire to find programs that are successful in helping ELLs develop the English skills needed to succeed in their college classes. Based upon the recommendations of colleagues, I decided to study the Commanding English Program at the University of Minnesota since its approach is thoroughly content-based and provides students who are developing their English skills with the opportunity earn college credit while gaining CALP.   The question that I will strive to answer by examining this program is: What components of a content-based, language support model can be adapted to a community college setting?

The implications for a study such as this will be significant for me personally because it will allow me to see theory aligned with practice and it will allow me to reflect upon the implications of my role as an individual teacher as well as the role of the program.   I would like to always be a part of a program that is a catalyst for my students' pursuit of their dreams. I do not want to be a part of a program that is a gatekeeper in any sense and by studying a model that successfully launches its students more quickly into

their credit-bearing academic courses, the risk of gate keeping is lowered. I also hope that one day the impact can be felt in the greater IEP community by giving an awareness of a model that is opening the doors in university academic studies sooner for ELLs.   For the larger IEP community, a study such as this may be able to help IEPs be more intentional in their quest to prepare ELLs for academic literacy.

In order to fully appreciate the unique approach of the Commanding English Program, Chapter Two of the thesis will review literature concerned with how academic literacy develops in a second language, the student population in IEPs, current practices in IEPs, content-based ESL teaching models, and literature associated with the Commanding English Program at the University of Minnesota .

Chapter Three explains the methods used to gather the information needed in order to respond to my research question. The general format is qualitative research with the case study being done using the Commanding English Program (CE Program). Chapter Four shows results from the information gathered (in Chapter Three), and Chapter Five discusses the implications for the results of Chapter Four.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this study, I examined a non-traditional approach to preparing ELLs for their content courses in English. I studied the components of a particular model, The Commanding English Program (CE Program) at the University of Minnesota, and studied the components of that program which make it unique in comparison with other English language programs attached to colleges and universities. Since I wanted to know if the CEP model could be applied to a community college setting, the literature review focused on: 1) the acquisition of academic literacy in L2; 2) immigrant vs. international students; 3) current trends and practices in IEPs; 4) content based instruction models and 5) literature concerning the CE Program at the University of Minnesota.

The Acquisition of Academic Literacy in L2

Academic literacy (AL) is the term used for the remainder of this thesis to express what can also be labeled as academic competence, CALP, academic success, academic achievement, and a myriad of other terms used to express what Newman (2002) calls a set of academic competencies that lead to academic success. Another definition for academic literacy is given by Echevarria et al. (2002) as having three knowledge bases: knowledge of English, knowledge of the content topic, and knowledge of how the assigned tasks are to be accomplished. For example, if a language learner has sufficient knowledge of the English language, then he or she will understand what is spoken and read, and this

facilitate an understanding of the content material. Understanding how a task is to be carried out means that the student grasps the instruction vocabulary as well. Words like synthesize, present, describe, compare and contrast, etc. tell the student how to successfully accomplish what has been assigned.

Newman (2002) also develops the idea of literacy as more of a social phenomenon than a purely cognitive process; it links individual decisions, motives for these decisions, and their effects within a set of social norms that govern the behavior of the members of an academic community. He maintains that students may choose to show their academic literacy skills if they are willing to do so in the ways prescribed by the instructor or institution. An example of this as it relates to ELLs would be in the area of collaborative work with fellow students. Perhaps a student's cultural background may be a barrier in participating in collaborative work, and he or she, therefore, does not participate fully. At this point, the student is choosing to not give evidence of the academic literacy he or she has for socio-cultural reasons. Consideration of these socio-cultural perspectives plays a vital role in the courses that prepare ELLs for their mainstream courses. Having an understanding of what it takes to succeed in an academic setting should determine how programs for ELLs in the college setting are designed. Since academic literacy is the goal, then literature that gives insight as to how it is acquired should be helpful.

With academic literacy defined, how is the chasm that separates initial language learning from academic literacy spanned? What does the bridge look like and how long does it take to build it? The second question is answered partially by Echevarria et al. (2004). These authors note that not all ELLs come here with the same background:

some students arrive with strong academic backgrounds being literate in their native language and have already begun to study other languages; other students come with very limited formal education and are not literate in their native language. The width of the chasm and the length, therefore, of the bridge varies from student to student. Cummins (1980) asserts in his theory that the language acquisition process is two-tiered. The first tier is basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and the second is cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). BICS is typically a one to two-year process and once attained will allow a language learner to communicate with others and communicate basic needs to others. The second tier typically takes five to seven years and involves the ability to use the language being acquired (L2) to analyze, explore, and deconstruct the concepts presented in academic texts (Collier &Thomas, 1989). Some sources interpret Cummins's findings as CALP needing seven to fifteen years to develop, depending on the learner's education background and literacy level in L1 (Parrish, 2004). The Mainstream English Language Teaching (MELT) Project sponsored by the U.S. department of Health and Human Services concluded that it takes an adult ELL who is literate in L1 between 500-1000 hours of instruction to develop low-level BICS, indicating that developing language skills adequate for college-level work would take much longer (Crandall and Sheppard, 2004).

Krashen (1982, 1985) stated that language structures are most efficiently acquired when presented through comprehensible input that is just beyond the learner's current proficiency level (i+1 will be used to represent this concept for the remainder of this thesis). The theories of both Cummins (1980) and Krashen (1982, 1985) suggest that

second language acquisition (SLA) is a complex cognitive task and cannot advance beyond BICS without explicit instruction.. These theories support the use of content as a vehicle for language learning, even though the language of the content may be slightly above the ELL's proficiency level.

Because the needs of ELLs living in this country have changed over the past decade, academic literacy is a necessity in order for them to succeed as students here, as well as for them to move into careers that can sustain them. Programs designed for students who were here to study and then return to their home countries are no longer valid for today's immigrant student population.

<div align="center">Immigrant vs. International Student</div>

What is the difference between an international student and an immigrant student, and why should this affect the programs available to ELLs at the college level? An international student is a non-resident student who is in the country for the purpose of studying and will return to his or her home country. An immigrant student is a resident who will continue to reside in the country during and after his or her studies. Crandall and Sheppard (2004) state that about one in four students in community colleges is an immigrant and the numbers are on the rise. The authors further indicate that of these immigrant students, there are two types who attend college: adults with basic literacy deficiencies and adults who come with a high level of education from their home countries (2004). While the two categories are broad, most adult students will fall into some sub-category of these two groups. Cochran (as cited in Rosenthal, 2000) of City University of New York identified six groups within that population needing support in English:

1. Native speakers of English: Two types of native English speakers:

monolingual and bilingual/bidialectal- are identified. Born in the U.S. they often

need remedial or basic skills instruction in English in order to continue into

 college-level coursework.

2. Close to native speakers: These are students whose oral English fluency

exceeds their ability to use English in academic tasks. They come from a diverse

ethnic

background and may or may not have been born in the U.S. In general, at home

with their parents and with their peers, they speak a language or dialect other than

standard English

3. Foreign educated adults with some knowledge of English:

In addition, they have studied English as a foreign language and have

good grammar knowledge and reading knowledge in English. They may

temporarily reside in the U.S. while earning a degree. Nonetheless, in order to

succeed academically they may need to improve their listening, speaking, and

writing skills in English.

4. Foreign educated adults with no knowledge of English: Cochran divided this

group into those with virtually no knowledge of English and those who immigrated

to the U.S. and completed high school here (Generation 1.5).

5. Nonnative speakers with limited schooling: these are immigrant and refugee

students with low-level academic language skills in both L1 and in English.

They may have limited formal education in L1 and as a result, their speech may be

non-standard in both languages.

6. Nonnative, not literate speakers: these are adults who have neither native

language literacy nor any knowledge of English. They need to develop literacy

skill in L1 as well as in English.

Cochran stated that while these descriptions may not describe all ELLs at all institutions, they

do illustrate the range of possible needs (as cited in Rosenthal, 2000).

As noted by Reppy and Adames (2000), there is a growing number of college students

who have completed high school in the U.S, but whose home language is not English. These

students are typically labeled Generation 1.5, a term that has been defined by many. The

definition that I will adhere to for this thesis will be Destandu and Wald's (as cited in

Smalkowski, 2005) which states that in general these students have been in the U.S. for more

than six years, are highly fluent in their English conversation, and may identify more with

U.S. culture than any other. These authors also state that Generation 1.5 students are less

academically literate in general than immigrants or internationals who arrived at a later age

than they did, thus reinforcing the need for language support. This segment of the university

student population will continue to grow, according to Harkau, Siegal, and Losey (1999)

because of the changes in immigration laws, wars and political situations, and the growth of

indigenous language minority groups.

<div align="center">Current Trends in IEP Instruction</div>

 With an awareness of the types of ELLs currently attending post-secondary

institutions, it is interesting to look at some of the programs offered around the country.

An internet search of intensive English programs will net IEPs in almost every state. Most programs adhere to a multi-level approach that must be completed prior to ELLs taking mainstream college classes. The courses are stand-alone in that they are not connected to other college courses. Course offerings usually include some form of speaking and listening class, reading and writing, grammar, and sometimes TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) preparation classes. According to Christensen, Fitzpatrick, Murie, and Zhang (as cited in Higbee, Lundell and Arendale, 2005), the program goal of traditional IEPs is that students acquire language; the level of instruction is pre-college; the courses are primarily non-credit bearing, and the pedagogical focuses are skills-based; the writing instruction uses a process approach with instructor-generated topics; the listening is for comprehension of a native speaker; and the grammar is taught for the mastery of rules. The advising focus of a traditional IEP is on visa regulation and ESL requirements while the target population is mostly for international students who are fully literate in L1. This approach does not meet the needs of immigrant students who may have had interrupted educational experiences, or have literacy gaps in L1.

By providing a basic overview of a few IEPs and the current trends, the significance of a non-traditional approach (that is, an IEP that does not follow the above definition given by Christensen et al.) can be more clearly seen. Kuo (2000) defines four curricular designs that summarize the types of IEPs that can be found on U.S. college campuses: the truncated design which is non-credit bearing and is a beginning and intermediate level program; the academic design which provides credit for all ESL courses found within an academic department except for non-credit bearing beginning

level courses; the comprehensive design which is similar to the academic design except it offers a wider breadth of courses to accommodate more proficiency levels; and the credit design which gives credit for almost all ESL courses and helps students make the transition form ESL to mainstream courses.

An overview of four programs on four campuses was provided by Reppy and Adames (as cited in Rosenthal, 2000) and offer some insight into the vast differences that can be found in the teaching of ELLs on college and university campuses. In trying to understand what is beneficial to students, it is helpful to look at some of the approaches taken around the country.

The first program was at Kean University in New York and it is an ESL program that is housed within an English department. Kean University is a large university enrolling over 9500 undergraduates and 1,800 graduate students. It is a culturally and linguistically diverse campus of students. The ESL program was started in 1960 by an English professor who noticed that students whose first language was not English struggled in freshman composition courses. She suggested that these students be placed in a separate section in order to receive the help they needed. From there, the program has evolved into its present program. After an ESL placement test, students are placed in one of four levels. Each level consists of a six-credit core course and while these courses carry credit, the credits do no count towards graduation. However, in the more advanced level ESL courses, there is a progression towards content-based instruction and a total of fifteen academic credits can be earned at this level.

The second program was the English Language Program (ELP) at the University

of California, San Diego. It is a program whose clientele are international students who are in

the U.S. studying on student visas and will be returning to their home countries. Its focus is

on reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The students do not have a direct admission

track to the university. The ELP offers four sessions that last ten weeks each.

Instruction is provided on eleven different levels, and each level has twenty hours of

instruction per week. There are elective courses offered as well in the areas of business,

medical, academic, and conversational English.

The third program overviewed was the American Language Institute (ALI) at New

York University and it is actually part of an academic institution. This institution was

founded in 1945 and has grown into a comprehensive program of English language

instruction. Its target students are international students who have matriculated or will

soon matriculate into the university's undergraduate or graduate programs and whose primary

concerns are academic. The other student profile it targets would be also international

students , but instead of their concerns being academically driven, they are career and

professionally driven. The ALI gives its own entrance test in order to place students.

Students whose scores are lower level are recommended for an intensive, noncredit course of

study that is twenty hours per week. If a students' scores are in the mid to high range, the

student is recommended for university preparatory courses which are credit bearing

The fourth program was the ESL program at Miami-Dade Community College, the largest community college in the United States. It has a student population that consist of mostly Hispanics, but there is a strong minority of Haitians and some other language groups as well. Students whose English proficiency is inadequate to take the school's Computerized Placement Test (CPT), the entrance exam given to all incoming freshmen, are given the Michigan English Placement Test (MEPT). Based upon the MEPT results, students are then placed in one of six levels of the ESL program. As the level progresses, the options for courses also progress. For example, a student at level six could opt to take a regular college course that is paired with an ESL writing course. Upon completion of all six levels, students take the CPT and placement into appropriate

courses is determined by departments outside the ESL department.

According to Kuo, community colleges have been taken by surprise with the high demand for ESL courses on their campuses. This has resulted in pieced together

programs that can be located in a wide range of departments or completely isolated from

the rest of the campus. Because the courses seemed to have evolved in an accelerated way because of an influx of students, the goals can be unclear and assessment efforts can be lacking. Further complicating the issues is that the instructors hired in these programs have a part-time status and heavy teaching loads thus making it difficult to improve curricula (2000). Students who come to these programs with deficiencies in academic literacy need programs that intentionally teach with the goal of academic literacy in mind.

Content-based ESL College Instruction

Because a great deal of literature indicates content-based ESL instruction is an

example of best practice in the field, a definition, as well as the foundational theories for the

model are in order. Content-based ESL instruction is defined as an approach in which

content topics are used as the vehicle for second language learning; it is a system of

instruction in which teachers use a variety of instructional techniques as a way of developing

second language, content, cognitive and study skills, often delivered through thematic units

(Echevarria et al., 2004). This definition is further developed by Kasper (2000) as instruction

that is carefully planned, is purposeful, is academically based, and targets linguistic and

critical thinking skills. Yet another definition for content-based

instruction is that it is second language programs in which lessons are organized around

topics, themes, and/or subject matter rather than language points. Simply put, Brinton,

Snow and Wesche (1989) contend that content-based instruction comprises comprehensible

input through which not only language, but information is acquired.

The theories that are foundational to content-based college instruction come from

Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis, Cummins's two-tiered model of BICS and

CALP and Anderson's cognitive learning theory. Each of these theories can be tied to

content-based instruction rationale and practice (Krashen,1985)

In Krashen's second language acquisition theory, he maintains that second language

development happens in the forms of learning and acquiring. The difference in the two forms

is that learning occurs through explicit language instruction and acquisition

occurs as language is used to learn about other things. Above all, Krashen's theories are

based upon his belief that meaning rather than form is required for second language

development. Krashen stated that language structures are best acquired by making input

comprehensible but slightly above the learner's proficiency level (1985). Content-based

instruction seeks to allow students to develop language skills through using authentic, and

contextualized materials, thus adhering to the idea that form is seen through meaningful texts,

and that comprehensible input should be above the ELL's proficiency level.

   Cummins's two-tiered model supports the idea that college ELLs need to be both

functionally and academically literate and that those two proficiency levels occur in

succession (Cummins, 1980). Content-based instruction seeks to help students

achieve CALP by using authentic materials from the content area in a setting that supports

learning about content and language simultaneously.

   Finally, Anderson's cognitive learning theory asserts that learning takes place

progressively through stages: the cognitive stage, or the instructional phase; the associative

stage, or the stage at which the learner applies what has been taught but may

still need support; and the autonomous stage, or the stage at which the learner performs

tasks automatically and without support (1983, 1985). In order to progress through these

stages, the learner must have extensive practice and feedback, as well as be instructed in the

use of learning strategies (Kasper, 2000). Content based instruction offers the student the

opportunity to learn about writing by writing about the content being studied; to learn about

reading by reading material associated with the content being learned; and to learn

to speak by speaking about the content material. All of these opportunities give the extensive practice and feedback needed to progress through the stages.

Crandall (1994) outlines six K-12 program models that are content-centered: sheltered subject matter teaching, theme-based programs, sheltered instruction, language across the curriculum, adjunct model, and cognitive academic language learning approach (CALLA). Each of these models offers students integrated language and content instruction which allows ELLs to continue their academic development while they are also acquiring academic language proficiency.

In sheltered subject matter teaching, the language of texts has been adapted to make content more accessible. It has also been called sheltered English or language sensitive content instruction. This type of teaching is done by content instructors or by a language teacher who has expertise in another academic area. The approach in both teacher language and textbook language is more accessible for ELLs, thus making it possible for the ELL to learn course content. The focus of the course is on the acquisition of content rather than on teaching language skills, although language skills are naturally learned in this setting.

Theme-based programs develop a curriculum around selected topics from a content area. The goal of such a program is to help ELLs develop academic language skills through relevant content. Theme-based programs are more focused on language skills and the content is a vehicle for developing these skills.

Sheltered instruction is content curriculum that has been adapted for use with students who have developing proficiency in a language. This model has been used in

foreign language immersion programs in order to allow for the teaching of content material in the foreign language. This model has been adapted for use in ESL programs for intermediate or advanced ELLs, but was not created explicitly for ELLs.

Language across the curriculum is content-centered instruction in which curricula has been integrated to teach both language and content in all curricular offerings. It can also be done in a paired or team teaching situation where both content-area teacher and ESL teacher work together to present the material. This model requires strong collaboration between the two teachers if it is to work well.

The adjunct model links a specific language learning course such as reading or writing with a content course in which both ELL and native speakers are enrolled. The adjunct course uses the same content as the content course, but the focus of instruction is language skill practice using the content material as a base. The adjunct course takes place at a different time from the content course, but the instructor for the adjunct course must be familiar with not only the content of the content-area course, but also the lesson plans for each day and plan the adjunct course accordingly. This is an ideal situation for the ELL in that it offers challenging exposure to the content material, yet it provides the support needed to understand the academic language used to present the course content.

The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) combines language, content and learning strategy instruction. This approach is typically used in transitional upper elementary and secondary students who are at an intermediate to advanced level of English language proficiency (Crandall, 1994). CALLA does focus on

language learning while using content, and while teaching students to recognize their learning

styles so that they can learn more efficiently.

Even though the above program models are most commonly found in K-12 education,

some can be adapted for post-secondary courses. The adjunct model, for example, is easily

adapted to the post-secondary level. Usually in the post secondary setting, there is not a

course by course approach, but rather a program approach such as the following models:

English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and Writing

Across the Curriculum/ Writing in the Disciplines (WAC/WID). The instructional situation

determines the model chosen by a particular

program for implementation, no matter which program is used, each has as its goal of refining

the linguistic and academic skills that a student will need in order to succeed in college

(Kasper, 2000).

Several programs fall under the more general category of EAP: intensive content-

based ESL programs, linked courses, and self-contained content-based ESL courses. An

intensive content-based ESL program is highly structured and interdisciplinary, requiring

heavy collaboration between ESL and mainstream faculty. All courses are interconnected and

reinforce one another. Students take their courses in blocks and are with their block for the

entire day. All students in the program take the same courses. Several of the program's

courses are credit-bearing, thus allowing students to earn college credit while refining their

academic language skills. Linked courses are EAP models that allow students to take a

mainstream course that has been paired with and ESL course. The two courses are totally

aligned so that the material of both courses are identical, only the

teaching focus is different. Self-contained, content-based ESL courses do not involve

mainstream faculty and, therefore, do not require collaboration. The self-contained

content based course may be unidisciplinary or multidisciplinary. Both content and language

are presented by the ESL faculty. The courses are not usually credit-bearing. WAC/WID

programs align with content-based ESL programs to extend the writing instruction, and the

focus shifts from the ESL program to the mainstream teachers while requiring collaboration

between the both ESL and mainstream faculty (Kasper, 2002). Typically, WAC incorporates

the teaching of academic writing skills in courses where writing is not usually the focus,

whereas WID teaches students how to write specifically for a discipline. ESP focuses on

specific vocabulary for careers, thus not diving deeply into academic literacy needs.

<div align="center">The Commanding English Program</div>

It is helpful to look at a program that actually incorporates components of different

program models, and the Commanding English Program (CE Program) on the campus of the

University of Minnesota is such a program since it incorporates linked courses and teaches

students to write for content-area work. It is primarily designed for students who do not fit

into the framework of a traditional ESL program: that is, students who are residents of the

United States and have done some of their secondary education in here; who are verbally and

aurally competent in English, but who may lack in academic literacy. While language

development is still the base of the program, it puts language development into the context of

academic coursework thus allowing students to earn college credit during their freshman

year.

The CE Program is mandatory for U.S resident students who are admitted to the University of Minnesota, who have been in the U.S. for only part of their schooling (8 years or less), whose home language is not English, and who have test scores indicating a lack of English proficiency. The CE Program is not, therefore, for immigrant and refugee students who have not done their secondary education in the U.S, or who do not meet TOEFL or MELAB score requirements, nor is it for international students who are here for short-term study: It is primarily designed for students who have had some of their education in the U.S., thus targeting Generation 1.5, that is those students who immigrated to the U.S. during their school years and are using English outside of the home but still adhering to L1 and cultural nuances at home (Harklau et al., 1999). This fact also sets the program apart from traditional IEPs which must accommodate students who come from all levels of educational backgrounds in both L1 and English. Another distinguishing factor for the CE Program is that students are earning credits and meeting course requirements while gaining academic literacy. (Higbee et al, 2005)

The CE Program's goal of academic literacy is based upon the research done by Krashen, Zamel, and Vygotsky (as cited by Higbee et al., 2005) which indicates that language ability is facilitated when it is connected to knowledge in a given subject matter; the learning is both about language and content.

The CE Program is a linked content based instruction model. According to Christensen et al. (2005), placing the CE Program within the content and context of the freshman year allows students to read and write extensively.

The curriculum reflects the CE program's goal by addressing the areas of academic writing, grammatical accuracy, academic voice, oral communication, and reading. Each of these areas is designed to correct the specific problems that ELLs often have in academic literacy. In examining each curriculum focus, the program's intentional approach can be seen.

The writing courses within the CE Program are designed to develop academic writing by building writing proficiency and confidence and by teaching the process of writing academic papers. In the first course, students begin by writing a literacy narrative which explores their own education. By the end of the first writing course, students will have produced source-based writing that leads up to a research paper of six to eight pages. The second writing course continues the focus of source-based writing and students work up to a ten to fifteen page research paper. By the end of the first year, students will have written approximately eight papers with two of them requiring fairly extensive research.

The writing courses in the CE Program present the same challenges that writing courses in that the university's mainstream writing courses provide: developing a position and supporting it in an organized and specific manner; citing sources using MLA and APA formats; and writing with a formal, academic tone.

This close adherence to principles of other university writing courses allows these writing courses to meet the first year writing requirement as outlined by the University of Minnesota.

Although the same concepts are taught in the CE Program as in the mainstream writing courses, there are some specific ways that the needs of the language learner are met: 1) in-class graded writing assignments are fewer; 2) reading assignments used with writing correlate with vocabulary level of the students; 3) major papers are drafted three times, allowing for the specific needs of ELLs to be addressed; and 4) a peer tutor is available in the writing classroom so that students have more access to one-on-one help.

The grammar course is not taught in isolation; rather it is paired with the writing course that CE students take during their first semester. The focus is on editing and allows a student to use the mistakes made in his or her own writing as a learning experience. The teacher is then able to address students' needs in a very individualized way.

Along with the content based approach, there is implicitly built into the curriculum the teaching of academic voice. Academic voice is best defined as the confidence a student finds as a result of having his or her ideas about subjects valued (Higbee et al, 2005). This focus is about building student confidence, instructors valuing what has been written as opposed to focusing on the errors made, and then moving students from personal experience writings to teaching students to incorporate others' works into their own and to give credit to those other authors. The CE Program also helps students develop academic voice and a sense of place by offering small class sizes, learning

communities, collaboration with advisors and the writing center, a process-based approach to composition instruction, and a multi-cultural content in its reading curriculum (Higbee et al, 2005).

The CE Program offers speech classes which meet the university requirements for speech and yet address the more pertinent needs of ELLs. Students are taught how to compensate for accented speech and how to give formal, academic presentations. This emphasis on oral communication is duplicated in the reading adjunct courses.

Reading proficiency is taught in the following way: students take one literature course (which meets a university literature requirement), linked content courses (either a biology, sociology, or humanities course) which are paired with a reading class for each course. The reading courses that are paired with the content courses are called adjunct reading courses. The reading instructors of the CE Program work closely with content course instructors in order to develop reading that follows the goals and course outlines of the content courses. One of the observations made by Christensen et al (as cited in Higbee, 2005) is that the CE students often out perform their native English speaking peers in their content courses because of the close connection between the reading courses and the content area courses.

Other areas of uniqueness for the CE Program are: its collaborative nature which allows teachers, students and advisors to work closely to insure student success; its learning communities which are established by the sets of classes that the same group of students take together; and its connected, multicultural curriculum.

Each one of these areas plays an intentional part in reaching the goal of producing academically literate students who can then move out of the CE Program and be fully integrated university students.

The CE Program evaluates itself during each semester. Two meetings per semester take place where students and advisors meet, teachers communicate with each other and changes are made if necessary. Students are also asked to fill out program evaluations. These are done anonymously and contain both numerical ratings as well as narrative response. This evaluation is designed specifically for participants of the CE Program and, therefore, for ELLs. In contrast, an IEP where I have taught, teacher evaluations are done by the students during the last week of class. These are evaluations of the teacher and the course. They are standard evaluations which are done by all students in all classes, not just students in the ESL program. The program, however, is not evaluated at all unless the students wish to write about it in the additional comments section.

In looking to see how academic literacy is defined and how the experts say it is acquired, and then in considering how the change in ESL student population over the past few years has caused post-secondary ESL programs to struggle as they deal with both influx and diversity, there seems to be a gap between the acquisition of academic literacy and program design and implementation for ELLs in post secondary institutions. By looking closely at a program whose stated goal is academic literacy for its ELL participants, perhaps the gap cold be challenged at the community college level.

Having reviewed literature about academic literacy, college ELL populations, trends and practices in IEPs around the country, content-based instruction, and the CE Program, I am ready to determine which, if any, of the components of the CE Program could be adapted to a community college setting in order to better meet the academic needs of ELLs. Chapter Three will detail the methodology of my on-site research of the CE Program. Chapter Four will detail the findings of my research, and Chapter Five will discuss the implications of my findings and any conclusions that can be drawn.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Since the research question sought to answer which components of a content-based language support model could be applied to the community college setting, a case study approach allowed the best opportunity to learn what is already taking place, how it is working, and if any of what is already being done could work in a community college setting. The CE Program offered an occasion to see theory aligned with practice in the post-secondary environment. The CE Program is content-based with academic literacy as the overarching goal. The combination of these two factors made it a very good match for my research because I wanted to see first-hand how a content-based, academic literacy-focused program actually functioned.

Setting and Participants

The CE Program on the campus of the University of Minnesota was chosen as the model for this study because of its highly structured and intentional approach to developing academic literacy in first-year, post-secondary students who are not yet proficient in academic English. The CE Program's approach is non-traditional in that it does not have as its sole purpose the development of English language skills. It is a content-based instruction model that is intended for students who are U.S. residents and who have been in the U.S. from one to eight years. (Christensen et al, 2005). Because most of the students in the program are students who have done at least part of their education in the U.S., the English proficiency level of the students may be somewhat higher than many of the ELLs enrolled in community colleges.

Research Paradigm

What components of a content-based language support model can be adapted to a community college setting? In order to determine this, an intense observation of the CE Program took place. There are four pieces of research that allowed me to form conclusions: an understanding of the program itself; study of the curriculum used in the program; classroom observation; and an interview with the director of the program.

The methodology was qualitative based upon Brown and Rodgers's (2002) parameters that allow for the background, current status, and environmental interaction of an individual, a group, an institution, or a community to fit into the category of case study. By using methodology that includes gathering information about the CE Program, and its current status, my research is a limited case study. It is not a developmental case study in that it does not look for patterns or growth, but it does look at the current status of a program in an in-depth way thus fulfilling qualitative research as defined by Brown and Rodgers (2002). The CE Program is both an institution and a community since the CE Program defines itself as a learning community (Robin Murie, personal communication, January, 2006). Data was collected using observation and evaluation as well as with surveys and interviews. According to Brown and Rodgers, these methods fit into the scope of qualitative research and their definition of research as it applies to second language research (2002).

Data Collection Instruments

Because much of the information I was seeking was intuition-based in its retrieval, I wanted to have some solid guidelines to govern my perusals and observations. I

developed the instruments for this phase of the research in order to keep my objectives

clear. It was more productive for me to use my own instruments than someone else's because

it allowed me to think through exactly what I wanted to know and then look only for those

things. These instruments were designed based upon the program's claims (Higbee et al,

2005) and upon my experiences as a teacher at both the secondary and post-secondary levels.

The checklist for the course materials (Appendix A) was designed to help me assess whether

or not textbooks and course materials had been adapted in any way for ELLs. The classroom

observation checklist (Appendix B) has six areas that are to be answered with either a positive

or a negative response and they deal with level of instruction, grammar, reading assignments,

classroom environment, teaching objective, and diversity (I was very interested in whether or

not the classes had a representation of several ethnicities since teaching to a single ethnic

group becomes tailored for the group's needs rather than being diversified). The interview

questions for the director (Appendix C) were created to be certain that I had come to the

correct conclusion about each of the areas I asked about. Each of these components is vital in

the determination of what can be transferred to the community college setting.

<div align="center">Data Collection and Analysis</div>

Gaining an understanding of the program was first done by reading what the program

had to say about itself. An exploration of the literature describing the program, as reflected in

Chapter Two, was very helpful in understanding the mechanics and ideals of the program. In

order to move from seeing the program from its own perspective and from words on a page,

the curriculum associated with the program was reviewed.

To determine if there is a similarity between the students in the CE Program and those who are in the community college setting, other questions that had to be answered were what type of student is in the program and what student needs are, as well as what type of faculty the director seeks when hiring personnel? If enrollment is limited, what happens to students who are not accepted into the program? The tool for classroom observation and the interview with the director of the program was designed to answer these questions Other than in the content area courses that are taken in the CE Program, are there additional textbooks or course packets? How does the language of these textbooks compare with textbooks typically associated with IEPs? The course materials tool was designed to answer these questions. Finding the answers to these questions gave insight to what components of the CE Program could be adapted for the community college setting.

In order to gather this information, I used the previously discussed instruments during a three-day, on-site visit to the University of Minnesota where I sat through two classes and spent one afternoon looking at literature used in some of the courses. I also had access to the program director for an initial in-person interview and a follow-up, email interview.

Chapter Four provides the results of the research that came from my reading, from my looking at the course materials, from my in-class observations, and from the interview I conducted with the director. Chapter Four also examines the rationale for each of the questions used in the observation and classroom checklists. Chapter Five focuses on the implications of my research as it relates to the research question, and the conclusions that can be drawn based upon my findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

In order to see which components of a content-based language support model such as the University of Minnesota's Commanding English Program could be applied to the community college setting, I read about the CE Program, studied the course materials used in its classes, interviewed its director, and observed in two of the program's classes. In this chapter I will document my findings and discuss their relationship to the research question.

Part of my desire to look at the program closely was to see if it was in fact doing what it proclaimed and then if and how its components could be applied in another setting. The literature that I read about the CE Program was autobiographical in nature. By its own definition, the CE Program is:

…a model program for multilingual students who lack fluency in academic

English but may not fit well into traditional ESL programs. CE situates language

development within the academic content of the first-year coursework, placing

students into the college curriculum and allowing them to earn the credit of the

freshman year.

(Higbee, Lundell, and Arendale, 2005)

There were two sources for my reading about the Commanding English Program: *The General College Vision (*Higbee et al. 2005), and a research paper entitled " After the Program Ends: A Follow-Up Study with Generation 1.5 Students Who Participated in an English Support Learning Community" (Christensen, 2005). The chapter in *The General College Vision* is designed to inform its readers of the innovative programs that are found in the General College. It is a quasi-objective piece of work which is written from within the General College.   There was an acknowledgement that further evaluation needed to take place perhaps in the form of following a cohort of Commanding English students through to graduation. As part of my research, I wanted to look closely to see if the proclamations that the program made about itself were true. The research paper was also written by an instructor in the program, but it was an attempt to see if the program had given Commanding English participants the tools they needed to succeed in their major areas of study.

The information in *The General College Vision* addresses each of the areas that make up the philosophy and implementation of the CE Program.   The program's goals are to help students develop academic writing, grammatical accuracy, academic voice, oral communication skills, and academic reading proficiency. All of this is set in a small collaborative setting where the curriculum is connected, there is specialized advising, and the students are part of a learning community. In the section of this chapter where I address the course materials, I connected these areas to course work and materials.

The follow-up study that was done with the students who had been in the CE Program was done for the purpose of understanding the experience of those students after they exited the CE Program. The author wanted to answer six questions in order to describe the students' post-CE Program experiences and to gain these students' perspectives of the university and the role of the CE as an access point.

Here are the author's six questions:

1. What do Commanding English students major in?

2. What classes do they take?

3. Do they feel prepared for classes outside the Commanding English Program and General College?

4. What are the students' experiences with diversity at the University of Minnesota?

5. Do they still have the idealistic vision of being a doctor, many of the Commanding English students have during their first weeks of class?

The author of this paper wanted to look at students who were in their junior year at the university. She contacted the twenty students who had been in the Commanding English Program. Only five responded and, of those five, only three could actually participate in the study.

The results of the study indicated that while each of the students had small suggestions that they thought would improve the program, such as one saying that she felt a more writing-intensive course should replace the reading adjunct courses, the overall opinion was that the Commanding English Program had done its part in preparing them.

Other situations such as time management and work and family responsibilities were the contributors to any problems they may have encountered.

All of these students take courses such as pre-calculus, microbiology, and microeconomics. Each one feels that the Commanding English Program's multiethnic literature helped them be able to appreciate the diversity that they find in their post-Commanding English courses. (Christenson, 2005)

Commanding English Courses

To understand the significance of the course materials, an awareness of the Commanding English schedule is needed. The progression of the courses is designed to build upon each other as they lead students towards independent academic literacy. During the fall semester, a CE Program participant will take the following courses:

GC 1041 Developing College Reading (2 cr.)

GC 1051 Intro to College Writing: Workshop (2 cr.)

GC 1421 Writing Laboratory I (3 cr.)

GC 1461 Oral Communications in the Public Sphere (3 cr.)

Students choose one of the following general education classes to pair with the college reading course:

GC 1211 People and Problems (4 cr.)

GC 1311General Art (3 cr.)

GC 1131 Principles of Biological Science (4 cr.)

All of these courses are credit-bearing and fit into a requirement for the University of

Minnesota. In the spring, the following courses are required in the Commanding English

Program:

GC 1422 Writing Laboratory II (3 cr.)

GC 1364 Literature of the American Immigrant Experience (3 cr.)

GC 1042 Reading in the Content Areas (2 cr.)

Students must choose one of the following to pair with the reading course:

GC 1285 Cultural Anthropology (4 cr.)

GC 1135 Biological Science: The Human Body (4 cr.)

GC 1311 General Art (3 cr.)

<div align="center">Textbooks and Materials</div>

To guide my perusal of the textbooks associated with the CE Program, I had a

checklist with four questions:

1) Are the textbooks used written specifically for ELLs?

2) Are the textbooks typical post-secondary textbooks with academic language appropriate to

that level?

3) Are course syllabi comparable to syllabi from mainstream, post-secondary courses?

4) Are the books for the literature courses simplified texts?

For the courses that are paired with the reading adjunct course, the students use the same textbooks as the rest of the class and are responsible for the same course work as non-Commanding English students. The reading adjunct course does not have a separate textbook, the instructor uses the textbook for the reading development.

 The reading adjunct course is a demanding course that requires students to take responsibility for their learning. There is an emphasis on vocabulary, but also continuous assessment of the content of the course reading is going on during class.

The literature course, Literature of the American Immigrant Experience, offers intriguing pieces for students to study and discuss. Four novels, which explore U.S. immigration themes, are read during the course. These novels are either about or written by immigrants. A recent course list included such works as *Thousand Pieces of Gold*, *Bread Givers*, *No-No Boy*, and *Odyssey to the North*. While these selections may not have decidedly complex plots, or use older English as some of the typical classics of a post-secondary literature course, they provide the opportunity for critical reading skills to be taught through plots and settings that are more readily accessible to ELLs . The required reading is usually 50 to 100 pages per class period, thus challenging the students in a way typical for a post-secondary literature course. (Higbee et al., 2005) Since building academic voice is an integral part of the CE Program, using literature that taps into an existing schema allows the students to have academic discussions born out of their own diverse perspectives.

The textbooks used in the CE program are not written specifically for ELLs. Textbooks are either from the mainstream courses that have been paired with a reading adjunct course, or they are other non-ESL textbooks thus having appropriate academic level for the level. The CE Program does not use simplified literature books for the literature course, but rather it selects books that are written from a global perspective .

<center>Course Syllabi</center>

Question three from the textbook checklist was the question I sought to answer in looking at the syllabi: Are the syllabi from the CE Program comparable to mainstream, post-secondary course syllabi? In reviewing the course syllabi, I found that the course requirements and instructor expectations are not any less rigorous than a typical university-level course. Each course in the CE Program has a syllabus with expectations stated. In order for the course to be allowed to fulfill any requirement at the university, the course has to meet the university's established criteria. Even though the writing courses are taught by the CE faculty, the course workload is comparable to a typical first-year, post-secondary composition class.(see Appendices D and E) Course syllabi for the program are non-ESL specific and are designed to prepare the program participants for what they will encounter once they have completed their CE courses. The expectations of the instructors are clear, the way in which grades are earned is also addressed, and appropriate information for course completion is included.

Class Observations

Being able to actually sit in on two of the CE classes was part of my data collection

because I felt that I would be able to observe the true level of interchange between students

and teachers. Although this type of observing is somewhat intuitive, it is intuition based upon

my experience as a teacher both at the college level and high school level. What I wanted to

observe was whether or not the level of instruction was modified for ELLs. I had a checklist

of only six questions to guide my observation. Although the

checklist is simple, it helped me focus on the core elements of what I wanted to know, and it

guided me in my observation of some of the CE Program's claims. After I list and briefly

respond to the checklist items, I will follow up with a more detailed description of my

observations.

Here are my six items on the checklist with a rationale for each and the answers:

1) College level instruction Yes/ No
Rationale: Is the level of instruction what the students would encounter in a
mainstream course?
Answer: Based upon what I observed in both classes, the level of instruction was
typical of a post-secondary class. An example from the reading adjunct course was that the
students were immediately held accountable for previously assigned readings and the whole
class was dependent upon the students having done their preparation.

2) Grammar instruction connected to editing strategies for writing Yes/No
Rationale: Because the program claims to focus on teaching students to self and peer
edit without stand-alone grammar instruction, I wanted to see if this is how it actually
happened.
 Answer: The writing class was built upon a research-based writing project which was
being peer-edited that day. Feedback was to include grammatical corrections, so instead of an
explicitly taught grammar class, the students were seeing in each

other's work what would not work and helping each other determine why and how to correct.

3) Reading assignments connected to the content-area courses Yes/ No
Rationale: I really wanted to see if the reading adjunct class actually was based upon course material from a biology class, for example.
Answer: The reading assignments came from the biology book, and reading for comprehension was taught using that textbook.

4) Classroom environment promotes all-student participation Yes/ No
Rationale: The CE Program desires to help students achieve academic voice and I wanted to if the classroom environment was conducive to building this in the students.
Answer: In both of the classes I observed, student participation was expected, and the lessons were structured in such a way that students had to participate. In the writing class, it was not possible to be in the class without having a draft of the research paper to edit. Everyone, therefore, was participating. In the reading adjunct class, students worked collaboratively thus creating an environment of everyone being involved.

5) Focus of classes is on academic literacy rather than language learning Yes/No
Rationale: Since the CE Program is a language support model for students who already have a certain level of proficiency in the English language, I wanted to see if the classes focused on students developing the high level academic proficiency instead of basic language functions.
Answer: Both classes were specifically designed to promote academic literacy with all aspects of language learning embedded in the class.

6) Ethnic diversity Yes/ No
Rationale: This seems like an unusual question for a program whose purpose is to provide language support for a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual population, but my interest was in whether or not an instructor had to reach a diverse group of students rather than a more homogenous group because when there is a strong representation of just one ethnic group, the instruction can lean towards addressing issues unique to that culture.
Answer: The ethnic diversity of these classes can be seen and felt. Each class seemed to have a fairly diverse group of class members, and the instructors grouped them so that English was the language of communication.

The first class that I observed was one of the writing classes and as stated earlier, the students were working on a near-final draft of a paper that carried important grade weight. True to the program's claim of the emphasis being less on grades for writing and more about teaching the steps of effective writing with a respect for the additional time it takes to formulate and write in a second language, students had been working on this paper through several edits. There had been teacher feedback, self-editing, and peer editing. On the day that I observed, the students were paired and had been given another student's paper to edit for homework. They were to conference with each other about what each one had edited on the other's paper. It was very much the sort of experience that any freshman composition class could incorporate effectively. The instructor was available for assistance, but the class was strongly student-led. Because my visit was near the end of the semester, the editing process had already been taught and the students were comfortable using it. While this class is only available to Commanding English participants, its approach could benefit most any struggling writer. The difference, however was that this was a class of students who were still developing fluency in sentence structure and vocabulary as opposed to native writers who struggle more with process and the finer points of grammar. It was also a class built upon teaching students the editing process that they may not have learned in high school.

The second class that I observed was one of the reading adjunct classes. It was a class that supported the anatomy course that the students were taking. This class was

fast-paced, teacher-guided, but not teacher-driven, and demanding. I was given a quiz on the urinary tract like everyone else. Even if I had reviewed my information on the urinary tract, I might have had some challenges. The quiz was designed as something that could be a part of the anatomy class as well as the reading adjunct class. The class was methodical in its moving students from helping them see where their weaknesses were to a clear vision of where they needed to be before the next anatomy class and reading class.

As I sat in the reading adjunct class, I kept thinking that the language was not modified, nor was any part of the class moving slower than an average college class and that any college student could be challenged in this setting. There was a very strong collaborative approach, thus the students were taking responsibility for themselves and their group. Continuous assessment was taking place, so there was no occasion for students to be passive. Using myself, a graduate student, as a gauge, I was challenged, and I would have had to study to be prepared for the next class. The unique piece of this is that the class was a reading adjunct class only available to CE participants, thus making its existence the language support for these students. It was an occasion for students to dissect the reading and understand very academic language both as a group and as individuals.

Interview With The CE Program Director

As I studied the CE Program, I had questions for which I needed very direct answers. Because of scheduling issues for both the director and me, I conducted an email interview. During the course of my study of the CE Program, I had visited with the director in person, via email, and occasionally by phone. The questions in my interview were questions that I had not been able to satisfactorily answer in my independent study.

My first question, since I could not seem to resolve whether or not the program was designed specifically for students who have been in the USA for eight years or less and who have done a varying amounts of their schooling in this country, thus being called Generation 1.5., was whether or not all of the CE Program participants could be considered Generation 1.5? The answer to this question is that the program was designed with these students in mind, but it was not designed only for them. It is, however, a program designed for resident students who are either immigrants or refugees.

I was also very curious about the faculty qualifications for the program since the approach is unique in many ways, so my second question was what are the qualifications for the faculty of the CE Program. I learned that most faculty members need to have a MA in ESL or a close equivalent. Some of the faculty members are University of Minnesota graduate students from the MA in ESL program or from the Curriculum and Instruction program.

The faculty whom I encountered also seemed to have very broad teaching experiences and strong cross-cultural backgrounds which would allow them to not only be aware of student needs from a cultural perspective, but would also be well-equipped to teach reading adjunct courses for courses outside their fields of expertise.

Another area of interest for me as a community college instructor was knowing what is available to students who need language support, but who do not get into the CE Program. The answer to this question is important to me because as I look at ways to adapt components of the CE Program into the community college setting, it is imperative to know how students get into the CE program. Community colleges tend to use a placement test for ELLs such as the LOEP or CELSA which are created to measure for placement into a program, whereas the TOEFL is designed to exclude students with lower English proficiencies from entering programs. Students are referred to the CE Program based upon the admission criteria set by the University of Minnesota which is that ELLs must have a minimum score on one of two tests: the TOEFL on which students must score a 550, or 213 for the computer-based version, or the MELAB on which students must score an 80. Scores which are lower than these requirements will not permit a student to register as a regular student. ELLs who are not admitted to the CE Program , but who have been in the USA for more than eight years and who meet the test requirements are admitted into the General College at the university.

These students have access to support that any students on the campus might need such as support in the writing center. Students who are first generation post-secondary students, that is those whose parents did not obtain post-secondary degrees, are available for academic support through a government-funded support program called TRIO.

Because the CE Program is one of the most vibrant education models I have encountered, I felt certain that there was a vision in place for modification in order to meet students' needs and to stay on the forefront of best practice in language support. Through my conversations with the director and through my final interview with her, it is easy to conclude that there is indeed vision for curriculum that is more deliberate in building community within the program, giving more career information, increasing academic acculturation, and creating more connections between courses and particular themes. All of this would be done to move further away from the ESL stigma; to energize the program; to make the support courses more dynamic, and in doing all this, to appeal to the students. (R. Murie, personal communication, June 2006)

As a result of spending time with the director of this program, I am even more aware of the incredible vision, patience, and willingness to continuously evaluate that it would take to duplicate this program anywhere. Along with those attributes, a very deft ability to work through the proper hierarchies of an institution of higher learning is at the top of the list of necessities. It is also clear that the institution must be willing to embrace innovative programs and empower those responsible for them.

Interpretation of the Data

Because academic literacy takes so much time to acquire, and because many of the ELLs who enroll in post-secondary institutions need it sooner rather than later, programs that foster efficient acquisition of it should be the base model for other programs. The CE Program is a model that takes the available research about how academic literacy is acquired and applies it. Taking the premise of Brinton, Snow, and Wesche (1989) that content-based instruction comprises comprehensible input in which not only language is acquired but also information is given, the CE Program brings the two pieces together in the first year of post-secondary education for ELLs. Krashen's (1985) theory that input should be slightly above the language learner's proficiency level is also supported by the reading adjunct courses offered in the CE Program and the university's willingness to allow ELLs to take mainstream courses that are paired with adjunct reading courses. I also see in the CE Program learning to write and writing to learn. The writing courses offered in the CE Program teach students the writing process, thus the "learning to write". Through requiring research-based writing, the students are also writing to learn as well as learning to write. Again, this approach supports a form of content-based instruction such as writing across the curriculum (WAC) and writing in the disciplines (WID) (Kasper, 2000). Rather than a cumbersome program that teaches English language skills in isolation, the CE Program streamlines requirements, matching the acquisition of academic literacy with first-year, post-secondary credits that count towards graduation.

Newman (2002) defined academic literacy as a set of academic competencies that lead to academic success, while Echevarria et al. (2002) describe academic literacy as three knowledge bases: knowledge of English, knowledge of the content topic, and knowledge of how the assigned tasks are to be accomplished. Kasper (2000) maintains that content-based instruction is instruction that is carefully planned, is purposeful, is academically based, targets linguistic and critical thinking skills. Using these core concepts are as guide or standard of measure, the CE Program incorporates these elements, thus making it probable that students who have met the program requirements will exit the program with an improved degree of academic literacy.

Conclusion

In Chapter Five, I discuss the implications of these research results. I discuss what the findings mean for integration of certain components of the CE model into the community college setting, as well as what these findings mean for me as an instructor in the community college setting.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

In seeking to answer the question of whether or not components of an English language support model could be applied to a community college setting, and if so, which ones, I first examined literature concerning language acquisition in general and focused on what was written about helping ELLs acquire CALP. The literature about content-based instruction for language learners, and literature about how academic literacy is achieved provided a base as I began to study the content-based Commanding English Program at the University of Minnesota. In this chapter, I will summarize what I learned from my research, state the implications for the profession as well as for me as an individual instructor, and offer some general conclusions.

Implications of the Research

During the course of my capstone process, I learned not only about the CE Program, but also what is being offered to ELLs on many community college campuses. Above all, however, is what I was able to envision for myself as an individual instructor for ELLs at the community college level, and what the ideal program for my students would be.

Although I have written extensively about the Commanding English program, I would like to address what I gleaned from spending time studying it. I understand more fully that in order to have a program like it, there must be a highly collaborative effort

between administration, ESL faculty, and non-ESL faculty.   An individual department could implement some components of such a program, but the most beneficial situation for the students would come from a setting where the success of the ELLs is desired and shared by the administration and faculty. The director of the Commanding English Program seems to have the complete confidence of the university's administration, yet she herself plays a significant role in assuring that the program continues to meet expectations. As an outsider looking in, I could see that such a program has to have someone at the helm who is visionary, organized, articulate, knowledgeable about administrative aspects, and who is focused.

Which components of a content-based language support model could be applied to a community college program for ELLs? My conclusion will address two different scenarios: one being for a setting where the institution's administration is supporting this model, and two being an instructor working in a setting where this model is not part of an overall approach in addressing the needs of ELLs. I will also discuss what my findings mean for me professionally.

<center>Administrative and Instructional Changes</center>

To take a traditional-approach ESL program in a community college setting where language learning is the focus to a program where academic literacy is the focus would require both top-down and bottom-up changes.

In instigating change from the top-down, the institution's administration would need to affirm in word and with funding the academic literacy approach.In a bottom-up change, the department would need to adopt the goal of helping ELLs achieve academic literacy by all instructors understanding and accepting the philosophy.

If I could redesign a program to focus more on helping students achieve academic literacy, I would take most of the components from the CE model and create an entirely different approach than what is currently used on most community college campuses. For example, the reading adjunct classes would work very well for many of the ELLs who are incoming first-year students. I would actually have a two-tiered program with one being for students with low English proficiencies according to the test scores as indicated by the currently used placement tests. For the students who place into a higher proficiency, and certainly for the students who did most or all of their high school education in the USA, I would recommend that they take either a test designed for native English speakers such as the Accuplacer or the MELAB. Students who score at the pre-determined level would then be placed into an academic language support model that would imitate as closely as possible the CE Program. It would be marketed as a language support model as opposed to an ESL program. In the community college setting, this two-tiered approach would better serve the students on both ends of the proficiency spectrum. I am especially intrigued by the reading adjunct courses because they would address several issues at once and promote an all-faculty involvement in the success of the ELL population of the school. First of all it would require that faculty from the ESL department seek out instructors in the mainstream to work with (I would negotiate with administration for incentives on both

sides). Secondly, the frustration level for the students who have already spent a significant amount of time being segregated from mainstream education would be lowered. Thirdly, this two-tiered approach would allow for longer support than the current two semesters that most community college ESL programs use, yet the ESL stigma would be abolished if the program were carefully, intelligently, and sensitively marketed. The two-tiered approach would be necessary since community colleges are typically more accessible to a larger segment of all populations, ELLs included.

Because I do not have a clear understanding of the administrative aspect in post-secondary institutions, I cannot speak to the feasibility of what it would take to instigate such a change. My conclusions are probably idealistic and perhaps unrealistic for the typical community college setting. Nonetheless, for a shift in thinking to occur most administrations would need to see their ELLs from the perspective that their time in any of the institution's programs should be optimal. ELLs, just like any other segment of the student population, need to be served with programs that exhibit best practice in teaching. The institution would need to support training for instructors which would teach them how to help students achieve academic literacy. This training would be not only for the ESL faculty but also for the non-ESL faculty. Taking the approach that a post-secondary institution would not offer anything less than cutting-edge technology for its computer courses or how to implement the use of technology in the classroom, it should not offer anything less than absolute best practice teaching of its student population in all departments.

For change to occur from the bottom up, the instructors in the program would need to recognize, accept, and teach from the position that academic literacy for ELLs is the goal of the program. Many instructors may not understand or accept the philosophical difference between language learning and academic literacy. Strong leadership in the department would have to be present in order to bring about a philosophical change. The CE Program instructors teach with the goal of helping students achieve academic literacy, and the process is defined by the program, and they are led by a passionate visionary. It has been my experience in post-secondary settings for faculty members in the ESL departments to be given the liberty to teach according to their own philosophies rather than adhering to an overarching goal for the program. This is the major difference in faculty I have seen in the community college setting and the CE Program's faculty.

To take a fossilized program and try to implement an entirely different approach to addressing the needs of ELLs would take more than I understand at this point. It does seem that many components of the CE Program could be incorporated, for example: the program entrance requirements such as more accurate assessments that would divide ELLs who need academic language support from those who need in depth language acquisition courses; course design to meet the differences of the two groups; learning communities; and linked courses. Someone, preferably the department chair, would have to take the initiative and convince the administration, but maybe it could be done.

The Individual Instructor

Until I am in a position to effect such sweeping changes as noted above, or until I can begin a new program, what can I do as an ESL instructor in a post-secondary institution? I have come away from this capstone project more convinced than ever that the instruction of ELLs in the community college setting must be content-based. I must design my courses to reflect this conviction and this will mean stepping outside of the usual parameters. How will I do this?

As ESL professionals in the K-12 setting know already, building relationships with mainstream teachers is crucial to the success of the students. This is true for the post-secondary setting, as well.   The CE Program liaises with non-CE faculty. While I would not be able to provide linked courses without a departmental plan and funding for additional courses, I could solicit materials and expectations from the faculty in other departments. I could establish relationships with faculty in all departments in order to better serve my students. Having this connection with other faculty would allow me to teach language through materials that are content-based.

For each of my courses, I would need to know my students' career aspirations and create tracks in my course for them. For example, if I have students who are aspiring nursing students, I would need to collect reading materials that relate to that field. I would also like to tape actual lectures of instructors in that department so that my students could experience authentic listening experiences. Knowing the types of writing assignments that instructors in various mainstream courses require and duplicating such

assignments in my courses would better prepare ELLs for their future courses. While this approach takes more time initially, I believe that it reflects best practice in helping students acquire academic literacy. Highly de-contextualized reading, listening, speaking , and writing experiences are minimally beneficial to students with developing academic literacy skills, but creating classroom environments where authentic experiences occur will help ELLs succeed in their mainstream courses.

The capstone journey has also made me reflect upon my role as a high school teacher. While I teach primarily at the college level, I would like to take the knowledge that I have gained into the high schools and help Generation 1.5 students avoid being placed in traditional ESL programs as they enter their post-secondary studies. Their needs are very different from the post-secondary student who has not done any study in an American high school and many times they are not well-informed about the possibilities for them after high school. This will involve me further educating myself about what colleges and universities in the Twin Cities have to offer. If it does not already exist, I would like to compile a directory which lists programs and details of those programs.

Limits of Current Research

Certainly studies about the academic literacy needs of ELLs who have been in the US for most of their high school education must continue and the research results must dictate how post-secondary institutions meet their needs. How to correctly assess and place these students must also be addressed. Tracking the educational progress of ELLs in post-secondary ESL programs would provide great insight into the efficiency and success of these programs.

Studies concerning non-ESL faculty approaches to and attitudes about ELLs in their classes

would provide a backdrop for future faculty training needs. Post-secondary institutions that

have high numbers of ELLs must explore their instructors' attitudes towards these students

and how it can best use the ESL department as a resource for facilitating academic literacy,

and retention of this student population. Follow-up studies that span the post-secondary

education experiences of former CE Program students would be most beneficial.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

There is much more to learn about how to best meet the needs of the ELLs who are in

the post-secondary setting. The needs of the population will continue to change as the face of

immigration changes. The professionals who serve this population will never fully have all

the answers, but we must always strive to improve and strive continuously to change in order

to know and apply best practice in teaching. Advocacy for best practice to be the norm rather

than the exception in the post-secondary setting will be an unending challenge, but

complacency is not an option since the students in this setting have their survival at stake.

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APPENDIX A

Course Materials Checklist

1) Are the textbooks used written specifically for ELLs? Yes/ No

2) Are the textbooks typical post-secondary textbooks with academic language appropriate to

that level?   Yes/ No

3) Are course syllabi comparable to syllabi from mainstream postsecondary courses? Yes/ No

4) Are book for the literature courses simplified texts? Yes/ No

APPENDIX B

Observation Checklist

1) College-level instruction   Yes   No

2) Grammar instruction connected to editing strategies for writing Yes   No

3) Reading assignments connected to content-area courses Yes   No

4) Classroom environment promotes all-student participation Yes No

5) Focus of classes is on academic literacy rather than language learning   Yes   No

6) Ethnic diversity Yes No

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions
For
Commanding English Program Director

1) Are all Commanding English Program participants categorized as Generation 1.5?

2) What are the qualifications required for faculty in the Commanding English Program?

3) If students are not eligible for the Commanding English Program, are they referred to
another program at the U? If so, which one?

4) What modifications do you see being made to the program in the coming years?

5) Why are the changes needed?

Questions for Commanding English Faculty

1) For content -based reading and writing faculty:
A) Do you have a background in the content areas?

B) Does the content remain the same from semester or must you become familiar with new material?

2) What is your background and training?