

2024

Full Issue - EnglishUSA, V. 10

Follow this and additional works at: https://surface.syr.edu/englishusa_journal

Recommended Citation

(2024) "Full Issue - EnglishUSA, V. 10," *EnglishUSA Journal*: Vol. 10, Article 13.

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.14305/jn.2836581X.2024.10>

Available at: https://surface.syr.edu/englishusa_journal/vol10/iss1/13

This Full Issue is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at SURFACE at Syracuse University. It has been accepted for inclusion in EnglishUSA Journal by an authorized editor of SURFACE at Syracuse University. For more information, please contact surface@syr.edu.

Full Issue - EnglishUSA, V. 10

Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



ENGLISHUSA JOURNAL

ISSUE 10 | 2024 Spring / Summer

ENGLISH
US  EnglishUSA.org

LEARN · EDUCATE · ENGAGE

Editorial Staff

Journal Co-Editors

David T. Lind (Syracuse University)

Alison Camacho (English Language Programs -
U.S. Department of State)

Professional Development Activities Committee

Mandie Bauer (ASC English)

Heather Snavelly (California Baptist University)

EnglishUSA Office

Cheryl Delk-Le Good, Executive Director

Lisa Kraus Gardner, Senior Association Manager

Contact

EnglishUSA

2900 Delk Road Suite 700, PMB 321

Marietta, GA 30067

Inquiries

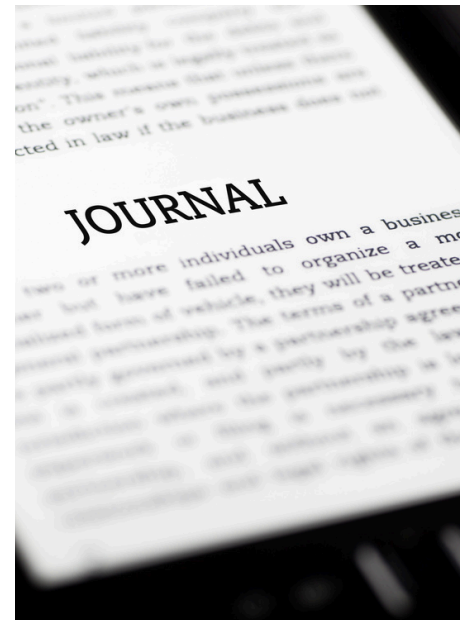
info@englishusa.org

(404) 567-6875

<https://www.englishusa.org/page/Journal>

About the Journal

The EnglishUSA Journal focuses on theory and practice in the field of teaching English as a second/foreign language and serves as a medium for sharing best practices, addressing current issues and presenting research. Submissions will be received by the EnglishUSA Professional Development Activities Committee (PDAC), evaluated by peer-reviewers and published in an online journal to be shared with EnglishUSA members and the wider ESL/EFL community. The EnglishUSA Journal is created for readers interested in English language teaching, administration and leadership at the post-secondary level. The journal is published semiannually and features practical and theoretical content primarily focused on programs that serve language learners in proprietary programs or university-governed institutions. Featured articles support EnglishUSA's interest to represent, support and be the recognized voice of English language programs, emphasizing engagement, integrity, excellence and collaboration.



Call for Submissions

EnglishUSA is accepting submissions for the 2024-25 Fall/Winter Issue of the EnglishUSA Journal in the following categories:

- In the Classroom articles provide a space for instructors, trainers, administrators and managers to share practical ideas, resources and tools to use in the classroom. The objective of this section is to share best practices, encourage peer collaboration, and inspire creativity.
- In the Office articles provide a space for English language program administrators, coordinators, and managers to share practical ideas, resources, tips and tools to use regarding program or office operations. The objective of these submissions is to share best practices, encourage peer collaboration, and inspire creativity
- Reports and Reviews offer summaries of relevant events, conferences or resources in the English language teaching field. The objective is to update the EnglishUSA community with reports on useful topics recently presented at events and conferences in the USA and overseas. This section also offers professional reviews on English language-related publications to help inform readers, which would be useful for their own programs.
- Journal Articles feature research, analysis and studies on teaching, learning and administration in the field of ESL/EFL. Content is relevant for instructors and administrators of the English language and focuses on language acquisition and learning, aspects of the English language, applied linguistics in addition to issues related to program administration.

For more info about the journal and submission guidelines:

<https://www.englishusa.org/page/Journal>

In This Issue

1

Editorial

David T. Lind & Alison Camacho

3

Advocacy Corner

Daryl Bish & Haviva Parnes

7

First-Generation African Americans in English Language Education by Quanisha Charles

13

Building Speaking Confidence with Call Annie by Andy Mattingly

15

Interactive Warm-ups that Promote Engagement and Build Community by Megan Chiusaroli

17

Using a Virtual Escape Room for Active Learning in an Online University ESL Course by Jennifer West

19

Building Cultural and Educational Understandings through Class-to-Class Exchanges by Sherry Steeley and Suzanne Matula

22

Fostering Intercultural Communication via International Conversation Partners by Quanisha Charles and Malika Nazymbekova

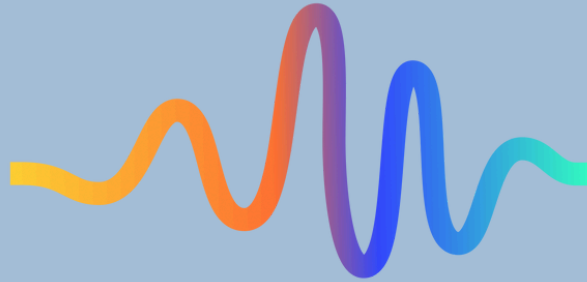
25

Interview with Cheryl Delk-Le Good and Jaqueline McCafferty

Diamond Sponsors



MICHIGAN
LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT



IMMERSE



Oxford International
Digital Institute

IELTS[®]



OXFORD
TEST OF ENGLISH



Editorial
by David T. Lind &
Alison Camacho

The Spring/Summer 2024 edition of the EnglishUSA Journal is here, and we want to express our sincerest gratitude to everyone who shared their work with us for this Journal. We truly value the time, energy, and passion invested in each submission. As we reflect on the past year, it is evident that the landscape of English language programs (ELPs) is rapidly evolving. This edition of our publication highlights key trends and insights that are shaping the future (and present) of ELPs, inside the classroom and out.

Our feature article for this edition, "*First-Generation African Americans in English Language Education*," by Quanisha Charles from North Central College explores the unique challenges faced by first-generation African American students in ELPs. This article underscores the importance of representation and belonging in ELPs and proposes solutions and support systems for first-generation African Americans who are joining the profession. It also highlights the need for further research into making the English language education profession more supportive of underrepresented groups.

In "*Building Speaking Confidence with Call Annie*," Andy Mattingly from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University explores the use of generative AI to support students in overcoming their fear of speaking in a target language. The article delves into how the app Call Annie can be used as a confidence-building tool, providing practical scenarios and real-time feedback to enhance students' speaking skills.

Megan Chiusaroli from Savannah College of Art and Design presents "*Interactive Warm-ups that Promote Engagement and Build Community*." This piece discusses the importance of starting classes with engaging warm-up activities that foster a sense of community and enhance student participation. Chiusaroli divides these activities into personal, cultural, and creative categories, offering a variety of strategies that can be easily adapted to different learning environments.

Jennifer West from Temple University introduces a novel approach to online learning in "*Using a Virtual Escape Room for Active Learning in an Online University ESL Course*." West shares her experience with gamification through virtual escape rooms, demonstrating how these interactive activities can boost student engagement, collaboration, and motivation in an online ESL context.

Sherry L. Steeley and Suzanne Matula from Georgetown University describe the impact of virtual class-to-class exchanges in their article "*Building Cultural and Educational Understandings through Class-to-Class Exchanges*." Through a case study of an initiative sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's Office of English Language Programs, the authors highlight the benefits of such exchanges in promoting cross-cultural understanding and professional development among teachers and students from diverse backgrounds.



"Fostering Intercultural Communication via International Conversation Partners" by Quanisha Charles and Malika Nazyrbekova from North Central College emphasizes the benefits of pairing international and domestic students for cultural exchanges. This article outlines the structure of their initiative, the International Conversational Partners program, detailing how it helps students develop intercultural communication skills and build meaningful connections.

Our interview segment this issue features Cheryl Delk-Le Good, Executive Director of EnglishUSA, and Jackie McCafferty, Director of Temple University's Center for American Language and Culture. The two shared insights into the recent Certified Trade Mission to Mexico and Colombia. They discussed the history, goals, and outcomes of the trade missions, emphasizing their role in promoting English language programs in the U.S. and fostering international collaboration.

Lastly, Daryl Bish, President-elect of EnglishUSA, and Haviva Parnes, Immediate Past President, share a summary of the latest collaborative advocacy efforts of the organization. As we look ahead, it is evident that embracing innovation and fostering inclusivity are crucial for the advancement of our field. We hope this edition inspires you to implement new strategies, build supportive communities, and continue making a positive impact on your students' lives.

Thank you for your dedication to this field and for your commitment to continuous improvement. Together, we can shape a more dynamic and inclusive future for English Language Programs.

David Lind, Ed.D., is Director of International Programs for Syracuse University's College of Professional Studies, where he oversees the English Language Institute and manages pathway and grant-funded programs for international students. He serves as Secretary for the EnglishUSA Board and Chair of the Professional Development Activities Committee.

Alison Camacho is the Marketing and Outreach Manager for English Language Programs - a program of the U.S. Department of State. She is co-editor of the EnglishUSA journal and a member of the Professional Development Activities Committee. Her work focuses on strengthening connections within the English language programs community by providing a variety of engagement and professional development opportunities.





July is a month of transition for EnglishUSA. As the association’s Executive Board transitions to the next fiscal year, some members cycle off the board after serving their three-year term; continuing board members may begin new roles; and we have the pleasure of welcoming new members to the fold. In these times of transition, there is a focus on ensuring that new board members have what they need to jump right in and that continuing members in transition understand new roles and responsibilities. Of course, as board members leave their roles, there is fear of losing historical, organizational, or field-specific knowledge, and sometimes there is a rush to accomplish tasks and have them ready for a smooth transition. All in all, the end of the “board year” is a reflective and busy time. This is especially true this year as EnglishUSA is developing its 2025 - 2028 strategic plan.

As part of this transitional and strategic planning process, EnglishUSA’s Advocacy and External Relations Committee (AERC) is reflecting on previous accomplishments and ongoing opportunities and challenges. AERC is responsible for monitoring public policy, maintaining relations with international education stakeholders, and advocating for English Language Programs (ELPs). We have learned much over the last years as the field faced a range of national and global events that impacted ELPs and U.S. international education. The past five years demonstrate the need and importance of advocating for ELPs nationally: from the previous administration’s 2020 proposal to limit F-1 international students to an aggregate of 24 months of

English language study to the sudden, severe, and long-lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic to the current administration’s 2021 joint statement renewing the U.S. commitment to international education and the subsequent formation of the U.S. for Success Coalition in 2023. In all instances, AERC and EnglishUSA worked to ensure that ELP voices were present and heard.

As AERC transitions to the next board year and looks to the future, the committee is reviewing and updating EnglishUSA’s ELP-Specific Recommendations to Federal Agencies, defining the committee’s strategic goals moving forward, and, importantly, reflecting on the field of English language training and its place within the current U.S. international education landscape. In the spirit of sharing with you where we have been and where we are going, here are some lessons we have learned about advocating for English Language Programs nationally.

First and foremost, there are so many positives for ELPs, it is not a hard advocacy sell. As institutions and programs, we see the positive impact of what we do every day. Language learning is foundational; it can change a person’s life. Improved English proficiency helps students personally and professionally. It helps them engage with their community or assists them with their career here in the U.S. or abroad. ELPs improve English fluency and proficiency so students can confidently enter U.S. colleges and universities. They are often an F-1 student’s first experience with U.S. higher education and they provide a pathway to degree programs. Our students not only learn a language, they also gain cross-cultural awareness by studying with students from around the globe and immersing themselves in the culture of your institution’s community and the U.S. Our classrooms represent diverse cultures, ethnicities, ages, and experiences. Students arrive at ELPs focused on learning

English and they leave as better global citizens. ELPs help students develop cross-cultural communication skills. They foster cross-cultural understanding in the campuses, communities, and students they serve. They are an important facet of U.S. international education for all of the above reasons and they contribute to the U.S. economy.

The pioneering Annual Report for English Language Programs in the U.S.A. was released in July 2023 by EnglishUSA and Bonard, a leading provider of global international education data and research. It estimates that in 2022 the contribution of the ELP sector to the U.S. economy exceeded 1 billion dollars. The international students, exchange scholars, and visitors enrolled in ELPs support local economies and jobs. When you are speaking with legislators and advocating for support, these things speak to people. Every legislative office can relate to the economic impact international students have on their community and the country.

What's not to like about ELPs? They benefit students by helping them achieve the language skills and cultural understanding needed to accomplish their personal, academic, and professional goals. They foster cross-cultural understanding and enhance the diversity of the communities they serve while contributing to local economies. ELPs help make the U.S. an attractive study destination in a competitive global market and they support U.S. international education efforts. All of these positives make national advocacy for ELPs relatively straightforward, but there are challenges.

As the recognized voice of the U.S. ELP sector, EnglishUSA safeguards the interests of our industry as an integral part of international education. EnglishUSA is the only organization in the United States that includes all types of English language programs. The diversity of program types ensures that EnglishUSA

represents the field as a whole. EnglishUSA's Advocacy and External Relations Committee (AERC) membership also reflects the diversity of program types with members from proprietary, college or university-based, multi-site, and pathway programs. This ensures that the committee approaches advocacy issues and tasks from diverse programmatic or institutional, field-specific perspectives. In the context of national ELP advocacy, this is both an incredible advantage, but also a challenge.

Building consensus among diverse stakeholders requires effective communication, compromise, active listening, respect, flexibility, patience, and time. If we think back to one of the major advocacy victories in EnglishUSA history, the Accreditation Act, we saw this in action. The Accreditation of English Language Training Programs Act (Accreditation Act) became law in 2010. It mandates that all ESL programs of study that are SEVP-certified must either possess accreditation by a regional or national accrediting agency recognized by the Department of Education. The Accreditation Act happened because of the advocacy efforts of EnglishUSA (then the American Association of Intensive English Programs) and a diverse group of stakeholders from across the ELP field. Despite our diversity, there was strong support for the Accreditation Act. Its passage demonstrates that complex, national ELP advocacy efforts can be successful when an idea or issue has broad consensus. In fact, many topics or issues draw broad support across the field, such as advocating that our language training students and programs be included in SEVP's annual SEVIS by the Numbers reports or informing Consular Affairs officers that attendance at English language programs is not in itself a reason for refusing a student visa application. Yet, several of EnglishUSA's advocacy efforts over the past five years have similar origins: we are responding to an event or action. From an advocacy point of view, reacting to events that

impact the field is relatively straightforward, like with the previous administration's proposal to eliminate Duration of Status / limit English language training to a lifetime total of 24 months aggregate or the formation of the U.S. for Success Coalition. They help drive and focus EnglishUSA's advocacy work. While they are reactive, the collaboration and constant communication required to form a response helps us also be proactive. EnglishUSA's Advocacy and External Relations Committee will always respond to events and collaborate with peer associations (TESOL, UCIEP, NAFSA, etc.) and other stakeholders to advocate on behalf of the ELP field at the federal level, but we can also be proactive in our advocacy. We can advocate for public policies that support our field and students and not just react to events. The current international education landscape for U.S. ELPs provides several reasons to think more proactively about national advocacy efforts.

Sustained lower international student enrollments from the pandemic and other impacts on student mobility have caused many programs to close or significantly diversify programming to adapt. What can we advocate to help schools stay open and diversify programming more easily? A more competitive global English Language Training (ELT) market in conjunction with higher rates of visa denials negatively impacts the popularity of the U.S. as a top destination. How can we proactively advocate to help increase the U.S. popularity as an English language study destination and ensure ELPs are seen as valuable contributors to U.S. international education, therefore decreasing student visa refusals for our students? The use of Artificial Intelligence in language learning is impacting the field and other technologies are changing how ELPs deliver their programs. Immigration policy should be modernized to keep pace with current education delivery models. What does this mean for ELPs from a regulatory perspective?

To be proactive in national advocacy efforts, we can look at the data provided by the Institute of International Education (IIE) and the EnglishUSA/Bonard Annual Report for English Language Programs in the U.S.A. to inform our efforts, but, most importantly, we need to listen to diverse program perspectives and ask some tough questions as a field:

- Should the field advocate for revising regulations and policy guidance to allow an explicitly certain, limited course of English language study on B-1/B-2 visitor status?
- Should the field advocate for revising the "full course of study" requirement for language study in the regulations to allow ELP students to enroll in limited online courses as part of their course of study?
- From a regulatory perspective, what can we do to compete with countries that allow more opportunities for work on a student visa and have more flexible visa regulations? How can we make study in the U.S. more affordable and attractive to students?

To start these conversations, EnglishUSA's Advocacy and External Relations Committee (AERC) released a survey in April 2024 asking for member and stakeholder input on some of the above topics as part of our review of the association's ELP-Specific Recommendations To Federal Agencies. We will continue these discussions as we develop the committee's goals during the strategic planning process. As was learned with the Accreditation Act, building consensus on ELP issues and advocacy goals takes sustained time and significant effort, which is why EnglishUSA is important. It ensures that diverse program perspectives are considered. It gives English language programs a seat at the table. It gives us a collective voice.

As an individual program, you can advocate for yourself, spread the word, and be loud. Or, you can find another program that has the same

interest, get together and advocate, spread the word some more, and be even louder. Or you can sit at the table with people with different interests. People who want the same things you want, but maybe in a different way. You can find consensus, and you can make sure that diverse perspectives are heard, and that all the layers of the onion are considered. That is where EnglishUSA and AERC come in and that is the most important national advocacy lesson we have learned as an association: advocacy works best when we build consensus and work together. We encourage you to join the conversation.

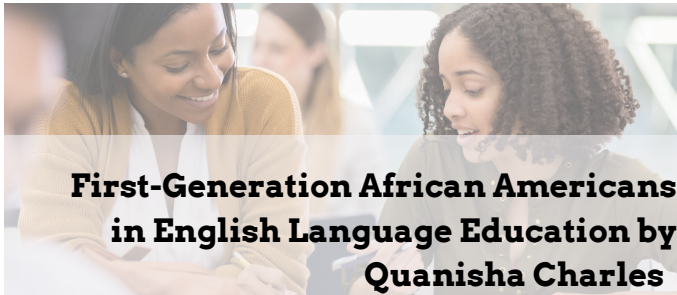
We at EnglishUSA and AERC appreciate your support and encourage you to continue to advocate for your students and programs. Please share your thoughts and questions about any of the above topics on EnglishUSA's Engage Members Forum.

Daryl Bish is the Assistant Director and PDSO at the University of Florida English Language Institute. He has experience as a teacher, program recruiter, and administrator, having worked for university and community college programs. His master's degree is in Curriculum and Instruction, with TESL Certification. He has served as the NAFSA IEP Network Leader, a CEA site reviewer, and is currently Co-Chair of the Advocacy and External Relations Committee and President-Elect on the English Executive Board.

Haviva Parnes is the PDSO and US Head of Operations for EC English Language Centers. Haviva started her career in English Language Learning over 20 years ago after receiving her TEFL certification and teaching in China. She has been working in both academic and operational functions in proprietary schools since. Haviva is currently the Past-President for EnglishUSA and is Co-Chair of the Advocacy and External Relations Committee.



Journal Articles



Introduction

This article contributes to academic research by examining the experiences of First-Generation (FG) African Americans enrolled in English language education, specifically programs like Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). The lack of representation and acknowledgement of African American contributions to world languages not only does a disservice to the ever-growing international population arriving within the U.S. but also robs African Americans of enriching international experiences (Baker-Bell, 2020 & Anya, 2020). As a result, FG African Americans entering TESL programs may be met with a lack of mentors to sufficiently support their needs, a lack of faculty who understand their situation, and ultimately a limited recourse for thriving beyond their studies; they may be tasked with either obtaining support outside of their program or thriving solo and based on experiential knowledge. This paper offers inspiration to prospective FG African Americans and English language education stakeholders. Importantly, this work might also become a cornerstone for educators seeking ways to better serve FG African Americans in TESL programs. The purpose of this study is to highlight challenges faced by some FG African Americans in English language education programs and propose appropriate solutions for student success.

FG students are defined as students with at least one parent who did not complete the traditional undergraduate route to attaining a college degree. Research (Davis, 2022 & Frazier, 2020) often classifies FG synonymously with being of low socioeconomic status and person of color, but credentials, certificates, and other vocational qualifications can be obtained through various educational routes (e.g., trade schools), which means that some FG students can come from affluent backgrounds. Remembering my experience as an FG African American enrolled in a TESL program at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI), barriers were clearly visible: obstacles getting acclimated to a rural town without family and friends, hardships navigating academia as a culture and getting acclimated to a new, and often esoteric, discourse of learning, being the only African American in the program, and feeling excluded in course content.

FG African Americans facing challenges at PWIs is not uncommon (Mickles-Burns, 2024) but was unexpected in a diverse program, like TESL. Second-guessing my purpose for being in the program became commonplace, unfortunately. These sentiments are seemingly common because other FG African American scholars (Davis, 2022; Sarcedo, 2022) have shared similar experiences at PWIs. "African American FGC [first-generation college] students also have less resources and a social network that does not consist of people that can adequately assist and guide them academically or professionally" (Green, 2015, p. 2). Acknowledging my lack of understanding of academia, grappling financial constraints, and lacking sufficient mentor support, often led to feelings of imposter syndrome. Nonetheless, self-

motivation to succeed, keeping the faith, traveling when possible, remaining in touch with family, and having a college companion fostered my success through the program. This article initiates conversations regarding support systems for FG African Americans in English language education programs, like TESL, with the intention of materializing recruitment efforts and instructional measures for department chairs and English language educators working with FG African Americans at PWIs. This article provides snapshots, based on a mini study that explores the following research questions:

1. What are some challenges faced by FG African Americans in English language education programs?

2. What are some solutions to assure college success for FG African Americans entering English language education programs?



Method

This qualitative research study was conducted at a four-year private liberal arts college located in the midwestern region of the U.S. during spring 2023. Participants were six undergraduate FG African Americans who had taken language study courses in English language education and one language education professor. Student participants were recruited via email and asked to sign a consent form. Once agreed, students were asked to complete a Microsoft Forms survey and engage in a follow-up recorded interview via Microsoft Teams for clarity of survey responses. Additional stipulations, if necessary, for student participants were to

devote no more than 1 hour (60-minutes) to evaluating material that is conducive to student retention, marketing tools, and/or pedagogical techniques. Faculty participants, once agreed, and if necessary, were asked to have one of their English language education classrooms observed, in which the researcher would be a detached spectator. There were 13-survey questions for both faculty and student participants. For faculty participants, survey questions asked about common student patterns in English language education courses, support systems required to better serve students, department marketing advice, student recruitment and retention strategies, and ways the department can be more supportive to students and faculty. For student participants, survey questions asked about challenges faced in the program, support systems required to better serve them, how can the department extend support, how can peers lend support, student retention and recruitment strategies, along with their inspiration for choosing their program of study. A thematic analysis (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, & Snelgrove, 2016; Riger & Sigurvinsdottier, 2016) was used to code individual responses and identify emergent themes.

Results

The thematic analysis employed in this study resulted in the identification of support systems for FG African Americans enrolling in English language education programs. Findings are brief snapshots presented under two overarching themes that emerged from data collection of survey questions and virtual interviews with six student participants and one faculty participant. The challenges highlight the experiences of the students whereas the solutions provide student success highlights responses from both students and the faculty member.

Challenges: Belonging(ness)

Survey results showed that participants acknowledged that it was not easy writing about their culture and experiences at a PWI with a student explicitly noting *"It lacks diversity."* The significance of representation and seeing oneself in the curriculum and on campus is crucial for not only student success but maintaining a sense of belonging. Moreover, "Having a sense of belonging is vital for academic success as students that lack the feeling of fit can endure more social stress and academic difficulties" (Thornhill, Wied, Spooner, Terrazas, & Evans, 2023, p. 20). A lack of diversity in English language education programs and feeling no sense of belonging can take an emotional and physical toll on students as evidenced by one participant: *"One big challenge right now is having motivation because my mental health is not in a good place right now."* Another participant specifically focused on there being a lack of intersectionality with Black issues within the curriculum or campus events: *"Being a psychology student makes me feel like the department is out of touch and never talks about or incorporates Black people/events unless one of us bring it up, or it propels stereotypes in a mostly white classroom."* This student is experiencing a sense of invisibility (Jackson, Colson-Fearon, & Versey, 2022) within a department that is majority white and lacks awareness of issues deemed pressing by the student. The situation creates a tension wherein the student is likely observing ways in which stereotypes and microaggressions are unknowingly reinforced. Often FG African Americans entering PWIs feel not only new to the environment but also intimidated because they do not see many students or faculty who look like them; this creates a sense of uncertainty and a need to receive guidance from mentors (Nunn, 2019; Sarcedo, 2022). Some FG African Americans have used their social capital to foster relations and "find their village" in PWIs for academic

success (Breedon, Wallace, & Bryant, 2023). Thus, ensuring visible access to mental support and resources both from and for faculty (e.g., mentorship), is essential. Equally vital is the establishment of sustainable support systems.

Solutions: Support Systems

One of the first steps to ensuring sustainable support systems requires a marketing team that promotes the English language education program and the benefits of the degree to FG African Americans. Based on my conversation with student participants, many were either not aware of the value of English language education and took courses primarily as a prerequisite to other programs. It is important that FG African Americans get introduced to numerous opportunities whenever entering any educational program. The urgency of this matter necessitates students being acclimated to the benefits of language education programs in grade school as a means of proactively attracting students and helping FG African Americans get a head start on how to navigate PWIs. The need for early recruitment outreach initiatives centered on FG African American student success is especially critical for long-term success and sustainability. In general, research centered on FG students (Almeida, Byrne, Smith, & Ruiz, 2021; Collier & Morgan, 2008; Nunn, 2019) continues to show that students grapple with financial constraints that impact their sense of belonging and academic success. Many students joining English language education programs have a desire to teach abroad but are challenged by financial constraints and a limited recourse as noted by one student: *"I think Black centered spaces, financial resources, and representation in the staff [are needed support systems]".* Similarly, faculty may be faced with financial constraints. The faculty participant mentioned, *"Funding for out-of-the-classroom activities (e.g. association memberships or compensation for guest speakers) or*

purchasing support materials [are needed support systems]". Indeed, monetary resources to support both students and faculty are a necessity for the sustainability of English language education programs, student retention, and ultimately student success. Moreover, accountability is required to determine how these funds are being used and ways they have specifically benefitted FG African Americans.

Some student participants saw a need to focus on the quality of English language education programs rather than quantity with one participant sharing:

"I think one thing the school can do is understand the POC [people of color] students a little better. They don't understand how hard it is for us to go to school, especially in an environment we probably don't feel comfortable in or not wanted. With all the things I heard that have gone on that have dealt with poc students. I think that's one thing they can take more seriously."

The participant's sentiments are indicative of a desire to get a head start on learning about the students joining the college and programs, establishing rapport with students of color, and creating spaces where students feel like they can thrive comfortably. Some student participants highlighted the desire for more education regarding diverse cultures in the classroom. One student participant specifically mentioned, *"Educate more about other cultures, provide more incentives for Black and Brown students and teachers to choose [the institution]"* and another student participant noted, *"Peers/cohorts can better support me by making me feel included in a discussion or a topic. With that I would not feel left out"*. These are outcries for more support that represent and reflect the diversity of the student body. Retentive programmatic strategies to implement are FG fellowships and peer-groups for FG African Americans who struggle with getting acclimated to English

language education programs that are housed predominantly in PWIs. Peer-groups will help students quickly find their tribe (Breedon, Wallace, & Bryant, 2023). Funding earmarked specifically for peer-mentor groups, faculty mentors, job placements, and streamlining FG African Americans into their English language education program would be beneficial to not only the students who feel a sense of estrangement at PWIs but also to all stakeholders dedicated to providing educational and career support for the longevity of student success.

Discussion

FG programs that call for interest to showcase skill sets from Afro-centric viewpoints are a plus for FG African Americans who are new to PWIs. In general, FG programs comprising frequent events, such as FG celebration day, FG Fridays, FG dinners, and cultural trends, help students feel like they belong to academic communities. FG staff and faculty can also show support and solidarity by speaking at student events, hosting FG events, wearing FG attire, and more. These sorts of engagements create spaces for students to find their place of belonging, meet with professors and staff, and realize that there may be more people of color around campus. Another way to pique students' interest is creating affinity groups based on academic majors, (e.g., FG English language education groups), which have the potential to branch out into other endeavors, (e.g., peer collaborations on academic panels, publications), and so forth. Doing this helps students find friends, converse with like-minded individuals, engage in critical conversations, and find additional resources and support from their peers both domestically and internationally. While mentorship, tutoring services, and counseling services, are a strong starting point for FG African Americans, there is also a push for Black linguistic reparations (Austin & Anya, 2024) that acknowledges language biases and

barriers imposed onto students that may hinder their enrollment and performance in world language programs. English language education department chairs and stakeholders can introduce FG African Americans to strategies for being internationally competitive, multilingual collaborative opportunities, and invite personnel from the U.S. English Language Programs to discuss what it is like teaching English as a world language professional and how to participate (e.g., foreign language study as a gateway to studying/working abroad). Thus, early recruitment initiatives, international institutional partnerships, and semester exchanges with students from underfunded urban schools would certainly provide opportunities for FG African Americans to see the value of life abroad, world language programs, and pursue a degree in English language education, like TESL; it could also be seen as a reparatory gesture (Austin & Anya, 2024).

There are some limitations based on the findings of this study. There were only six participants who responded to the call and one faculty member, all of whom were female. The faculty participant in the study did not identify as African American nor did she have African Americans currently enrolled in her courses. Further research development is underway to explore pedagogical strategies for faculty anticipating an influx of FG African Americans in their language education courses. Research (Frazier, 2020) centered on FG African Americans show a need for behavioral modeling, mentorship, and financial support for students to become academically successful. Because there is a lack of enrollment from FG African Americans in English language education programs overall and this PWI study site in particular, this research is pivotal to understanding the challenges needed for student retention and long-term success. The purpose of the study was to identify challenges faced by FG African Americans in English language education

programs and propose appropriate solutions for student success. Based on current data collection from student and faculty participants, a lack of support, limited financial resources, faulty sense of belongingness, and uncertainty of career prospects remain common challenges. While every institution is different and more research is needed to draw significant conclusions, this article is an initiation into contemporary issues affecting FG African Americans in English language education programs at PWIs. Hopefully, this article behooves readers to conduct inventory on the demographics of FG African Americans (or the lack thereof) in their language education programs and advocate for sustainable support structures conducive to the longevity of their retention and success in the English language profession.

References

- Almeida, D. J., Byrne, A. M., Smith, R. M. & Ruiz, S. (2021). "How Relevant Is Grit? The Importance of Social Capital in First-Generation College Students' Academic Success." *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice* 23(3), 539-59. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025119854688>.
- Anya, U. (2020). African Americans in World Language Study: The Forged Path and Future Directions. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 40, 97-112. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190520000070>
- Austin, T., & Anya, U. (2024). World languages for Black Linguistic Reparations. *Foreign Language Annals*, 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12756>
- Baker-Bell, A. (2020). *Linguistic Justice: Black Language, Literacy, Identity, and Pedagogy* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315147383>

Breeden, R. L., Wallace, J. K. & Bryant, L. D. (2023). This Is Our Villages' Degree: Reflections and Advice from Black First-Generation Doctoral Students, *Journal of First-generation Student Success*, DOI: [10.1080/26906015.2023.2275756](https://doi.org/10.1080/26906015.2023.2275756)

Collier, P. J. & Morgan, D. L. (2008). "Is That Paper Really Due Today?": Differences in First-Generation and Traditional College Students Understandings of Faculty Expectations." *Higher Education: The International Journal of Higher Education and Educational Planning*.

Davis, D. E. (2022). "Her-Story: A narrative study on the lived experiences of first generation African American women who transfer to a predominantly white institution". Theses and Dissertations. 2980. <https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/2980>

Frazier, T. (2020). "The Voices of African American Female First-Generation College Student Seniors at Historically Black Colleges and Universities". Dissertations. 315. https://digitalcommons.umassglobal.edu/edd_dissertations/315

Jackson, A., Colson-Fearon, B., & Versey, H. S. (2022). Managing Intersectional Invisibility and Hypervisibility During the Transition to College Among First-Generation Women of Color. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 46(3), 354–371. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03616843221106087>

Mickles-Burns, L. (2024). Voices of Black Faculty at Predominantly White Institutions: Coping Strategies and Institutional Interventions. *Journal of Applied Social Science*, 18(1), 136-153. <https://doi.org/10.1177/19367244231209272>

Nunn, L. M. (2019). 33 Simple Strategies for Faculty: A Week-by-Week Resource for Teaching First-Year and First-Generation Students. Rutgers University Press.

Riger, S. & Sigurvinsdottir, R. (2016). Thematic Analysis. In *Handbook of Methodological Approaches to Community-based Research Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods*. Edited by Leonard A. Jason & David Glenwick. Oxford University Press: U.K.

Sarcedo, G. L. (2022). Using Narrative Inquiry to Understand Faculty Supporting First-Generation, Low-Income College Students of Color, *Journal of First-generation Student Success*, 2(3), 127-142, DOI: [10.1080/26906015.2022.2086087](https://doi.org/10.1080/26906015.2022.2086087)

Thornhill, C.W., Wied, C. M., Spooner, M. M. N., Terrazas, A., & Evans, T. S. (2023). Factors of College Involvement and Belonging for First-Generation Students of Color, *Journal of First-generation Student Success*, 3(1), 20-32, DOI: [10.1080/26906015.2022.2156826](https://doi.org/10.1080/26906015.2022.2156826)

Vaismoradi, M., Jones J., Turunen, H. & Snelgrove, S. (2016). Theme development in qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis. *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice*, 6(5). doi: 10.5430/jnep.v6n5p100.

Associate Professor of English, Dr. Quanisha Charles teaches first-year writing and language study courses. In addition to her teaching role, Dr. Charles serves as a first-gen faculty mentor and advisor on the study abroad committee. She has taught the English language in South Korea, China, and Vietnam. Her research interests center narrative inquiry, racial ideologies, and teacher identity in language education. Moreover, Dr. Charles serves on the international TESOL Journal editorial board and as a U.S. Dept. of State English Language Specialist.



In the Classroom



Video Call

When in the video call mode, students have a wide range of options in terms of conversation topics. The app offers ‘conversation ideas’ for students who are not sure what to talk about. Categories such as “Recs [popcorn emoji]” and “Work strategy [upwards trending graph emoji]” offer a variety of topics to discuss or activities to practice. The “Recs” category has offerings such as gift ideas and movie recommendations. The “Work strategy” category has topics like job interviews and workplace conflict. Several more categories offer 5-11 topics within them. Students can also add custom prompts if they like to discuss a specific topic.

In practice, I have suggested the use of this open-ended video call function to students who reach out to ask about additional speaking practice but who are very nervous or shy. One student who found success with it told me that he would talk to Annie about topics that his English-speaking friends often brought up so that he could have the vocabulary at the forefront of his mind before spending time with those friends. It helped him recall phrases, which was particularly helpful as he often found it difficult to jump into conversations due to the speed with which his friends spoke and how long it took him to remember words specific to their shared hobby.

Scenarios

The aspect of this app that I have used in my class as an activity is the scenario function. Because I only use the free version of the app in my classes, this is limited. However, even the limited version is very useful. The app has

Perhaps one of the most common problems that language students face is the fear of speaking in their target language. While they have the goal of becoming fluent, their nerves can often overshadow their motivation to practice speaking. This can be due to a lack of vocabulary, concerns about intelligibility, or simply social anxiety. No matter the reason that they are resistant to speaking practice, avoiding the necessary use of the skill can hinder a student’s ability to progress in the language. This article will describe the features of Call Annie and discuss how I use it as a confidence-building tool in my classes at Embry-Riddle Language Institute.

Call Annie

In the age of ever-advancing technology and generative AI, there are options that can benefit students who need more encouragement and confidence before they can comfortably practice speaking in a classroom and in their life. One option is an app called Call Annie. Call Annie (callannie.ai) is an app that utilizes generative AI to hold conversations with the user. It is designed to be a language-learning app. The app interface looks like a standard video call, with options to switch to voice-only or text-only. While it can act as a text-based conversation partner, the real value is the ability to have spoken communication practice. I will focus on the voice-based practices in this article.

many scenarios for students to choose from, including going out to eat and planning a study group session. Students can customize their proficiency level for each scenario, in case they have more experience in one scenario than another.

What is especially useful about using Call Annie as a role-play partner is that she knows the terminology necessary to have a successful conversation, which promotes a fluent conversation. Students do not have to rely on their classmates right away, which gives everyone a chance to practice key vocabulary before they must use it with another person. It also eliminates frustration between partners when one is advancing faster than the other, especially right at the beginning. This extra practice gives them time to repair language issues or gaps in their knowledge. Additionally, there are options for pronunciation assessment and feedback in the app itself. Students can get real-time feedback, so they are in control of what is assessed and what is not. This is empowering to students who are actively engaged in their own learning process. The ultimate goal is that students feel confident and empowered to have classroom discussions without losing face due to errors so frequently that they become discouraged. By using the app as interim practice between learning vocabulary or grammar usage for a specific speech act and practicing it in the class, students have ample opportunity to help themselves feel prepared to speak to real people.

Future Uses

The most recent updates to Call Annie on iOS were in April 2024. Several new features were added, including the ability to record video calls. In the coming semester, I plan to incorporate this feature in my class by offering students a chance to record their discussions with Annie based on the classroom content at home, so that they can practice with people in

class. By submitting conversation recordings, they can get teacher feedback before the class practice begins. Ideally, this type of at-home practice will make the classroom a place that they can improve their skills with their classmates in a way that makes them feel prepared and confident.

Andy Mattingly is a language instructor at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. Their research interests include use of generative AI as a language-learning tool and second language writing assessment. Andy has presented on adding generative AI to the writing process, as well as how to assess student-use of generative AI as a writing tool.





Interactive Warm-ups that Promote Engagement and Build Community by Megan Chiusaroli

Introduction

Beginning class with a warm-up is a simple way to promote interest and engagement in the lesson. Most instructors are familiar with a variety of these activities, including games or short review exercises, but may not always feel they have the time or see the benefit in doing so. However, warm-ups can set the tone for the entire lesson and encourage students to take an active role in their learning. Warm-up activities should be communicative, low stakes, and connected in some way to students' lives; most importantly, they should be fun. In fact, brain studies support the positive relationship between enjoyable experiences and effective learning (Willis, 2007).

Warm-Ups

This paper divides interactive warm-ups into three categories: personal, cultural, and creative. It also describes an option for student-led warm-ups as an opportunity for peer instruction and student-centered learning. These activities have been used in remote and in-person university ESL classes with both undergraduate and graduate students at a high- intermediate level (CEFR B2) but could easily be adapted with other learners in different contexts. The instructor allows approximately 20-25 minutes at the start of a two-and-a-half-hour class for these warm-ups.

Personal

This first category of warm-ups includes activities that require students to share

something personal about themselves, similar to classic ice-breaker activities. Ice-breakers are typically done only at the start of the term, but students benefit from these types of activities periodically throughout the course to help build community (Chlup and Collins, 2010). In one activity, students share three photos from their phone with a partner: a place they've visited recently, a person that's important to them, and a food they've eaten recently. Once they've shared the photos with their partner and explained the context of the photo, they upload one of their photos to a shared document like a Jam Board or Digital Whiteboard. The instructor goes through each photo individually and asks students to share information about the photos with the whole class. Students ask questions and learn more details about their classmates, which helps foster a more personal and empathetic classroom dynamic. Other activities include games like "Two Truths and a Lie," and "What's on your desk?" (for remote classes)

Cultural

The second category, cultural warm-ups, should be relevant to the calendar date. The instructor creates a mini lesson about an upcoming holiday or cultural event. Examples include Groundhog's Day, April Fools' Day and Martin Luther King Day. Students discuss questions to access prior knowledge, watch a short video or read a short text about the event, discuss comprehension questions, and do a follow up activity, such as use related idioms, categorize famous pranks, or list their personal dreams. These lessons are self-contained, fast-paced, and communicative. They provide an opportunity to practice receptive and productive language skills and offer cultural context that students often lack in L2 settings.

Creative

Finally, these types of warm-ups ask students to create a simple piece of visual art. This can be pairs of students describing different

images to one another and drawing what they hear. In one particular activity, the instructor shares a poem based on a painting. The instructor reads the poem, explains new vocabulary, and then asks students to recreate the artwork described in the poem through a simple drawing. Students share their drawings, explaining the details that relate to the poem. Afterwards, the class views the original artwork and compares their drawings to the original. In this way, students activate learning through visual art and practice reading comprehension.

Student-Led Warm Up Option

If an instructor provides daily warm-ups throughout the course, mid-term may be a time to introduce the student-led warm up project. First, students think reflectively on previous warm-ups and list the features of a good warm-up, if, for example, it should be educational, fun, or related to course content. A daily warm-up can be dedicated to this activity with students sharing answers to questions in pairs and on a digital form reviewed as a class. At this time, the instructor introduces the student-led warm up project which involves students working in pairs to develop and lead their own warm-up on a scheduled class date. Students are given detailed instructions and feedback from their instructor before leading the activity. Afterward, the class completes anonymous feedback forms, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the warm-up. The instructor assesses the activity based on organization, delivery, and presenters' engagement with the class. This project allows students to engage in peer instruction, improve confidence, and experience a truly student-centered classroom.

Key Takeaways

With assessment and learning objectives at the forefront of curriculum design, it can be difficult for instructors to make time for "fun" activities that build community and engagement in the class. A daily warm-up is

is a way to ensure that at least part of the lesson is dedicated to just this. Students begin the class eager to participate and develop valuable leadership skills through peer instruction. Instructors might feel that they don't have time to dedicate 20-25 minutes every day to such an activity, but times can be adjusted, and course content, including vocabulary, grammar, or pronunciation tasks, can be incorporated and reviewed as part of the warm-up. Knowing that class begins with a low-stakes activity reduces the affective filter of students and increases interest and engagement in the lesson (Schrank, 2016). Additionally, participating in student-led warm-ups builds community and confidence among learners.

References

Chlup, D. T., & Collins, T. E. (2010). Breaking the Ice: Using Ice-breakers and Re-energizers with Adult Learners. Adult Learning, 21(3-4), 34-39.

Schrank, Z. (2016). An Assessment of Student Perceptions and Responses to Frequent Low-stakes Testing in Introductory Sociology Classes. Teaching Sociology, 44(2), 118-127.

Willis, J. (2007). The Neuroscience of Joyful Education. Educational Leadership, 64.

Megan Chiusaroli is a professor of ESL at the Savannah College of Art and Design. Her special interests include flipped classroom strategies and incorporating literature into the ESL curriculum. She began her teaching career on a Fulbright Grant and has been a fellow in the English Language Fellow program.



Using a Virtual Escape Room for Active Learning in an Online University ESL Course by Jennifer West

Introduction

As an online ESL instructor for university students, I was excited to try the new approach of gamification in my classes to improve student engagement. Gamification, incorporating “game design elements in non-game contexts (Khoshnoodifar et al., 2023, p. 230),” enhances learning in online ESL classes. Virtual escape rooms are one example of gamification, where students collaborate to answer course-related mission questions to “escape” a room. Indeed, evidence suggests they improve learner motivation, participation, and collaboration (Bellés-Calvera and Martínez-Hernández, 2021). Therefore, I created one to facilitate learning and aim to share my experiences here to encourage their use in other online ESL classes.

Activity

Students and Course

I used the virtual escape room activity as part of a synchronous online writing support course within Temple University’s conditional acceptance program. This course provides additional support for advanced, non-native English-speaking students in their required first-year writing course at Temple University’s main campus in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The six mixed-gender students in this support class have diverse language backgrounds, including Mandarin, Arabic, and Albanian.

Virtual Escape Room Creation

My purpose for creating a virtual escape room

was to provide an engaging, learner-centered, and collaborative review activity on sentence types for an upcoming quiz. I created the virtual escape room activity using Genially. Genially (<https://genial.ly>) is an online tool for creating interactive content in the form of presentations, quizzes, and games for increased engagement in the fields of education and business. Genially offers both free and paid membership options. With the free membership, users have access to numerous, “templates and resources, unlimited creations, and unlimited views (<https://genial.ly/plans/>).” There are virtual escape room templates appropriate for the educational needs of students of various ages and levels and with different interests.

I chose the free membership to create a virtual escape room for my ESL course. I selected the “horror story” template based on my students’ interests. The premise of this escape room is to help a ghost and the players escape a haunted house by answering questions and completing tasks. After I picked the template, I edited the content by directly typing my questions and answers onto each slide. The questions were multiple choice and reviewed the class content on sentence types. I asked questions such as, “What is an independent clause?” It is important to note that Genially permits users to add or delete slides and edit the content and features of each slide as necessary. Upon completion of my virtual escape room, a link and QR code were generated for my students to use at a later time. It is worth noting that with a free membership, you must make your escape rooms visible to the public as only paid memberships can make their work private.

Playing the Virtual Escape Room

During a scheduled Zoom class, I introduced and demonstrated the “horror story” virtual escape room to my students. Then I divided my students into two teams and assigned them breakout rooms. I instructed them to use the link or QR code I provided to sign up and play

the escape room as teams. Throughout the 15-minute game, I monitored the rooms to keep the students on task and to help with any technical problems.

After the Virtual Escape Room

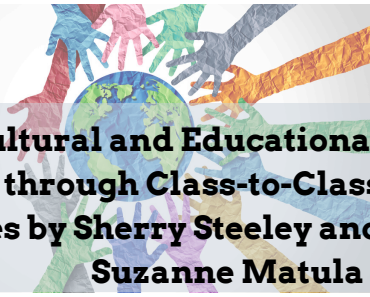
After participating in the virtual escape room activity, my students provided feedback using the polling feature on Zoom. I asked them these 3 closed-ended questions using a 5-point Likert scale: 1. The virtual escape room helped me review sentence types. 2. I had fun playing the virtual escape room game. 3. I would like to play a virtual escape room game again in the future. The students responded “agree or strongly agree” to these questions, except for one student who responded “neutral” to the question about having fun. I also asked follow-up, open-ended questions (e.g., “Is there anything else you would like to share about the virtual escape room?”) during a brief 3-minute discussion of the activity to allow them to expand on their answers from the poll. The discussion showed the students were receptive to the virtual escape room and found it useful. Indeed, one of the students suggested having a virtual escape room once per week. Their responses to the poll and their verbal feedback in the discussion aligned, with the students indicating that they enjoyed the activity, felt it improved their learning, and would like to do more of them. This feedback was also consistent with my observations of the teams while they played the game, as I noted collaboration and intense focus on the activity. Specifically, the students used authentic language to navigate the escape room and to come to a consensus on the answers. Thus, this activity afforded the students the opportunity to consolidate their knowledge of sentence types for the upcoming quiz and practice their English and collaborative skills in an authentic manner.

Conclusion

Based on my experiences, observations, and feedback, I suggest that virtual escape rooms for online ESL learners are an easy and effective way to increase student engagement, collaborative learning, and fun. I also feel that with repeated use, virtual escape rooms would likely increase the students’ fluency and confidence in using English. Furthermore, I recommend that other ESL instructors use the free membership Genially to create virtual escape rooms to promote active learning in their online classrooms.

References

- Bellés-Calvera, L. and Martínez-Hernández, A. (2021). Slave Away or Get Away: Escape Rooms as Motivational Tools for Learning English in the CLIL History Classroom in Higher Education. Latin American Journal of Content & Language Integrated Learning, 15(1), 1-15, e1511. <https://doi.org/10.5294/laclil.2022.15.1.1>*
- Genially. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://genial.ly>*
- Khoshnoodifar, M., Ashouri, A., and Taheri, M. (2023). Effectiveness of Gamification in Enhancing Learning and Attitudes: A Study of Statistics Education for Health School Students. Journal of Advances in Medical Education & Professionalism, 11(4), 230-239, doi: 10.30476/JAMP.2023.98953.1817*
- Jennifer West is an ESL instructor in the TCALC department at Temple University in Philadelphia, PA. She has various research interests including gamification, gender, AI, and error correction in ESL classrooms.*



Building Cultural and Educational Understandings through Class-to-Class Exchanges by Sherry Steeley and Suzanne Matula

Introduction

This article describes virtual class-to-class exchanges that took place within a larger virtual teacher exchange program. In this program, 40 in-service English language teachers from 30 countries around the world participated in a 10-week virtual exchange program which included synchronous and asynchronous sessions and activities each week.

The goals of the program were multifold. The primary goal was for participants to develop greater cross-cultural and international understanding through exchange, for the teachers to find commonalities with those in different linguistic, cultural, and educational contexts, and also to share challenges and solutions. Through guest lectures and facilitated discussions, the program also introduced participants to best practices in Content Based Instruction (CBI) and Project Based Learning (PBL). The program's content focus was on Business and Entrepreneurship, to prepare teachers to provide real world preparation for their own students. The capstone of this program was a PBL lesson or unit plan focused on an aspect of business and entrepreneurship (marketing, budgeting, project planning, etc) to be used with their own students in their own educational environment.

¹ The program, "English Access Microscholarship Virtual Exchange: Business and Entrepreneurship in the English Language Classroom" was sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's Office of English Language Programs through the English Access Microscholarship Program (Access). The program was administered by FHI 360 and delivered by Georgetown University.

One of the tools to support these goals were the class-to-class exchanges. For these exchanges, teachers were paired, or put in small groups; each pair/group included different languages and cultures, but were in similar time zones to enable the possibility of real-time (synchronous) communication, both between the participating teachers and their respective students.

Class-to-Class Exchanges

Preparation

To support participants as they began preparing for class-to-class exchanges, we provided prompts and space for pair meetings starting three weeks in advance of their first exchange. The scaffolded prompts moved from modality and technology to topics and instructional approaches. We also conveyed that, although the exchanges were intended for a given two weeks during the program, they could start earlier and extend later into the program. We also suggested structures to fit various circumstances based on class schedules, connectivity, and other issues. The first would be live synchronous sessions between two classes via Zoom or another platform. Another that might be slightly more manageable was that one teacher would visit the other's class and lead a discussion or lesson and then reverse roles in a subsequent exchange. Teachers might also choose completely asynchronous exchanges among students, with materials for response by the other class for recorded or written responses.

Focus of Exchanges

The types of lessons and exchanges that participants developed mirrored the goals of the program. Some focused on cultural exchanges and others focused on Business and Entrepreneurship topics.

Culture

One synchronous example involving culture

involved a pair representing Egypt and Pakistan. Students came up with questions for their partner class based on a KWL /3-2-1 model, shared on a Padlet for the other class. Questions ranged from culture to history to demographics, education, tourism, and music. Students in the other class selected from these topics to present in a follow-up session.

Another exchange focusing on culture was a three-way exchange conducted asynchronously among Bolivia, Japan, and Venezuela. In each class, students created videos, which was a new experience for them. The videos introduced cultural traditions and then the teacher shared the videos with partner classes. Teachers reported high levels of engagement as students experienced ideas and practices from another country, and discovered both similarities and differences.

Business and Entrepreneurship

Related to business and entrepreneurship, one pair from Turkey and India conducted an asynchronous exchange. Students developed advertising and marketing videos of their traditional local products and exchanged the videos with their partner class. Students in the receiving class had to decide whether to invest.

Another group focusing on business and entrepreneurship involved a teacher and one student visiting the partner class via Zoom to keep the exchange manageable. Each class prepared a business plan and a budget, one for gift exchanges and traditional ceremonies and the other for daily expenses. They also prepared marketing clips for their national products.

Challenges and Solutions

There were challenges in planning and implementing the class-to-class exchanges, but the teachers creatively collaborated to find

solutions. Differences in time zones created difficulty having live sessions for the two classes. Reliable internet, variable connectivity speeds, and availability of electricity were also challenges, especially for teachers participating in the program during their local rainy season. Academic schedules also created challenges: some schools were in the middle of exams and others were on break. These challenges were mitigated by holding asynchronous sessions (sharing recordings and creating material with the other class/students), and utilizing voluntary student participation (for activities held outside regularly scheduled classes).



Ongoing Impact

The inclusion of the class-to-class exchange has had a positive post-program impact on the participating teachers, arguably a larger impact than the virtual exchange program alone (i.e. without the class-to-class exchanges). Ongoing collaboration, communication, and sharing among the teachers has been high, especially between/among teachers who were paired/grouped together for the exchanges. Teachers have included experiences with (and benefits from) the class exchanges in professional development workshops and activities they have led in their own schools and local settings. The value of the exchanges has also been shared in regional TESOL Conference presentations. The exchanges have also had a longer term impact on the students involved; some student-student connections resulting from the exchanges have been maintained, fostering greater cross-cultural and international understanding between and among the students.

Implications and Conclusions

The inclusion of the class-to-class exchanges greatly enhanced the teachers' experience in the program; it provided an opportunity to more deeply connect with other teachers, and implement the ideas covered in the program (CBI, PBL, and business and entrepreneurship content topics) with their own students and with classes in a different linguistic, cultural, and geographic region. The exchanges greatly contributed to the programmatic goal of strengthening cross-cultural and international understanding while providing practical opportunities for teachers to practice and develop best practices in language teaching while providing real-life preparation for their students. While challenges in implementing virtual class-to-class exchanges are real, the benefits to teachers and students outweigh the obstacles.

Sherry L. Steeley, Ph.D., is a teaching professor in the English Language Center at Georgetown University, School of Continuing Studies.

Suzanne L. Matula, Ph.D., is the Director of Programs in the English Language Center at Georgetown University, School of Continuing Studies.





Fostering Intercultural Communication via International Conversation Partners by Quanisha Charles and Malika Nazyrbekova

Introduction

Each semester international college students enter the classrooms in the U.S. hoping to make American friends, learn American English, and get acclimated into American culture. One solution – International Conversational Partners (ICP) – offers students the opportunity to partner with American college students around campus. ICP is a classroom-based assignment implemented by faculty in search of finding ways to kickstart or continue the process of fostering global citizens. Faculty are tasked with facilitating ICP by creating opportunities for both their American and international students to immerse themselves in a cultural exchange around the college campus and local community. From personal experience, ICP has been a tremendous success wherein everyone benefits by either developing long-term friendships, practicing American idioms, learning about diverse cultures, or engaging less commonly spoken languages. Adopting this assignment in the classroom means incorporating it into syllabi for at least one course section comprised of primarily international students and another course section comprising domestic students. Ideally, the teacher is the head instructor of both sections and can facilitate the pairing process. The ICP assignment is a fun and engaging way for students to earn points and establish international relationships.

Student Learning Outcomes

- Identify the benefits of conversing with international partners.
- Collaborate with international partners to explore intercultural connections within the community.

- Develop conversation prompts and questions to engage with international partners.
- Practice active listening and speaking skills.

Materials Needed

- Sample conversational prompt
- Information to prospective events on campus or around the community
- Assignment Guide / In-class activities
- Scoring rubric based on learning outcomes

Steps to Take

Step 1: Ask students to first create a bio introduction. Because students partner with someone from a different class, the teacher is responsible for pairing students and facilitating the exchange. Students can either submit a bio to the teacher or the teacher can create a discussion forum for students and include the following prompt:

Introduce yourself to your prospective conversational partner! Feel free to submit a video response or simply type in your introduction by clicking on the reply button.

Please share...

- Your name
- Where you're from
- Your major / year
- Why are you taking this class, and what do you expect to learn this semester?
- A photo of something related to you and your post

Other ideas for sharing...

- What are your career goals?
- What are some of your favorite hobbies?
- What is your favorite food?
- Do you have any pets?
- Where do you want to travel to the most?
- Partner preference, e.g., male, Spanish-speaker, etc.
- Social media account

Step 2: Collects students' bios and pair students based on likes and interests. Send an email to ICPs congratulating them on this endeavor and ideas to get acquainted, e.g., icebreaker prompts and a link to the full assignment.

Assignment Summary:

The purpose of this assignment is to provide both domestic and international students with a partnership opportunity to experience a unique culturally differentiated experience over the course of two-weeks. Students should meet at least twice during the next two weeks to learn about each other's culture and language. Students are expected to engage in at least two culturally enriching experiences either on campus or in the community. Students will report on these experiences, what they learned, liked, disliked, wish to learn more about, etc. and submit their presentation to Canvas for grading. Students should review the scoring rubric prior to submission. **Expect to give a 10-minute power-point presentation regarding the experience.** The presentation will be graded based on the following information:

1. The overall experience of having a conversational partner.
2. What you learned from and about your partner - the cultural and linguistic aspects (e.g., challenges, triumphs, etc.).
3. What you previously assumed about your partner's culture or language that turned out to be unfounded.
4. What you would like to have learned more about.
5. How this experience has changed your outlook on any previously held notions.
6. Pictures of you and your partner as proof of engaging in two (2) culturally enriching events.
7. Your three (3) recommendations to future conversational partners.

Step 3: Have students search the college's website to find culturally enriching events and remain in communication with each other by exchanging contact information. Students should schedule multiple times and opportunities to meet just in case of schedule changes. Remind students that their presentations need to be created separately and submitted to Canvas on time.

Step 4: During class time, provide sample conversation prompt templates (e.g., "What do you think about...?" or "Have you ever...?"). Have students spend 10-15 minutes individually creating conversation prompts based on their chosen topics of interest. Using platforms like Sway or PowerPoint can inspire creativity and assist students with developing presentations. Below is an example of how teachers can thematically scaffold classroom lessons based on a 3-times p/week and 1-hour p/day schedule:

- Week 1: Crafting Conversations about the Significances of Places and Events
 - i. Current Events: Discuss and explore the latest news stories about partners' culture and interests. Research and explore the significance of events.
 - ii. Hobbies and Interests: Compare and contrast partners' background and places of interests, favorite foods, home values and cultural traditions.
 - iii. Travel Experiences & Places to Visit: Highlight partners' travel stories and lived experiences. Research nearby places to visit and use Google Earth to make virtual preliminary visits. Write a review of expectations vs. reality
- Week 2: Intercultural Conversational Practices & Reflections
 - i. Partner Matching: Role-play conversations and ICP interactions in class. Create a list of unfamiliar behaviors and unanswered questions.

- ii. Expectations vs. Reality: Journal experiences about the expectations of their partner versus reality. Discuss problems with finding congruent times to meet and most appropriate apps to remain in contact.
- iii. Wrap-up Discussion: Engage in peer-learning and reflection by having students converse about the benefits and challenges of intercultural communication based on their ICP experience.
- iv. Share the benefits of the project, inspirations, learned content, etc. 1-para (6-7 sentences).

International freshmen student, Malika Nazyrbekova '27, majors in Computer Science at North Central College in Naperville, IL. She is from Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, a small country in Central Asia. She wants to use her major in her country to support Kyrgyz women by teach them about financial literacy and helping them gain financial independence.

Conclusion

Overall, the ICP assignment benefits all students by providing a real-life intercultural communication experience. International students can develop English literacy skills via multiple modes of communication. Furthermore, American students can learn about new languages, cultures, and ways in which international students perceive their American college experience. There are opportunities to build friendships, break barriers, demonstrate leadership abilities, and showcase cultural expertise that transcend borders via one culturally enriching assignment - ICP.

Associate Professor of English, Quanisha Charles (Ph.D.) teaches first-year writing seminar and language study courses. She has taught the English language in South Korea, China, Vietnam, and virtually in Lebanon. Her research centers intercultural communication, English language education, and teacher identity.





The EnglishUSA Professional Development Activities Committee sat down with Cheryl Delk-Le Good, Executive Director, EnglishUSA, and Jackie McCafferty, Treasurer, EnglishUSA and Director of the Center for American Language & Culture at Temple University, to discuss the recent Certified Trade Mission to Mexico and Colombia (April 20-27).

Twenty-four EnglishUSA member programs from 18 states across all regions of the U.S., in collaboration with U.S. Commercial and Foreign Services, Department of Commerce traveled to Merida & Mexico City, Mexico followed by Medellin and Barranquilla, Colombia.

What’s the history of trade missions with EnglishUSA?

Cheryl: EnglishUSA (then AAIEP - American Association of Intensive English Programs) organized the first of its kind Certified Asian Trade Mission in 1998 with 10 member program delegates traveling to Taipei, Bangkok, Tokyo and Seoul over a 13-day period.

We started talking about a trade mission again in 2018 with the U.S. Commercial Service, with whom EnglishUSA had just become a strategic partner, and planned the first larger scale mission for November 2019 to Colombia and Brazil. The timing of the start of the pandemic just shortly after this, greatly impacted the results.

Trade missions are large-scale projects to plan with a lot of moving parts on our part in the

U.S., but also aligning with our collaborators and foreign trade specialists in the targeted cities and countries.

Jackie: The MDCP (Market Development Cooperator Program) funding that was awarded to EnglishUSA in October 2022 really triggered the momentum for this trade mission in 2024. The MDCP is a “cooperator” award that provides funding and opportunities for EnglishUSA to collaborate with the Department of Commerce, U.S. Commercial Service, and the International Trade Association. This award has allowed EnglishUSA to work on various projects, including the first ever English language programs in the U.S. data collection and analysis in collaboration with Bonard. This serves to complement the data already collected by IIE for Open Doors and provides the information for English language programs to decide where to spend recruitment funds.

With the EnglishUSA Annual Report from 2023, along with the Open Doors Intensive English Program report, Latin America rose to the top as a prime market, and particularly Mexico and Colombia. Based on this, Cheryl and the EnglishUSA board began planning a return to Latin America for the 2024 Trade Mission. We chose spring 2024 because we felt it would give programs time to begin rebounding from the pandemic and build a budget for travel recruitment. Regarding recruitment budgets, the MDCP funding allowed us to provide a discount to the attendees and also to cover EnglishUSA’s costs.

Cheryl: And just to add, for the Department of Commerce, in their 2023 National Export Strategy, the U.S. Department of Commerce recognized the importance of international education and highlighted the field as a top export priority. The MDCP project “Promoting

and Supporting English Language in the U.S.” aligned perfectly with the goal of promoting U.S. education opportunities.

What makes Certified Trade Mission different from other types of recruitment fairs we might be familiar with?

Cheryl: Our Certified Trade Mission (CTM) is not limited to direct student recruitment activities, although we included several in each city. With the assistance of the U.S. Commercial Service (both U.S.-based on Foreign Trade Specialists), meetings and networking opportunities were held with public and private school administrators, agents, and government officials. The attendees were able to engage with representatives from the American Chambers of Commerce, officials from the Consular Offices and U.S. Commercial Services Branch offices, EducationUSA advisers, and hundreds of prospective students who are eager to come to the U.S. to study English.

Jackie: From my perspective as a program director, I found it to be much more comprehensive than the typical student fair recruitment travel. First, by traveling with the Department of Commerce and International Trade Association, we had access to key audiences with a specific interest in English language programming in the U.S. As Cheryl mentioned, we met with American Chambers of Commerce members in each city who were eager to connect with us to discuss opportunities for their employees to improve their English. We met with university representatives also eager to partner with U.S. institutions or independent programs to bolster the English language fluency of their students and, in some cases, their professors. For example, I learned that students at technological institutes in Mexico must graduate with a minimum English proficiency of CEFR B1 and these institutes are eager to expose them to native speakers to help achieve

that goal. Colombia is promoting bilingualism among its population and is looking toward the U.S. for help with this. Additionally, EducationUSA organized student fairs and, as is usual for EducationUSA student fairs, all the students in attendance are focused on learning in the U.S. On many days we were running from event to event exchanging WhatsApp QR codes for fast communication with key prospective partners, then on to the next event. Some days had five back-to-back events! In all these examples, we were provided a captive audience eager to learn more about how to collaborate with or apply to our programs. You're doing so many things in so many cities in such a short period of time and the purpose is to learn about the market in those cities and to connect with people on the ground in those cities who want English language programming from the United States. As far as I know, this is the only trade mission specifically dedicated to English language programs - this is what makes it unique.

What are the desired results of the mission?

Cheryl: For the industry as a whole, we hope to boost the number of students enrolling in U.S. based English language programs—this is a goal of the MDCP project and of course, a goal for individual programs. Because of some recent policy changes occurring in the other primary destinations (UK, Canada, and Australia), the U.S. is positioned to be competitive in the capacity and offerings of programs.

Jackie: Well, results and ROI is critical but it is important to remind everyone that this all takes time. We've just returned a few days ago and my focus has been on connecting with universities and businesses who expressed an interest in partnering with us. I've had four meetings with prospective partners around on-line English programs, teacher training programs, and short-term summer programs. The success of this is largely contingent on the

degree to which I follow through and can provide the programming needed by our counterparts in Mexico and Colombia. In many ways, the real work begins after the trade mission. I expect to start seeing results in 2025, but it's important to remember that one trade mission, or one visit to a country, does not reap rewards for long. It is up to each program to commit to a country or a region, nurture those relationships from afar, and return regularly for in-person visits. In all honesty, this is what we were continually being told about Canada - students are going to Canada because Canada goes to Mexico and Colombia regularly. Everyone we met with were thrilled to welcome us because the U.S. just doesn't visit in-person enough. My big take-away from this trip is that people are interested in studying in the U.S. and collaborating with U.S. partners, but U.S. programs and universities need to have a presence in these countries. For English language programs in the U.S., EnglishUSA, through its mission, vision, and its strategic partners, helps us do this and the MDCP award and this trade mission are excellent examples of this.

What other benefits of the trade mission?

Cheryl: I heard a few of the delegates describe the experience as “an 8-day professional retreat with your peeps!” Traveling together with early and late night arrivals, eating together, helping set up, and absorbing the information we all heard is professional development that you can't really predict or put a price tag on. You learn about how other programs promote, what they teach, what the challenges are, the successes. And, everyone has everyone's back! As a former ELP Director, I know that sometimes being an administrator is a lonely job, so multiple days of networking with a group of peers, even before they've had their 6 am morning coffee, is truly a personal and professional experience of a lifetime.

Jackie: I can't agree enough with Cheryl, it does feel like a professional retreat and, given the rigor of this trade mission, the exhaustion felt especially mid-week as we traveled endlessly from event to event fostered an especially strong bond. We helped each other and were there for each other when exhausted or sick (don't eat the salad in Mexico!). Now that we are on the other side of the trip, I have a new professional network of 30+ people to reach out to, get advice from, and to support. As Cheryl said, being an ELP director can be lonely; the more we connect and share, the stronger we are, and a trade mission such as this goes a long way in building these support networks.



Gold Sponsors



SAVE THE DATE!

12th Annual EnglishUSA Conference

Registration opens in June



EXPLORING NEW HORIZONS:
THE EVOLVING ROLE OF ENGLISH
LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

September 26-27, 2024 | Alexandria, VA

