Self-directed Learning Practices in ESL: How Beginning Adult Latinx English Language Learners Can Increase Learning Outcomes

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Self-directed Learning Practices in ESL: How Beginning Adult Latinx English Language Learners Can Increase Learning Outcomes

A Field Project Proposal Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Second Language

By
Jessica Anna Rosa Parisi
May 2020
Self-directed Learning Practices in ESL: How Beginning Adult Latinx English Language Learners Can Increase Learning Outcomes

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

in

TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

by

Jessica Anna Rosa Parisi
May 2020

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this field project (or thesis) has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

Approved:

April 30, 2020
Date Approved
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank everyone who answered the phone when I called, and lent me an ear or gave me advice. Both personally and professionally, innumerable people contributed to the successful completion of this project.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank my instructors at the University of California at Berkeley, many of whom are University of San Francisco alumni and/or community college ESL teachers in the San Francisco Bay Area. Without their leadership, I would not have realized my passion for teaching English. Specifically, I would like to thank Dr. Popal, whose encouragement and guidance helped me to realize that a Master of Arts degree was attainable, and that I have something to contribute to the field.

My greatest thanks and appreciation belong to Tom Kennedy, my mentor, and an ESL instructor at City College of San Francisco, Mission campus. It was under his mentorship that I discovered a passion for teaching English to members of my own community. Witnessing firsthand his commitment and dedication to his students, and importantly, his students’ dedication to and adoration for him, I learned that as much as I love the English language and teaching it, what brings me fulfillment is being of service in my community.
ABSTRACT

This field project investigates the self-directed learning (SDL) practices that could increase learner outcomes in English language acquisition for beginning adult English language learners (ELLs), and presents on a website designed for the learner, the practices and local resources to engage them. Non-credit English as a second language (ESL) courses in community colleges in the San Francisco Bay Area have high enrollment and low levels of advancement, especially beginning levels. Latinx adult ELLs face unique challenges that contribute to their low rates of advancement, including linguistic isolation, and work and home duties that often prevent learners from attending classes the minimum hours necessary for language acquisition. Thus, ELLs could benefit from using SDL practices outside of the classroom to increase English language acquisition. However, studies show that beginning adult Latinx ELLs are not practicing English outside of the classroom, and are often unaware of the various SDL practices they could engage in. The website outlines different SDL practices a learner can engage in, to both improve specific skills and overall learner outcomes. By identifying effective SDL practices for English acquisition and placing tools and local resources to practice them directly in the hands of the learner, beginning adult Latinx ELLs in San Francisco Bay Area ESL courses may increase their learning outcomes and matriculation rates.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Speaking English in the United States is necessary for participation in the political and social domains in American communities and for economic stability. However, many adult Latinx English Language Learners (ELLs) in the United States live in linguistically isolated communities and are not immersed in the majority language (Ciriza-Lope, Shappeck & Arxer, 2016; Drake, 2014). This leads to fewer opportunities for ELLs to learn and practice English outside of the classroom. Furthermore, adult Latinx ELLs often have work and home duties which prevent them from being able to study in the classroom the necessary hours to attain higher levels of English proficiency. In his 2008 CAAL report, Chisman concludes that the slow progress many students experience leads to high dropout rates at literacy and beginning levels of English as a second language (ESL). If students were made aware of the tools they have outside of the classroom to improve their learner outcomes, it could lead to higher persistence and matriculation rates.

The student population of ESL classes in community colleges faces many challenges. Students often live in linguistically isolated communities and are in effect English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students rather than ESL students (Drake, 2014; Hardman, 1999). Adult Latinx ELLs face additional challenges. Language socialization can create conflicting identities within the learner, among other learners, and among a learner’s first language, or L1, community (Ciriza-Lope et al., 2016; Mori, 2014). Similarly, historic and present cultural attitudes between language minority and language majority groups can create discord and more barriers to English acquisition (Good, Masewitz & Vogel, 2010). Studies also show that outside-classroom learning opportunities greatly enhance learner outcomes, yet self-
reporting studies of ELLs indicate that few students take advantage of such opportunities (Askildson, Kelly & Mick, 2013; Grover, Miller, Swearingen & Wood, 2014; Wurr, 2018). These factors could be contributing to the low learning outcomes experienced in non-credit ESL courses in community colleges.

In community colleges, non-credit ESL courses begin at literacy level and end at advanced. An advanced ELL in a non-credit ESL course is generally proficient in English. A credit ESL course begins at entry-level college English and focuses on academic writing. As noted above, beginning level ELLs face many challenges. While attendance in non-credit ESL courses in community colleges in the San Francisco Bay Area is robust, students are still not receiving the requisite hours that experts believe are necessary for language learning and/or acquisition. Students’ work schedules often vary, making attending class regularly difficult (Chisman, 2008; Spurling et al., 2008). Many students also have family obligations which can further hinder a student’s ability to attend class. Although a typical non-credit ESL course at City College of San Francisco (CCSF) is 180 hours of instruction (10 hours a week for 18 weeks), an average learner attends just 110 hours of instruction per semester (Spurling, Seymour & Chrisman, 2008). Students are motivated to enroll in ESL classes, but are either unaware of how, or are not motivated to take the additional steps needed to advance.

A longitudinal study conducted at City College of San Francisco found that between 1998 and 2000, only 19% of students matriculated from low-level, non-credit ESL courses to higher levels of credit ESL. This is a college where ESL is the single largest department with 34% of total enrollment (Spurling, Seymour & Chrisman, 2008). Perhaps because of this low rate of advancement, even students who continue to enroll for multiple semesters (persistence) usually stop attending before they matriculate to the next level. Of adult ELLs in community
colleges throughout the United States, two-thirds of learners in beginning levels do not advance one level per year (Spurling et al., 2008). Furthermore, only 10% of learners in non-credit ESL classes advance to credit classes (Chisman & Crandall, 2007; “Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education,” n.d.; Crandall & Sheppard, 2004).

In a summary of multiple reports conducted in community colleges throughout the United States, Chisman (2008) shows that ESL programs in community colleges have robust enrollment, especially at the literacy and beginning levels. However, comprehensive reports on these programs show that even with a moderate persistence rate, few students advance to higher levels. These programs were designed to give students (the majority of whom are of Asian or Hispanic ethnicity) access to the level of English that would enable them to reach their social, economic, and academic goals in order to create a society in which every member can be an active citizen (Spurling et al., 2008). Community College ESL programs are meant to elevate the workforce to both higher wages and higher civic involvement. Unfortunately, current research demonstrates that this is not the typical outcome.

In her research, Lambert (2015) identifies a learner profile who is most likely to benefit from community college ESL courses. That student is young, has no dependents, is unemployed, and intends to return to their home country (Lambert, 2015). However, foreign students who do not intend to remain in the United States are not the target demographic for community-based and publicly funded community colleges (City College of San Francisco, n.d.). Indeed, they make up a minority of the student population. In data collected in 2007, nearly 60% of non-credit ESL students at CCSF were aged 35 or older, and 27% were over 50 years old (Spurling et al., 2008). According to California Community Colleges, in the academic year of 2015-2016, 43.61% of students were Hispanic and 23.83% of students were aged 25 and older (“Key Facts,”
n.d.). In the academic year 2017-2018, 35.9% of non-credit ESL students at CCSF were Latino, a percentage that has been steadily increasing over many years (Leiserson, 2019). The needs of the target demographic, and indeed, the majority population, of ELLs taking non-credit classes at community colleges, are not being met.

Beginning adult Latinx ELLs are a target demographic of community-based and publicly funded community colleges in the San Francisco Bay Area, yet they are the least likely to benefit from non-credit ESL courses in these same institutions (“Key Facts,” n.d.; Lambert, 2015). The inability to adequately reach these students is due in large part to the linguistic isolation that many adult Latinx ELLs experience in their daily lives, as well as the home and work duties that prevent learners from attending class the necessary hours to achieve higher learner outcomes. Beginning adult Latinx ELLs are not able to put in the necessary hours in class to improve their English language learning outcomes, and furthermore do not have the tools to continue learning English outside of the classroom.

**Purpose of the Project**

According to a 2008 Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy (CAAL) report, fewer than 5% of ELLs at City College of San Francisco (CCSF) matriculate from beginning level (0-4) ESL classes to intermediate levels (4-7) (Spurling et al., 2008). Adult Latinx ELLs in these programs often face additional challenges to language acquisition including a) linguistic isolation, b) lack of English language socialization, and c) work and home duties, which can often hinder a student’s success in language learning.

Most language teachers agree that immersion is the best method for language acquisition. However, many Latinx ELLs live in linguistic isolation and do not benefit from
language socialization in the English-speaking community (Drake, 2014; Mori, 2014). This may be due to embarrassment, some students do not feel comfortable practicing English due to both the language minority culture as well as the language majority culture, the ease of survival without English, or most likely, some combination of these and other variables affecting continuing education outside the classroom (Ciriza-Lope et al., 2016). Because many adult, Latinx ELLs live in linguistic isolation, many attend non-credit ESL classes at community colleges.

Many beginning, adult, Latinx, ELLs enrolled in non-credit ESL courses are not able to attend the requisite hours of class to receive the full benefits of the courses. However, there are many tools students can use to continue their English language learning outside of the classroom (Grover et al., 2014). Even in linguistically isolated communities, opportunities for English language exposure are ample. What is needed is a guide for beginning, adult, Latinx English language learners to help both maintain their motivation (which they have if they enrolled in an ESL class at a community college) and to give them the tools and resources to continue learning outside of the classroom, in order to enable them to take responsibility for their learning outcomes.

In a field as large and diverse as TESOL, research and development of methods and materials is an ongoing process, ever-evolving with our understanding of the various cultural, political, and economic effects that modern societies have on a student’s capacity to learn, as well as our increased understanding of the social and cognitive aspects of language acquisition. While research continues, current adult Latinx ELLs living in linguistically isolated communities can benefit from a website that will encourage students to continue learning outside the classroom while providing them with engaging methods and resources to do so. The purpose
of this project is to create a resource that students can use to learn about and access SDL practices in their community, in order to reach as wide an audience as possible. This project includes a website which provides the methods and materials for beginning, adult, Latinx ELLs in non-credit ESL courses in the San Francisco Bay Area community colleges to enhance their learning outcomes by engaging in self-directed learning (SDL) practices.

**Theoretical Framework**

In the 1960s, Malcolm S. Knowles was one of the first researchers to understand that adults learn differently than children, and pioneered the concept of andragogy (Knowles, 1980; Merriam, 2001). Knowles identified five characteristics that differentiate the adult learner from children. An adult learner usually has (a) an independent sense of self, (b) life experience, (c) learning needs related to social roles, (d) learning needs related to immediate problems, and (e) internal motivation (Knowles, 1975; Knowles, 1980, Merriam, 2001). Based upon these principles, Knowles developed the andragogical theory of self-directed learning (SDL). Thus, self-directed, adult learners, Knowles argued, inherently have higher intrinsic motivation and thus learn more and better than other learners (Knowles, 1975). These principles seem to have been validated by other research on adult learning.

At the same time, Alan Tough was also doing research on adult learning in Canada. In studies he conducted at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the time, he found that nearly all adults engaged in some form of informal learning. Indeed, he came to believe that informal, unintentional learning is a part of the human condition. In the following decades, these results were replicated all over the world, across all demographics. While the results varied somewhat across cultures, they remained consistent across age groups (Tough,
Furthermore, he found that 90% of adults engaged in at least one deliberate learning effort per year and that only 20% of said learning was guided by a professional (Tough, 1999). Thus, the overwhelming majority of adults were engaging in some form of intentional, self-directed learning (Tough, A. 1979). In the following decades, SDL practices have been studied and adopted across many disciplines of adult education (Grover et al., 2014; Merriam, 2001; Tough, A. 1999; Wurr, 2018). While the studies by Tough and others show that the majority of adult learners engage in independent learning, most educators continue to focus on in-class study.

Efforts to increase learner outcomes in adult education have largely focused on getting students into the classroom (Tough, A. 1999). Indeed, as Knowles (1975) noted, most adults need to learn how to learn. After all, most adults have only experienced passive reception of knowledge given to them by teachers in formal, pedagogically based settings. When adult learners are shown the tools to engage in SDL practices, they are often more successful learners, achieving higher learning outcomes in less time.

Studies show that there is a plethora of methods a student can use outside of the classroom to improve their learner outcomes in language acquisition (Askildson, Kelly & Mick, 2013; Wurr, 2018). Self-directed learning practices in language acquisition may include (a) communicating outside of the classroom in the target language (TL) with friends, co-workers, or at the store, (b) watching television or movies in the TL, (c) listening to music and/or podcasts, and (d) reading in the TL, among others. However, few adult community college ESL students take advantage of these methods (Grover et al., 2014; Spurling et al., 2008). By using Knowles’ theory of self-directed learning, a website was developed to give beginning adult Latinx ELLs in community colleges in the San Francisco Bay Area the tools and resources to continue learning
outside of the classroom, which may aid in enhanced engagement, increased intrinsic motivation, and increased learner outcomes.

**Significance of the Project**

There are numerous potential benefits of the use of SDL practices for beginning adult Latinx ELLs in community colleges in the San Francisco Bay Area. If adult Latinx ELLs are given the tools to continue learning outside of the classroom with SDL practices, they may improve their learning outcomes at a faster rate than with classroom study alone. With faster, noticeable learner outcomes, students may be more likely to have higher persistence rates and achieve higher levels of English proficiency. When learners begin to notice increased outcomes, it often lowers their affective filter and increases their intrinsic motivation, which itself leads to enhanced learner outcomes.

Higher levels of English proficiency will enable learners to be more active in the social, political, and economic domains. Many adult Latinx ELLs live in linguistically isolated communities and thereby do not actively participate in English speaking domains (Ciriza-Lope et al., 2016). Linguistic isolation contributes to decreased language acquisition, which in turn leads to continued linguistic isolation, trapping many adult Latinx community members in the San Francisco Bay Area in a cycle of disenfranchisement (Drake, 2014; Mori, 2014). As educators it is our job to empower all members of our community to be active citizens who can exercise their rights and have a voice in society. Self-directed learning practices can be a valuable tool for elevating beginning adult Latinx ELLs out of said destructive cycle.

Many SDL practices inherently involve communicating in the TL. This manner of language socialization, like noticeably increased learner outcomes, can lead to a positive cycle of
learning fueling learning. Exposure to the TL in safe, constructive environments can increase learner confidence, while also lowering the learners’ affective filter and by extension, hopefully, increasing the learner’s intrinsic motivation.

With access to an engaging, interactive website which links learners to tools and resources that they can use at home, on mobile devices, and in their communities, students may be more likely to take advantage of the resources available to them outside of the classroom. Using such resources may increase learner engagement, thereby increasing learner outcomes at a noticeably increased rate which could, in turn, lead to a lower affective filter and higher intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, increased proficiency in English can benefit the Bay Area Latinx community by empowering its members to be more active in the broader community, including access to higher quality education, better paying jobs, and greater access to health care. Perhaps more meaningfully, greater English proficiency can open doors by giving Bay Area Latinx residents a voice in the political and social domains, enabling them to take part in the processes that shape our communities both in the present and in the future, and by extension increasing their quality of life in an English majority society.

Limitations

This website is designed to guide beginning adult Latinx ELLs in the San Francisco Bay Area to the tools and resources they have to increase their English language learning outcomes. While some content, such as videos and podcasts, may be ubiquitous on the internet, much of the content, such as information regarding community gardens, volunteering, and language exchange meetups, is locally based. Therefore, while all ELLs could benefit from much of the content, there is a limited audience for the full breadth of the content. Furthermore, this website is by
nature dependent on outside sources. Many such sources are local and community based, and as such are themselves subject to change over time. Similarly, many sources referred to on this website are privately maintained and the continuation of such sources is unknown.

**Definition of Terms**

- *Latinx* is a term used to describe people from Latin America that includes all genders, and is intended to eliminate the binary concept of masculinity and femininity in a gendered language. ("Center for Chicanx and Latinx Academic Student Success," n.d.; Steinmetz, 2018). It is the term I will use to describe people from Latin America.

- *Latin@* is a term used to describe people from Latin America and is meant to incorporate both the -o/-a endings in Spanish ("Lexico," n.d.; Steinmetz, 2018). It is a slightly older term and as such is more common in academic literature. I will use this term when referring to literature in which it is used.

- *Persistence* refers to the number of semesters in which a student “persisted” in ESL courses, i.e. the rate of re-enrollment in ESL courses (Spurling, Seymour & Chrisman, 2008).
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Beginning adult Latinx English language learners (ELLs) studying English in community colleges often live in linguistic isolation and have little contact with English outside of the classroom (Chisman, 2008; Ciriza-Lope, Shappeck, & Arxer, 2016; Drake, 2014; Mori, 2014; Spurling, Seymour, & Chisman, 2008). For these students, English belongs almost exclusively in the domain of the classroom (Grover, Miller, Swearingen & Wood, 2014); however, studies show that self-directed learning (SDL) outside of the classroom can greatly enhance learning outcomes (Askildson, Kelly, & Mick, 2013; Chisman, 2008; Knowles, 1980; Wurr, 2018). Unfortunately, research shows that few beginning adult ELLs living in linguistic isolation utilize SDL practices (Grover et al., 2014). Perhaps because of the low rates and slow pace of advancement, students often stop taking English language classes before they achieve the outcomes toward which they were working (Chisman 2008; Spurling et al., 2008). By providing the tools for beginning adult Latinx ELLs to engage in SDL practices outside of the classroom, learning outcomes may increase at a faster rate, and adult Latinx ELLs attending community colleges in the United States will increase their persistence rates and matriculate to their desired level of English acquisition.

SDL practices may lead to greater learning outcomes for beginning adult Latinx ELLs who attend community colleges in the San Francisco Bay Area and live in linguistic isolation. There are three reasons to justify this claim.

- The data show that beginning adult Latinx ELLs in community colleges have low rates of advancement to intermediate and advanced levels (Chrisman, 2008; Spurling et al., 2008). Those students who do advance, do so at a slow rate and...
ultimately achieve lower outcomes than intermediate and advanced ELLs (Spurling et al., 2008). Thus, these students need additional help to achieve their learning goals.

- Many Latinx members of the Bay Area community live in linguistic isolation, leading to less exposure to English outside of the classroom (Chisman & Crandall, 2007; Spurling et al., 2008). While linguistic immersion is considered by many researchers to be one of the most effective methods of language acquisition, members of linguistically isolated communities do not benefit from being “immersed” in a language majority country (Ciriza-Lope et al., 2016; Drake, 2014).

- Research has shown that SDL practices increase learner outcomes in many disciplines (Knowles, 1980; Merriam, 2001; Tough, 1979; Tough, 1999). SDL is correlated with increased intrinsic motivation (Knowles, 1980). Indeed, studies show that some forms of SDL, such as the service-learning model, have been shown to increase intrinsic motivation, leading to greater learning outcomes (Askildson et al., 2013). In a language learning context, SDL practices, by nature, often involve extensive communication in the target language (TL) (Askildson et al., 2013; Knowles, 1980; Wurr, 2018). Thus, utilizing SDL practices in an English language learning context could benefit ELLs by increasing both exposure to the target language and intrinsic motivation in the learner.

Joint reasoning is used to justify this claim because each piece of reasoning, while related, is an independent sphere of academic study. When taken together, however, they constitute a
roadmap toward increasing learner outcomes among beginning adult Latinx, ELLs in community colleges in the San Francisco Bay Area. A visual representation of the logic equation is as follows: R1, R2, R3 ∴ C (Machi & McEvoy, 2016).

**Low Rates of Matriculation to Intermediate and Advanced Levels**

Studies show that there are low rates of advancement from beginning levels of non-credit ESL courses in community colleges to intermediate and advanced levels (Chisman 2008; Spurling et al., 2008). This holds true across different colleges which delineate sub-levels in various manners, and despite the fact that beginning level students have higher persistence rates. While the goal of community colleges is to uplift the members of the community, adult Asian and Latinx community members are least served in beginning level non-credit ESL courses while younger students who do not intend to remain in the community benefit most (Lambert, 2015).

Community colleges in the United States generally define levels of English language learning as literacy, beginning, intermediate, and advanced (Spurling et al., 2008). However, community colleges often use different metrics to define these levels. The levels are demarcated differently, thus different assessment standards are used in different institutions, according to various needs of each, in order to place ELLs (Chisman & Crandall, 2007; Spurling et al., 2008). Within these four levels are sublevels which are usually delineated as levels 0-7 or 0-10. Of the latter, 0 is literacy, 1-4 beginning, 5-7 intermediate, and 8-10 advanced (Spurling et al., 2008). This section of the literature review is based on reports and demographics at colleges where ESL levels are delineated on a scale of 0-10.
Comprehensive longitudinal studies conducted by the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy (CAAL) at colleges across the United States show that advancement rates of adult ELLs are low (Chisman, 2008). The reports show that nearly half of non-credit ESL students do not advance even one level (Chisman, 2008). At City College of San Francisco (CCSF), one of the colleges where the CAAL studies were conducted, researchers found that on average across levels, only 56% of ELLs advanced one sublevel, and that the percentage of students advancing at least one sublevel was higher in correlation with a higher entrance level (Spurling et al., 2008). Which is to say that while ELLs who begin classes at intermediate or advanced levels were likely to advance one sublevel (over 74% of learners), students who began at literacy level (0) were only 44% likely to advance, and the percentage for beginning-entry levels only increased up to 56%. Examination of the data shows that advancement from literacy or beginning levels to intermediate levels is significantly less than that of sublevels; less than 4% of literacy and beginning level learners matriculate to intermediate and/or advanced level English (Spurling et al., 2008).

Low advancement rates occur despite the fact that literacy and beginning-level students have higher persistence rates than students at the intermediate and advanced levels (Chisman, 2008; Spurling et al., 2008). The CAAL longitudinal study shows that while persistence rates are higher for literacy and beginning levels than those of students who enter ESL programs at intermediate and advanced levels, the advancement rates for students at lower levels are demonstrably less than that of learners who begin ESL at higher levels (Spurling et al., 2008). This is due to at least two discernable factors: (a) beginning students have farther to go to achieve desired learning outcomes, and (b) desired learning outcomes may be lower than fluent English; once a student has achieved their desired level of English, they are no longer motivated
to continue learning (Spurling et al., 2008). Thus, despite higher persistence rates of literacy and beginning-level ELLs, advancement to higher levels is less likely than for ELLs who begin at higher levels of English proficiency.

These data are particularly true of Asian and Hispanic students (Spurling et al., 2008). Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education (CCCIE) cites that 25% of current enrollment in community colleges in the United States is by people from an immigrant background (n.d.). Likewise, ESL comprises the majority of enrollment in community colleges (Chisman, 2008; Chisman & Crandall, 2007; Spurling et al., 2008; CCCIE, n.d.; Leiserson, 2019.) Of these students, the vast majority are of Asian or Latinx descent (Leiserson, 2019; Spurling et al., 2008). Indeed, a CAAL report conducted at CCSF shows that 34% of overall enrollment was in ESL classes and that 37% of noncredit ESL students were Latinx (Spurling et al., 2008). This is consistent with the data that Liz Leiserson (2019) compiled for the 2015-2018 academic years at CCSF, during which 35.9% of the non-credit ESL students were Latinx.

Community colleges are meant to serve the members of their local communities (Chisman, 2008; Spurling et al., 2008). Enrolment data show that ESL is one of the greatest needs in many communities, and that immigrants make up a large portion of students in ESL classes in community colleges (Chisman, 2008; CCCIE, n.d.; Spurling et al., 2008). Adult, Latinx ELLs at community colleges are in large part immigrants to the United States (CCIE, n.d.; Crandall & Sheppard, 2004; Spurling et al., 2008). Most adult Latinx ELLs live in language minority, linguistically isolated communities, even those who indeed grew up in the U.S. (Chisman, 2008; Ciriza-Lope et al., 2016; Drake, 2014; Spurling et al., 2008). These students represent the target demographic for noncredit ESL classes at community colleges in the United States (Chisman, 2008; City College of San Francisco, n.d.). Community colleges aim to serve
the members of the community in the diverse needs that they have, including ESL, in order to increase the general welfare of the community members and the community as a whole (Chisman, 2008; City College of San Francisco, n.d.; Spurling et al., 2008).

However, as Lambert (2015) notes in her study at community colleges, the students most likely to benefit from ESL classes in community colleges are in fact not members of the community. Rather, they are young, single, have few if any family or work obligations, and intend to return to their home country (Lambert, 2015). In contrast, adult Latinx ELLs attending community college generally have many work and home duties (Chisman, 2008). The data show that despite often high persistence rates among beginning adult Latinx ELLs, advancement rates are low, and students’ needs are not being met solely inside the classroom (Chisman, 2008; Spurling et al., 2008).

Despite efforts by dedicated educators and faculty, community colleges are failing in their mission to serve beginning adult ELLs, some of the most vulnerable members of our communities. While beginning level learners, the majority of whom are Asian or Latinx, have the highest rates of persistence in ESL courses, they are the least likely to advance (Ciriza-Lope et al., 2016; Lambert, 2015; Spurling et al., 2008). This is due, in part, to the linguistic isolation in which the most of these students live (Ciriza-Lope et al., 2016). Learners who are not being exposed to English outside of the classroom could benefit from a website that could guide them towards self-directed learning opportunities outside of the classroom in order to increase their language learning outcomes.
Linguistic Isolation

Linguistic isolation occurs when a language-minority (LM) lives and works within a LM community in a language-majority society. The term was first introduced in reaction to the Voting Rights Act (VRA), in the 1980 U.S. census (Drake, 2014). The U.S. Census Bureau interprets section 203 of the Language Provisions of the VRA to be speech communities that comprise at least 5% of the voting population or 10,000 voting age individuals who are English limited proficient (Section 203, 2017). The U.S. Census Bureau needed to start collecting data so that government agencies could comply with the VRA, and introduced the term language-minority to describe such speech communities. While the term as used by the census bureau is a marker of linguistically isolated households, linguists studying second language acquisition (2LA), and the TESOL, field have appropriated the term to mean neighborhood and community linguistic isolation (Drake, 2014). When citizens live in linguistic isolation in the United States, they are, by definition, not experiencing English-language immersion.

Linguists who study 2LA theory agree that language immersion is a key factor to successful acquisition. However, historically, most studies of and attention to immersion and ESL have been focused in the classroom and is centered around the debate of bilingual education (Drake, 2014). More recently, the TESOL field has taken an active interest in the wider effects of living in LM communities, especially in the U.S. where there exists an ever-growing population of native Spanish speakers (Drake, 2014). Drake (2014) takes up this query in his study of the effects of linguistic isolation on LM students in high schools, while Ciriza-Lope et al. (2016) examine the effects of linguistic isolation on adult ELLs. Chisman (2008), in his summary of the series of CAAL reports, finds that linguistic isolation is present among students in ESL programs in colleges throughout the United States. Linguistic isolation is especially
common among adult Latinx ELLs, and is a reason that many learners, despite often having lived in the United States for significant periods of time, enter non-credit ESL classes at literacy and beginning levels (Ciriza-Lope et al., 2016).

Ciriza-Lope et al. (2016), as well as Drake (2014) note that linguistic isolation is a key characteristic of adult Latinx ELLs and a barrier to English acquisition. Likewise, Chisman (2008) and Spurling, Seymour, and Chisman (2008) agree that linguistic isolation is a barrier for English learners. For LM learners living in linguistic isolation, the classroom is often the only domain in which learners are exposed to and practice English (Ciriza-Lope et al., 2016). However, the majority of adult Latinx ELLs in non-credit ESL programs in community colleges do not receive enough classroom instruction hours to advance to higher levels of English proficiency (Chisman, 2008; Spurling et al., 2008).

Linguistic isolation has been shown to be an impediment to language acquisition. Nevertheless, many beginning adult ELLs in community colleges, including the majority of Latinx ELLs, have this experience. For these students, the only domain in which they speak English is in the classroom. Yet classroom instruction, without immersion, has not produced significant learner outcome gains. However, if these students have tools to continue learning English outside of the classroom, they may be more able to reach the hours of study consistent with enhanced learner outcomes and advancement.

**Self-directed Learning Practices**

Self-directed learning (SDL) is based on the theory of andragogy which arose in the 20th century. Educators noticed that the adult students in various disciplines had different learner needs and goals, and that traditional pedagogy was insufficient. Malcom Knowles outlined a
model for which a facilitator, guide, or teacher leads a learner to understand their needs, set their goals, and find the methods and materials that best enable the learner to acquire the knowledge or skill that they are pursuing (Knowles, 1975). SDL is centered upon the idea that the student takes responsibility for their learning outcomes, both inside but especially outside, of the classroom (Knowles, 1970; Knowles, 1975; Merriam, 2001). In ESL literature, the terms SDL and autonomous learning are often used interchangeably (Grover et al., 2014).

Recently, researchers and educators have begun to investigate how SDL can be used in ESL and EFL settings. Thus far, research has mainly focused on two themes, the role of the teacher and the specific SDL practices that can be put into place. While more research is needed, it is evident that beginning adult ELLs in community colleges throughout the United States are not engaging in SDL practices.

**Pedagogy vs Andragogy**

The average human life expectancy did not reach 40 until the agricultural revolution in the 16\textsuperscript{th} century (Galor and Moav, 2005). However, it decreased shortly after its rise due to urbanization, and did not rise above 40 again until the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century (Galor & Moav, 2005). Thus, to Knowles (1980) it is understandable that the western world has been teaching pedagogy, Greek for “the art and science of teaching children” (p. 40) since the 12\textsuperscript{th} century (Knowles, 1980). However, Knowles believed that modern adults have intrinsic qualities different than those of children, and thus learn differently than children (Knowles, 1970; Knowles, 1975, Knowles, 1980; Merriam, 2001; Tough, 1999). Indeed, in Europe in the mid-20\textsuperscript{th} century, educators were drawing the same conclusions, and the term for the art and science of teaching adults, or andragogy, was coined (Knowles, 1980; Merriam, 2001).
Malcolm S. Knowles posited that adults, unlike children, have an identity of self and self-direction (Knowles, 1970; Knowles, 1975). Thus, the relationship between teacher and learner is inherently different in andragogy than pedagogy (Knowles, 1980). In adult education, the “teacher” performs as a guide who can enable a student to learn, in contrast to pedagogy which implies that the learner is a passive recipient of knowledge (Grover et al., 2014; Knowles, 1970; Knowles, 1975; Merriam, 2001; Ohashi, 2018). This indicates that both inside and outside of the classroom, teachers need to provide the tools for adult students to learn.

As educators throughout Europe and North America were conducting research and developing andragogic models, Knowles developed his theory of self-directed learning (SDL) (Knowles, 1970; Knowles, 1980). Merriam (2001), however, argues that the intrinsic characteristics that Knowles attributed to age may be due more to motivation, and that some adult learners are dependent on their teachers to impart knowledge. Indeed, Knowles himself modified his theory to account for learner maturity rather than age (Knowles, 1980). However, at the same time Allan Tough was doing research in Canada and found that 90% of adults engaged in intentional, informal and self-directed learning, and that nearly all turned to some sort of guide to aid in their learning pursuits (Tough, 1979; Tough, 1999). After Tough’s 1965 to 1971 Ontario study, the findings were replicated 55 times worldwide (Tough, 1999). Thus, while some adults may need more direct instruction, and some children may be more self-directed in their learning, studies show that the majority of adults are engaging in self-directed learning.
**SDL Practices in ESL**

SDL practices in regard to language acquisition include any encounter with the TL that the learner engaged in on their own that may improve their learning outcomes (Grover et al., 2014). These may include:

- visual media such as watching television, movies, or YouTube;
- audio media including radio and podcasts;
- social media platforms;
- communicating in the TL with friends, at the store, or in a language cafe;
- volunteering;
- reading, whether a book, a menu or advertisements, among many others.

**Service-learning**

Service-learning is a model of instruction which involves a student applying directly the skills they are trying to acquire in a real-world context, which often benefits the greater community (Service Learning, n.d.; What is Service-Learning?, n.d.). A key component of service-learning is the student’s reflection on the service and how it relates to the curriculum (Service Learning, n.d.; What is Service-Learning?, n.d.). Perhaps because of the self-reflection involved in the service-learning model, it has yet to be fully embraced by ESOL educators (Wurr, 2018). As Wurr (2018) notes in his literature review, the TESOL field has been largely ignoring service-learning practices. However, some intensive English programs (IEPs) have been testing the service-learning model (Askildson et al., 2013; Wurr, 2018).

One study of an IEP at the University of Notre Dame used the service-learning model and found learner outcomes to be three times higher than those of other IEPs (Askildson et al., 2013). While the service-learning model is not SDL, many of the practices expounded by the
SDL theory were present. In this program, classroom hours were reduced to three days a week while two days a week were spent in community service. In this way, learners engaged with native speakers in real life situations in a meaningful context (Askildson et al., 2013). Furthermore, the ELLs were immersed in the community in a way that would be difficult, if not impossible, if they were in class the full five days per week. The act of volunteering in a native English-speaking community encompasses at least six of the 19 SDL practices that were studied by Grover, Miller, Swearingen, and Wood (2014), demonstrating that at least some of the SDL practices can have a tangible impact on learning outcomes.

While service-learning specifically refers to service included in a curriculum to further the educational goals of a specific program, Askildson et al., (2013) have shown that community service can increase the rate of English language acquisition. Volunteering in one’s community could be an effective SDL practice which both increases a learner’s exposure to English, as well as building community within the larger majority language culture.

**SDL practices of Latinx ELLs**

Few adult Latinx ELLs utilize SDL practices. In a study of 440 beginning adult Latinx ELLs conducted in various rural and urban educational centers in the Mid-South, Grover, Miller, Swearingen, and Wood (2014) identified 19 different SDL practices and found that students utilized these practices “infrequently if at all” (p.14). The study’s authors note that lack of home computers (only 62% of participants had one) and of internet access (57.3% had access) may be an explanation for not utilizing many of the identified forms of SDL outside of the classroom. However, their findings also show that a less than inspiring number of participants watch TV in English, while recognizing that the majority of participants surveyed only had access to English-Language television. Indeed, 430 participants reported that they did watch TV in English, yet
did so “sometimes” (Grover et al., 2014). These findings seem to indicate that participants’ access to SDL practices are not the cause for low rates of utilization of SDL practices, rather that learners are unaware of the effect of utilizing SDL practices outside of the classroom.

**SDL and the Role of the Teacher**

While the term self-directed may lead one to understand SDL as independent learning, it is better understood as a model by which the learner chooses a path (or paths) and a guide leads them on it. As Tough (1979) observed in his first studies at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, the vast majority of adult learners seek a guide to aid them in their learning goals. That guide may be a friend, a personal instructor or tutor, an expert, or an instructor in a classroom (Knowles, 1980; Tough, 1979; Tough, 1999). In the most simplistic terms, Knowles’ concept of SDL can be described as being learner-centered rather than teacher-centered (Knowles, 1975; Knowles 1980). It is the facilitator’s (and, he argued, the teacher’s) role to guide the learner to understand their own needs, determine their goals and objectives, develop their own strategies, and engage in self-assessment (Knowles, 1975). However, in the ESL/EFL fields, the exact nature of what the role of the teacher should be in SDL is still not clearly understood (Grover et al., 2014; Ohashi, 2018).

Ohashi (2018) conducted a study in Japan which compared two different models of integrated SDL practices in two EFL courses. One course met for 90 minutes once a week and had a high emphasis in SDL practices, while the other met for 100 minutes twice a week with a small emphasis on SDL practices. The study was limited and had few conclusions, but showed that the students with a greater emphasis in SDL practices appreciated their teachers less and engaged in more out-of-class learning, than the students with a lesser emphasis in SDL practices. The most noteworthy result of this study is that learners with a focus on SDL practices
appreciated learning about SDL tools from other students more so than did their counterparts with less emphasis on SDL, yet their perception of the usefulness of learning about the SDL tools from the teacher was only somewhat less than their counterparts (Ohashi, 2018). This is notable because it suggests that the more emphasis teachers place on SDL practices, the more likely the learner will be to seek guidance from multiple sources, and by extension, engage in SDL practices.

While TESOL is often regarded as utilizing some of the most innovative and effective teaching practices, the field as a whole, and notably adult ESL classes at community colleges, have left out what many consider to be a key factor in andragogy. Indeed, Grover et al. (2014) conclude that instructors need development to analyze students’ capacity for SDL practices and offer the tools for them to do so. While the TESOL field develops and begins to include SDL practices into the curricula, beginning adult Latinx ELLs in community colleges could benefit from an engaging website to serve as a facilitator for SDL practices.

Summary

Community colleges have evolved to serve the needs of its community members by providing them with the education and skills they need to become active members of the social, political, and economic domains of society. For many communities, including the San Francisco Bay Area, the greatest need to achieve this level of civil engagement is competency in the English language. However, studies show that there are low rates of advancement from literacy and beginning level ESL courses in community colleges throughout the United States. Even with the relatively higher persistence rates of literacy and beginning level students, learning
outcomes are consistently lower than that of students who begin ESL at higher levels. This is due, in part, to the linguistic isolation in which many beginning adult ELLs live.

Adult Latinx ELLs are particularly likely to live in linguistic isolation, which has been shown to be an impediment to English language acquisition. Linguistic isolation, by nature, indicates that ELLs are not benefiting from immersion in a TL community, which linguists agree is one of the most effective ways to acquire a foreign language. However, SDL practices can help to engage linguistically isolated community members with the TL.

SDL has been shown to greatly enhance learner outcomes. Knowles’ observations of adult learning have been verified time again by Tough and others, and have shown that adult learners are particularly adept at SDL, although many learners may not yet have the tools to effectively embark on such a journey. Indeed, beginning adult Latinx ELLs are unlikely to utilize SDL practices. Educators are still grappling with the role of the teacher and the learner in an ESL/EFL setting, and experts agree that community colleges in the United States are not utilizing SDL practices effectively. If beginning adult Latinx ELLs who live in linguistic isolation were provided with tools and SDL practices to use outside of the classroom, learning outcomes could be accelerated and enhanced.

Beginning adult Latinx ELLs in noncredit ESL programs at community colleges in the San Francisco Bay Area often live in linguistic isolation, do not utilize SDL practices, and despite the best efforts of the faculty and staff at community colleges, are still not achieving the desired learning outcomes. While research continues on how to best serve this community, an engaging website, where learners can find resources for SDL practices for English language acquisition, relevant to their lives and communities, may increase learner engagement leading to greater learner outcomes.
CHAPTER III  
THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

Description of the Project

This project is a website for beginning, adult English language learners (ELLs) living in linguistic isolation in the San Francisco Bay Area. It is intended to make ELLs aware of the self-directed learning (SDL) practices that learners can use to continue learning outside of the classroom, in order to increase learner outcomes. Furthermore, an effort has been made to connect the user with free resources whenever possible, and notes when a resource or tool may not be available for free. The website outlines various SDL practices, tips on making the most out of said practices, and when possible, makes available direct links to local and internet resources, to more easily facilitate the use of SDL practices by the ELL.

Organization

The website, Learn English Your Way, is organized in such a way as to parallel an essay. It offers a homepage as an introduction to the user. The section How do you learn? is also on the homepage, and contains links to the sections that make up the body of the website. The body of the website consists of tools and tips addressing each of the four main skills of language acquisition: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The website “concludes” with an About the Developer section as well as contact information for educators. All of these sections can be accessed from every page on the website via the drop-down menu next to the homepage icon.

The listening, speaking and reading sections are further subdivided into on-line and in person SDL practices. The writing section has fewer resources and is not subdivided. Each section can be accessed both from the drop-down menu as well as the images on the homepage. Subsections not listed on the drop-down menu each have back buttons to the previous page. See below for detailed descriptions of each section.
Content of Sections

Homepage (How do you learn?).

The homepage begins with a concise and easy to read explanation of the target audience and purpose of the website. It is a note to the ELL that this website is meant to provide them, the learner, with fun tools to learn English the way that works best for them. Scrolling down on the homepage brings the user to the How do you learn? section, which also has a direct link from the drop-down menu. This section displays clearly the four main skills in language acquisition, and titles them: Watch & Listen, Speak & Communicate, Read & Understand, and Write.

Watch & Listen.

This is the listening skills section of the website. The main Watch & Listen page has two images titled on-line and in person, respectively. These images are links to different pages that contain resources for SDL practices.

On-line.

This page lists resources for four SDL practices for listening skills. Each section has a related image, a link if applicable, and a description of the SDL practice or resource listed. In this section, the resources are:

- Lingohack, by the BBC. This site offers daily news clips chosen for ELLs. It also includes transcripts for the learner, as well as definitions of key vocabulary.
- Podcasts. This section explains the wide variety of podcasts, how they can be accessed, and links to TuniIn, a free website that streams radio and podcasts on-line.
- Videos. This section links to an in-site page of various videos ELLs can watch at their level. It includes informational videos about, and links to, (a) News in
Levels, (b) BBC Learning English, and (c) Ted Talks. It also has information about renting videos or streaming on-line for free from the San Francisco Public Library, and links users to both the Library main page as well as the page to obtain a library card.

- Music. This section reminds ELLs of the benefits of listening to music as an SDL practice, and links to YouTube and TuneIn.

**In person.**

This page includes three different ways to go into the community and listen to English. It suggests attending concerts, street fairs and festivals, and other events. It includes images and provides links to local San Francisco and Bay Area websites that list free and inexpensive events happening in San Francisco Bay Area communities.

**Speak & Communicate.**

Like the listening section, the speaking section is subdivided into two sections, on-line and in person. It has the same formatting and images as the Watch & Listen page, but links to resources for SDL practices with an emphasis on speaking.

**On-line.**

This section describes three of the most popular language learning applications and computer programs, Rosetta Stone, Duolingo, and Babbel. For each application or program, there is an image of the developer’s icon, a link, and a description of the main features and benefits of each. In the case of Rosetta Stone, the description notes that this program can be checked-out from the San Francisco Public Library, for free, and links both to the Rosetta Stone website for information about the program, as well as to the San Francisco Public Library.
In person.

This section mentions four different settings in which ELLs can practice speaking English in their community. Each setting includes an image, a link when applicable, and a brief explanation of why said SDL practice can be a fun way to increase learner outcomes. *Friends,* and *work* are mentioned, with a gentle reminder to ELLs that there are people in their community with whom they can practice speaking English in a safe environment. The other two sections, *volunteer,* and *language exchange* each lead to their own in-site page with more resources.

The volunteer page is divided into two types of volunteering, in kitchens or food banks, and in community gardens. Kitchens and food banks are divided into six regions: San Francisco, Contra Costa, Oakland, San Jose, San Mateo, and Berkeley. For each city, there are links to two different organizations with information about how to volunteer. The community gardens section is divided into five regions, San Mateo being excepted from the previous list (due to current lack of volunteer opportunities), and contains one to three links for each region to community gardens where people can volunteer in their community.

The language exchange page discusses two types of language exchange: one-on-one and group exchanges, and the benefits of each. For one-on-one language exchanges, ELLs are linked to Conversation Exchange, Lexody, and Lexody SF, each of which connects language learners based on native language and the target language, as well as location and interests. For group exchanges users are linked to the language exchange page on Meetup, which lists local events where people gather to exchange language and culture.
**Read & Understand.**

Read & Understand is designed and formatted the same as the previous two sections, with the subcategories of on-line and in person. Each link directs the user to resources and SDL practices with an emphasis on reading.

**On-line.**

There are two subsections in Read & Understand on-line: news and books. The reading on-line section reminds learners that they can read news and books, in English, on-line on their personal devices or on a computer. Each section includes an image, a link to an in-site page, and a brief description of the features of each on-line reading source.

The news section leads to an in-site page with a brief description of, and links to, five different news sources. The first is News in Levels, which allows learners to read current news articles, or search archives, for news that interests the user in a level the ELL can understand. The page also links to Mission Local and SF Gate, two San Francisco based media outlets that focus on local news and culture. The last two links are to The Mercury News and KQED, which both cover local, state, and national news.

The section for books on-line lists six different applications and websites users can sign up and use for free to read books on personal devices and computers. Each application has an image of the developer’s icon, a link, and a brief description citing its pros and cons. The website includes Google Play Books and iBooks, one of which is usually preinstalled on smartphones. Nook and Kindle are listed, as they are two of the most common applications used on tablets. Lastly Overdrive and Libby, the most common applications used to check out books from libraries, are explained and linked to.
In person.

Read & Understand, in person, is a resource not only for how ELLs can enjoy reading with others, but also what is available to read in daily life. It describes three SDL practices: reading to children, joining a book club, and reading signs and flyers one encounters in normal daily activity. For each SDL practice, there is an explanation of the benefits of utilizing said SDL practice and how an ELL may avail themselves of it.

Write.

The writing skills section of the website is the only skills section not divided into the subcategories on-line and in person. It includes three SDL practices users can utilize either on-line or in person. Each practice is represented by an image and a brief description of the benefits of using said SDL practice. It encourages ELLs to text and use social media in English, and suggests changing settings in familiar social media sites to English. This page also links back to the language learning applications in Speak & Communicate, on-line, with an explanation of how these applications can also be used to practice writing skills.

About the Developer.

About the Developer can only be accessed via the drop-down menu. It has a brief biography of the developer, including interests, educational background, and special skills the developer was able to bring to the project.

Contact.

Contact information is included as a footer at the bottom of each page on the website, as well as from the drop-down menu. It is intended for educators, rather than users, for potential future collaboration in further development of the website, including but not limited to, updating
links as new opportunities and resources become available, or unavailable, as well as expanding the site to serve ELLs in other regions.

**Development of the Project**

**Concept Development**

The idea for this project began when the author volunteered to tutor high-beginning ELLs at City College of San Francisco (CCSF), Mission campus, from 2017 to 2019. The tutoring program was geared toward beginning adult Latinx ELLs, most of whom live in linguistic isolation in San Francisco, or in the greater San Francisco Bay Area. Two facts struck the author. First, ELLs living in linguistic isolation resemble EFL learners more so than ESL learners, as they do not benefit from immersion in the target language (TL). Second, the students generally did not utilize SDL practices outside of the classroom. Indeed, most SDL practices had never occurred to the learners. The few students who were using some SDL practices did so because at some point in their education, a teacher had told the learner of a specific SDL practice they could try on their own. This realization, along with a discussion with an advisor, led to a literature review.

The literature review revealed that there is a dearth of information regarding SDL in the TESL/TESOL field. However, findings reveal that SDL is an effective andragogical method, and is highly studied and used in other adult education fields. Furthermore, the review confirmed the author’s anecdotal experience that beginning, adult, Latinx ELLs are not utilizing SDL practices to learn English outside of the classroom. Thus, the author came to believe that the development of another method of informing ELLs of effective SDL practices that can be used to increase learner outcomes is necessary.
In conversation with an advisor experienced in the field, the author came to believe that a website could be an effective, engaging medium to expose beginning adult ELLs living in linguistic isolation to the tools and resources locally available to engage in SDL practices to improve their English language acquisition. If there were a consolidated site where learners could go to learn about and access tools to improve English language acquisition utilizing SDL practices, beginning adult Latinx ELLs living in linguistic isolation could improve their learning outcomes. With these goals in mind, a website was developed to serve as a hub for San Francisco Bay Area ELLs to access local resources to facilitate the use of SDL practices that can aid in English language acquisition.

**Website Development**

The first step in the development of the website was the creation of an outline, beginning with the four main language acquisition skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. For each, the author then enumerated the SDL practices that can be utilized for acquisition of said skill. This list was created from the developer’s own anecdotal experience, as well as research conducted by Grover, Miller, Swearingen, and Wood (2014). The list included such SDL practices as watching videos in English, practicing speaking and listening to English at work and with friends, and using electronic devices in English, among others. After a list of each SDL practice was outlined, the SDL practices were coded based on several factors, ultimately condensed to SDL practices that are: (a) social in nature, (b) personal (independent) in nature, (c) practiced on-line, or (d) practiced in the community.

The methods of, and tools for, utilizing SDL practices vary depending upon the specific skill a learner is focusing on. However, some overarching themes among the methods and tools began to become clear. Unfortunately, these themes do not disambiguate equally. Ultimately,
the divisions on-line and in person were chosen to subdivide all but the writing section of the website. Other various dichotomies were considered, including, solo and social, solo and with others, and alone and social, among others. Two problems consistently occurred with most pairs of terms. Often, one or both of the terms were above the CEFR (or other assessment guide) level of understanding in the target demographic. Importantly, the terms often did not accurately represent the nature of the relationship among resources. Not every practice in-person is social; a learner can read street signs alone while on the bus. Likewise, not every on-line experience is solo, one can communicate in the target language using social media. However, the terms on-line and in person were chosen because they best impart the overarching dichotomy of the SDL practices outlined on this website. Once the methods had been delineated by skill and theme, the website was developed section by section.

The obvious starting point was to establish a website and create a homepage. After some research, Wix.com was chosen for its affordability and ease of use for the developer. After the homepage was created, the scaffolding of the website was built. This began with creating four separate webpages, one for each of the four skills, and linking them back to the homepage. For the pages Watch & Listen, Speak & Communicate, and Read & Understand, two more pages each were created, representing the on-line and in person codes, and linked back to their respective icons on the main page for each skill. After the scaffolding was in place, the content was researched and inserted one section at a time, in the order of listening, speaking, reading and lastly, writing.

The coded outline of SDL practices was then used to research the on-line and local resources available for beginning adult ELLs living in linguistic isolation in the San Francisco Bay Area. Internet resources, such as language learning programs and applications, are
relatively well known and finding those resources was straightforward. Likewise, finding digital media such as videos designed for ELLs, news in slow English, and podcasts was no great challenge. However, finding and connecting learners to local events and service opportunities, where the learner can engage in SDL practices, became challenging in some instances. Every effort was made to verify content validity of external sources. Likewise, face validity was a concern, but was considered in the context of available resources and content validity. Google was the primary search engine used to find local, in person, opportunities.

The search for service opportunities began with a Google search of soup kitchens in San Francisco. It quickly became clear that there were far more opportunities in food pantries than for physically serving meals to those in need. The majority of opportunities to serve meals are delivery-based, and do not provide the same community and social aspects that studies have shown are effective characteristics of SDL practices, especially in regard to immersion in language acquisition. Thus, the search was expanded to include food pantries, which while do not directly serve meals, still create a communal atmosphere among volunteers where English could be practiced in a safe environment. The search then led to multiple service opportunities throughout six Bay Area regions. However, the search for volunteer opportunities in community gardens was also challenging.

Community gardens are generally small and hyper-locally run, making internet searches largely unfruitful. The volunteer opportunities that could be found via Google searches tended to be in larger, public gardens, such as Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. Others are run by local organizations and charities, of which one has to be a member in order to volunteer. However, an exhaustive search of community gardens on Google led to opportunities in five Bay Area
regions, though not equally distributed. Finding local events was somewhat easier than volunteer opportunities, yet had its own challenges.

The majority of local media outlets curate both print and digital lists of upcoming events, including concerts, street fairs, public talks and forums, among others. The challenge was directing ELLs to events that are both free, and where the learner would be immersed in English. After the search was conducted, the lists were scrutinized to ensure that a majority of events were affordable, if not free, and accessible to beginning, adult, ELLs living in linguistic isolation in the San Francisco Bay Area. Furthermore, the website clearly notes to the user that not all events linked to are free.

As the content for each SDL practice was developed based upon skillset, more scaffolding and pages were added to meet the specific needs of each SDL practice. Depending on the resources and SDL practices for each skill, the pages were individually curated and designed to be accessible and relevant to the content, while maintaining thematic continuity. Once the content had been fully developed, the last step was to verify face validity and content validity of the website, along with usability and navigation.

The face validity was confirmed by reviewing every page, of both the desktop and mobile view, for thematic continuity and pleasurable appearance, including factors such as images, typefaces, and readability. Content validity was reviewed by checking every link, both in-site and external, for accuracy and navigation. Furthermore, each SDL practice and resource were compared to the literature on its utility in andragogy and language acquisition. Lastly, the drop-down menu was rechecked for facility of navigation. Once the website was thoroughly reviewed for face and content validity, it was published.
The Project

Http://www.learnenglishyourway.com

Examples of website content, as well as links to individual pages, can be found in the appendix.
CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Non-credit English as a second language (ESL) courses at San Francisco Bay Area community colleges are meant to uplift vulnerable members of the community to higher participation in the social, political, and economic spheres. Increasing English language learners (ELLs) learner outcomes can contribute to the learner obtaining higher paying jobs, thus improving their economic circumstances, as well as giving them skills to actively participate in the wider community. Increased learner outcomes in English acquisition have many benefits that can enhance an ELLs quality of life in a majority English-speaking community. However, adult Latinx members in Bay Area communities often have low English learning outcomes.

Beginning adult Latinx English language learners (ELLs) in the San Francisco Bay Area are not advancing their English language learning outcomes at desired rates. Despite high persistence rates among beginning adult Latinx ELLs in community colleges, advancement rates are low (Chisman, 2008; Spurling, Seymour & Chisman, 2008). Many of these learners have work and home duties which prevent them from attending what experts agree are the minimum necessary hours for advancement. Furthermore, the majority of beginning adult Latinx ELLs live in linguistic isolation, and thus have little exposure to the majority language. These learners effectively become students of English as a foreign language (EFL) rather than the ESL students they are. While adult Latinx ELLs make up a large portion of the target demographic of non-credit ESL courses in Bay Area community colleges, they are among the least successful (CCCIE, n.d.; City College of San Francisco, n.d.; Lambert, 2015; Leiserson, 2019).

However, there are tools that adult Latinx ELLs living in linguistic isolation can use outside of the classroom to increase their learner outcomes. Various methods of self-directed
learning (SDL) have been shown to be effective in andragogic learning. Numerous practices have been identified that, if adopted, can increase learner outcomes in an ESL setting (Grover, Miller, Swearingen, & Wood, 2014). Such SDL practices as making an intentional effort to speak English in a safe, community setting, watching TV in English, and reading street signs, are among the various ways that an ELL can improve their English acquisition outside of the classroom. Unfortunately, beginning adult Latinx ELLs living in the San Francisco Bay Area are not utilizing SDL practices.

Studies demonstrate that many beginning adult Latinx ELLs in community colleges are unaware of the SDL practices they could utilize outside of the classroom (Grover et al., 2014). Indeed, CAAL reports note that curricula focus on inside classroom learning based on pedagogic theories (Chisman, 2008; Crandall and Sheppard, 2004; Spurling et al., 2008). While educators are often aware of potential benefits of SDL practices, classroom time is valuable; teachers often do not have time to take away from classroom learning to address the methods and benefits of continuing education outside of the classroom. A website could be an effective resource for educators to direct their students to learn about SDL practices they can adopt.

A curated website of effective SDL practices geared towards beginning adult ELLs, and local resources to practice them, could be an effective tool for ELLs to increase their learner outcomes. By placing the tools that learners could use directly in their hands, they could continue their education in their daily lives. Beginning adult ELLs attending non-credit ESL classes in community colleges are already motivated to learn English. A website that directs learners to local and on-line resources of SDL practices can enable the ELL to continue learning in the way that is most effective to the individual, in times that are convenient to the learner.
The website that was developed for this project is a fun, easy to use guide for beginning adult ELLs where they can learn about, and engage in, SDL practices. The clear text, simple language, vibrant photos, and clean appearance of this website, present accessible content. The drop-down menu, in-site back buttons, and multiple in-site and external links make the website, and the resources it presents, easy to navigate. By combining a user-friendly interface with high face-validity, this website should be a pleasurable, engaging platform for ELLs to access resources for SDL practices useful to ESL students. Furthermore, the content validity ensures that this website is not only usable, but useful.

The content validity of this website was reviewed on two different measures, the validity of the practices themselves, and the validity of the external resources linked to. The practices were chosen based upon research in the ESL field in regard to how Knowles’ theory of self-directed learning can be applied to English language acquisition by adult ELLs. Knowles’ theories of SDL have been validated in studies across the globe (Tough, 1979; Tough, 1999). Some researchers in ESL have identified specific SDL practices that can be used to acquire English (Ciriza-Lope, Shappeck, & Arxer, 2016; Grover et al., 2014). The selected practices included on the website have been shown to be effective means of SDL practices that have the potential to increase learner outcomes in English language acquisition. The external sources referenced on the website were similarly researched.

Each resource referenced on the website was vetted for content validity. The majority of the digital resources are well known to educators in the field for their effectiveness as tools for language acquisition. Community-based resources were researched for integrity; interfaces that facilitate peer-to-peer learning were vetted for safety and reliability, and service opportunities were screened for authenticity and opportunities to engage in SDL practices. The measures
taken to ensure the face and content validity of this website should ensure that it is an effective
tool for beginning adult Latinx ELLs living in linguistic isolation in the San Francisco Bay Area
to enhance their language learning outcomes with SDL practices.

Beginning adult Latinx ELLs living in linguistic isolation in the San Francisco Bay Area
are not acquiring the necessary English language skills to fully participate and thrive in the
social, political, and economic spheres in their communities. This is due in part to the societal
barriers that face the socially and economically disenfranchised members of the community.
However, enrollment in non-credit community colleges suggests that members of this
demographic are motivated to learn English. If ELLs cannot spend the necessary time in class to
successfully learn or acquire a language, then the resources to continue their education outside of
the classroom are imperative. An engaging, easy-to-use website could facilitate ELLs utilizing
SDL practices outside of the classroom, perhaps enhancing their intrinsic motivation and
hopefully, their learner outcomes.

**Recommendations**

This website was developed for English language learners. It is meant to be a guide for
ELLs to use SDL practices in their daily lives to increase their English language learning
outcomes. It is hoped that adult Latinx ELLs in the Bay Area will use this website to facilitate
their language acquisition in a manner that conforms with both their time constraints and
learning styles. While educators may not have in-class time to focus on SDL practices for
continuing education outside of the classroom, educators could make their students aware of
resources, including this website, available to them to help increase their learning outcomes. It is
my hope that educators will make their students aware of this site, and explain the benefits of
using SDL practices, and how this website can help them embark on a path of self-directed learning.

This website was designed to be a resource specifically for ELLs in the San Francisco Bay Area, and as such is limited in scope. The service-learning opportunities and language exchange meetups are locally based. Furthermore, due to the COVID-19 shelter-in-place orders that were locally mandated in the Bay Area in early 2020, the time of this project development, finding local resources was challenging. All resources had to be researched on-line, rather than by phone or in person. Likewise, local language exchange locations have closed, and may not reopen when the shelter-in-place orders are lifted. However, volunteer opportunities and language exchange meetups naturally change over time, thus updating resources for in person SDL practices is, and should be, a constant work in progress.

Further development of this website should proceed in two directions. As noted, this website was designed to serve the greater San Francisco Bay Area. However, this has led to few resources for any specific region. For example, the website links to 12 volunteer opportunities in the San Francisco Bay Area, two for each of six regions. In the future, this website should have as many resources for each city or region as possible. Furthermore, while the site in its current form covers only the San Francisco Bay Area, going forward it could be expanded to other cities, so that ELLs can find local resources for SDL practices wherever they live. ESL and EFL educators can work together in their communities to find local resources to expand Learn English Your Way to cities and regions all over the world.

In addition, this website could benefit from further research into SDL practices for ELLs. The literature review shows that in relation to language acquisition, more studies are needed
in effective SLD practices, the effect of linguistic isolation, and service-learning, among others. However, there is more immediate research that can be conducted to increase learner outcomes among beginning adult Latinx ELLs living in linguistic isolation. While reports demonstrate that learning outcomes for the majority of this demographic are low, there are ELLs who achieve their desired learning outcomes, some of whom transition to credit ESL classes. Local surveys of SDL practices utilized by ELLs who achieve their learner outcomes could provide useful insight for available and accessible resources to help beginning adult ELLs living in linguistic isolation and attending community colleges, attain their goals.
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APPENDIX

Learn English Your Way
Learn English Your Way

How do you learn?

Each person has different needs and goals when they study English. And each person learns differently.

This website is designed to give you, the English learner, the tools to learn English your way, for your needs, and in your community.

How Do You Learn? Do you learn better by listening? Or reading? Do you prefer to learn by yourself or with others? Do you like to use your computer or phone? Maybe you don’t know. Click on a link below to go to the tips and tools that will help you learn the way you learn best.

Watch & Listen

Speak & Communicate

Read & Understand

Write

For educators

Learn English Your Way was developed to inform English Language Learners (ELLs) of the self-directed learning (SDL) practices that can be used to increase their English language acquisition. At the moment, many of the resources are consumer-based in the form of readers and texts. Content areas and topics that you would like to add or curate to address specific needs and interests in your community:

Japanese Quakers 2000
Watch & Listen

There are lots of fun, free ways to practice listening to English, by yourself and with others. You can watch your favorite movies in English, listen to music on YouTube, and listen to podcasts on any topic you like! You can even listen to the news in slow English. Click on a link below to take you to different ways to listen to English.

On-line

In person

Listen On-line Main Page

There are lots of ways to listen to English from anywhere you are comfortable. Here you will find links to watch and listen to videos and radio so that you can practice listening to English however you enjoy it.

Lingolock, by the BBC, gives you the news in slow, easy to understand English. Each news video also has the transcript so that you can read along if you want. It also has a vocabulary list of new words. Click above to check out Lingolock.

Podcasts are a great way to listen to English. These are podcasts on every topic, so you can find something that interests you. You can use your favorite player on your phone, or check out the link above to find podcasts on Audiolinks.

Did you know that you can read articles for free from your public library? Getting a library card is free and easy. Click above for ideas about what types of videos you can watch to practice listening to English.

Music is a great way to listen to English in everyday use. You can listen to local radio or save like Tunesia, or explore new music on YouTube, or download your favorite songs on any device.

Try watching some of your favorite shows in English. You can click the video to see what is happening, and you will get to practice listening to people speaking English.

Learn English Your Way was designed for native English Language Learners (ELs) in the self-directed learning (SDL) process they can use to increase their English language acquisition. At the moment, many of the resources are community based in the San Francisco Bay Area. Connect me if you would like to add courses with specific needs and resources in your community.
Listen your way
In person

There are lots of ways you can practice listening to real, everyday English. You don’t even need to speak back. You can go to plays, concerts, street fairs, and other places to practice listening to English. Click on a link below to find events in the San Francisco Bay area where you can practice listening to English.

Concerts are a great way to enjoy listening to music in English. Not only do you get to hear music you love, but also there are a lot of people you can listen to all around you.

Do the Bay is a great site to learn what street fairs and festivals are happening in your area, and all around the San Francisco Bay Area. Click above to find community events near you.

Funcheap SF is a website that lets you know what is fun and free or fun and cheap in the San Francisco Bay Area. Check out the link above to learn what fun and inexpensive events are happening near you.

Contact

For whom

Learn English Your Way was developed to aid in English Language Learners (ELLs) of the self-directed learning (SDL) practices that can use to increase their English language acquisition. As the moment, many of the resources are community based in the San Francisco Bay Area. Contact us if you would like to find someone to address specific needs and resources in your community.

Japanese Speaking Site

Tel: 415.331.0708

© 2009 Learn English Your Way
Speak On-line Main Page

Speak your way On-line

There are lots of Apps for your smart phone and computer that you can use to practice learning a language. Did you know that many of these programs also let you practice speaking? Using your phone or computer to practice speaking is a safe way to work on pronunciation before you're ready to try speaking with other people.

Rosetta Stone

Rosetta Stone is one of the oldest computer based language learning programs. Many people think that it's still one of the best. You can click on the button above to read about Rosetta Stone in English and Spanish. Don't let the price scare you, you can rent it for free from the San Francisco Public Library.

Duolingo

Duolingo can be used on-line on your computer or you can download the app for your smartphone. Duolingo turns learning English into a game, that you can play any time, for any amount of time. You can play your lessons from work or school, or on the bus. You can read more in up to 23 languages by clicking on the button above.

Like Duolingo, Babbel has short, 10-15 minute lessons that you can do anywhere and on any device. You can read about it in seven languages by clicking above. Babbel uses different methods so that you can learn the way that works best for you. However, this quality program isn't free. But you can try it for free and see if you think that it will work for you.

Speak in Person Main Page

Speak your way In Person

There are lots of safe, fun ways you can practice speaking everyday English. You can practice when you go to the grocery store, or take the bus. Talking to people you know is one of the safest, fastest, and most fun ways to practice. Read more below to find different ways in the San Francisco Bay area where you can practice speaking English with native and non-native speakers.

Volunteer

Volunteering is a great way to practice English when meeting your neighbors, making new friends, and feeling good about helping out. You can volunteer in a kitchen to feed the homeless, or your church, or even a community garden. Click above to learn how you can volunteer in your community.

Here in the San Francisco Bay Area, there are hundreds of places where people speak many languages. This means that many more people may speak your language in work, too. However, work is also a great place to practice speaking English. Maybe someone you know wants to learn your language. Go ahead, give it a try!

Making friends in English is one of the best ways to learn. Your friends want to help you to say whatever you are thinking. Talking to friends who speak the language you want to learn is a safe, fun, way to practice English.

Just like you want to learn English, many people want to learn your language, too. There are language meetups all over the Bay Area and all over the world. Some groups go to coffee, or bars, some go on hikes or other places in nature. Some people like to meet out-once. Click above to learn about some options that you have here in Bay Area.

 więcej informacji, kim jest Ewa Bisch, a także o jej nowej książce i doświadczeniach, można skorzystać z phiếuu dostępnych w internetowej bazie danych.
Read On-line Main Page

Read your way
On-line

There are lots of Apps for your smart phone and computer that you can use to practice learning a language. Did you know that many of these programs also let you practice speaking? Using your phone or computer to practice speaking is a soft way to work on pronunciation before you’re ready to try speaking with other people.

The news is a great way to learn what’s happening in your community and the world, while also practicing English. There are even places where you can find the news in easy English. Click above to find links to local news and easy news so that you can stay informed and learn English at the same time.

Books are a great way to read English because you can find a book on any topic that interests you. You can find a book that you will enjoy at any level! If you don’t want to carry a book with you, you can download apps so that you can read on your computer or smartphone. Check out the links above to find apps and books you can download and enjoy whenever you want.

Read in Person Main Page

Read your way
In person

You can always pick up a book, or a newspaper and read it closer, but there are ways you can read with others. Read below for ideas about how you can enjoy reading with others.

You don’t have to take time to sit down and read the news or a book to practice reading and increase your vocabulary. There are things to read everywhere you go. From street signs, to billboards and ads, there are words all around you. When you walk down the street, ride the bus, or sit down at a cafe, there are words you can read all around you. Go ahead, give it a try!

Reading to a child, a friend, or a partner is a fun way to share a book with someone you care about. You can try reading one of your favorite books in English. When you already know and like a book, reading it in English can be a fun way to practice reading and learn new vocabulary. Don’t have a favorite book you can read in English? You can try something like Harry Potter, which is fun for all ages. You can always ask a librarian for help finding a book right for you... that’s what they do!

Book clubs are a great way to enjoy a book with others. You can read alone whenever you want. Then you can get together with other people who also read the book, and talk about what you read. Many local bookstores have book clubs, or you can join a book club at your local library. Do you want to choose the books that matter most to you? Start your own book club with friends or family. If you are taking ESL classes, try to start a club with other English learners at your same level!
Writing Main Page

Write

Writing in English can greatly improve your English skills. It helps you to remember vocabulary and spelling. You can practice doing small things like writing notes to yourself or grocery lists. You can also learn from others by reading and using social media in English. Read below for more ideas about how you can begin to write in English.

Language learning apps are a great way to practice writing, along with other English skills. Click above to learn more about apps that you can download on your phone or tablet, or use on your computer.

Texting your friends in English is a fun and safe way to practice writing. You can learn new words from your friends. The spell check feature will help you with spelling. Go ahead, give it a try!

Social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, and others, are a fun, easy way to practice writing in English. You can write to your friends, and make new ones to help you practice English. There’s more on social media than your friends, there are many groups on-line just for learning English. Check them out on your favorite site.

About the Developer

About the Developer

Jessica Parisi

I have a passion for world languages and cultures. These passions have helped lead me to become an advocate for the immigrant community in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Educational Background

I earned my undergraduate degree in Historical Research and Writing with a minor in Latin, from the University of California at Davis, in 2007. I have also earned certificates in Latin (2004) and in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) (2018) from the University of California at Berkeley. I am currently an MA candidate in TESOL at the University of San Francisco.

Skills

I have taught myself the Spanish, Italian, and Neapolitan languages using many of the practices outlined on this website. I have also done extensive research into self-directed learning (SDL) practices in adult education and its application to language acquisition.