Title
SEALL : Scaffolding Experiences for Authentic Language Learning

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/75m831kk

Author
Angell, Chad

Publication Date
2013

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation
SEALL: Scaffolding Experiences for Authentic Language Learning

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in

Teaching and Learning (Curriculum Design)

by

Chad Angell

Committee in charge:

Paula Levin, Chair
Cheryl Forbes
Marcia Sewall

2013
The Thesis of Chad Angell is approved and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

____________________________________

____________________________________

____________________________________

____________________________________

Chair
DEDICATION

To my older brother Keith: thanks for always listening.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

SIGNATURE PAGE .............................................................................................................. iii
DEDICATION ......................................................................................................................... iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS .......................................................................................................... v
LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................................... vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ......................................................................................................... viii

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS .............................................................................................. ix

I. Introduction ........................................................................................................................... 1

II. Assessing Need: Communicative Competence, Authenticity and Cultural Awareness for Adult, English as an Associate Language Learners .......................................................... 6
Common Practice .................................................................................................................... 8
English as a Second Language Programs Nationwide .................................................................... 13
Conclusion .................................................................................................................................... 15

III. Review of Relevant Research ............................................................................................. 17
Service-Learning: Definitions ................................................................................................... 17
Mutually Beneficial Learning Environment: A New Method ............................................................ 19
Discourse & Strategic Competence: Elements of Focus Within Communicative Competence ................................................................................................................................. 20
New Models in English Language Teaching (ELT) ......................................................................... 21
Sociolinguistic Competence’s Role in Cultural Awareness .............................................................. 22
Authenticity ............................................................................................................................... 23
Conclusion .................................................................................................................................... 23

IV. Review of Existing Curricular Approaches ............................................................................ 25
Existing Curricular Approaches ................................................................................................ 25
Observations .............................................................................................................................. 27
Conclusion .................................................................................................................................... 28

V. Scaffolding Experiences for Authentic Language Learning ...................................................... 30
Guiding Questions .................................................................................................................... 30
Goals of Scaffolding Experiences for Authentic Language Learning ........................................... 31
Constructs of SEALL .................................................................................................................. 32
Activities of SEALL: The Preparation Stage ................................................................................. 39
The Interaction and Reflection Stage ............................................................................................. 42
The Conclusion Stage .................................................................................................................. 43
Conclusion .................................................................................................................................... 44

Chapter VI: Implementation and Revision of Scaffolding Experiences for Authentic Language Learning ......................................................................................................................... 46
The Setting ............................................................................................................................... 46
Urban Ministry & Project New Start ............................................................................................ 48
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Three phases of SEALL .................................................. 36
Table 2. The Four Operational Aspects of Reflection ................................ 55
Table 3. Goals of SEALL .................................................................. 58
Table 4. Evaluation Rubric – Goal #1 ............................................... 62
Table 5. Student Scores - English Fluency ............................................. 63
Table 6. Student Writing Sample - Henry ............................................. 65
Table 7. Evaluation Rubric - Goal #2 ................................................. 68
Table 8. Student Scores - Cultural Identity ............................................. 70
Table 9. Evaluation Rubric - Goal #3 .................................................. 74
Table 10. Student Scores - American Culture ....................................... 75
Table 11. Student Writing Sample - Abdul .......................................... 77
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, thank you to all my wonderful students. Your hard work, energy, and love brought life into the classroom; you are a blessing. Thank you to everyone at Metro United Urban Ministry, especially Ernesto Bustillos and Dahan Blevins - the work you do for under-represented youth is truly remarkable. A very special thank you to my brilliant adviser Paula Levin – your help and guidance is life changing. Thank you to Cheryl Forbes – you are the heart of this program, the life of my paper, and a source of joy and strength for me. Thank you to Luz Chung - your summer course was the inspiration for this thesis and the reason I needed to become an agent of change. To my cohort, you guys rock! You are all such beautiful and talented people. Thank you for all your help this year. To my dad, without whom I wouldn’t be here (yes, literally as well), I truly thank you for all your love and support. To Mom, Katie, Chris, Ryan, and all my family who helped me along the way. Thank you to my friends who supported me, namely the forever beautiful and blessed Melissa Meridith and Nycole Bradley (GBYAF) and the champ himself, NYC Mike. Last but not least, a special thanks to my little pup for hanging out with me for countless hours in my room – thanks Britta. And thank you Father God for meeting me right where I was and right where I am. Amen!

“A Supersonic Ride of the Mind”
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

SEALL: Scaffolding Experiences for Authentic Language Learning

by

Chad Angell

Master of Arts in Teaching & Learning (Curriculum Design)

University of California, San Diego, 2013

Paula Levin, Chair

To uncover whether English fluency can be strengthened and awareness of American and native culture increased, I developed the Scaffolding Experiences for Authentic Language Learning (SEALL) curriculum. The design project responded to the need for more authentic and autonomous curricular approaches in local and national EFL programs. The project attempted to capitalize on often under-utilized cultural funds of knowledge common to EFL settings.

SEALL relies on a mutually beneficial learning environment that scaffolds authentic interactions between English as an Associate Language students and native English speakers. SEALL structures choice for students into the topics and
interactions they have with native speakers while also giving students opportunity to evaluate intended learning goals and critically reflect about experiences with native speakers. Throughout the course, students share about their past experiences with each other and native speakers, ultimately becoming ethnographers learning from and studying cultural informants.

The SEALL curriculum was implemented in a private, intensive language school in San Diego and was used during a six-week EAL course taken by adult international students from 10 different countries.

The results suggest that students were able to increase their English fluency by interacting and conversing regularly with native speakers. In addition, students were able to gain a broader awareness of American culture by completing structured activities with American peers. By examining themselves, students also developed a heightened understanding of their own beliefs concerning their native cultures and countries.
I. Introduction

A typical scenario within my spacious classroom walls at International Language School (ILS) (all names of persons in the thesis are pseudonyms for privacy purposes), one of many English programs around San Diego, provides a brief observation into some of the problems that a majority of my international students face while studying English in America. Today, the classroom holds a group of fourteen adult, international students from ten different countries. The class, Creative Expressions, is a supplemental special interest course selected by students. The course is designed to give students the opportunity to express information about themselves and their culture through various art forms while increasing English fluency.

Presently, a 19-year-old Swedish university student shares the details of a decorative tree used for a traditional celebration in Sweden with a 25-year-old German businessman. Later, the German businessman comments that although he appreciates learning more about other cultures from international peers, he wishes he could speak with Americans in order to learn more about their culture while improving his speaking skills. A 25-year-old Taiwanese actress wonders how she will improve her speaking abilities conversing only with other non-native speakers. Similarly, all thirteen other students in the class comment that they wish they had more opportunity to interact and converse with Americans.
This personal observation clearly shows that the spacious classroom walls are not wide enough; they are holding students back from achieving the culture and language acquisition goals they traveled from around the globe to reach. The majority of students in my classroom are not only desperate for interaction with native speakers but also searching for a more authentic look into American culture.

Before continuing the discussion surrounding my own classroom setting and introducing my curriculum design project and the participants, a working definition for this particular field of teaching and learning must be presented and understood. There has been much progress and change within the world of teaching English to non-English speakers since humble beginnings of referring to the practice simply as the teaching of English (Chapman, 1958; Frisby, 1957; Palmer, 1940; Quirk & Smith, 1959). Today, there is some ambiguity between the popular terms, English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL), two terms that are often used to describe the field. However, a new term, English as an associate language (EAL) has been presented as a way to close the gap between ESL and EFL, their history, and their usage (Nayar, 1997).

After considering the applied linguistic and sociolinguistic motivations for each term, Nayar (1997) substantiates that the following definitions for each phrase should be applied to represent English in non-native situations. The author posits that ESL should be retained and used for all situations involving ESL2. The term ESL2 delineates that the ideology of the language policy of the native-speaking nation is involved in the concept of ESL (Tollefson, 1991), and that the learners are
physically situated in the target community and the learning objectives are target community orientated. Taken a step further, communicative competence, which refers to a language user’s grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology, phonology, as well as social knowledge about how and when to use utterances appropriately (Hymes, 1971), is essential for ESL students because of the goal of acculturation and assimilation into the English-speaking society. According to Nayar, any setting encompassing these situations should fall under the category of ESL.

Contrary to this, EFL should be used to describe situations where there is no history of prolonged political presence by England or the United States, and where the English language has no special status with a low priority for communicative use. EFL students use English to participate in the contexts of English-dominated global interaction without the language holding a part of their linguistic or cultural identity (Nayar, 1997).

Finally, EAL should be used in all situations of English learning where English has some communicative goal and some well-defined domains. EAL students are not looking to assimilate into the native-speaking community, but may identify with the native culture depending upon their motivation. The language has social function, purposive communicative use, but will not be the sole language encompassing all public domains. EAL students also often persistently code mix English with their native language as a way of encoding the language into their multiple identities.
(Myers-Scotton, 1993), as well as conduct much of their schooling and higher education in the medium of English.

Taking into account each definition, EAL is most relevant, slightly more so than EFL, to the language learning environment at International Language School (ILS) and within my new classroom, *Cross-cultural Communications*. Here, the adult English learners often mix English with their own language, use English socially, have varied levels of linguistic and cultural identification with the language, and hold little concern with assimilation.

Founded in 1965, International Language School (ILS) is the world’s largest private education company with 400 schools and offices in over 50 countries (Education First, 2011). One such school, International Language School San Diego, uses the Education First Efekta™ System, which combines communication-based teaching with innovative technology to deliver an English language acquisition program to a broad array of adult, international English learners. Students attending ILS are required to complete 14 general language lessons and 4 special interest (SPIN) lessons taught by various instructors every week.

As a teacher at International Language School in San Diego, I have been able to observe both general language and SPIN classes as well as critique a small portion of course materials and workbooks. The more time I spent working at ILS, the more questions arose about whether the curriculum being taught was using best practice principles of authenticity, which refers to the real, rich, and complex ideas on which the curriculum centers (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 2005). Due to ILS’s heavy
reliance on textbook and course books in their academic programs, I wondered whether a well-rounded communication-based approach to teaching was being delivered. I also wondered whether students were given any autonomy – having the power and freedom to direct one's will and actions (Deci, 1995) – within the classroom and if they were learning anything about the American culture they had traveled great distances to experience.

Taking these thoughts into account I began to develop some initial research questions. How could seemingly contrived workbook lessons be authentic? How could non-native speakers interacting with other non-native speakers develop elements of communicative competence? How could a teacher ensure that students' desires to learn more about American culture were fulfilled? How could the classroom walls that separate these students from the American world they had ventured from afar to understand be figuratively knocked down? These are questions that have fueled my project on providing adult English learners with a new approach to communication-based teaching, SEALL: Scaffolding Experiences for Authentic Language Learning.
II. Assessing Need: Communicative Competence, Authenticity and Cultural Awareness for Adult, English as an Associate Language Learners

ILS attempts to educate adult English learners, referred to by the institution as EFL students, through communication-based teaching with innovative technology (Education First, 2011). Although the use of technology, most notably seen at ILS through different forms of media on computers in iLab classes, can be useful, Hedberg (2006) substantiates that instructional undertakings using computers is inconsistently employed. In his study, Hedberg examined technology use with Australian university students, who found e-learning techniques as a provision of information only. The claim by e-learning enthusiasts to enable student engagement, motivation, and higher order thinking skills was unconfirmed.

Overall, this does not mean that the blended learning approach does not work; however, theories show the importance of using these technologies specifically to give EFL learners authentic, contextualized, and linguistically challenging activities and materials (Cummins, 1981; Kasper et al., 2000; Krashen, 1982). Biber (1986) examined empirical evidence – a large corpus of spoken and written textual material – to show the distinction between contextualized and decontextualized language skills while Cummins (1981) determined its effect on language proficiency.

Students enrolled and completing ILS’s blended learning curriculum will complete at least 14 general language lessons and at least four special interest
(SPIN) lessons (Education First, 2011) each week as part of the communication based teaching curriculum. In both cases, the communication element of the curriculum relies heavily on workbook and textbook materials or teacher created materials to elicit conversation and discourse between “EFL” students.

Although students at International Language School are given the opportunity to learn about American culture in the classroom and are, in minimal cases, given the chance to showcase their own culture, students are rarely allowed to bring forth cultural factors and funds of knowledge. Giving students the time during class to examine and discuss their own culture while simultaneously tapping into their funds of knowledge plays a significant role in foreign language education (Sarroub, 2002). The funds of knowledge, bodies of knowledge and cultural artifacts taken from the home, the community, the club, the church, and other places, show that individuals draw on multiple resources to make sense of the world and need to use this to have significant learning experiences in the classroom (Porto, 2010).

Textbooks that teach communicative practices that are reflective of authentic conversations, similar to ILS workbooks, rarely include comprehensible and adequate explanations of how conversation works in English (Berry, 2000; Burns, 1998; Cane, 1998; Grabt & Starks, 2001). Furthermore, Eggins and Slade (1997) not only suggest that textbooks ignore the best model in developing discourse competence, which is casual conversation, but the authors also posit that this model needs to be modeled by proficient users of the target language. Unfortunately, ILS students – and other similar EFL and ESL programs - are not only working with
course books, but they also do not have significant opportunities to converse with proficient users of the target language.

The inadequacies of relying on textbooks and course books for a communication-based teaching approach is not only limited to insufficient explanations of how conversations work and a lack of opportunity to develop discourse competence, but is also limited to contrived dialogues and decontextualized material. Boxer & Pickering (1995) argue that many language textbooks written by native-speakers, like ILS course books, wrongly emphasize explicit rather than tacit knowledge of how people speak. The authors show that many sample dialogues in the texts are contrived, with little information about setting, context, and relationship between speakers and addresses.

**Common Practice**

**Using the Morning Light Textbook and Workbook**

Similar to International Language School, many English as a Second Language or English as a Foreign Language programs around the nation revolve their curriculum around textbooks and workbooks for both language acquisition and to increase English fluency. One textbook commonly used in secondary and adult level programs is Morning Light (Chamot, Hartman, & Huizenga, 2004). Although the textbook is useful in providing supplemental instruction as well as a supplemental reading and content material, much of the textbook - and the lessons provided – lacks opportunity for student-autonomy, authenticity, cultural
awareness, and discourse competence. A curriculum that relies primarily on the Morning Light textbook leaves very little room for students to: make choices about the content they are studying and how they will study it, view the content as relevant and connect it to real situations and their lives, use their funds of knowledge to examine their own culture in comparison to the native culture, and regularly converse with native English speakers.

The description of the textbook inside the introduction states that Morning Light provides challenging content-based language development and learning strategies that help students learn academic English through a three-level English language-learning program. Students read informational and contemporary literature to learn the vocabulary, grammar, viewing, listening, speaking and writing skills needed to transition to mainstream curriculum (Chamot, Hartman, & Huizenga, 2004). The supplemental student workbook contains skill-building activities for vocabulary and word analysis, grammar, writing mechanics as well as active reading logs.

When I examined the textbook more closely, I realized that students did not have any choice in the content they would be reading and learning about. Furthermore, there was little option for students to choose how they would learn about the content. For example, Unit 6 in Morning Light is about shifting perspectives. One of the first activities asks to discuss the theme of the unit with specific questions provided by the textbook. Students have no choice about the content, are not allowed to develop questions of their own to discuss, and cannot
decide which questions they want to answer. The lack of choice and ability for students to feel governance over their own actions while working in the textbook is detrimental to the intrinsic motivation students possess (Deci, 1995).

In addition, although this particular unit has an important theme - changing one's point of view in understanding or judging things – the textbook does not ask students to connect these issues to their own lives in order to make the content and activities more authentic. The lack of connection also devalues the rich funds of knowledge – the cultural bodies of knowledge and artifacts that underlie household activities (Moll, 2000) – that each and every student brings to the classroom which, if tapped into, can be used as a means to utilize the skills individuals learn from different communities of practice in a learning environment (Wink & Putney, 2002). Relying on the textbook does not allow students to examine their culture and compare and contrast it to other foreign cultures, let alone the native American culture. I was only able to find two instances in the textbook and/or workbook where students were instructed to speak directly with native speakers, once for an interview and another during a volunteer assignment in the community. Both situations were short supplementary activities, clearly showing that the textbook is devaluing funds of knowledge and discourse competence as well as limiting opportunity to draw forth this knowledge and develop this skill.

Using the ILS Course Books

According to the academic director at International Language School, the academic program is designed by a team of administrators and educators at their
corporate headquarters in Switzerland. The program breaks students into six different proficiency levels ranging from beginner (A1) to upper advanced (C2). Each of these levels is broken up further into three different parts: 1, 2, and 3. Every student that enrolls into ILS completes a placement test to determine what level they should begin their academic program. After placing into the appropriate level and completing 5 weeks of study, each student takes a level test to move on to the proficiency level. When students excel, they can easily skip one of the three parts to move into the next level with approval from the academic director.

Each proficiency level and every three-part component series comes with an ILS Course Book. The course books are designed to be used by instructors in helping EFL students attain the English fluency goals the institution has set forth. I examined a few of the course books at random to get a better sense of some of the structure, units, lessons and activities being used in the classroom.

The course books are broken up into 8-12 units, with each unit structured around a theme or task. In the beginner level ILS Course Book, for example, the first unit is based on greetings, the second on locations, and the third on people. Each unit is broken into 5 different sections – focus, functions, skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking), grammar, and vocabulary/pronunciation – that are a part of every unit. So, every unit has a grammar section, a skills section, etc., for every unit in the course book.

Similar to the results found in the Morning Star textbook and course books, the ILS Course Book does not contain any opportunity for students to choose the
topics they will be working on throughout the course. Deci (1995) clearly shows the need for individual choice in order for students to stay motivated, engaged, and develop into lifelong learners.

Although ILS Course Books limit choice for students on topics, the structure, topics, lessons and activities in the course book do attempt to help students connect their learning activities to real life situations. Authentic learning practices call for activities that give students the opportunity to “make it real” and involve themselves in real-world situations (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 2005). The ILS Course Book attempts to do this in some of its chapter topics and subsequent lessons and activities. For example, one of the chapters in the ILS Course Book is about discussing different fields of study at college. The students answer questions about their own education and future educational goals. They have a “discussion” with an American student through pre-written dialogue lines by the course book’s authors. This activity does allow students to discuss a real life topic, but it doesn’t allow students to actually speak to someone about the topic in a real life situation. Connecting students at ILS to actual college students to discuss this topic would be a more authentic approach to this lesson.

ILS Course Book allows students the chance to discuss real life situations, but it does not take the next step in allowing students the opportunity to interact within a real-world setting and, as mentioned before, does not give choice for students within the curriculum. Both of these elements are essential in providing authentic
learning practices within learning environments (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 2005).

The ILS Course Book also has limited opportunity for students to engage their funds of knowledge by reflecting on their own lives as a means to viewing their own culture. In addition, it does has no opportunity for students to compare and contrast their lives with the lives of students from other countries, including America, as a means to compare and contrast cultures. There were a few assignments in the course book that asked the students to consider how people in their culture – with its norms, customs, values, and habits – would react to a situation, but there was almost no place for students to reflect on the issue or make a personal conclusion and reflect on that choice. Wolcott (1981) suggests that examining peoples’ lifestyles, choices, and habits is the best way to learn about culture. People are cultural informants and culture is found in the way people behave throughout life. Taking this into account, the ILS Course Book does not do elicit funds of knowledge in students by engaging in reflective assignments and discussing and reflecting on the lives of other foreign students in order to help raise cultural awareness.

**English as a Second Language Programs Nationwide**

As part of the Adult Education Act, a third-party national evaluation of adult education programs was conducted in September of 1990. Of all the adult students enrolled in the adult education programs, the highest enrollment came in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, accumulating 51 percent of the services being
received and 76 percent of the hours of instruction being received. This number continues to grow as the program’s target population increases by about two-thirds more each year than the program successfully serves (Young, 1994). More contemporary studies also show that ESL programs are the fastest-growing programs at many colleges, catering to immigrants coming into the United States as well as international students seeking English instruction (Kuo 1999, 2002; Schuyler, 1999).

In the national evaluation conducted by Young (1994), only 10% of the adult ESL students enrolled in the program moved from beginning level to advanced level instruction by the program’s completion and, overall, the instruction received was insufficient to have a major effect on literacy outcomes. The question that arises is: what kinds of curriculum and instructional approaches are these types of adult ESL programs, and other common programs like it, using?

The types of ESL programs in the United States vary as much as the diversity found in its heterogeneous population. Programs can range from survival ESL and vocational ESL to GED ESL and academic ESL, with each program being offered at different proficiency levels. The setting and providers of these ESL programs are just as complex, ranging from local education agencies and businesses to private and public educational institutions and voluntary organizations (Crandall, 1993; Guth 1993; Chisman, Wrigley, and Ewen, 1993).

No matter the setting or the provider, the majority of ESL programs - especially beginning level programs - are functional in nature, focusing on survival
skills, employment, and language and cultural orientation. Advanced programs focus on more advanced skills and, recently, more and more intermediate programs have been initiated to help students make the transition from beginning to advanced level programs. Within these ESL programs specific instructional practice varies depending upon each program, but increasing programs are adopting approaches similar to the International Language School blended learning model. With limited funds, colleges and private and public institutions are combining classroom instruction with self-instructional programs or computer based learning (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004).

**Conclusion**

After looking at the discrepancies between the existing state, using ineffective workbooks that lack autonomy for students, authentic activities, and opportunities for EFL students to share cultural funds of knowledge and converse with proficient English speakers, at ILS and similar programs in the U.S., and the desired state - tapping into EFL students cultural funds of knowledge while increasing student-autonomy, authentic activities and allowing conversations with proficient English speakers - the question arises on how to structure a curriculum around these guidelines.

My curricular innovation promotes a mutually beneficial learning environment that scaffolds continual, authentic interactions between EAL students and native English speaking peers while giving students the freedom to be autonomous by guiding the interactions. Furthermore, the approach allows EAL
students the opportunity to use their cultural funds of knowledge on a regular basis by examining their own lives and the lives of foreign and American peers as a vehicle to gain awareness of their own culture and American culture while increasing English fluency and discourse competence.
III. Review of Relevant Research

SEALL is an EAL curriculum that scaffolds interactions with native English speakers within a mutually beneficial learning environment. Here, as originally defined by Wood (1976), the term scaffold is used to describe the interaction or process used by a tutor that allows a novice to solve a problem, carry out a task, or achieve a goal which he or she would be unable to accomplish unassisted. To make a well-rounded case for change, it is necessary to review several areas of relevant literature. First, traditional and contemporary service-learning definitions will be examined to help present the proposal for a similar, yet unique learning environment that I refer to as mutually beneficial. Secondly, sociolinguistic competence will be explored to show its connection to cultural awareness. After, student-autonomy and its connection to increased motivation will be discussed. Finally, authenticity will be examined.

Service-Learning: Definitions

Offering meaningful language input among different contexts is a challenge that has been pushing a number of English as a Second Language and English as a Foreign Language programs to implement service-learning opportunities into their curriculums (Hillyard, Reppen, & Vasquez, 2007). In addition, some universities and institutions that allow service-learning to be taken as additional credit have found widespread interest in service-learning classes and increased retention of students (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996).
In general, service-learning encompasses pedagogy which links academic study and community service through reflective assignments that reinforce each other (Mass-Weigert, 1998; Jacoby, 1996; Kinsley, 1994; Berson, 1994). In the EFL context, Minor (2003) contends that service-learning is an educational tool that gives EFL learners the opportunity to practice English in authentic, meaningful contexts, while helping others, and also allowing for enhanced language learning by bringing back community experiences to the classroom. Both definitions require a community service component combined with classroom instruction; while one stresses the importance of reflection, the other stresses authenticity.

In Minor’s (2003) examination of Sacred Heart University’s 8-week long pilot service-learning course, he develops the link between service-learning principles and language acquisition for adult ESL students. Minor describes service-learning as an offshoot of experiential learning, which recognizes the importance of combining experience and knowledge. In addition, service-learning can benefit students socially, psychologically, and academically by developing humane values, active learning, moral reasoning, and problem solving skills as well as significantly decreasing the sense of alienation and isolation (Carter, 1997; Conrad & Hedin, 1982; Schumer, 1986).

These social, personal and psychological factors are highly relevant issues in the ESL context as longstanding research recognizes that social and affective factors, like empathy, alienation and social distance, have significant impacts on language learning (Gardenr & Lambert, 1972; Schumann, 1975). Finally, Minor argues that
service-learning provides some of the real and meaningful contexts ESL students need for language acquisition.

**Mutually Beneficial Learning Environment: A New Method**

My unique curricular approach offers to change the perception of how the participants in certain service-learning environments are viewed. In many cases, as in my proposal, a more reciprocal learning relationship is formed between all participants involved in the course; students as well as participants in the service-learning project will learn from each other. In my approach, SEALL gives EAL students the opportunity to develop English fluency and cultural awareness in authentic contexts in a mutually beneficial relationship with native speaking peers. Interacting with native speakers, EAL students will benefit directly by increasing English fluency and cultural awareness. The native speakers and participants in the project, members of Urban Metro’s (UM) *Project New Start* program, will benefit from interacting with EAL students by building social networks to encourage positive personal growth, which is one stated goal of the program. In addition, participants of the program are empowered as “language aids” and cultural informants, using their funds of knowledge (sometimes for the first time) to help EAL students develop English fluency and learn about American culture.

Similar to traditional service-learning programs, EAL students using the SEALL curriculum critically reflect on their community experiences – interactions with native speakers - in the classroom. The reflection element of SEALL, along with its connection to working with the local community, makes it similar to traditional
service-learning approaches; however, students are not merely conducting a service or volunteering. They are involved in reciprocal learning relationship that has specific benefits for both parties.

**Discourse & Strategic Competence: Elements of Focus Within Communicative Competence**

The communicative competence model presented by Canale (1983) still constructs the conventional framework for curriculum design and classroom practice in association with communicative language teaching (Alptekin, 2002). Two of the four components within the model that are particularly relevant to the SEALL project are discourse and strategic competence. The two other elements of the communicative competence model, grammatical and sociolinguistic competence, will not be discussed here because neither of these elements, nor communicative competence as a whole, encompass elements that reflect the goals of this particular curriculum design project.

Discourse competence highlights the ability to deal with the extended use of language within context and connect a series of sentences or utterances to form a meaningful whole. Strategic competence shows the ability to cope in an authentic communicative situation and keep the communicative channel open (Alptekin, 2002).

Strategic competence is activated when learners wish to convey messages their linguistic resources do not allow them to express successfully (Dornyei & Thurrell, 1991). Corder (1981) shows two main methods that learners use when
strategic competence is activated – message adjustment strategies and resource expansion strategies. Dornyei and Thurrell (1991) delineate these terms as follows: message adjustment strategies involve the learner making a slight alteration or reduction of the message (often denoting a risk avoidance by the speaker), while resource expansion strategies involve the learner using co-operative and non-co-operative means to remain in the conversation, conveying their message by compensating for their language deficiencies.

In an attempt to understand how these competencies are developed, Eggins and Slade (1997) conducted a study of casual conversation by recording and analyzing over ten years of recorded data from authentic, spontaneous, everyday conversations between participants in a variety of settings. The authors recorded and examined conversations between friends, family members, and coworkers of the same and mixed genders. Eggins and Slade simply posit that casual conversation -- with proficient users of the target language is the best model in developing discourse competence.

**New Models in English Language Teaching (ELT)**

Many academics and educators are calling for a new pedagogical model to accommodate the developing case of English as an intercultural and international communication. Hyde (1998) proposes that English language learners should be equipped with linguistic and cultural behavior and an awareness of difference – and strategies for coping with such difference – which will enable learners to communicate effectively with others. Kramsh and Sullivan (1996) call for a
pedagogy that addresses global appropriacy and local appropriation, in that it should prepare learners to become both global and local speakers of English and feel comfortable in both international and national cultures. Finally, instructional materials and activities should involve local and international contexts that are familiar and relevant to language learners’ lives (Alptekin, 2002) and have suitable discourse samples pertaining to native and nonnative speaker interactions, as well as nonnative and nonnative speaker interactions (Widdowson, 1998).

**Sociolinguistic Competence’s Role in Cultural Awareness**

One of many challenges teachers face in ESL, EFL, and EAL instruction is understanding what a learner needs to know when communicating in actual social contexts in the setting of the new culture (Ramney, 1992). Brown (1994) agrees that learners must have competence, which involves acquiring the rules and norms of the appropriate timing and realization of speech acts. Having the base knowledge of the language alone does not prepare learners for effective and appropriate use of the target language, so adult language learners must attain stylistic adaptability to be able to encode and decode the discourse around them.

In conjunction with sociolinguistic competence and the ability to attain stylistic adaptability is the realization that cultural awareness plays an integral part in attaining that adaptability. Culture is vital in shaping an English language learner’s communicative competence (Richards & Renandya, 2002). Due to the complexity of culture and its ever-changing nature, an achievable goal would allow learners a chance to develop skills to investigate cultural complexity, and promote
cultural curiosity while raising cross-cultural awareness (Abrams, 2001). Cross-cultural awareness simply implies that students contrast other cultures with their own (Ortuno, 1991). In the appropriate use of language, attaining stylistic adaptability, it is essential for students to recognize the rules that are culturally determined in communication (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

Securing the need for instructors to scaffold interaction between English language learners and native speakers, Richard and Renandya (2002) state that true language acquisition clearly becomes more than knowledge of its grammatical and semantic rules; learners must also understand its use by native speakers in the context of structured interpersonal exchange.

**Authenticity**

Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde (2005) define authenticity simply as real, rich, and complex ideas on which the curriculum centers. In more depth, they explain that authentic learning involves maintaining the complex ideas found in literature, rather than "dumbing them down" and giving students choice so that they can take ownership of their work. They entreat teachers to "make it real" involving students in real-world experiences.

**Conclusion**

My curricular innovation calls for a new outlook on a unique approach to a traditional service-learning approach. With the SEALL curriculum, a more reciprocal, less service-based, approach accounts for the mutually beneficial
relationship between students and participants. The approach also values the inclusion of discourse competence and cultural awareness in communication-based teaching, as well as authentic practices to tie each aspect together.
IV. Review of Existing Curricular Approaches

The meaning and use of the constructs and features within the SEALL curriculum, like service-learning, authenticity, discourse competence, and cultural awareness were explored and examined in the review of research. These learning theories are a foundation for analyzing and evaluating existing curricular approaches.

Existing Curricular Approaches

*Multi-Experience*

In an attempt to bring a wider variety of interactions with native English speakers to their international university students, a university level English program created a service-learning curriculum built around student-autonomy and authentic English in a 16-week class entitled *Multi-Experience* (Hillyard, Reppen, & Vasquez, 2007).

In *Multi-Experience*, Hillyard, Reppen, & Vasquez (2007) highlight the value of service-learning, defined by Minor (2004) as an educational tool that provides students with language practice in authentic, meaningful contexts while helping others as well as enabling more enriched-classroom experiences as a positive side-effect, but place the primary focus of their curriculum on authentic communication. Placing students as interns or volunteers in various businesses and organizations, volunteer sites, and throughout the community was used as a means to expose
students to a variety of authentic English language input found within the respective volunteer sites.

One aspect that Hillyard, Reppen, and Vasquez thought to be significant about their curriculum was the incorporation of student autonomy into volunteer site placement. Allowing choice in the selection of their volunteer sites gave students the ability to pursue their individual interests, pick a site that aligned with their field of study or business pursuits, and meet and work with other students who had shared interests.

Hillyard, Reppen, and Vasquez suggest that Multi-Experience provided the setting for springboard discussions on sociolinguistic issues. In one example, students practiced role-playing situations in which they were asked to start conversations with strangers, something that many students found difficult. Role-playing activities gave students opportunity to navigate more authentic tasks and provided opportunity to examine sociolinguistic boundaries.

The Multi-Experience course provided access to authentic interactions for English language learners through service-learning volunteer sites while incorporating student autonomy and sociolinguistic activities into its curriculum. Although students were given opportunity for real-life interactions with native speakers, scaffolding and reflection were not essential elements of the curriculum and there was not specified time for casual conversations.
American Culture: EF International School Course

To fill the void of cultural awareness in EAL students at EF International Language School, Kelly Chu created a course called American Culture. The class was designed to help students better understand and adjust to American culture.

Throughout American Culture, students are introduced to a variety of aspects found within American culture including, geography, history, pop-culture and music, customs and values, and slang. The culminating assessment is a research or interview project students choose to work on, with the content of the project also mostly chosen by the students.

Observations

During American Culture on Thursday, October 20, 2011, observations were made by the author in order to consider whether cultural funds of knowledge in students were being utilized and authenticity and sociolinguistic competence were being employed.

The class began with the instructor, Kelly Chu, going over the answers for the homework assignment – a crossword puzzle on famous American landmarks. Students were given answers to the questions and then given a few additional facts about each landmark. The teachers’ review of the assignment was very fast-paced, quickly giving students a lot of facts about each landmark, leaving little time for students to write down the answer or correct mistakes, let alone comprehend the information. There were at least two students who were doing neither; they were sitting at their desk trying to copy down a few answers, completely silent.
After this assignment, students were given an “American State Project.” In this assignment, students were asked to choose one American state and work with a partner in order to complete a handout on the topic. The handout asked students to find useful information about the state, including weather, attractions, and geography. It also asked students to include some pictures and drawings of their state and its attractions. Students were much more engaged in this assignment, excited to work with someone and excited to find out information about a state of their choosing.

Conclusion

Although the framework of American Culture has a few merits, there are some telling problems with its overall structure and execution. For starters, the curriculum is not grounded in any particular learning theories, and if so, there is no mention of what these theories are. Based on a classroom observation, students are given a lot of facts but little time or materials to understand or use those facts to build meaning about their relationship to actual American culture.

One positive aspect of this course was that students were given the opportunity to choose the type of project they would complete for the culminating project. This is one opportunity where students may be more engaged in the class; they are given the time and resources to find meaning with their project and American culture.
The *Multi-Experience* curriculum possesses both negative and positive aspects in its approach to teaching adult EAL students English in a service-learning curriculum based on student-autonomy and authenticity.

The lack of a clear definition for authentic communication and specific examples of its occurrence in the *Multi-Experience* curriculum was one aspect that was perplexing and unsupported. Students did volunteer at various organizations and businesses, but there is no evidence that students were engaged in authentic communication – which, again, is impossible to determine without having a clear understanding of its definition.

One positive aspect of the *Multi-Experience* curriculum approach is its inclusion of allowing choice for students when selecting their volunteer sites. This clearly allowed students to take more responsibility for their experiences at the volunteer site, and subsequently, in the classroom. Taking the approach one step further, and allowing for more choice in other aspects of the curriculum would give even more autonomy to the students. This could be easily done by allowing students to choose how they are assessed and more importantly, how they will interact or engage while working at their respective volunteer sites.
V. Scaffolding Experiences for Authentic Language Learning

The clear need to provide EAL learners with an authentic and contextualized curriculum (Cummins, 1981; Kasper et al., 2000; Krashen, 1982) is not a novel idea, nor has it been neglected within the educational community. Two curricular approaches attempting to fill this need have approached the problem by either creating a curriculum developed around knowledge of culture or service-learning (Hillyard, Reppen, & Vasquez, 2007). Although each approach has merits, both curricula’s overlook the importance of cultural awareness and conversations with native speakers to develop discourse and sociolinguistic competence (Brown, 1994; Eggins & Slade, 1997).

In order to uncover whether these constructs, discourse and sociolinguistic competence, can be strengthened in EAL learners, I designed a reciprocal-learning curriculum that scaffolds authentic interactions between EAL students and native speakers with allotted time for native speakers.

Guiding Questions

How do authentic and casual conversations with native speakers affect sociolinguistic competence in EAL students?

How does strengthening sociolinguistic competence in EAL students effect comfort and confidence levels with their own English ability?
My curriculum, Scaffolding Experiences for Authentic Language Learning (SEALL), relies on a mutually beneficial learning environment that scaffolds authentic interactions between EAL students and native speakers with allotted time for casual conversation between each group. In the SEALL curriculum, students choose the topics they will discuss with native speakers and provide input on and feedback for the interactions they have with native speakers. Students also review and evaluate the intended learning goals, and are given class-time to reflect critically about their experiences with native speakers. Finally, throughout the course students share experiences about their past with each other and native speakers, ultimately becoming ethnographers learning from and studying cultural informants (Wolcott, 1981).

**Goals of Scaffolding Experiences for Authentic Language Learning**

The mission statement at International Language School highlights the purpose of the institution: to teach the English language to speakers of other language in a communicative classroom setting and to involve students in the surrounding community, where students can practice English with native speakers. Taking this purpose into account, I developed the goals of the SEALL curriculum to support this mission by strengthening English fluency in students while giving students time to become involved in the community and interact with native speakers. There are three main goals of SEALL:

1. Students will increase English fluency.
2. Students will better understand their own cultural identity.

3. Students will learn more about American culture.

The relevant learning theories and constructs are operationalized into learning activities, so that learning goals may be met. SEALL uses a variety of activities with teacher-provided scaffolding over three phases of a six-week course called *Cross-cultural Communications*. The stages include: the preparation stage, the interaction and reflection stage, and the conclusion stage.

**Constructs of SEALL**

**Scaffolding**

An important element of the SEALL curriculum is the process of scaffolding information, assignments, and interactions with native speakers for the students. Wertsch (1979) argues that scaffolding is an inter-psychological mechanism that promotes internalization of knowledge. To help ignite this mechanism, the SEALL curriculum has been broken up into three distinct phases that organize the material to help meet the learning goals. During the initial phase, students analyze and evaluate information about the course and the group of native speakers with whom they will be working. Students are given the opportunity to express doubts, concerns, expectations, and initial judgments. During the subsequent phases, students are directed into each assignment with warm-up exercises or modeling activities and students practice speaking with one another before they interact with
native speakers.

**Student-autonomy**

Another important element of the SEALL curriculum is student-autonomy. Deci (1995) substantiates the direct link between providing opportunity for self-guidance through choice and increased intrinsic motivation. Giving students structured choice self-motivates them to participate with greater energy and enjoyment. The organization and execution of the SEALL curriculum allows multiple instances within the *Cross-cultural Communications* course for significant choice by students. Students evaluate goals and leave input for forming new objectives. Students are often given opportunity to choose partners during assignments. Students choose topics and write questions for use during conversations with native speakers and have choice within the majority of activities.

**Authenticity and Mutually Beneficial Learning Environment**

In an attempt to make a curriculum that looks to develop knowledge of native culture and Americans in EAL students, the interactions between EAL students and Americans needed to be authentic. Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde (2005) argue that in order to obtain a level of authenticity in a curriculum, the teacher needs to involve students in real-world experience. What’s a more real-world experience than interacting, conversing, and developing relationships with peers within the local community? Once an organization willing to work with *Cross-cultural Communications*, work with administrators and managers from the
organization was undertaken to develop a mutually beneficial learning environment.

There are a few aspects about the SEALL learning environment that differentiate and distinguish it from a traditional service-learning environment. A service-learning environment is traditionally defined as a setting where students work or serve the community in some fashion and that work both informs and transforms the academic learning in the classroom (Howard, 1998). Notably different, the learning environment in which SEALL operates, there is no service or work done for the community. There are interactions with local native speakers who may or may not benefit from those encounters – and in the case of this setting the native speakers did benefit – but there is no actual service completed. In addition, students do benefit from the interactions with native speakers by developing discourse competence (Dornyei & Thurrell, 1991).

Due to the fact that the SEALL curriculum operates in an environment without an actual service being done by students, the learning environment that the SEALL curriculum creates falls closer to Minor’s (2004) definition of service learning in the EFL context. Minor defines service learning as an educational tool that gives EFL learners the opportunity to practice in authentic, meaningful contexts, while helping others, and also allowing for enhanced language learning by bringing back community experiences to the classroom. Although this definition gives light to much of the learning environment in which the SEALL curriculum operates, it leaves out the benefits students receive outside of the classroom during
the interactions and experiences with native speakers. For these reasons, the setting that the SEALL curriculum operates in can best be described as a mutually beneficial learning environment.

**Cultural Informants and Discourse Competence**

One of the advantageous aspects of the SEALL curriculum for developing cultural awareness in EAL students is its recognition that students learn about culture by studying members of the culture rather than facts about the culture. In the *Cross-cultural Communications* course, students become ethnographers of native speakers by studying and learning from them as cultural informants (Wolcott, 1981). In addition, students study themselves and their international peers throughout the course.

While studying native speakers, peers, and themselves as cultural informants allows students to tap into rich funds of cultural knowledge, having casual conversations with native speakers allows students to develop discourse competence (Dornyei & Thurrell, 1991). Besides completing assignments, activities, and exercises between with native speakers, SEALL structures time for EAL students to interact with native speakers through cordial and casual conversation.
Overview of SEALL

Table 1. Three phases of SEALL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation Stage</th>
<th>Curriculum Activities</th>
<th>Curriculum Constructs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Syllabus and goals evaluation and review</td>
<td>Scaffolding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Student-Autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-implementation</td>
<td>Cultural Informants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Autobiography</td>
<td>Funds of Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-implementation</td>
<td>Cultural Informants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E-mail to a friend</td>
<td>Funds of Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Scaffolding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Student-Autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview Practice</td>
<td>Authenticity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Scaffolding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Student-Autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Building</td>
<td>Cultural Informants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exercises</td>
<td>Funds of Knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interaction & Reflection Stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum Activities</th>
<th>Curriculum Constructs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

(Table 1. Three phases of SEALL, continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviews with Native Speakers</th>
<th>Authenticity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural Informants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discourse Competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Funds of Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student-Autonomy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Over the Line</th>
<th>Authenticity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural Informants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discourse Competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Funds of Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scaffolding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student-Autonomy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Back to Back</th>
<th>Authenticity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural Informants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discourse Competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Funds of Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scaffolding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student-Autonomy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conclusion Stage</th>
<th>Curriculum Activities</th>
<th>Curriculum Constructs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
The SEALL curriculum is broken up into three phases, as shown in Table 1. Each phase has a certain number of activities that correspond to that particular stage. The activities, and the stages, are designed to scaffold the information and assignments for the students as well as the interactions between students and native speakers. Each activity is aligned with one or more constructs used to design that particular activity as shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-implementation Autobiography</th>
<th>Funds of Knowledge</th>
<th>Scaffolding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-Implementation E-mail to a Friend</td>
<td>Cultural Informants</td>
<td>Funds of Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brain Scan</td>
<td>Cultural Informants</td>
<td>Funds of Knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Activities of SEALL: The Preparation Stage**

*Introductions*

One of the first activities in the SEALL curriculum is a brief interview and introduction assignment. As a class, students make a list of questions they feel are important when they meet someone with the purpose of not only getting to know that person, but also introducing that person to a group of strangers. Students use these questions to interview a partner then introduce them to the class. This activity allows students the opportunity to learn more about each other and to practice the process of conducting an interview for their first meeting with native speakers.

*Syllabus review and goal evaluation*

Students review the syllabus of the *Cross-cultural Communication* course to learn about the overview, assignments, and goals of the class. The syllabus review also introduces students to the idea of interacting with native speakers in a mutually beneficial learning environment. The environment is a place where students will help native speakers while learning from them. This gives students the chance to learn more about the partner organization and where activities and interactions will occur. Finally, students appraise the learning goals as a means to judge their competence and expectations of the goals. By giving time to assess goals, Students are more motivated to learn because they are able to voice their opinions on the relevance and value of the learning tasks (Stipeck, 1998).
Pre-Implementation Autobiography

The pre-implementation autobiography is a short writing assignment in which students provide some basic information about themselves, their families, their upbringing, and their country. In this pre-autobiography, students expand on one or two experiences in their lives that have made an impact on their personality. By sharing about their experiences, using them to consider their viewpoints today, and interacting with native speakers within a mutually beneficial learning environment, students are using their funds of knowledge (Wink & Putney, 2002).

Pre-Implementation E-mail to a Friend

During this assignment, students write an informal letter or e-mail to a friend or family member who is living in their home country. Students choose whether or not to send the letter, but students are instructed to write the letter with a recipient in mind as though it were a real letter. Students write about their expectations, concerns, and excitement prior to their trip to the United States and about their arrival. Students write about their initial impressions and how it compares to their expectations. Finally students tell their friend about some initial distinctions between their country and the United States. This allows the opportunity for students to complete an authentic task that is relevant to their real-life (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde 2005) and to analyze themselves as cultural informants (Wolcott, 1981).
**Topic Choice and Interaction Type**

To foster intrinsic motivation, Deci (1995) shows that students need the freedom to choose what and how they learn in school. Adhering to this idea, students are allowed structured choice in both topics of conversation and types of interactions between themselves and native speakers. Students make a list of all the topics they want to learn about from native speakers (in this case, American peers), and these topics are incorporated into the interaction activities. Students also evaluate the interaction activities so the activities can be changed or adapted as the class progresses.

**Community-Building**

The very first meeting between students and native speakers provide an excellent opportunity for community-building and icebreaker activities so that students can become more comfortable and trusting with each other. One example of an activity is to have student’s line-up by month of birth or shoe-size without talking. Another icebreaker activity, developed a drama group called *Road Warriors*, is called “Bomb Pond.” In this activity, students lead a blindfolded partner through an imaginary pond (roped off), filled with bombs (balloons). Other students play the role of “negative influence” – yelling negative statements and distracting one blindfolded partner while the other partner tries to guide them through the pond. In between activities and while waiting their turn, students and native speakers have brief chances to just chat with one another. Both activities allow students to get to know each other in a non-threatening and informal environment.
The Interaction and Reflection Stage

Interviews

During the second meeting between students and native speakers, students interview native speakers and then introduce them to the whole class. In the preparation stage, students had a chance to practice this with their classmates, so they have been prepared. In addition, students use that practice exercise to develop a list of interview questions. Although this is mostly surface-level information, students become “ethnographers,” studying and learning from cultural informants (Wolcott, 1981), the native speakers they are interviewing.

Critical Reflections

Throughout the SEALL curriculum, and as they interact with native speakers, students attempt to write critical reflections about their experiences. Hatton and Smith (1995) argue that critical reflections take into account multiple perspectives in various contexts, evaluate personal and external factors, and show a logical interpretation of actions and events. One of the first exercises to help students reach this goal is to allow them the chance to look at the scale developed by Hatton and Smith, and then read and evaluate some reflections. Before students write a reflection themselves, they look at some models written by other students and find examples of each type of reflection Hatton and Smith list on their scale. Once students accomplish this, and the results are discussed, students have a model for what a critical reflection should include. Students are the able to write critical
reflections about either the community-building activities with native speakers, or
interviews, or both.

**Over the Line**

Another activity developed by the drama group *Road Warriors* is called “Over
the Line.” For this activity, students all stand on a line (a piece of tape on the floor or
a line on a field). The teacher says a statement about some type of action, emotion,
or thought and if any students has committed that action, emotion, or thought in
their past, they have to take a step forward. Each student then has to share some
additional information about that experience with the group. For instance, one of
the statements could be, “Run away from home.” The teacher makes a list of these
statements and the activity is done a few times. This is an excellent opportunity to
include some of the topics that students chose in the preparation stage. On the last
few attempts, students make the list of statements, and the activity is repeated using
the statements they have created.

**The Conclusion Stage**

**Post-Implementation Autobiography**

The final part of the curriculum simply asks students to write another brief
autobiography about their experience in a new country, learning a new language,
and interacting with a group of native speakers. For this assignment, students write
about how they have changed throughout the course and how the experience has
made them look differently – if at all - at others as well as themselves. Students also
write about how culture impacts each of us as people.

**Post-Implementation E-mail to a Friend**

This assignment gives students the chance to write another informal letter or e-mail to a friend or family member that is living in their home country, except this time students are looking back on their experience. Students write about their experiences and the things they learned while living and studying in the America. Students pretend that their friend or family member is traveling to America to study, and they offer advice on integrating into American culture and dealing with and adapting to American people.

**Brain Scan**

Brain Scan is a short brainstorming and writing exercise in which students list all the interesting things they learned about the American peers they interviewed and interacted with over the six-week program. Students also list all the things they learned and realized about themselves and their classmates. Finally students write their overall thoughts about the *Cross-cultural Communications* course and provide feedback on assignments, activities, and interactions.

**Conclusion**

SEALL provides a mutually beneficial learning-environment where students have the opportunity to learn from one another outside of the classroom. Students are given choice in what they will be learning about as well as how they will be interacting with native speakers. Students also have the chance to not only reflect
on their experiences, but also to reflect on themselves and their behaviors.
Chapter VI: Implementation and Revision of Scaffolding Experiences for Authentic Language Learning

The Setting

International Language School (ILS) is part of a private education company that owns and runs a network of over 200 schools and offices in over 20 different countries. The intensive language school operates 52 weeks a year, the students arrive every week, and their courses may last anywhere from two to 52 weeks. The course of study includes General English classes, Special Interest Elective (SPIN) classes and interactive computer-based lessons known as iLabs. Students are grouped under four main categories depending upon their length of stay. These include Academic Year (AY) students, who are part of the nine-month program, Semester (SEM) students, who are in the six-month program, Intensive Language Students (ILS), who are in the 2-20 week program, and University Prep (UP) students, who are in the six to nine month university preparation program.

Cross-cultural Communications is a SPIN class created to develop English fluency and cultural awareness in ILS’s EAL students. The class meets over a six-week period every Monday and Wednesday from 11:25-12:45 p.m. At the end of the six-week period, students will choose a new SPIN class and so, Cross-cultural Communications will receive a new group of students. Currently, there are thirteen students in the class, but because of weekly arrivals that number is possible to change as early as the following week. There are four AY students, three SEM
students, and seven ILS students. The students’ ages range from sixteen to twenty-six years old and the mean age is twenty. There are two students each from Brazil, Denmark, France, Saudi Arabia, and one student each from Argentina, Belgium, Chile, Holland, Peru, and Japan. The current students in *Cross-cultural Communications* have been studying English for as long as twelve years in their country of origin and as little as seven months at ILS. Students in my class have a variety of goals for studying English at ILS. Four students are studying English to prepare for English-related majors at their prospective Universities in their country of origin. One student is studying English to pass a STEP Level 1 test administered in Japan, which she believes will ultimately allow her to get a better job. Similarly, five students are studying English because of their work at home or future career aspirations. Finally, three students are studying English at ILS for fun, experience and, or vacation.

One major obstacle of teaching *Cross-cultural Communications* at ILS is the transient nature of the school and the programs they offer. Each week, new students arrive to and depart from ILS. This not only makes it very difficult for me to monitor and evaluate learning outcomes of the students, but it also makes it difficult to assign homework and move fluently from class to class because at any point, a student can leave and a new student can arrive. To compensate for this dilemma, I created or adapted lesson plans designed to be completed within one class period. Furthermore, if students arrived on a “reflection day”, they would complete the Introduction & Goals phase described in Chapter IV, so that they understood the
purpose of the class. If the students arrived on an “authentic experience” day, they would take part in the activity for the day and complete the Introduction & Goals phase for homework.

**Urban Ministry & Project New Start**

Urban Ministry (UM) is a social service and community development organization founded in 1966 that fulfills one branch of the forty-eight United Methodist Churches throughout San Diego and Imperial Counties. UM’s mission is “to empower low income individuals, families and communities, to overcome poverty and to achieve self-sufficiency through employment, education, social services, and leadership development” (Metro United Methodist Urban Ministry, 2010). The one service that UM currently offers is a program called *Project New Start*. The state and federal government fund the program, for six months at a time, with the ability to renew the funding for up to three years.

Young adults and adults between the ages of 17 and 24 who have been “touched by the law” in the last 12-months from the beginning of the program are able to attend *Project New Start*. “Touched by the law”, according to one of the lead teachers, means that the person had been incarcerated, arrested, or was on probation, but did not have an adult criminal record. Catching a young adult or adult before they had an adult record could steer them away from continuing on a life of crime. There is no cost for the participants in the program. Each participant is given a $200 bi-weekly stipend if they are, according to the teachers and managers at UM, completing the program at a satisfactory level which entails regular attendance,
effort, and meeting outline goals of the program.

The goals of Project New Start are clearly stated on the website: the program encourages ex-offenders to achieve their full human and economic potential through work force, educational, and personal development, while rendering ongoing support in their aim to develop and achieve personal and community goals (METRO, 2010).

While completing Project New Start, students are directed under four principles or phases of the program: connect, study, integrate and action. During the first phase of the program, students learn about multiculturalism and working together. Many of the students are coming from racially isolated places, especially if in prison, and have never worked with different races. The ability to work with a diverse group of people is essential considering the diversity found throughout the adult workplace. The study phase of the program is when students began working towards a G.E.D., high school diploma, or a higher degree. There are two instructors from National University who work at the center to support the students academically. During the third phase, students apply the skills they're learning to life while making both short and long term goals. Finally, the action phase is where students go into the community and take action while trying to attain their goals. This is usually by volunteering in the neighborhood or community where they committed their crime as a means of pursuing civic justice. Students also train in work force development by taking vocational classes on solar installation, organic farming, mobile app programming, and computer refurbishing.
Preparation Stage

Once approval was given from the Academic Dean at ILS and the Associate Executive Director at the Urban Ministry to proceed with a mutually beneficial education program between, *Cross-cultural Communications* and *Project New Start*, there was about a week to prepare for incoming students. My goals over the first week were to prepare students for this encounter. I wanted them to understand whom they would be talking to and to give them an idea of the goals of the course. I also wanted to allow students a chance to comment on and evaluate those goals, and to give them an opportunity to introduce one another all while building community with each other. The Preparation Stage involves introductory pieces in the following four areas: student goals, cultural & personal identity, community building, and critical reflection.

Introductions and Goals

The first activity in the Preparation Stage was to have my students introduce each other as a way of meeting one another and also as a way to practice introducing a partner to the class – later in the term, students would introduce *Project New Start* participants to a group of people. On the first attempt of this activity, students came up with, as a class, a list of questions they felt were important to ask someone when not only trying to learn more about them but also introducing them to a group of people. I wrote the questions on the whiteboard, and the class agreed on which questions were appropriate and useful considering they would be introducing their partner publicly. After interviewing each other, students
introduced their partner to the class, and after the first or second introduction, students began to lose interest. Some even began to talk among themselves about other things – clearly not interested or not listening. This prompted me to consider altering the activity slightly to reduce the possibility of students becoming disengaged. On the next attempt, a few weeks later, I decided to ask students to draw portraits of their partner to make the activity more creative and give students something to show to the class while introducing their partner. Based on my observations, students were more engaged during introductions and students were listening attentively when others spoke. Sometimes students made comments about the drawing or asked follow-up questions about the person. Therefore, I revised the opening lesson to include a more creative and graphic approach.

Although there was not enough time during this trial implementation, in the future, students could analyze their drawings to consider what kind of statements the image makes about their cultural or personal identity. Furthermore, the activity could be developed in more depth by having students look at some images online, via the iPads available in the classroom, or as a class and share their opinions on what the images portray and how that affects their outlook on the identity of the person or people in the picture.

After students had the opportunity to introduce each other, it seemed an appropriate time to introduce the syllabus. Students reviewed and answered questions, in pairs, about the syllabus and the Project New Start program. This proved to be more difficult than expected and out of the student’s Zone of Proximal
Development (ZPD). Vygotsky (1978) defines ZPD as the space between actual development – determined by independent problem-solving – and potential development – determined by the completion of the learning task with help of an adult or capable peer. The adult or peer is able to scaffold the task for the student so that they can complete the task.

Unfortunately, the majority of students were unable, even with help from peers or from me, to complete the task. The language in the syllabus and the questions were just too difficult for students to manage, especially with limited time. All of the students could not complete the assignment or only partially completed it. This prompted me to adapt the activity and lighten the language of the syllabus while providing more scaffolding of the assignment.

One aspect of the assignment students were able to complete was about course goals. I emphasized the goals of both Cross-cultural Communications and Project New Start, and students simply wrote down what the goals were. After reading literature about student involvement with course goals I decided to revise this activity. On the next attempt - in order to lay a foundation for further learning and develop interest - students not only appraised the learning goals, but also judged their competence and outcome expectations of the goals.

Allowing additional time for students to voice opinions on the relevance and value of the learning tasks helps motivate students for their schoolwork (Stipeck, 1998). Relying heavily on Stipeck’s method for obtaining opinions of course goals, I added new questions to the assignment. Students wrote about their interest in the
goals. They wrote about the relevancy of the goals to their life, and whether they believed they could accomplish the goals.

**Introduction**

**Pre-Implementation Autobiographies**

Students wrote an autobiography about an experience that has helped form their identity today. In order to help orientate students to the ideas of identity and autobiography, we first discussed, as a class, what these words meant and thought of some examples together. Students were then given three short excerpts of some famous autobiographies. For example, one excerpt, the memoir by Frank McCourt, *Angela’s Ashes*, gave the students a quick look at Frank’s negative feelings about growing up Irish Catholic. In pairs, students read their assigned excerpt and answered a series of questions about the autobiography. Overall, students struggled to decipher the complex language and vocabulary from the excerpts. During the exercise, at least one member from every group needed a lot of support from me to figure out the meaning of the excerpts. Again, Vygotsky (1978) argues that providing appropriate assistance to a student will give the student enough help to achieve the task. This proved to be the case for this particular assignment; with my help students completed the assignment and articulated their understanding of the passage both on paper and in discussion. After students finished answering questions, I formed larger groups so that students could explain and share their responses and thoughts about the excerpts to other classmates. Students then wrote their autobiographies; however, for a three or four of the students, analyzing a model was not enough to help them begin writing.
Therefore, I decided to allow students to use graphic representations to brainstorm some ideas about what they wanted to write about. I instructed students to draw symbols or images that showed something that that had helped form their identity in some way. After they completed their drawings, students explained what it was they drew, and why it was important to a partner. One Belgium student, Amelie, drew an Arabic symbol of freedom, over a roof surrounded by wings and spirals. The Arabic symbol, she explained to her partner Jessica from Switzerland, was a symbol that she held dear to her heart and hoped to one day get a tattoo of on her body. The roof represented the protection given to her at a time when she was very sick in the past, and the spirals were drawings she did regularly while studying English in New York and, furthermore, reminded her of a happy time in her life living closely with friends. Finally students were asked to write the first draft of a short autobiography about an experience in their life that helped form their identity.

Critical Reflection Introduction

Considering that a large part of my curriculum revolves around reflection, I thought it would be beneficial to spend some more time thinking and working on helping students develop some skills that would allow them to reflect more critically. Hatton & Smith (1995) made a scale that shows four different levels on reflection:
**Table 2. The Four Operational Aspects of Reflection.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Descriptive Reflection</th>
<th>Dialogic Reflection</th>
<th>Critical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rote reporting of facts, simplistic descriptions of events and literature, no discussions beyond descriptions</strong></td>
<td>Limited justification, consideration of alternative viewpoints, reflection based on personal perspectives or rationales, recognition of multiple factors</td>
<td>“Stepping back” from events and actions, different levels of discourse with self, events, and actions, use of judgments and possible alternatives for explaining and hypothesizing, reflection is analytical or integrative, linking different factors and perspectives</td>
<td>Awareness of multiple perspectives, historical, and socio-political contexts, logical interpretations of events and actions based on theory and practice, argument evaluation of personal and external factors and perspectives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 2 delineates and categorizes the four operational aspects of reflection according to Hatton & Smith (1995). Since the SEALL curriculum relies heavily on student reflections, this rubric set a standard by which to assess student responses at different phases of the implementation.

Through no fault of their own, most students’ reflections, according to the Hatton & Smith Scale (1995) fell under the descriptive reflection category or, just merely descriptive writing. In a first attempt to help students take steps towards reflecting critically (without yet having seen this rubric), students, working in pairs, were asked to read and review a reflection; each group had a different one, written by past students. Students were mainly asked to review the reflections for writing mechanics - as a means to motivate them to write more academically - as well as
their opinions on what aspects they liked or disliked about the reflection they read. Based on their responses, we then, as a class, discussed what made a good reflection. Students said that the aspects that made for a good reflection were things like: honesty, personal, description, and support for opinions.

Given this experience, I revised the activity to include time for students to read and respond to Hatton & Smith’s reflection scale and determine why reflecting critically is important. Students looked at some models of critical reflections and attempted to critically reflect on a recent subject. Students then assessed their partners’ reflections based on Hatton & Smith’s scale. Finally, students shared their assessments as a class and why they categorized responses as they did.
VII. Evaluation of Scaffolding Experiences for Authentic Language Learning

Introduction

The guiding purpose behind the SEALL curriculum was to capitalize on the diversity of cultures present within my classroom, an English as an Associate Language (EAL) setting, as well as develop an educational way to utilize the desire of my students - in the more unique setting of an American language school - to interact with local native speakers. Instituting this idea into a curriculum took on a variety of tasks, including formulating relevant goals, identifying data collection sources and determining the evaluation methods to assess learner outcomes. I used a variety of sources to collect data including, International Language School (ILS) level tests, teacher observations, and student writing. Each of these sources gave valuable information to evaluate my three goals, although not every source was used to evaluate every goal. Table 3 gives a breakdown of which sources were used to evaluate each goal of SEALL.
### Table 3. Goals of SEALL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals of SEALL</th>
<th>ILS Level Tests</th>
<th>Teacher Observations</th>
<th>Student Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal #1: Students increase English fluency</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal #2: Students better understand their own cultural identity</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal #3: Students learn more about American culture</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Research Study Limitations

One of the major limitations of this study was the high number of absences throughout the six-week course as well as the transient nature of International Language School. ILS enrolls student for intake every week of the year, allowing students to arrive on any given Monday to stay from two to 52 weeks. The ongoing enrollment allows students the freedom to personalize their trip to fit their individual needs; however, every course has to be ready to accommodate arriving and departing students each week.

Fortunately, during my last implementation only one student departed early during the duration of the six-week course and only one student arrived late – three weeks after the start of the course. Unfortunately, the data from both students was
not used to elicit research findings. Although the SEALL curriculum was designed and prepared for this situation, including the late arrival of students, this particular student did not take part in each phase of the curriculum, and so the data would not be relevant.

**Data Collection Strategies**

I collected data from a variety of sources over three phases of the SEALL curriculum, in addition to a pre and post level test given by ILS. The first phase involved student writing in the form of a pre-implementation autobiography and an e-mail message to a friend. During the second phase, I collected data from student writing in the form of critical reflections. In the last phase, students wrote a post-implementation autobiography. Teacher observations were included throughout every phase of the implementation.

**ILS Level Tests**

ILS level tests are given to every student enrolled at ILS and are taken online through the ILS Efekta system. The test assesses language level and describes language ability (EF, 2011). There are four main sections of the test, including speaking, listening, reading and writing, each broken up into smaller components. Students are ranked in six categories from Beginner to Upper Advanced on results based on the results of their level tests.

**Student Writing**

There were three sources of student writing, including pre and post
autobiographies, reflections, and a pre and post e-mail to a friend. The pre-autobiography asked students to write about an experience from their past that made them into the person they were presently, while the post-autobiography asked students to relate that experience to something they learned while interacting with native speakers. The reflection activity gave students time to write about the interactions with native speakers. Not only did students elaborate about what they learned during the activities, they also evaluated the activities and made suggestions for changes. For example, during classroom discussions after reflection assignments were written, the majority of students stated that the interview activity was too formal and slightly intimidating. Some students commented that it was difficult to elicit detailed responses from the American participants. During classroom discussion, one student suggested more community building exercises before interviews would make it easier to speak to the Americans, and the majority of students agreed. Another student wanted to alter some of the questions used to conduct the interview to make them more personal. The student felt the interviews were more productive, meaning she learned more about the individual and a more in-depth response was given, when the questions were more personal. The e-mail to a friend assignment allowed students to write to a friend from their home country (students were not required to send the email) discussing different elements of their trip and arrival into America. Students wrote about their expectations and initial differences they noticed between American lifestyle and lifestyles back in their own country.
Examining the Data

In order to help determine whether the goals of the SEALL curriculum were met, a rubric was created to help organize, quantify, and analyze data from three of the four data collection sources, including teacher observations and student writing. Each goal had its own evaluation rubric showing how each goal was analyzed. The rubric is shown under each goal in Table 4, 7, and 9.

Goal #1: Students Increase English Fluency

One goal for students at ILS is the desire to increase English fluency. Congruent to this, ILS states language acquisition and fluency as one part of their mission and commitment to students, while I found through teacher observations that the all of my students expressed the same goal during the preparation stage.

Finding #1: The Majority of Students Made Limited Increases in English Fluency

The data collection methods used to determine this finding came from the ILS level tests, teacher observations, and student writing, although the only data that was quantified was the teacher observations. There was an insufficient amount of data from student writing in order to quantify it. Table 5 gives a breakdown of each student and their scores from the evaluation rubric as well as whether they passed or failed the ILS level test, while Table 4 shows the rubric used to assess this goal.
Table 4. Evaluation Rubric – Goal #1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Rubric</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal #1: Students increase English fluency</td>
<td>Student demonstrated substantial increase in English fluency.</td>
<td>Student demonstrated moderate or some increase in English fluency.</td>
<td>Student did not demonstrate any increase in English fluency.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The evaluation rubric in Table 4 provides a gauge to assess the possible levels of increase, or lack thereof, in English fluency throughout the six-week course. A score of zero indicates that there is no observable change in fluency while a score of two indicates a substantial observable change in fluency.
Table 5. Student Scores - English Fluency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Level Test</th>
<th>Teacher Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The most substantial data shown in Table 5 that determines a moderate increase in English fluency comes from the ILS level tests. As the table shows, 81% of students passed the level test allowing them to move to the next term within their ILS level. This number clearly indicates the large majority of students made enough improvement in English fluency from the beginning of the course to the end to pass a test specifically designed to gauge improvement in English fluency.

The teacher observations provided less conclusive data; as Table 4 shows only 45% actually made moderate improvements in English fluency as determined by teacher observations. Although some students made improvements, there was no identifiable change in English fluency for the majority of students.

Student Work

One of the students who showed moderate improvement in English fluency as determined by teacher observations was Student 11, whom I'll call Henry. Although Henry’s level of English proficiency was in the intermediate level, he made noticeable errors in grammar and vocabulary when speaking to peers, in front of the class, or directly to the teacher. He often misused words and subject-verb agreement was not always accurate. He did, however, show proficiency with pronouns and articles, an area in which many other EAL students in the class struggled. During discussion at the end of the course, Henry was speaking at a higher level of English fluency. Not only was his pronoun and article usage still proficient, but he also made fewer mistakes with subject-verb agreement and was using words more accurately.
Although there was a noticeable improvement in English fluency seen through teacher observations of Henry's speaking, there was not any noticeable change in English fluency seen in his written work. All of the data collected for Henry’s written work did not show enough change to substantiate moderate or significant improvement. Henry’s written work contained fewer errors with grammar and vocabulary than his spoken responses during interviews, but the same level was seen in his written work at then end of the course.

**Table 6. Student Writing Sample - Henry**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>“Everything in a life helps to build a person, but as I don’t remember a lot of my childhood, this is the most profitable experience that I had.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>“I think that most students are not really aware of what’s going on in the world. For instance, a girl asked me if we had cell phones in Belgium.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 shows the lack of change in Henry’s writing samples from week 1 of SEALL through week six. As was the case in the rest of Henry’s writing samples, there is no significant change in English fluency found in his work, although he demonstrates a solid command of writing conventions, grammar, usage, and vocabulary at both the start and end of the course.

As a 17-year-old high school student studying from Germany, Henry said that he had been studying English since the elementary level, which meant he had been reading and writing English for almost 10 years. Although Henry had spent a lot of his childhood studying English, he said that he did not have the opportunity to speak
and “use” the language while studying in his home country. According to him, a lot of the activities he completed were in workbooks and textbooks. In his classroom in Germany, Henry had very little time to speak or use his English language skills in real-life settings. Spending a number of years reading and writing without opportunity to speak could account for Henry’s strong writing skills and lack of improvement in that modality, and his ability to improve his speaking skills over the six-week course.

Contrary to the improvement made by Henry, Student 7, I’ll call her Miriam, did not show any noticeable improvement in English fluency as shown by teacher observations or her written work. Miriam stayed at a constant intermediate level throughout the course and did not exhibit any of the changes defined in the evaluation rubric when assessing her work.

Miriam, a 19-year-old college student from Switzerland, was another student who studied English for a number of years back in her native country. Miriam did not elaborate on her English language studies throughout middle and high school, but she did mention some of her studies while at college. Contrary to Henry, Miriam noted that she spent a lot of time speaking in her courses and with friends outside of class. From my understanding, and how Miriam spoke about her English language studies, Miriam used a variety of English language modalities in both her studies and life at college. This factor could not only account for Miriam’s proficient level of English fluency she exhibited throughout the course, but also for her constant level and lack of change over the six-week course.
Limitations

One of the limitations for determining the results of this particular goal was that all the students being examined during the study were completing General English classes at ILS and a variety of other Special Interest (SPIN) classes. *Cross-cultural Communications* was not their only course, so all students were working in other classes with other teachers trying to increase their English fluency level. Because of this limitation, there is no way to tell how much of the change, or lack thereof, they exhibited in English fluency came through the SEALL curriculum or through other classes and other courses.

Another limitation in evaluating this particular goal was the shortage of data from different collection sources. Using teacher observations, levels tests, and student writing samples to evaluate student language development and language proficiency could have been strengthened with one additional collection source. The data sources used, however, did provide enough information to show the different levels of language proficiency of the students and were essential in determining learning outcomes in students for goal #1 of the SEALL curriculum.

**Goal #2: Students Will Increase Their Understanding of Their Cultural Identity**

This goal was part of an attempt to utilize the vast and rich funds of cultural knowledge found within my classroom. Among this particular population, there were ten different countries, each with their own culture represented. This provided
the basis to give students the opportunity to speak about their cultural identity with their international and American peers in a variety of activities.

As part of an idea to consider students as cultural informants, students were only asked about culture during a short questionnaire assignment at the beginning of the course. In all other stages and sources, students were asked to talk about themselves. As Wolcott (1981) suggests, examining individual lifestyle is the best method to examine culture.

Finding #1: Students Showed Some Understanding of Their Cultural Identity

The data collection methods used to determine this finding came from teacher observations and student writing, although only the teacher observations were quantified. Table 8 gives a breakdown of each student and their scores from the evaluation rubric, while Table 7 shows the rubric used to assess this particular goal.

**Table 7. Evaluation Rubric - Goal #2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal #2: Students develop understanding of their own cultural identity</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student comments showed substantial knowledge of their cultural identity.</td>
<td>Student comments showed some knowledge of their cultural identity.</td>
<td>Student comments did not display any knowledge of their cultural identity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The evaluation rubric in Table 7 provides a gauge to assess the levels of understanding students attained of their own cultural identity throughout the six-week course. A score of zero indicates that the student did not display any
observable change in knowledge of their cultural identity while a score of two indicates that the student showed a substantial observable change in their knowledge of their cultural identity.
Table 8. Student Scores - Cultural Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Student Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data shown in Table 8 determines that the majority of students displayed some understanding of their cultural identity. In fact, 73% of students showed knowledge of their cultural identity, with 64% of students showing some knowledge and less than 1% of students showing substantial knowledge of their cultural identity. This means that the majority of students learned about their own personal cultural identity and how it contrasted with American and other international peers.

**Student Work**

The most noticeable examples of change in understanding of cultural identity was seen through teacher observations of Student 1 and 2, two Mexicans twins, whom I’ll call Mia and Joseline. During each of the phases, both students would often verbalize to peers and directly to the teacher some of their keen observations about the differences in their own lifestyle in Mexico and the lifestyle of their American and international peers. For example, Mia often talked about how Mexican lifestyle was very “laid back and calm”. According to Mia, Mexicans worked hard, but they took a lot of time for family, food, and enjoyment. Contrary to this, Mia observed that American lifestyle was more “hectic and work-orientated”. She said that Americans worked all the time, never stopping. She wondered why and how Americans did this, “I don’t understand why they do this life,” she commented. Her sister Joseline shared her opinions about the lifestyle differences between her own life and Americans. Joseline commented that she wasn’t as “serious” as Americans. She didn’t work “so hard” and enjoyed spending more time with her family than
working. By examining their own lives and the lives of American peers, the young women were able to gain some understanding of their own cultural identity, including the different work and family dynamics that they mentioned.

Another student who displayed some substantial knowledge of her cultural identity during the course was student 10 from Chile, whom I’ll call Constanza. One of the first noticeable remarks that Constanza made that came during a discussion about one of the community building activities. The activity, called “Bomb Pond”, allowed Constanza the opportunity to partner with an American peer for an ice-breaker game that was designed to highlight teamwork and trust. Although the activity was short in duration, Constanza felt like she was able to gain a good amount of information about her partner in a short time. She said that her American partner was different from many of her friends at home because of how serious and loud he was. She commented that people from her country were more calm and relaxed, particularly during social settings.

Later on in the course, Constanza made another comparison that showed her knowledge about her cultural identity, except this time it was between herself and a Saudi Arabian classmate. During a group discussion activity reflecting on conversation time with American peers, Constanza spoke to her partner about her religious beliefs. During this time, Constanza was very conscientious about the differences between her religious views and her Saudi Arabian partners and how those views informed her lifestyle and choices. This was seen in her responses during the conversation and how she connected some of her choices, including
social and personal, to her religious belief. In both cases, Constanza was able to examine her partners views compared to her own, and relate that information to how she saw herself and her cultural identity.

Limitations

Similar to the other findings, another limitation in the evaluation of this goal was that all the students being examined during the study were completing General English classes at ILS and a variety of other Special Interest (SPIN) classes. Cross-cultural Communications was not the only course students were completing, so students had a lot of other opportunity to learn more about their cultural identity. Since students were living in the United States, they had a lot of opportunity to explore, interact, and learn from Americans and people outside of the classroom.

Goal #3: Students will learn about American Culture

This particular goal of the SEALL curriculum was established in an attempt to fulfill the desire to learn more about American Culture that many students emphasized at the beginning of the course. Similar to Goal #2, students would examine individual lifestyle as a method to examine culture (Wolcott, 1981). For this goal, however, students would not be completing activities with each other, but instead would be interacting, completing activities, and conversing casually with American peers. During these interactions, the American peers became cultural informants, allowing EAL students to learn about American culture.
Finding #1: The majority of students learned about American Culture

The data collection methods used to determine this finding came from the teacher observations and student writing, although the only data that was quantified was the teacher observations. There was an insufficient amount of data from student writing, in order to quantify it. Table 10 gives a breakdown of each student and their scores from the evaluation rubric, while Table 9 shows the rubric used to assess this goal.

Table 9. Evaluation Rubric - Goal #3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal #3: Students will learn about American culture</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student demonstrated substantial knowledge about American culture.</td>
<td>Student showed some knowledge about American culture.</td>
<td>Student did not display any knowledge on American culture.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10. Student Scores - American Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Teacher Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As the table 6 shows, 73% of students learned about American Culture, as seen through teacher observations. This number was significant because it showed that most students were able learn more about the culture they had traveled from around the world to experience.

Student Work

Watching and recording interactions between students and the native English speakers allowed me the opportunity to observe a large number of comments made by EAL students. During the interactions with native speakers, students exhibited all the new information they had learned about American culture. Between these interactions, and teacher observations of students conversations with each other and directly with the teacher, there were a number of comments that expressed a new understanding of American culture. Some of these comments included:

1. I didn't know the clubs were so full.
2. Americans eat larger plates of food.
3. Lots of people work many jobs.
4. People are kinder and easier than I thought.
5. People are always trying to help you.
6. Americans are tolerant and passion for other cultures and people.
7. The biggest difference between us is responsibility.

Many of the comments expressed by students show a new understanding of the people, food, and lifestyle found in American culture. Comments like these are scattered throughout the writing assignments students were required to complete during the SEALL curriculum, and highlight the change in understanding and gain in knowledge about American culture students acquired throughout the course.

Another example that shows an increase in understanding and knowledge about American culture came from some samples of written work by student 9, whom I’ll call Abdul. Specifically, this change was noted through two assignments that were completed at the beginning and end of the course, E-mail to a Friend #1, and E-mail to a Friend #2. Table 8 shows some quotations from Abdul’s two assignments.

### Table 11. Student Writing Sample - Abdul

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>“The people so nice and friendly and they like to help.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>“The most important thing about how to deal with American people is: Don’t lie to them and be honest or you will lose the credibility.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The difference in understanding found in Abdul’s writing between week 1 and week 6 of the SEALL curriculum shows the change in his understanding of American people. The first comment displays a more superficial understanding of Americans and their behavior. Abdul finds people to be kind, friendly, and helpful. In
the second comment Abdul determines that the kind, friendly, and helpful behavior exhibited in Americans is conditional. He says that you need to be honest with Americans or you will lose credibility or trust from Americans. This data highlights the complexity in thinking in Abdul's understanding of Americans and their culture. Through study, interactions with native speakers and reflection, Abdul has gone past the surface level observations of American culture to make a statement that shows a higher level of understanding about Americans and their culture. This sample provides a good example of one student learning more about the Americans and the culture that he discovered over a six-week course designed to just that: increase knowledge of American culture.

Limitations

One limitation in evaluating this particular goal was the lack of data collection sources. Teacher observations were the only collection source for all the students, while student-writing samples were used to determine learning outcomes for only one student. Although these collection sources provided a way to determine results, examining data through additional collection would reinforce and solidify learning outcomes. Although additional data sources would have been useful to reinforce assessment of learning outcomes, teacher observations and student writing showed student knowledge of American culture throughout the course.

Similar to the other findings, another limitation in the evaluation of this goal was that all the students being examined during the study were completing General English classes at ILS and a variety of other Special Interest (SPIN) classes. Cross-
cultural Communications was not the only course students were completing, so students had a lot of other opportunity to learn more about American culture. One aspect of enrolling at ILS was that students were then able to join a variety of clubs, travel activities, and community events. Most of the clubs, activities, and events were centered on helping students learn more about San Diego and American culture. The program certainly could have had a large effect on the overall change in knowledge of American culture throughout the six weeks they were taking part in the SEALL curriculum.
VIII. Conclusion

“To be happy, your work must fulfill three universal psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness.” – Edward Deci 2013

There was one significant statement made by a student in my class that kept echoing through my head a few weeks before the ideas behind my curriculum project, Scaffolding Experiences for Authentic Language Learning, began to take shape: “I have flown to America to learn about it, but I am on a campus with other foreign people.” This simple comment was supported by another student a few days later, whose remark highlighted the learning and language side of the issue, “It’s hard for me to learn English with my friends; they also speak bad English.” Both complaints are not uncommon today within the typical Teachers of English to Speakers of other Languages (TESOL) educational model found in the United States. There are classrooms full of English as Associate Language students, like my own, who spend their days learning and conversing with EAL peers of the same English fluency level. After identifying the need, with free reign to make changes in my classroom, I decided I needed to address the complaints of my students.

The questions I faced were fairly clear: how do I expose students to the American culture they traveled to experience, and how do I give them an opportunity to speak with native speakers? My answer came in a late night fit of passion to help others: volunteer work! I discovered a local organization that ran a program called Project New Start. The program was looking for people to mentor under-privileged, low socio-economic, “troubled” youth in the community. Perfect!
It took time and coordination to transform a mentor program into a mutually beneficial learning environment serving local youth and an international classroom, but SEALL was born, and my students were now able to interact with native speakers with rich American cultural backgrounds.

From my earliest days growing up as a student, I hardly ever enjoyed school. Like many other students, I didn’t pay much attention, and my imagination was rampant. In high school, my interest in academic studies continued to wane except when I was given opportunity to make choices in what I was studying and reading. I thoroughly enjoyed learning about topics I was interested in outside of school where I had more freedom to choose. I always thought something was wrong with the system, not with me. Finally, in college when I made it to the latter years of undergraduate school, I had choice in my classes, and structured choice within those classrooms. In this more autonomous environment, I excelled academically and relished my experiences in the classroom. These are some of the factors that led me to create a curriculum project centered on autonomy and authenticity, and these elements were part of why I believed the SEALL curriculum needed to happen. I wanted to give my students the opportunity to take an active role in their own education while tapping into their own personal interests as well as their desires to experience a rich new culture.

Taking into account my personal educational experience, Deci’s (1995) call for autonomy - the power and freedom to direct one’s will and actions – within the classroom as a means to maintain and increase intrinsic motivation became an
integral aspect of the SEALL curriculum. Its embedment in the curriculum served as a core element to help provide more ownership of the course and its outcome to the students. It also became a catalyst in pushing students to take a broader outlook at reflection, a key aspect of the SEALL curriculum’s mutually beneficial environment. Part of reflecting critically, according to Hatton & Smith (1995), entails the evaluation of personal and external factors and perspectives, including one’s own. By having choice in topics and activities, students were encouraged to consider their own perspective while reflecting on the experiences in the classroom with their peers and with native speakers.

Lending autonomy and authenticity to the SEALL curriculum allowed students the opportunity to tap into their cultural funds of knowledge. Discussions surrounding their own lives and their own interests – with choice serving to push context and motivation – gave students the opportunity to explore themselves and others as cultural informants (Wolcott, 1981). After initial adjustments were made and some scaffolding was implanted into the curriculum, EAL students worked well within an environment that allowed them to learn more about themselves, each other, and their American peers. Stepping outside of decontextualized material and contrived dialogues found in textbooks throughout traditional ESL classrooms (Boxer & Pickering, 1995) including ILS, gave students opportunity to navigate real-world and authentic interactions (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 2005); the majority of students were able to become more aware of cultural identity while building knowledge about American culture in a fresh, exciting, and fruitful way.
In pursuit of increasing cultural awareness among EAL students, one of the most unique elements – and enjoyable for many of the students – found within the SEALL curriculum was the allotted time given for casual conversations between EAL students and native speakers. Discussion and conversations allowed students to increase cultural awareness while attaining stylistic adaptability causing better management, delivery, and control during English usage (Richards & Renandya, 2002). This crucial element brought more than just an attainment of one of the primary goals of SEALL, that is, to increase English fluency in EAL students. It also brought connection and community to local, impoverished San Diego young adults.

Fulfilling an organizational goal of personal growth and networking building (METRO, 2010), Project New Start opened its doors to international students from all over the world and allowed their own participants to learn about countries, places, and people they never even knew existed. Although not always simple, the compassion and genuineness shown in the exchanges between these two groups showed that real connections could be made between diverse groups, and was one of the best reasons why implementing this project was so meaningful for me.
Appendix: Scaffolding Experiences for Authentic Language Learning

The appendix section of the SEALL curriculum provides all the handouts and worksheets that correspond to all the activities used throughout the six-week course. The activities and assignments were used over three phases of SEALL:

**Preparation Phase**

1. Autobiography #1
2. Email to a Friend #1

**Interaction & Reflection Stage:**

1. Reflections #1-#5

**Conclusion Stage:**

1. Prompts Assignment
2. Brain Scan
**Autobiography #1**

Please write a brief autobiography about one or two major experiences throughout your lifetime that have helped make you the person you are today. Here are some questions to help you to think about things to write about:

1) What are some of your early memories as a child that are particularly clear or vivid still today?

2) What images, sights, sounds, and moments do you remember about each major experience?

3) How did you get there? What were you thinking before and during the experience?

4) What was strange, unusual, or different about these particular experiences?

5) What kind of things did you learn about yourself?

6) Did you meet anyone that stuck with you, that influenced you?

7) How did these experiences change you?
**Autobiography #2**

autobiography |ˌəʊtəˈbɪərəˈɡɒfɪ|noun (pl. -phies) an account of a person’s life written by that person.

Please write a brief autobiography about one major experiences from this trip to the U.S. and one experience from this class that have made an impact on you. Here are some questions to help you to think about things to write about:

1) What images, sights, sounds, and moments do you remember about each major experience?

2) How did you get there? What were you thinking before and during the experience?

3) What was strange, unusual, or different about these particular experience?
**E-mail to a friend #1**

Please write an e-mail (you don't actually have to send it) to a friend from your home country. Please use the following questions to help guide the content of your e-mail:

1) What were some of your thoughts before arriving and while traveling to the U.S.? What were your expectations about the people, the food, and the geography? What were your expectations about California?

2) What were some of the first things you noticed about the country when arriving? What was different than you imagined?

3) Have you met a lot of American people? Any interesting American people? Talk about one or two people you've met that are interesting and tell why you think they're interesting.

4) Tell your friend what is different here from your home country. How are the people different? What is strikingly different about the way of life (daily life, work, school, relationships, food/restaurants, cars, people, mannerisms, religion, parties, etc.) compared to your home?

5) What else do you want to do or experience while in America?
E-mail to a Friend #2

Please write an e-mail (you don’t actually have to send it) to a friend from your home country. Please use the following questions to help guide the content of your e-mail:

1) How do you feel about the U.S. now that you have been here for so long? How do you feel about the people, the food, and the geography? How about California?

2) What was the biggest surprise about living here?

3) Tell your friend about American people – give them some advice with how to talk, interact, and learn more about Americans if they were to come here.

4) What are some final impressions about the way of life (daily life, work, school, relationships, food/restaurants, cars, people, mannerisms, religion, parties, etc.)?

5) Are there any other places you want to go in the U.S., or are you ready to go home?
Reflection Assignment #1

Please write some reflections – thoughts and considerations about something that already happened – about our first interaction with members of the METRO – Project New Start – program.

1) What were your thoughts before meeting with METRO students? Were you nervous? Excited? Why?

2) What does impression mean? What were your first impressions about the METRO students?

3) Did you keep your first impressions after speaking with the students, or did your impressions change?

3) How was the overall experience meeting and talking with METRO members? Why? How did you feel? Were you comfortable?

4) We did a few activities: “I have...” (we sat in a circle and switched places when one person said something they've done), “Silent Communication” (finding out birthday and shoe size without talking), “Back to back”: (with a partner you found out three things about them). Were these activities hard or easy for you to understand and complete? Why?

5) Which activity did you like or dislike, why?

6) Which activity did you learn most about your classmates and METRO students?

7) If you could change anything about the activities, what would it be and why?
Reflection Assignment #2

Please write some reflections – thoughts and considerations about something that already happened – about our first interaction with members of the CHANGE program.

1) How was the overall experience meeting and talking with CHANGE members? How did you feel? Were you nervous? Were you comfortable?

2) What were your first impressions about the CHANGE members? Did you keep your first impressions after speaking with them, or did your impressions change?

3) What did you think of the activity, leading a blindfolded partner through a “bomb-filled pond”? What was your role in the activity? Was it difficult or easy?
Reflection Assignment #3

Please answer some of the following questions about the trip to METRO last week and your experience interviewing some the CHANGE students:

1. What were your general feelings and thoughts about the (although brief) interview?
2. Were you able to understand and easily converse with the CHANGE students? If not, what made it difficult to understand them?
3. What did you learn about the student’s customs, habits, or personality?
4. Do you think this interview was beneficial, why or why not?
5. How was it speaking within the setting of the METRO center? Was it comfortable? Did it change how you conducted our interview?
6. Besides time limits, were you able to accomplish your goal of getting a response about culture from the CHANGE students? Is there anything you could have done to make this easier on the students?
7. Do you think there was a better way to conduct these interviews? In other words, if you had to go back and do it again, what would you do differently?
8. Were you able to understand the tone of the CHANGE students? In other words, did you know when they were joking? Did you know when they were serious?
9. What did you think of your interviewee in general? How did your perceptions change about him or her after or during the interview?

What did you think about how the CHANGE students spoke? Did it seem like they were speaking “normal” English?
Reflection Assignment #4

Please write some reflections – thoughts and considerations about something that already happened – about the last interaction with members of the METRO program.

1) What were your overall feeling and thoughts about the “Over the Line” activity? Did you enjoy the activity? Why or why not?

2) What are some of the things you learned about your peers or METRO students or teachers? Were you able to understand each other?

3) Please elaborate on one of the ways you shared. If you did not share, please write about one of the prompts. For example, some of the prompts were: “Have you ever cried for joy”, “Have you ever felt take advantage of”, “Have you ever done something bad to someone and not apologized”, “Have you ever not tried your best at something”

4) Were you able to understand what the teacher (Dahan) was saying? Was it easy or difficult for you? Why?

5) If you could change the activity, how would you change it and why?

6) Do you have any other comments, suggestions, or questions about your experience and our next trip to the METRO site??
**Reflection Assignment #5**

Please respond to the following questions in your best academic writing:

1) How was this interaction with the METRO students compared to your first reaction? What was different? What was better or worse? How did you feel this time prior to the interaction? How do you feel after?

2) This interaction was more unplanned, what exactly did you talk about? What did you learn about your partners?

3) What did you like or dislike about interacting with students this time? Did you like that the interaction was less planned (meaning you weren’t totally prepared to interview) or did it make it more difficult? What would you change about the interaction?

4) After having another conversation with METRO students, what would you like to talk about in the future? What would make this interaction better for you personally?
Supplementary Culture, Art & Music Assignment

1. Do you like doing cultural-related things – like going to museums?
2. How many times do you go to the museum a year? If none, is there one museum you would like to go to?
3. Do you often go to concerts? What was the last one you went to? If not, what concert would you like to see? Why?
4. What is your favorite band or singer?
5. What other kinds of music do you like?
6. Do you like urban art?
7. What do you think qualifies as music or the arts? Does something need to be professionally made?
8. Can you be an artist just by being famous
9. Do you like street art?
10. What do you think is the best part of being an artist?
11. Do you like theatre? Why or why not
12. Are you interested in the history of the arts?
Prompts Assignment

1) General Food & Meals:
   a. What types of food do you usually eat?
   b. Do you like food and what’s your favorite food?
   c. Do you eat fast or slow? Why do you think that is?
   d. Do you eat three meals a day – breakfast, lunch, and dinner?
   e. Do you often eat with family or friends?
   f. Do your friends or family have a meal you like to share together?

   EF Student  
   METRO Student

2) Fast food:
   a. Do you like fast food?
   b. How often do you eat fast food? Once a year? Once a day?
   c. Do you think fast food is good or bad for you?
   d. Do you think fast food should be banned from kids for health reasons?

   EF Student  
   METRO Student

Brain Scan
Please write down all the things you learned and enjoyed experiencing in this class:

1) Urban Metro students – conversations and interactions

2) Autobiographies and letters to a friend

3) Personal Reflection writing
REFERENCES


