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The Use of Authentic Materials in the K-12 French Program

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Introduction

Foreign language learning has become extremely important in an increasingly global world to facilitate communication between communities of different cultures and languages. Learning a language and its culture through the use of authentic materials allows students to develop their communicative ability in a meaningful context and to gain cultural awareness that will help them to function in the target culture. Authentic resources such as literature, music, films, newspapers, and advertisements help the foreign language teacher create an environment for meaningful language practice that parallels language used in the target culture.

Despite differing opinions on the definition of an authentic resource, researchers underline the importance of studying the language and culture in a natural or natural-like context. Authentic materials are therefore important in the K-12 foreign language classroom because they allow the student to experience the target culture and language as it is used in real life and through the eyes of a native speaker.

Review of Literature

The use of authentic materials in instruction can have considerable positive effects on foreign language learners. Studies show that oral language development improves through practice using authentic materials (Duquette, Dunnett, and Papalia, 1987; Allen, Bernhardt, Berry, and Demel, 1988). Authentic materials can also increase reading development by introducing students to new vocabulary and expressions (Dodds, 1997; Abrate, 1988). Authentic audio and video can aid students' listening comprehension (Bacon and Finneman, 1990). Allen, et al. (1988) maintain that the strategies students develop in deciphering authentic texts can help them develop writing proficiency in the target language.

Aside from the linguistic advantages of using authentic materials in teaching and learning a foreign language, there are further advantages, such as increased cultural knowledge as students are able to compare cultures which can lead to a greater appreciation of other cultures, and dispel stereotypes (Rogers & Medley, 1988). Students gain not only increased language ability and cultural knowledge, but research indicates that some students are more motivated to learn a foreign language when authentic materials are an integral part of the curriculum (Bacon & Finneman, 1990; Kienbaum, 1986).

Authentic materials are a crucial factor to consider as teachers align their instruction with the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (1996) and the *Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners* (1998). The *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* outline what students should know and be able to do in foreign language learning and the *ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners* are national guidelines that measure a student's performance in a foreign language.

Authentic materials can be useful at any level of language instruction in grades K-12, but it is essential to design purposeful tasks and activities that lead to language development (Rogers & Medley, 1988). Activities should be planned to guide students through the language process for a variety of purposes. Pre-listening/reading activities, reading/listening activities, and post-reading/listening tasks give students background information to prepare them to read, view, or hear the authentic resource, provide them with activities to aid in their comprehension while working with the material, and also give them opportunities to reflect on the material (Kienbaum, 1986; Rogers & Medley, 1988).

Although researchers acknowledge the importance and advantages of the use of authentic materials in the foreign language classroom, research also indicates that in addition to concerns about students' ability to handle authentic materials, teachers experience have challenges regarding access to authentic materials, the expense to purchase them, and the time required to locate materials (Knox, 1983; Mariet, 1985). However, the benefits that authentic materials bring to the foreign language classroom greatly outweigh the challenges, and well merit the extra time and effort required of foreign language teachers.

The purpose of this study is to examine 1) specific criteria K-12 French teachers use to select authentic materials as well as the types of resources they select, and 2) strategies they use to incorporate these materials in their planning and delivery of instruction to increase students' cultural awareness and communicative language ability.

Methodology

The researcher conducted interviews with eight French teachers during the months of October and November 2004 in order to determine how teachers select authentic materials, and the methods they use to integrate authentic materials into instruction. The participants currently teach in elementary, middle, and high schools in a school district in the Southeastern United States and were randomly chosen for the study. The three elementary school teachers teach French in grades 3-5. One of the elementary school French specialists also teaches high school Advanced Placement French. Two middle school teachers in grades 6-8 were also interviewed. Three high school teachers participated in the study: one teaches French I-IV, one teaches French I, and the third teaches levels I-V. The same fourteen questions were posed to each of the teachers during the interview, and the information collected was reviewed in order to identify the criteria teachers use to select and evaluate authentic materials as well as the teaching strategies they employ to increase students' cultural and communicative language ability.

Analysis of Data and Discussion

All of the teachers interviewed responded that they feel authentic materials are extremely important in foreign language instruction, and the researcher found that they use authentic materials either as a supplement to or as a basis for their instruction. Although the teachers stated that they use many diverse authentic materials and resources, many of them did not articulate how they plan instruction that incorporates the materials and follows the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* and the *ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners*. This study also revealed that five of the eight teachers interviewed do not routinely use authentic materials in assessment. This is contrary to research that indicates that authentic materials can be a useful tool to help foreign language teachers measure students' performance in a foreign language according to the *Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners* (ACTFL, 1998).

Teachers gave varied responses about the definition of authentic materials; however, all agreed that authentic representation of a target culture and natural or natural-

like language are important features. Teachers also reported using a variety of materials from each of the given categories of literature, multimedia, réalia, and "other". The most widely-used materials reported by the teachers were poetry, fairy tales/legends/folktales, menus, advertisements, films, and art. The least frequently used materials they noted were television programs, novels, radio, and biographies and autobiographies.

The foreign language teachers in this study locate and select materials in various ways, but six of the eight teachers look to textbooks and state and local curriculum for assistance. The other primary influences cited by teachers are their own personal interest and experiences, age appropriateness, and current events. This study revealed that most of the teachers locate the materials on their own. For example, most of the teachers interviewed reported using the Internet, and study or travel abroad as key resources to acquire authentic materials.

All eight teachers agreed that the level of language, appropriate representation of the target culture, inclusion of Francophone cultural themes, relevance to students' lives and interests, and the length of selection are important criteria. Seven of the eight teachers thought that relevance to curriculum was also important. This careful consideration to selection criteria shows that teachers recognize the importance of choosing appropriate materials.

The researcher found that the teachers interviewed integrate a wide variety of authentic materials in the foreign language program, yet many of them do not use the materials to maximize language development. This could be due in part to the problems teachers cited in finding the materials, including as time, cost, and difficulty involved in their selection. These concerns have all been acknowledged by Knox (1983) and Mariet (1985).

Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are all important elements of foreign language learning. The researcher found that teachers use authentic materials for listening, speaking, and reading tasks. However, the researcher also noticed that many of the teachers do not use authentic resources to develop students' writing proficiency as suggested by Dodds (1997) and Allen, et al. (1988). The researcher learned that all of the teachers who were interviewed use authentic visuals and réalia in a variety of ways which follow the goals outlined in both the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (ACTFL,

1996) and the *ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners* (ACTFL, 1998). The researcher found that authentic audio materials are perhaps being underutilized by teachers because they are not being used to develop students' cultural knowledge and vocabulary.

The teachers offered many ideas and suggestions for the use of authentic resources in the classroom, but the researcher determined that many of them did not explicitly align their instruction and use of the materials with the goals of the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* or the *ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners*. Although many teachers use these different materials, they still struggle with how to effectively plan their instruction to take advantage of the linguistic and cultural opportunities presented by authentic materials.

Conclusion

Both the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (ACTFL, 1996) and the *Performance Guidelines* (ACTFL, 1998) outline the need to develop students' communicative ability and their cultural awareness. Research demonstrates the effectiveness of authentic materials in achieving this goal. French teachers should strive to plan instruction that combines authentic materials and meaningful activities in order to create an authentic environment in which students can learn and develop their language proficiency and cultural knowledge.

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Surveying Students: What Classroom Styles They Enjoy and Think Work Best

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School children are highly aware that some teachers are not reaching them. The best teachers are the ones students want to spend all day with. Students learn so much in those classes and enjoy every activity. They know what to expect, and can see every other student in the class doing their best (Fraenkel, 1992). In considering this fairly universal phenomenon in which students see quite clearly how their teachers' style, activities, and personality affect themselves and their classmates, it is amazing how little educational literature reflects what students think about their teachers and classrooms.

Surveying teachers regarding how many students enjoy their class might produce, for a researcher, accurate information about teacher perceptions of student engagement (August, L., Hurtado, S., Wimsatt, L., & Dey, E., 2002). Having an expert in education observe the teacher and classroom might produce equally useful knowledge about observed student engagement. However, it seems evident that simply asking each student what they enjoy and what they find to be helpful, would give the most accurate presentation of how many students are reached, and specifically which aspects of teacher personalities, class styles, and activity choices students find helpful, as well as enjoyable.

Review of Literature

The purpose of this study has been to determine what types of classroom and teaching styles students prefer, and which styles they feel are most effective. By utilizing teaching methods and activities that students see as either interesting, or successful, teachers can further motivate students to do their best in the classroom. Motivators include, but are not limited to, interesting texts, enjoyable activities, connections to the student's lives, use of meaningful skills, and opportunities for cooperation.

While numerous researchers have revealed that students' motivation to complete specific assignments is often based on the assignment itself (Arthur, 1995, Hoover, 1989,

Duckworth & Lind, 1989, August, Hurtado, Wimsatt & Dey, 2002, Gehlbach, 2003) and not wholly on a students' desires to be all-around successful in the classroom, teachers sometimes fail to take advantage of this information.

Anderman & Johnson (1994) and Arthur (1995) showed that students who found interest in current events, and enjoyed current event activities, were then motivated to do better in social studies class. Reading assignments have also motivated students. Creative texts motivated students to read and study more because these materials held their attention longer (Ataya & Kulikowich, 2002). Understanding what the students enjoyed allowed the teacher to connect the information to the students in a more meaningful way by being more selective when making assignments. By making the subject more real and connected to students' lives, oral history projects have been shown to increase participation levels, even in previously unmotivated students (Hoover, 1989).

While research has often focused on what motivates college bound students, there are motivational techniques shown to work well with college bound and non-college bound students. Most important for non-college bound students is the activity level of in-class assignments. These students can be motivated to learn the material, by including knowledge in games or active projects, especially those that incorporate skills they will need to know in other careers later, such as computer use.

All of this research promotes some specific type of classroom activity that has been found to motivate students. By asking students about the activities, researchers (Arthur, 1995, Hoover, 1989, Duckworth & Lind, 1989, August, Hurtado, Wimsatt & Dey, 2002, Gehlbach, 2003) were able in each case to prove that the activities where inherently motivating by design. Not only are these individual activities motivating to students, but in fact there are a great number of activities that motivate students to achieve in classrooms where they are not motivated by the grade they will receive.

The previous research discussed the phenomenon of students being motivated by the type of activities, the way activities related to their lives, and the way they allowed them movement and creativity. With these arguments, it is simple to come to the conclusion that numerous types of activities motivate students. The main idea is that if a teacher can find out what activities motivate their students, they can get students to apply serious effort in their classroom, even from those students who are least motivated to be

successful students overall. While few social studies teachers allow students to spend all year reading creative texts, many do spend the majority of the year lecturing, which may not be the best way to motivate students. The purpose of this study has been to determine what types of classroom and teacher styles students find motivating and effective.

Methodology

This study used student participants in various southeastern high school social studies classes to provide the answers to what teaching methods best motivated them. The researcher provided sixty-six students in high school social studies classes with two brief surveys. Classes were not chosen based on grade level, specific social studies content, or the academic level.

All sixty-six students interpreted the survey questions their own way, producing an accurate data pool of student preferences. Before completing the surveys, students had to have appropriate documents allowing them to participate. The researcher then totaled the answers provided by students in both surveys to categorize what students liked most in a classroom and teaching style and what they felt was most effective in the classroom. The researcher compared these two outcomes to see if students felt the classroom and teaching styles that they either enjoyed most or felt worked best for them were also the styles they felt were best for the entire class.

Results and Conclusions

The purpose of the surveys was to determine which teaching styles students prefer personally, and which they find to be most effective for the entire class. From the data three themes emerged. The first revealed that the students as a group do not have a strong preference for individual activities of a similar nature, for example they do not express a clear preference for debate styled discussions verses open class discussions. Second, students prefer a mixture of activities specifically when one major activity, a lecture for example, leads into a group assignment. Lastly, students are aware of whether the activity they are completing matches the assignment, and prefer those that do.

The analysis procedure revealed not only which individual answers received the most selections by students, but also which pairings. This made it possible to see whether students felt that the most enjoyable choice for them personally (Survey One) was the same or different from what was best for the class (Survey Two). The pairings

consist of a student's selection from Survey One; question one and Survey Two; question one (etc.) which were intentionally different, but nearly identical in overall meaning.

This section of questions involving class discussions reveals the first theme, because it did not ask students how often they enjoyed being part of discussions, but rather what types of discussions they enjoyed most and found most effective. The most common chosen responses involved open class discussions moderated by the instructor, but there was no clear majority. The fact that there was no clear majority reveals that students as a group do not have a shared preference for slightly different activities, but rather, their preferences are in common most when it comes to larger picture questions regarding how the majority of class time is spent. Ultimately, students do not care as a group how class discussion happens, but merely that it takes place occasionally.

The second major theme is that students prefer a mixture of activities that include all of the most common in class activities. The first set of questions asked about student's beliefs regarding class lecture practices. 54% selected that they believed it was best for the class if "lectures start the week to give background, but then students do activities." On both surveys students could have also selected an answer that allowed for lectures to take up the majority or minority of class time, but in both cases students selected that they believe lectures should constitute some of the learning time, followed by activities.

The third pairing also reinforces the second theme regarding student preferences for a mixture of activities. 63% of students selected that it is best for the class if "group work is fairly common, so students can learn from each other", however group work should neither be done year round nor never. Here the students did not have the option to choose identical answers from Survey One and Survey Two. What they did do however, was select similar answers which both expressed a strong enjoyment of group activities and a belief that group work is a good way for students to learn.

The third theme involves students' preferences for activities that match the content and assignment. The questions in section three asked students about class or group learning. 56% of students selected that they preferred group work the majority of the time because teamwork allows "teammates (to) split up work into what they (are each) best." Here students expressed a preference for group work, when group work would be the most useful way to complete the assignment. They expressed a desire to work in

groups when an assignment allowed for different students to assume different roles on the team to make use of their talents. Later in topic four, students expressed a similar preference for individual work, when the assignment was clearly explained as an individual assignment. Here students could have selected to do the work in groups, but did not, instead choosing to work individually because doing so better fit the assignment.

The meaningful findings reveal that students are aware that a variety of classroom activities are best for everyone, regardless of the student's individual preferences for more or less of one activity. As in much of the research literature, students expressed a clear connection to what they find enjoyable and what they find works best (Arthur, 1995; Hoover, 1989; Duckworth & Lind, 1989; August, Hurtado, Wimsatt & Dey, 2002; Gehlbach, 2003). Students believe that the activities they enjoy are also the most effective. Further, students are not just motivated by the more unique activities described by Hoover (1989), Duckworth & Lind (1989), and Gehlbach (2003). When properly mixed, students enjoy extremely common class activities like lectures and group projects.

Only sixty-six students participated in the survey process. This number is too small to represent all students, or to even generalize over their local school system. What this research is however, is a window into the minds of a generalized pool of students.

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**Teachers' Perceptions of the Use of Student to Student Interaction
In Social Studies Classrooms**

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Introduction

The use of student to student interaction in the social studies classroom has the potential for educating students far beyond the scope of traditional classroom instruction. Allowing students to work together as a team to find answers, complete assignments, or help each other learn class material better are the main reasons to include student to student activities in class instruction time. This allows students to act together to construct their knowledge of the subject, enables students to gain a deeper understanding of the subject and promotes interest in life-long learning (Cohen, Lotan, Abram, Scarloss, & Schultz, 2002). Using these activities enables teachers to meet the goals of the National Council for the Social Studies, which say that social studies educators should teach students the content knowledge, intellectual skills, and civic values necessary for fulfilling the duties of citizenship in a participatory democracy (NCSS, 2004).

The purpose of this study was to determine if teachers use student to student interactive activities for curriculum enhancement. It was also to determine which activities they use, and if they feel that using student to student learning activities is a valuable utilization of classroom time.

Literature Review

What is the most effective method for working through the standard course of study while assisting students to grow intellectually and gain an understanding of the civic values needed to participate fully as citizens? Using student to student interaction appears to be appropriate and powerful for reaching these goals. Cohen et al. (2002) convey in their report on group learning that "through the creative exchange of ideas, groups can solve problems and construct knowledge beyond the capacity of a single member" (p. 1046). This interplay between students can help every student become more

successful in his or her schoolwork. Fraenkel (1995) reports that effective teachers use small group activities to assist their students in grasping the main concept of the lesson and gain a deeper understanding of the subject. Helping students gain a strong comprehension of the curriculum material should be the goal of all teachers, and using tools that foster such comprehension will help more students achieve that goal. Research has shown that students who work together master material better than those who work independently (Barfield, 2003 and Jenkins, Antil, Wayne, & Vadasy, 2003).

Students' participation in class raises their learning level and ability to solve problems (Reynolds & Nunn, 1997; and Jenkins et al., 2003). Requiring their participation through cooperative student activities is one way to ensure that all students actively participate and achieve the corresponding benefits.

Sullivan and King (1999), Ross et al. (2002), and Smith (1998) note that it is very helpful to spend time teaching students the skills needed for working in groups. Examples of these skills include knowing how to listen to each other, how to deliberate on important points, and how to disagree without arguing or purposely hurting someone's feelings.

The classroom environment is also important to the success of a particular course. Sullivan et al. (1999) report student to student interaction as being a valuable tool with the power to shape the classroom atmosphere in a positive manner. This often leads to fewer conflicts in the classroom. Often problem situations arise because of misunderstandings between students. Since students who work together have an opportunity to learn to understand each other, misunderstandings are minimized, often resulting in a more efficient and successful school year.

According to Cohen et al. (2002) and Jenkins et al. (2003), the use of student to student interaction is a way to create equitable classrooms, where all students have a fair chance to succeed when they make the effort to work toward that goal. Students who are stronger can assist slower students and they in turn learn the material better from having spent time helping the others understand it.

Student participation equals student engagement in the learning process, which is considered valuable by educators. Research has found that student to student interaction

does increase student engagement and participation, which then leads to student success (Cohen et al., 2002; Jenkins et al., 2003; and Sullivan, 1999).

The NCSS recognizes the importance of educating students who are committed to the ideals and values of our democratic life-style and are familiar with the steps of decision-making and problem-solving (NCSS, 2004). Students with these skills and knowledge will be the most capable of shaping the future and sustaining this country. Student to student interactions in the classroom form these skills, providing opportunities to practice debating, decision making, problem solving, and cooperatively reaching goals that positively impact each group member (Smith, 1998). Smith also gives specific examples of valuable classroom group experiences and tells us the use of cooperative learning activities is "probably the most obvious way of extending the learning environment into a community building mode" (1998, p. 3). This community building will have a positive impact on the students as they mature, helping them with inter-personal relationships in many areas of their life.

A final outcome of group work is the empowerment of the individual student. According to Sullivan et al. (1999) and Barfield (2003), students, once empowered by the teacher, take charge and empower each other. Students learn their destiny is in their own hands. This will be invaluable for these students when become adult citizens.

Methodology

This study focused on classroom use of student to student activities. Five high school social studies teachers from urban and suburban high schools in the same small southeastern city/county school system participated in this qualitative study. The teachers were asked to fill out a survey about their use of these activities. The sample included teachers of the various social studies courses. The research participants had at least one year of teaching experience.

During analysis, teachers' names were not used. They were labeled Teacher 1, Teacher 2, et cetera. All collected information will be destroyed after the study and all data will remain confidential.

Results and Conclusions

Analysis consisted of sorting data into categories, looking for repetition in interview answers. After careful scrutiny consistent themes and trends were found.

When four or more of the respondents answered a question in the same way a trend was identified. Analysis of this data produced six trends that detailed teacher use and perceptions of student to student interactive activities in the classroom. The six trends were: actual use of student to student interaction in the classroom, effect on class participation, better student understanding of class information, effect on student to teacher interaction, concerns of time constraints, and enhancement of the classroom.

The first theme that became apparent was actual use of student to student interaction in the classroom. All of the responding teachers said that they do use student to student interaction of some sort in their teaching. While the frequency of use varied widely between the teachers, each of the teachers does use it in some form or another during the school year.

The second theme in this research was class participation. All the teachers responded that using student to student interactive class activities positively affected classroom participation by their students. Three of the teachers said that using inter-student activities required shy or quiet students to speak up when otherwise they would never be heard from. This factor helps even the playing field for students.

The third theme to emerge related to student ability to understand class information better when using student to student activities. In answer to the question, "does student to student interaction have an effect on the students' ability to understand the subject material and related ideas", four of the five teachers felt that it did have a positive effect when used.

The fourth theme was student/teacher interaction. Four of the five teachers said that using student to student interaction positively affects student/teacher interaction, which encourages students to work harder and care more about their learning.

The fifth trend that showed up in analyzing the data from this research was that time constraints and testing requirements do restrict the ability to use student to student activities in class. Four of the teachers overwhelmingly reported that time constraints reduced their ability to include student to student interactive activities in their classrooms.

The last trend identified in the data collected for this survey is that student to student interaction enhances the classroom. There are many ways these activities could enhance the classroom. The surveyed teachers gave the following examples. Teacher

one stated that, "it puts the responsibility of the material on the student and how much they put into it is how much they get out of it", and that it "brings different perspectives to the table." Teacher 5 said that he thinks, "students actually participate and take 'ownership' of their learning."

The respondents to this research survey gave answers similar to what previous research indicated. For the most part these teachers expressed the opinion that including student to student interaction in their classrooms is a valuable choice that has possibilities for greatly increasing student understanding and knowledge of curriculum required information.

Implications from this research are that teachers, even, or especially, novice teachers, should attempt to make a real effort to include student to student interaction in their instruction time, realizing that it is best used purposefully and with structure. The overall positive response to the questions supports the use of student to student activities in the classroom.

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Effective Writing in Secondary English Classrooms

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Introduction

Despite still retaining it's stature as one of the fundamental principles of education, writing seems to have taken a back seat to reading in many language arts classrooms. With fewer opportunities to write, which are often a result of educational reforms based on memorizing facts for end-of-course tests, students are often discouraged and less engaged in the instances they do have. Thomas (2000) expresses a similar concern by saying, "Writing instruction is still viewed by most as a sub-field of English. We must develop it as a thriving field of study among English teachers before we can shift the popular conception of effective writing instruction" (pp. 40-41). The primary purpose of this study is to examine possible correlations between instructional techniques, methods of instruction, and the amount of time spent writing in secondary English classrooms. Thus, the researcher hopes to provide a better understanding of how to encourage effective writing in the classroom.

Review of Literature

According to the National Council of Teachers of English (2004), schools with effective writing policies generally contain similar educational practices. These include finding adequate time for writing each day, ensuring all teachers understand how to help writers, using appropriate strategies to further the writing process, building a community of writers, and establishing a love of writing that encourages continued success.

Atwell (1987) provides seven principles all teachers should know about writing. Writers need the following opportunities to be successful: plenty of time for writing, topics of their own choosing, response from others, mechanics demonstrated in context, adults to model writing for them, opportunities to read, and knowledgeable and responsible teachers. While speaking on the difficulties of writing, Casey and Hemenway (2001) would add risk-taking, tolerating mistakes, and having high

expectations to such a list. Applebee (1981), who believes the majority of student writing is mechanical (i.e. fill-in-the-blank questions, short answer questions, etc.), says that students should be engaged, teachers must accept minimal roles, and writing should emerge naturally from other activities in order to be effective. Reeves (1997) points out that "young writers are often so caught up in learning to write that they may never experience writing to learn, not just to learn about a particular project but to learn about themselves, their values, their experiences, their environment" (p. 38).

Britton (1975) says students should "write as someone with something to say to the world in general" (p. 192). For this idea to be achieved, teachers must find a way to lead students towards something worth writing. Atwell (1987) provides the most common distinction teachers must choose from when deciding which instructional technique will benefit students the most: choice or structure. According to Milner and Milner (2003), teachers should "offer an invitation to writing that is provocative and genuine" and "construct enabling structures that nudge students beyond their starting points" (p. 316).

In a perfect world, students would have a combination of what Casey and Hemenway (2001) call "the anarchy of complete freedom… and the paralysis of mindless structure" (p. 73). It should be the aim of every teacher of English, and teachers of other subjects as well, to incorporate as much writing as they can into their classroom. Students should be bombarded with the opportunity to write, just as they are with the opportunity to read. Just as teachers must be willing to allow their students' exploration of the writing process, they must also allow themselves to discover how best to accommodate each student's journey into the world of writing.

Methodology

This study took place in the classrooms of four cooperating English teachers in a representative United States public high school. A total of 36 hours of classroom observations were recorded of teachers who taught a mixture of Standard, Honors, and AP English classes of tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students. The teachers were identified as teachers A, B, C, and D. During these observations, the researcher carefully monitored the instructional techniques of each teacher. Instructional techniques were divided up into three categories: consequential writing, acquisitional writing, and no writing.

The idea behind developing the terms consequential and acquisitional was inspired by Louise M. Rosenblatt's (1978) *The Reader, the Text, the Poem*. In her text, Rosenblatt describes reading as either aesthetic or efferent. For the purposes of this study, consequential writing occurs only when students are engaged in a significant and meaningful writing experience. Acquisitional writing, on the other hand, consists of writing that lacks personal exploration and is primarily used to acquire knowledge. Furthermore, the researcher observed the different methods of instruction, which consisted of journaling, free writing, letter writing, topical open-ended prompts, specific teacher-directed prompts, note-taking, and worksheets.

Other relevant observations were also noted when applicable, such as a description of the writing assignment, student response to the assignment, student participation in writing, the teacher's role during writing, the overall context and purpose of the lesson, and if the assignment was graded. Once the instructional techniques and methods of instruction had been recorded, the researcher calculated how much time was spent performing consequential writing and acquisitional writing in the classes of the four teachers. This data offered the percentage of class time students spent writing for the combined classes of each teacher, as well as how much of that writing was consequential.

Results

Classroom observations for *teacher A* showed very little writing during each class period. Of the approximately 405 total minutes in the combined classes taught by *teacher A*, students spent only 50 minutes working on written assignments, which is approximately 12% of the time available. More specifically, five of the nine observed classes contained no writing at all and only 18 minutes, or 4% of instructional time, was devoted to consequential writing. Most writing was done as homework, leaving class time for reading, taking notes, and orally discussing the writing process. Of *teacher A's* four class periods containing writing, two included consequential writing, while the other two consisted of acquisitional writing. The consequential writing assignments were specific teacher-directed prompts.

While *teacher A* assigned very little in-class writing, *teacher B's* classroom showed a very different trend. Of the nine observed class periods, six of these consisted of consequential writing. Five were specific teacher-directed prompts (consequential,

formal) while the other was a topical open-ended prompt (consequential, exploratory). Altogether, consequential writing took up 38% of the instructional time; approximately 154 minutes of a possible 405 involved student writing (45%). Unfortunately, teacher B seemed to separate the processes of reading and writing, which seemed to account for the higher percentages of writing during classroom observations.

Unlike each of the first two teachers, *teacher C* was more unpredictable in assigning writing. Of the nine observed class periods, the only commonality was the number three, which was the number of consequential writings, acquisitional writings, and no writings that took place. Like *teacher A*, *teacher C* spent more time on acquisitional writing (two worksheets and one note-taking session) than on consequential writing, although the only true journaling and letter writing assignments were observed in this classroom. Overall, *teacher C* used approximately 84 of the possible 405 minutes for student writing. This calculates out to 21% of the entire class. Acquisitional writing took up 57 of those minutes; 27 minutes were spent on consequential writing, which means students spent 7% of the class working on consequential writing assignments.

Teacher D was the only teacher of the four who consistently allowed students to write in groups. Four of the six class periods where writing occurred involved students working in partners or groups of three. One of the assignments was consequential (topical open-ended prompt) and lasted into the second day, while the other two were both acquisitional worksheets. All together, *teacher D* assigned four consequential writing tasks and two acquisitional tasks. No writing occurred during three class periods. *Teacher D* allowed students to spend time on writing assignments during 131 of the 405 possible minutes (32%). 19% of these classes were spent on consequential writing; three were topical open-ended prompts and the other was free writing.

Discussion

Each of the four observed teachers had very different teaching styles, which led to an assortment of writing assignments. The statistical analyses of this research clearly indicate an overall lack of consequential writing in the classroom. Although approximately 28% of the classes were spent in some form of student writing, students were only engaged in a significant and meaningful writing experience during 17% of the observed English classes. Acquisitional writing assignments made up the other 11%.

The reality is that 83% of class time was devoted to educational endeavors other than the experience of meaningful writing.

Generally speaking, teachers seemed to prefer consequential writing assignments to acquisitional writing assignments, as the 15 to 8 ratio implies. Unfortunately, there were almost as many class periods that contained no writing (13) as there were class periods that contained consequential writing (15). Among the various types of instruction, the most popular were specific teacher-directed prompts, topical open-ended prompts, and worksheets. Students who received choice in their writing assignments were initially engaged more quickly than students who were given specific instructions. As a result of these observations, student choice within a structured environment, namely topical open-ended prompting, seems to be the most ideal situation to focus students on their writing.

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Teaching Styles and Student Preferences: Is There a Mismatch?

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Introduction

Teachers today face a difficult decision when selecting teaching methods for their classrooms. Most educators have an idea of what methods they will utilize from their own experiences and preferences. Recently, emphasis has been placed on using a constructivist approach to teaching. A constructivist approach creates a more student-centered learning environment while a lecture-based teaching style creates a more teacher-centered learning environment. Is this type of teaching style offered to secondary science students? This study attempts to determine the learning preferences of secondary science students and compare those preferences to the teaching styles offered in their classroom.

Review of Literature

Teaching Methods

There is evidence that constructivist approaches to teaching stimulate student achievement. Sadler (2002) compared student achievement in a constructivist college classroom and a direct lecture college classroom. Abbott & Fouts (2003) observed classrooms for the extent of constructivist teaching and compared this to fourth, seventh, and tenth grade level standardized test scores. In their study, Abbott & Fouts (2003) found that constructivism had a significant positive influence on student achievement. Other studies have also indicated a positive effect of constructivist teaching on student achievement; however, constructivist teaching alone is not responsible for increases in student achievement (Wilson et al, 2002; Sadler, 2002).

Student Preferences

Lin (1998) found that when he taught middle school students using a traditional method followed by a constructivist method, 89% of the students preferred the

constructivist method. In addition, Lin (1998) found that 96% of the students had a positive attitude towards constructivist teaching.

Another study found that students prefer a context for learning science that focuses on everyday examples. Choi and Song (1996) surveyed high school juniors to determine their preferred context for learning science concepts. It was found that students preferred to use the problem scenarios relating science to everyday life situations (Choi et al, 1996).

The Gaps Between

Different students have varying preferences toward education. Even with this knowledge of student preferences, however, there are still major discrepancies between student preferences and teacher implementation. August et al. (2002) found that students and professors at the college level agreed on the importance of active learning. Based on survey results, professors indicated that they design interactive classes that include interactive activities and discussion and encourage questions. However, professors and students differed significantly about how often such techniques were actually employed in the classroom (August et al, 2002).

Purpose

This study intends to examine what types of teaching methods are offered to high school science students and to determine if these methods align with student preferences. The null hypotheses for this study are:

1) Teaching methods will not vary significantly between individual teachers.

2) Students will not have methodology preferences for learning scientific concepts.

3) In the event that there are student learning preferences, there will be no discrepancies between what students prefer and the methodologies offered.

Methodology

This study was conducted in the classrooms of four secondary science teachers in a public high school in central North Carolina. These teachers taught biology, anatomy, chemistry and physical science respectively. Each of the teachers was observed for a total of ten hours throughout the duration of the study. The students from the four teachers' classrooms also participated. The school observed was on a block schedule and each observed teacher taught three separate classes. Each class had approximately 25-30

students. The students' ages ranged from 14 to18. Approximately 30 students per teacher participated in the study.

Observations were conducted by the researcher using the Teaching Strategy Observation Differential (Anderson et al, 1974). The TSOD is an instrument that was used to characterize teaching styles according to a teacher-centered/student-centered scale. For each minute of classroom observation, the researcher gave the teacher a numerical score ranging from 1 to 10, 1 being teacher-centered and 10 being student-centered. After ten hours of observations of each teacher were completed, all observation scores were averaged for one mean teaching style score for each teacher. This score was then compared to the student preference scores obtained through the student preferences survey.

The survey used a combination of ranking style questions and Likert scale questions to determine what kinds of learning activities students prefer in science classrooms. These surveys were kept completely anonymous as the students did not write their names on the survey.

In addition to the surveys, two students per teacher were randomly selected to be interviewed by the researcher. These interviews were one-on-one so as not to bias student responses. These interviews were utilized to gain further understanding of student responses and to ensure clarity of the survey.

 A one-sample t-test was used to determine if there were significant differences in student preferences for learning science concepts. A t-test was also used to determine if there was a significant difference among the four teachers based on their respective teaching style scores. Similarly, the t-test was used to compare each teacher's TSOD score to the scores of their students for their preferences for teacher/student-centered class environments.

Results

The data from all the classrooms observed were aggregated to examine differences in preference for teaching methods. Students did not express a strong affinity for lecture or independent study, while preferences for class discussion, group work and lab activities were similarly preferred.

The average TSOD scores were compared among the four teachers participating in the study and a one-sample t-test showed a significant difference between the teaching styles offered by each of these teachers (p=0.000). The teacher's scores were as follows: Teacher 1 (3.47), Teacher 2 (3.59), Teacher 3 (4.03) and Teacher 4 (4.31).

A one-sample t-test showed a significant difference between student preferences for a student-centered or teacher-centered classroom and the teaching styles offered by Teacher 1 (p=0.000). Teacher 1 utilized a more teacher-centered teaching style, while students preferred a more student-centered learning environment. A mismatch was also found between the student preferences and teaching style offered by Teacher 2 (p = 0.000). Students preferred a more student-centered atmosphere while Teacher 2 provided a more teacher-centered teaching style. Although Teacher 3 had a higher overall TSOD Score (4.03) than both Teacher 1 (3.47) and Teacher 2 (3.59), there was a significant difference between student preferences and the teaching style implemented as shown by a one-sample t-test (p=0.000). Although Teacher 4 had the highest overall TSOD rating (4.31), a similar mismatch between student preferences for a student-centered classroom and teacher use of a teacher-centered teaching style occurred (p=0.000).

Discussion

Students did exhibit a significant preference for different teaching methods in the high school science classroom (p<0.05). Therefore, the null hypothesis that students will not have a significant preference for learning scientific concepts is rejected. In this study, students' least preferred methods were lecture and independent study, while lab activities, group work and class discussion were equally preferred in differing class situations. This finding could have been due in part to the social aspects of these types of learning activities. One student commented that they enjoyed lab activities because "we can socialize and learn at the same time." Another student commented that they preferred lab activities "because I get to interact with others and I find it fun."

It is interesting to note that based on the TSOD, lab activities do not always result in a more student-centered score. Teacher 1, who had the lowest score (3.47), implemented a large number of lab activities. These labs, however, were all "cookbook" labs in which all the students followed dictated steps to reach the same ultimate

conclusion. Conversely, Teacher 4, who had the highest score (4.31), did not utilize as many lab activities. This teacher, however, had an extremely high response to student questions, and these questions would often direct the flow of the lesson. By addressing students' curiosity about scientific concepts being covered, this teacher generated a more student-centered classroom. Due to these findings, the null hypothesis that teaching styles would not significantly differ is also rejected.

Teachers must use a variety of different learning activities in order to reach all students. Indeed, students seemed satisfied in class environments that utilized a broad spectrum of teacher-centered to student-centered activities. When asked if they were satisfied in their current classroom environments, students who felt their needs were met made the following statements:

- "This class is very balanced"
- "This teacher uses a little bit of everything"
- "We use different activities in this class"

These findings indicate that students' preferences can be addressed by offering a wide range of learning activities.

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One-on-One Interactions in the English Classroom

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Introduction

It is critical all students feel there presence is important in the classroom. This goal may be accomplished in several ways, but one direct method is to have one-on-one contact between the student and the teacher during class time. Teachers develop their relationships with students differently and may devote varying amounts of their time to one-on-one interactions with students. While time spent with each student may be helpful to the relationship of that specific student and teacher how is this time spent with only one student affecting the rest of the class? Do class periods with higher quantities of one-on-one interactions correspond to a higher attention level from the class, or does the class engagement as a whole suffer? This study looks to answer these questions.

Literature Review

Previous studies by Forsyth, Forbes, Scheitler, and Schwade (1998) and Newby et. al. (2000) have considered the value of content in one-on-one interactions, as well as the significance of how the interaction was perceived by both teacher and student. Kirkpatrick was also concerned with the idea of perceptions and their effect on one-on-one interactions. Through surveys Kirkpatrick found that teachers believe that student/teacher relationships are an integral part of the learning process. However, "there were several teachers that made additional comments on the surveys that addressed many instances of students learning more from teachers that they did not like," (44). It is interesting the teachers would make a special note of mentioning that likeability is not essential to the success of the relationship. What is important to students is that some sort of relationship exists. A certain level of respect is necessary but friendliness is not critical to academic success.

Wubbels (1995) study broaches the subject of how teacher behavior influences the classroom on the whole – not just the interpersonal-relationships between teacher and student. In terms of classrooms without "deviancy," the classroom management technique of teachers that was most effective was to demonstrate "withitness (the teacher demonstrates that he or she knows what is going on) and overlapping (the teacher is able to attend to two issues simultaneously)," (6). This would suggest that one-on-one interactions may at times come at a cost to classroom control if the interaction lasted long enough for the teacher to lose the opportunity to simultaneously monitor the other students.

Researchers varied on the importance of proximity between teacher and student. Morris found that "teaching in close proximity to students is not necessary to have high levels of student participation," (79). Proximity and touch are only two forms of communication and teachers can reach students through other ways so long as it is appropriate to the students' learning style and teacher's style. Contrary to Morris' observations, Hensley and Taylor (1987) emphasize how physical proximity can be used to arrest potential problems. Gunter et al. (1995) supports this and notes increased engagement as a benefit to proximity.

Previous studies have considered the development of the teacher-student relationship through one-on-one interactions. This study seeks to discover how the classroom levels engagement are effected by the quantity of one-on-one interactions.

Methodology

The researcher observed four different secondary instructors at a representative public high school in a mid-sized American town. The different instructors varied significantly according to teaching style, and classes taught. Students represented a wide range of levels and ability. The researcher observed nine class periods of each of the four teachers, alternating between different class periods and teachers for a total of thirty-six observed classes. The researcher limited her presence in the classroom to observations, and did not have a personal interaction with the students or the teacher. During the observations, the researcher noted and recorded the number of instances the teachers engaged in one-on-one contact with students within the class period. One-on-one interactions vary in nature. Some of the characteristics of the one-on-one interactions

considered in this study included: obvious eye contact, personal proximity and/or touch, discussion of a personal issue (relating to their personal work or a private problem), or a meeting at the teacher's or the student's desk. Not all of the interactions precisely met each of these criteria because the nature of the classroom is varied according to lesson and physical limitations imposed by the classroom set-up. Accordingly, the researcher looked to see that several of these features were present in the interactions deemed to be "one-on-one."

Ten minutes after the official beginning of class and every ten minutes thereafter the researcher collectively scored the on task level of all the students in the classroom. The class was given a score on a scale from one to five where one is the lowest and five is the highest rate of on task students. Students were considered on task when they appeared to be applying themselves to the activity at hand: reading, discussing, listening, etc. The rubric is shown below.

Engagement Assessment Rubric

Score	Definition
1	Less than 60% of students are on task
2	60-69% of students are on task
3	70-79% of students are on task
4	80-89% of students are on task
5	90-100% of students are on task

At the conclusion of the research, the researcher averaged the on-task scores for each class period. The researcher then averaged the class's average engagement scores to find the collective average engagement score. The average engagement scores, collective average engagement scores, and the quantity of interactions were compared. The quantity of interactions and engagement scores from the first ten minutes of each class were also compared. The pronoun "he" will be used to discuss the four teachers who are coded, A, B, C, D, regardless of the gender of each teacher.

Results and Conclusions

The results suggest that a relationship does exist between a teacher's average quantity of interactions per class and the average engagement level of a teacher's class. Teachers A, B, and C reflected this pattern (Graph I). However, Teacher D was a significant outlier with the least number of interactions and the highest levels of class engagement. Teacher D had significantly fewer interactions with the students, approximately nine less

interactions per class period on average than the teacher with the second fewest interactions.

Collective Averages and Grand Totals for Teachers A, B, C, and D

Teacher	Grand Total of Interactions	Collective Avg. Number of Interactions per class	Collective Avg. Engagement Score of Class	Collective Avg. Number of Interactions in the First 10 Minutes	Collective Avg. Engagement Score of the First 10 Minutes
A	147	16.33	3.97	5.77	4.11
B	129	14.33	3.48	2.66	3.66
C	145	16.11	4.64	4.66	4.44
D	50	5.55	4.53	2.33	4.66

Graph I
Collective Average Engagement Score Compared with the Average Number of Interactions per Class by Teacher

Graph III
Grand Total of Interactions

Observation of Teacher D revealed him to have a very commanding presence, both physically and vocally. Teacher D circulated and interacted with these groups but they could not be considered one-on-one interactions. This may suggest that students do not necessarily require a one-on-one interaction but can gain some of the benefits from a one-on-one interaction when meeting in small groups.

Teachers varied significantly in their rate of personal interaction with students. The four teachers' grand total of interactions during the observation period varied from 50 to 147 with three of the teachers clumping from 129-147 (Graph III). Teacher D appears to be an anomaly with 80 fewer interactions than each of the other three teachers. Despite the low number of interactions, Teacher D was able to maintain a very high level of engagement. Perhaps this is because his students have come to perceive their interactions with him as more rare, and consequently, more significant.

In Teachers A's, B's, and C's classrooms, the correlation existing between the number of interactions they averaged per class and the collective average engagement level of their classes is likely the result of a continued relationship. It is important to

distinguish between the average engagement level of a specific class, and the collective average engagement level of the classes taught by a particular teacher. Specific classes did not present trends between the quantity of interactions and the level of engagement, however, a teacher's average interactions for their combined classes, and their collective average engagement scores for their classes do appear related. In some class periods, virtually no interactions were observed between students and teacher, yet the average engagement level was a four or five. These cases were usually related to a special activity, like watching a film, or circle-discussions involving the entire class. In other classes, a large quantity of interactions took place while engagement levels lingered at three. No direct relationship could be found when comparing the total number of interactions for one class period with the average engagement level of that specific class period. This evidence suggests that the value of the one-on-one interaction may not be illuminated immediately. Indeed, an exceptional number of one-on-one interactions often occurred when the class was in a less orderly state and the students were at liberty to approach the teacher as needed. This may reflect some of the concerns discussed in the literature review are true; some teachers struggle to retain control of the class when they are participating in a series of one-on-one interactions. The teacher's attention, focused on one student, allows other students to lower their level of engagement. However, the value of the one-on-one interaction appears when comparing the teacher's average number of interactions per class and the collective average engagement level of students, thus suggesting that the interactions are relationship builders and the benefits are ongoing.

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The Effects of Group Work on Student Achievement

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Introduction

Teachers often use group work to help their students learn the material better. Research has shown that group work increases student achievement as well as student memory and comprehension of classroom material. Because of this research and the widespread use of group work, many group work methods have emerged.

In jigsaw, every student in the small group individually studies one aspect of a particular topic. The students then reconvene in their groups to share their knowledge with the other members of the group. In peer tutor, one member of the group is appointed the group leader. Finally, in role assignment, every student in the group has a job to complete. Students using role assignment always know which group member is in charge of which duty.

This study attempts to determine which of the three group methods (jigsaw, peer tutor, and role assignment) results in the highest level of student achievement. The study also attempts to discover which group work method students prefer and why they prefer one method over another.

Review of Literature

Cooperative Groups

Johnson and Johnson (1986) studied cooperative groups and found that students retain material for a longer amount of time when they are allowed to work in cooperative groups. Gokhale (1995) showed that students learn more problem-solving skills when they work in cooperative groups. In addition, Gokhale (1995) found that students who work in cooperative groups gain the same amount of factual knowledge as students who work individually.

Group Work Preferences

Another aspect of group work involves the reasoning behind preference for group work. Millar, Seth, and Sharma (1999) showed that most students prefer working in groups.

Group Work Dynamics

Studies conducted on the dynamics of group work explained some of the reasons why working in groups is successful. Hayes and Kameguchi (2001) found that "a structured program of group work" (p. 20) contributed to student participation in the class.

Group Work Methods

In the jigsaw method, each student in the group individually studies one aspect of a larger topic (Milner et al, 2003). After each student has mastered his aspect of the topic, the students gather back together in the group and share what they learned. In the peer tutor method, one student is the appointed leader of the small group. The leader receives special instructions from the teacher and then gives these instructions to the group. Finally, in the role assignment method, each student in the group has an assigned role for the activity.

Student Achievement

Studies on group work often include results showing the effects on student achievement. Vaughan (2002) researched group work. The study showed that working in groups resulted in improved student achievement (Vaughan, 2002). In addition, Jones, Klein, and Sullivan (1996) showed that students who worked in groups but did not prefer working in groups actually had increased student achievement.

Purpose

Every teacher has a different way of utilizing group work, and the goal of this study is to determine which method of group work has the highest effect on student achievement. Therefore, this study will investigate the following null hypotheses:

1. The jigsaw group work method will not affect student achievement.
2. The peer tutor group work method will not affect student achievement.
3. The role assignment group work method will affect student achievement.
4. Varying the group work method will not affect student achievement.
5. After experience with all three group work methods, students will not prefer one group work method over another.

Methodology

  This study seeks to determine whether one group work method is better than another. Students completed four labs in class. The grades on these labs were collected and analyzed to determine if any of the group work methods affected student achievement.

Study Design

<u>Labs</u>

  For the first three laboratories, the cooperating teacher assigned a group work method to each lab group. This assignment ensured that no group used the same group work method more than once. For the fourth laboratory, students were allowed to choose which group work method they wanted to use.

<u>Analysis</u>

  The grades were analyzed with a t-test to determine if any significant differences exist between student achievement and group work method. The distribution of the group work methods for the fourth laboratory was depicted in a pie chart in order to see if students chose one group work method over another.

  The student questionnaires were also analyzed to determine if any correlations existed between the students' attitudes towards the group work methods and the group work methods.

Results

Student Achievement

  Students did not get significantly better grades when using one group work method over another. No significant difference exists between group work method and test score ($p > 0.05$).

Student Preference

  A significant difference exists between student preferences for group work method ($X^2 = 0.045$). When given the option to choose which group work method to use, students preferred role assignment over both jigsaw and peer tutor.

  If students enjoy their jobs in role assignment, then they are likely to enjoy role assignment as a group work method. In addition, a significant negative correlation exists between liking peer tutor as a group work method and liking jigsaw as a group work

method. This means that if students enjoy the peer tutor method, they are less likely to enjoy the jigsaw method.

Students were asked to name which group work method was their **least** favorite. The students chose jigsaw as their least favorite method (63%). Students were also asked to name which group work method helped them learn the most. Students chose role assignment as the group work method that helped them learn the most (63%).

Discussion

This study shows that group work method does not affect student achievement. Hence, the null hypothesis that the jigsaw group work method will not affect student achievement is accepted. The null hypothesis that the peer tutor group work method will not affect student achievement is also accepted. Conversely, the null hypothesis that the role assignment group work method will affect student achievement is rejected. The results of this study also show that varying group work method does not have an effect on student achievement. Thus, the null hypothesis that varying the group work method will not affect student achievement is accepted. Students do, however, prefer one group method over another. Therefore, the null hypothesis that after experiencing all three group work methods, students will not prefer one group method over another is rejected.

Student Achievement

A significant difference exists between the percentage of questions correct when students were allowed to choose their group work method and the percentage of questions correct when students were assigned a group work method. This significant difference indicates that students learn more when they are allowed to choose which group work method to use during lab. This implies that allowing students to choose which group work method they use during lab will increase student learning and achievement.

Student Preference

Over half of the students (55%) chose role assignment when they were given the option to choose their group work method. In addition, when students were asked to name which group method helped them learn the most, a majority of students chose role assignment (63%). A correlation could exist between which method the students like the best and which method students perceive as helping them learn the most.

Implications

        The results section indicates that each group work method helps students learn an equal amount of subject matter. This research study has shown that varying the group work method does not affect student achievement. Conversely, allowing students to choose which group work method they want to use results in higher student achievement. Teachers can also help students choose which group work method works the best for them by giving them the opportunity to experience several different styles of group work. Students who have experienced different group work methods will be able to make informed decisions about which method works best for them. This research study has shown that group work method does not necessarily affect student achievement, but group work method, when chosen by the students, does have a positive effect on student achievement.

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Opening Salvos: The First Five Minutes of Class

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Class structure is one constant among teaching at all grade levels and across all subject areas. Every lesson must begin and then end, whether its end comes 45 or 90 or some other number of minutes later. The question of time management is whether or not there are consistent individual approaches to the bookends of the lesson. Do those approaches affect student engagement between the bells?

Review of the Literature

Students need to be engaged before the task of learning can begin in earnest, and "to have an effective . . . session," teachers must "set the tone in the first five minutes of class" (Oswald and Turnage, p. 347). They continue, emphasizing that "in those beginning minutes of class, the learning environment is established, and the tone is set for the rest of the class period" (p. 348).

A teacher's role in the initial development of a learning environment begins with his or her concept of time. Teachers may intuitively understand the importance of time management, but many of them continue to struggle to use time effectively. Clough, Clough and Smasal (2000) argue that the most "cost-effective strategy to increase engaged time is to determine where time is lost during the school day, and reduce this time" (p.1). Their study of the beginning and endings of classes includes the finding that "on average, 2.5 minutes pass between the bell ringing and class beginning" (Clough et al, p. 1). The necessary question is two-fold: How are teachers spending the first portion of class, and how should they spend it?

In a study of the high school for which he is principal, Landry (1993) remarks that his teachers "have little time with students" at the start of class. Teachers need strategies "designed to maintain student interest [and] maximize student engagement," which translate at the beginning of the period into "a variety of introductory activities or

'attention grabbers' to stimulate student interest in the learning task" (Fulk, 2000, p. 183). One English teacher allows his students a voice in determining the lesson for the day, saying that teaching "resembles writing: planning is the pre-writing stage where attention must be given to the connections among the teacher/writer, students/audience, and the needs and goals" (Cox, 1991, p. 33). Students are given an opportunity to spark their own interest in the work of the class period by directing the content to a certain degree.

Liz Cho (2003) finds a similar approach to the start of class in another pair of English colleagues, whose methods "seem to denote that personal teacher-student interaction in the beginning moments of class is a crucial element in engaging students" (p. 35). Teachers who bring student opinion into the start of a class increase the students' stake in the work.

In another descriptive study, Whitfield (2001) examines the initial moments within several English classrooms. The first "often started instruction within the first minute of class, and – due to the quick startup – this teacher often accomplished many different, smaller tasks over the course of the period"; the second teacher, "though slowest in starting class, was able to accomplish at least one rather large objective" (p. 70).

The next step is to illuminate any relationship between student engagement over the course of an entire period and the way in which that period begins.

Methodology

The researcher observed 9 class periods of each of four English teachers in a representative high school in a mid-sized American town, alternating between different class periods and teachers, for a total of 36 observed classes. The classes incorporated a wide variety of levels: Sophomore, Junior, and Senior regular and honors classes; one AP Language class; one Sophomore seminar class; one elective Shakespeare class; and one standard-level English class.

There were seven designated categories: administrative, assignment, discussion (related), discussion (non-related), collecting homework, lecture, and nothing. "Administrative" referred to taking roll, reading school announcements, listening to school announcements, taking up money for books, and other, similar activities. The two "discussion" categories referred to students talking with the teacher, either about the class

itself (the previous day's lesson, the current day's lesson, or a related aspect of both) or about subjects unrelated to school. For the remainder of each period, the researcher assessed whether each student was on-task or off-task and recorded the total number.

Results and Discussion

During the nine observed class periods, Teacher A averaged 96% engagement; Teacher B, 95% engagement; Teacher C, 81% engagement; and Teacher D, 88% engagement. The following chart illustrates the other findings:

Administrative = 1; Collecting homework = 2; Discussion (related) = 3; Discussion (unrelated) = 4; Assignment = 5; Lecture = 6; Nothing = 7; Other = 8 (with explanation)

Mode	Teacher A		Mean
	First Five Minutes	Average Engagement	
	3, 4	99%	
	2	98%	
	3	97%	
2, 3	1, 2, 7	96%	96%
	5, 7	96%	
	8	95%	
	3, 8	94%	
	4	98%	
	1, 2	91%	
Number of different opening salvos: 7			
1 salvo: 4 ; 2 salvos: 4 ; 3 salvos: 1			

Mode	Teacher B		Mean
	First Five Minutes	Average Engagement	
	1, 7	95%	
	3	98%	
	3, 5	89%	
3	5, 7, 8	93%	95%
	5	96%	
	3, 5, 7	91%	
	3	97%	
	1	92%	
	3	100%	
Number of different opening salvos: 5			
1 salvo: 5 ; 2 salvos: 2 ; 3 salvos: 2			

Mode	Teacher C		Mean
	First Five Minutes	Average Engagement	
	3, 4, 5	96%	
	1, 7, 8	71%	
	3, 5	86%	
3	3, 4	54%	81%
	3, 5	90%	
	3, 8	77%	
	1, 3	89%	
	1, 8	88%	
	3	79%	
Number of different opening salvos: 6			
1 salvo: 1 ; 2 salvos: 6 ; 3 salvos: 2			

Mode	Teacher D		Mean
	First Five Minutes	Average Engagement	
	2	77%	
	1, 2, 4	96%	
	2, 3	82%	
2	3, 7, 8	87%	88%
	2, 3	85%	
	1, 3	89%	
	4	88%	
	2, 7	84%	
	5	100%	
Number of different opening salvos: 7			
1 salvo: 3 ; 2 salvos: 4 ; 3 salvos: 2			

All four teachers frequently began class with discussion that was related to the day's work. Only Teacher D did not have this category as his mode; however, Teacher D still used related discussion four times during the first five minutes of the nine observed class periods. In contrast, Teacher A had related discussion as his mode, but his classes only included it a total of three times. The use of more styles did not correlate to higher engagement, however; Teacher C, with the lowest average engagement rate at 81%, used six different methods, while Teacher B, with a rate of 95% engagement, used five. What separated Teacher C from Teacher B? In six of the nine classes, Teacher C had these openings (using the number codes designated above): 3-4-5; 3-5; 3-4; 3-5; 3. In six of the nine classes, Teacher A had these openings: 3-4; 2; 1-2-7; 5-7; 3-8; 4. Teacher D, whose average student engagement falls seven percentage points above Teacher C and seven to eight percentage points below Teachers B and A, varies her method of starting class much more than Teacher C, yet her consistency mirrors that of Teacher B. Where Teacher B used method three, related discussion, to begin five of the nine class periods, Teacher D used method two, collecting homework, to begin five of the nine class periods. The high scores that Teacher B received, despite using fairly consistent methods to begin his class, are explained by the second consideration, uniformity.

The next distinction to be drawn between the four teachers is the degree of uniformity in each individual day's opening salvo. Did these teachers divide their opening five minutes into more than one activity? The teachers with higher engagement levels seemed to have done just that. Teachers A and B used one activity for the first five minutes in four and five of the observed classes, respectively. Teacher C split his class into two activities within the first five minutes on six occasions. Teachers A and D both split the opening five minutes in half in four of their classes; however, Teacher D split those five minutes into thirds on two occasions, while Teacher A only split his beginning into thirds once.

Teacher A split more than fifty percent of the observed class periods into more than one activity; however, he never repeated the particular methods used on another day that he was observed. Teacher B repeated his opening several times, using related discussions and assignments in fifty percent of his classes; however, he used the first five

minutes for a single, uninterrupted activity in five of the observed class periods, which may have compensated for the slight lack of variety.

Conclusion

The first five minutes of class are critical to the overall success of a lesson. The results of this study suggest that there are two ways to misuse this time: a lack of uniformity and a lack of variety.

A lack of uniformity hurts student engagement because it compounds the already chaotic time between and before classes. A single activity held for five minutes, whether it is a discussion, an assignment, or the completion of administrative duties, helps to lock the students back into an attentive mindset.

A lack of variety from day to day hurts student engagement because the beginning of class becomes repetitive and then negligible to the student. Even subconsciously, wondering how a class period will begin each day must lead to more engagement. Knowing that the teacher will collect homework for five or six minutes, spend two to three minutes taking roll, etc., gives any student so inclined the opportunity to detach from the class and operate on a kind of autopilot.

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Language Departures:
Teacher Response to Nonstandard Language in the English Classroom

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Introduction

In the year 1995, Lisa Delpit wrote that all United States demographic data indicated that American society was becoming increasingly diverse. Delpit's statement rings no less true today. The diversity of America is nowhere more evident than in America's public schools (Delpit, 1995). As the demographics of America change, educators can expect an increasing number of their students to speak nonstandard dialects of English (Wilbur, 1999) and the question of how educators should respond to language that does not conform to the accepted standard in the classroom assumes a great deal of importance. This study aims to investigate the methods of response to nonstandard language that promote the most oral participation in the classroom in order to provide pre-service and in-service teachers with realistic and beneficial options for response.

Review of Literature

Most linguists agree that no one dialect is inherently superior to another; nevertheless, Standard English is often upheld as the single correct lingual form. Any speech that diverges from Standard English is considered flawed. According to Texas linguist Sledd (1996), dialects constitute "socially graded synonyms" that are equally clear and grammatical; "correct usage" is nothing more or less than linguistic good manners (p. 59). Sledd concludes, "the term *dialect* should not be pejorative in its application to *any* variety" (p. 60).

Despite evidence to the contrary, most educators continue to promote the idea that Standard English is the only correct variety and are intolerant of nonstandard forms in the classroom (Wilbur, 1999). Wynne (2002) found that teachers and pre-service teachers felt that all students needed to know Standard English and that nonstandard speech should always be corrected in the classroom. Teachers, moreover, tend to stereotype

those with poor formal English skills as unintelligent (Baker, 2002). In her study on dialect bias in questioning styles in the Standard English classroom, Strickland (1999) found that teachers asked Standard English speakers more high-level questions than nonstandard English speakers, suggesting that teachers do make judgments about students' capabilities and intelligence based on the way they speak.

Despite over ninety years of research that consistently shows traditional teaching of grammar has little to no effect on students, many teachers persist in attempting to change the form of students' language through rule-based correction (Hillocks & Smith, 1991). In addition to being ineffectual, error correction can have unintended negative effects. Wilbur (1999) found that many educators today are so focused on grammar and mechanics that they emphasize these technical writing conventions over linguistic fluency and creativity. Krashen (1982) suggests that correcting errors in spoken language makes students less receptive to learning a second language by placing students on the defensive and publicly revealing weakness.

If error correction is not the best way to respond to nonstandard language in the classroom, educators must consider alternative methods. Krashen (1982) suggests that "the best way, and perhaps the only way, to teach speaking . . . is simply to provide comprehensible input;" in other words, to model Standard English (p. 22). According to Krashen, the appropriate time to correct errors is not during discussion, when the focus should be on content, but in writing and prepared speech, when more focus can be placed on form. Other educators and researchers have found that it is not *when* teachers correct errors but *how* they correct them that results in adverse effects for students. Weaver (1996) advocates the use of humor in response to language departures and Terrel (2003) found that students were more receptive to error correction when the teacher first establishes a respect for the student's native dialect.

Methodology

This research study focused on the classes of four English teachers at a suburban North Carolina high school. The researcher focused her observation to the extent possible on standard-level classes. The four observed teachers were considered master teachers and each had been teaching English for several years. In order to protect the teachers' confidentiality, the teachers were referred to as teachers A, B, C and D. The

observed students were of varying abilities, gender, and socioeconomic, racial and cultural backgrounds. The students' identities remained anonymous throughout the course of the study.

Over a period of eight weeks, the researcher observed nine class periods of each of the cooperating teachers. During her non-participant observation, the researcher recorded each instance of nonstandard language and placed it in one of four categories that indicated how the student's speech deviated from Standard English: slang, grammar, pronunciation, and word choice. The researcher also recorded the teacher's response to each instance of nonstandard language and placed it in one of six categories: no response, rephrase, modeling, explanation, reprimand and humor.

In order to measure oral participation, the researcher recorded if there were none, one or multiple responses to each question asked by the teacher. The researcher also tallied the instances of unsolicited student questions and comments. The researcher kept detailed field notes during her observations in order to record information not adequately captured by the performance checklists.

At the conclusion of her observations, the researcher analyzed her field notes in order to determine trends in students' usage of nonstandard language and teachers' responses to nonstandard language in the classroom. The researcher also attempted to determine whether a connection can be stated between teachers' varying responses to nonstandard language and varying levels of oral student participation in the classroom.

Results and Conclusions

The types of language departures encountered most frequently varied amongst the four observed classrooms. In classrooms A and C, the most frequently observed language departures were grammatical in nature. Grammatical departures accounted for 70% of the observed language departures in classroom A and 86% in classroom C. In classrooms B and D, the most frequently observed language departures were errors of pronunciation when reading aloud. Pronunciation errors of this variety accounted for 75% of the language departures in classroom B and 66% in classroom D.

Grammar that departed from Standard English accounted for 51% of overall observed language departures amongst the four classes. The most common grammatical departures overall, as well as in each of the observed classes, involved verb conjugation

and use of the word "ain't." Overall, conjugation errors accounted for 39% of the observed grammatical departures. Use of the word "ain't" accounted for 31% of the observed grammatical departures. Use of a double negative also accounted for a considerable percentage of observed grammatical departures in classrooms A and D.

The most frequent teacher response to nonstandard language in the classroom was no response. In 54% of the observed instances of nonstandard language, the four observed teachers did not respond to the form of the students' speech. At times the teachers praised the content of the students' speech and ignored its nonstandard form.

Individual teacher response to nonstandard language varied amongst the four observed teachers. The distribution of responses for each teacher is shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1

	No Response	Rephrase	Modeling	Explanation	Humor
Teacher A	77%	10%	3%	3%	7%
Teacher B	16%	21%	0%	37%	26%
Teacher C	86%	0%	7%	7%	0%
Teacher D	39%	43%	9%	9%	0%

Oral participation was generally high in all four classes. The distribution of oral participation is shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2

	No Response	One Response	Multiple Responses	Unsolicited Participation
Teacher A	0%	7%	93%	16
Teacher B	2%	13%	85%	29
Teacher C	14%	35%	51%	23
Teacher D	2%	24%	74%	26

In general, all four teachers showed respect for the language students brought to the classroom through positive methods of response, incorporating slang into their own speech, and prioritizing the content of students' speech above its form. It is likely that the aforementioned factors contributed to the high levels of observed participation, but it is difficult to establish a direct connection. The researcher noted several ancillary factors that seemed to affect the level of student participation: teaching style, students interest in the material, difficulty of questions, whether or not credit is offered for participation.

Given the probable importance of these uncontrolled variables toward promoting or reducing the level of student participation in the classroom, it is difficult to say that the observed levels of participation were linked directly to the teacher's method of responding to nonstandard language.

When teacher response did vary, diverse methods of teacher response did not result in predictably different levels of oral participation. Teachers A and C provided the most similar responses to nonstandard language, but displayed the most different levels of student response. Teacher B was the most different in his response to nonstandard language in that he rarely provided no response; however, Teacher B's method of response did not produce markedly different levels of participation from Teacher's A and C who frequently did not respond to instances of nonstandard language.

While inconclusive, the results of this study suggest several strategies for maximizing oral participation: responding positively or neutrally to nonstandard language; demonstrating a positive attitude toward all lingual forms by incorporating slang into lecture and allowing students to use nonstandard language for effect in writing; and validating the content of students' speech when its form does not correspond to Standard English. The results of this study also suggest that further research should be done that implements particular methods of teacher response to nonstandard language while holding constant other factors that could affect student participation.

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The Effect of Individualized Oral Feedback on Perceived Classroom Engagement

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In the high school English classroom, there are few "right or wrong" answers. How a teacher responds to a student's interpretation of a text or capability to read aloud can have a great impact on the student and the overall learning environment of the classroom. Several research studies have explored the effectiveness of written feedback, and other studies have examined the effectiveness of oral feedback in college communications classes; however, not much information is presently available regarding oral feedback in the high school English classroom.

This research study proposes to observe not just how secondary English teachers orally provide feedback in the high school English classroom, but specifically how this feedback affects classroom engagement. Ultimately, this study will attempt to provide a deeper understanding of how individualized oral feedback can help create a collaborative and supportive classroom environment.

Review of Literature

Many researchers are in agreement that teacher-to-student evaluative feedback in the classroom has the potential to promote student success. According to Booth-Butterfield (1989), "feedback is an essential component of the instructional process," and "without instructor mediation and explanation, little improvement occurs" (p. 119-120). Konold, Miller, & Konold (2004) add that "it is extremely important for all students to feel successful in school" (p. 64). Indeed, students should frequently be informed about their strengths and where improvement is needed, and research has shown that specific individualized teacher feedback can serve to promote student motivation and success (Chilcoat, 1985; Konold, et. al., 2004; Booth-Butterfield, 1989; Preston & Todd-Mancillas, 1985).

Black (1992) states that the most common method of teacher-to-student feedback in the English classroom is written (p. 69). Although written commentary on student papers succeeds in addressing each student individually, current research shows that this form of feedback is actually ineffective. Many students skim through the comments and focus on the grade at the end (Black, 1992, p. 71), and even the most well-intentioned teachers neglect praise in written commentary and provide mostly negative feedback when writing on student papers (Black, 1992, p. 69). This is not to say that oral feedback is not currently being used in the classroom at all. According to Cadzen (1988), the most common instructional pattern that takes place in classrooms today can be summed up by the acronym IRE: the teacher Initiates, a student Responds, and the teacher Evaluates the response (p. 29). However, Konold, et. al. (2004) claims that only 4% of class time is actually being devoted to the oral evaluation-component of the pattern, and during that time, it is often ineffectively delivered (p. 65).

Challenging the ineffectiveness of both written commentary and poorly delivered oral feedback, Chilcoat (1986) argues in the journal article "Developing Student Achievement with Verbal Feedback" that immediate affirmative or corrective oral feedback is most effective following every student response in the classroom (p. 8). He cautions against "delivering random and unsystematic feedback" and "giving more praise to high-expectation students than to low-expectation students" (1986, p. 10). In *Qualities of Effective Teachers*, Stronge (2002) further agrees that "the amount of time between the activity and the feedback has a critical effect on student achievement" (p. 56). As research has shown, there is not only a need to increase oral feedback in the classroom, but teachers should also be more informed about which types of feedback are most effective and how feedback should be delivered.

Methodology

This research study was conducted at a typical suburban high school located in a representative mid-sized American city. The subjects of this study consisted of four English teachers (three male, one female of the same race) who teach British literature, World literature, American literature, Shakespeare, and Journalism to regular and honors

students from 9th to 12th grade. To protect the confidentiality of the students, no names were recorded, and the four teachers will hereafter be identified as A, B, C, and D.

During the fall of 2004, the researcher observed forty classes, ten per teacher. In order to discern the effects of each teacher's individual oral feedback on classroom engagement, the researcher used a self-developed performance checklist for data collection. The researcher noted how many times a student asked a relevant question, offered a comment, answered a question, or participated in class. Following these student prompts, the researcher duly noted how each teacher responded, indicating each time when a teacher supplied positive, negative, or neutral feedback[1]. Concurrently, the researcher observed classroom engagement. A performance checklist recorded every time a student raised his hand, a student expressed a moment of epiphany by expressing an "Ohhh" in understanding, or a student voluntarily spoke to offer a question or comment relevant to the lesson.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the researcher recorded classroom field notes that took into account additional and pertinent information not adequately captured by the performance checklists. While the performance checklists are used to record frequency of feedback and acts of student engagement, the observational field notes provide further insight into how students appear to be affected by the teacher's feedback. These field notes contain the researcher's interpretation of the teacher's tone used in delivering feedback to the students and how the students individually responded.

Results and Conclusions

The ways in which each teacher provided individualized oral feedback to the students varied by amount, manner of delivery, and type (positive, neutral or negative). In terms of *amount*, some teachers provided more feedback than others: of the 844 total teacher responses observed, Teacher A gave 13% of the feedback, Teacher B gave 20%, Teacher C gave 39%, and Teacher D gave 28%. In terms of *type*, neutral feedback was the dominant response for all of teachers, comprising 62% of feedback, while positive and negative feedback were equally 19%. Finally, in terms of the *manner of delivery*, the

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[1] Neutral feedback consists of when a teacher does not qualitatively assess the preceding student prompt, disclosing neither a positive nor negative response.

researcher perceived that the classes with strongest teacher-student rapport, usually in which the teacher responded to individual students humorously or with deliberate sincerity, were the most engaged.

In general, there was a discernable correlation between a teacher's individualized oral feedback and class engagement. Although additional research would be needed to confirm the results from this study (particularly taking into consideration external variables such as teacher pedagogy and teacher-student rapport), this research found that the more feedback a teacher provided to his or her students, the more engaged the classroom. Further, after observing each teacher's interaction with a variety of student groups, it became clear how the different class levels were not a factor in engagement unless the teacher responded differently to the students. This phenomenon was particularly evinced by Teacher C and Teacher D; the former provided more negative feedback but less feedback overall to the standard level students and consequently received less engagement, while the latter provided more positive feedback and more feedback overall to the standard level students, yielding greater class engagement.

In addition to being the most prevalent feedback overall, neutral feedback was also the dominant teacher response for each student prompt (questions, comments, answers, and participation). This general lack of a qualitative response (positive or negative) seemed to have an effect on the frequency with which student prompts occurred. For example, only 6% of student questions received positive feedback compared to 26% of student answers; correspondingly, student questions comprised 15% of student prompts while student answers were more than double with 33%.

Thus, although this study demonstrates how teachers most often respond to student prompts neutrally, what still remains unclear is whether or not neutral feedback can contribute to creating a collaborative, engaged classroom. Following the conclusion of this study, new questions were raised; for instance, in what ways does neutral feedback hinder student engagement, and in what ways does it encourage a student's free-thinking without seeking a teacher's stamp of approval? Further, does neutral feedback promote students to engage in content-related discussions more deeply or is positive feedback more likely to encourage students to take risks with class participation? If another research study were to be conducted regarding oral feedback in the high school English

classroom, an in-depth analysis of the different nuances with which teachers provide specifically neutral oral feedback and how it affects engagement might yield further enlightening results.

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Teacher Beliefs and Practice:
Consistency or Inconsistency in the High School Social Studies Classroom?

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Most new educators can describe their personal theories about education. They can share their beliefs about how students learn best, and they can explain how their belief system will contribute to enhancing educational effectiveness (Fang, 1996). A new teacher's educational philosophy will significantly impact her classroom practices. While some teachers consistently practice their educational beliefs, there exists a disjuncture between teaching philosophy and classroom practice in others (Muskin, 1990). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to observe the relationship between the educational beliefs among Initial Licensure[2] social studies teachers and their actual teaching practices in the high school social studies classroom. Also, the researcher seeks to discover the common ways in which Initial Licensure social studies teachers are either helped or constrained in their effort to keep their beliefs and practices consistent in the classroom.

Literature Review

Previous literature on the beliefs and practices of teachers show two distinct belief systems emerging from observations of new teachers. The two dominant belief systems include (1) the *Traditional* belief that teachers dominate the lecture in which their students absorb the knowledge, a principle method in social studies classrooms, and (2) the *Non-Traditional* belief that student-centered learning is the goal, where teachers stress reflective learning and critical thinking (Muskin, 1990; Adeyemi, 1992). As new teachers begin to apply their educational beliefs, previous researchers like Muskin (1990) and Adeyemi (1992) report a disjuncture between teacher belief and practice, while Grant (2001) and Rowicki (1999) show consistency between the two.

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[2] Initial Licensure teachers refer to those social studies teachers who have licensed teaching experience between zero and three school years.

Because researchers remain inconclusive on whether teacher belief and practice coincide, previous researchers have sought to explain why some new social studies teachers are able to consistently practice their educational theories. One theory is that autonomy and an environment that gives "considerable freedom to make instructional decisions" (Kilgore and Ross, 1990, p. 31) allowed teachers to more easily keep their beliefs and teaching practices consistent. The autonomy allows them to experiment with their beliefs and test educational theories without the presence of an administrator or higher-ranking colleague who might inhibit the new teacher's methods with their presence.

Unfortunately, consistency strategies are not as readily available as inconsistency strategies. Muskin (1990) and McCann and Johannessen (2004) cite workload and general time constraints of the day as some of these reasons. These prevent teachers from taking the time to develop interactive lessons that demonstrate reflective thought from the students. End-of-course tests and classroom management (Grant 2001) have led some new teachers to use more teacher-centered activities, like the lecture method, so that students are forced to sit quietly and take notes on the lecture (Yeager, 1997). Due to the inconsistency of the research available, this study seeks to provide further insight into whether new teachers are able to maintain consistency between their educational beliefs and practices.

Methodology

This qualitative study conveniently selected and observed seven Initial Licensure social studies teachers from five high schools within one school district in the Southeast United States. The participants were only identified by pseudonyms (Teachers B, D, L, M, O, S, and W). The three-hour observations were then followed by an audio-taped thirty minute interview in which the researcher used an Interview Protocol to direct the interview. The data was then analyzed so that the researcher could categorize the relationship between teacher beliefs and practice.

Results and Conclusions

Four themes emerged from the data; the emergence of a *Mixed* belief system that challenged the two-belief system discussed by Muskin, consistency reported among

teachers, a teacher's classroom practice is directly related to student ability level, and similarly reported factors that hinder consistency.

Two of the seven participating Initial Licensure social studies teachers demonstrated that a third dominant belief system exists; that of a *Mix* between the Traditional and Non-Traditional belief systems. Teacher S reported, "I think you would say I'm a combination of a constructivist and what I call a traditional teaching style. Sometimes the best way to get the information that you want them to know is just to tell them, just to lecture," while other times "I try to get them involved and do things like presentations and skits where they actually show me a product at the end."

A second theme was that all seven of the participants said that they are consistent, or trying to be, when practicing their beliefs in the classroom. Throughout the observations, the researcher observed that actually six of seven participants consistently practiced their educational beliefs in the classroom. Often, teachers who believe in a Non-Traditional style of teaching resort to Traditional methods due to various constraints on their ability to practically apply their teaching beliefs in the classroom. However, Teacher B, self-identified as maintaining a Mixed belief system, was actually observed as strictly practicing Non-Traditional methods in the classes observed. Normally, Non-Traditional style believing teachers often are forced to teach in the Traditional style. Because Teacher B teaches a majority of students with higher ability levels, she tries to maintain the Traditional Approach, but often finds herself practicing more Non-Traditional methods to reach the lower-ability level students in her class.

Another trend exhibited was between the teachers' belief systems and the ability level of their students, i.e. honors or regular level students. All but one of the teachers who taught honors level students tended to use the Traditional or Mixed teaching methods, while teachers who taught regular level students were more likely to use the Non-Traditional methods. This trend possibly indicates that regular level students are more likely to be successful with the Non-Traditional methods of hands-on group work associated with projects and presentations rather than the Traditional methods of lecture and note taking.

Many of the teachers also reported similar factors that hindered their ability to practice their educational beliefs. The most prevalent complaint among three of the

seven participants was the problem with discipline or immaturity in the classroom. Teacher L reported, "[Discipline] left unchecked, either at home or at the administrative level, definitely gets in the way. I have a seventh period who can't handle group work. They don't do well with group work. And that disrupts [my teaching style]." Another factor was the general time constraints associated with the profession. Teacher M described how "Paper work, meetings, progress reports, absenteeism, extracurricular advisory roles, and coaching really get in the way." All of these external factors leave many teachers with very little time to spend on creating and preparing lessons for the students, thus creating a difficult task for teachers who want to practice their ideal teaching philosophies.

Three of the seven teachers in this study also reported that end-of-course tests proved to be a hindering factor when utilizing Non-Traditional teaching methods. The end-of-course test forces many teachers to maintain a strict schedule that does not allow for creative teaching, reflection, and discussion. The last factor reported was class size. The teachers with fewer students in their classrooms were better able to incorporate a variety of teaching methods, because the teacher was able to have a more intimate educational relationship with each student. Teacher O said, "And because my classes are smaller this year, we're able to have more seminar-type participation and they just learn it so much better."

This study produced fascinating results that showed that six of seven participating teachers were able to maintain consistency between their beliefs and practice. However promising these results appear, there are also some factors that must be considered when discussing this study. One significant factor that may have limited the application of this study to a larger population was that the study used a small sampling of high school social studies teachers. A second factor is that four of the seven teachers taught in an experimental program devised by the district to provide an alternative learning environment for its students. About forty ninth grade students were placed in classes consisting of twenty students learning on a block schedule rather than the traditional seven period day. The participating teachers in the district-wide experimental program were therefore teaching smaller numbers of students in ninety-minute classes; thus not entirely representative of normal high school classrooms. A third, and perhaps most

important, factor that affected this study was the presence of a *Mixed* belief system, which was newly identified in this research. The identification of this Mixed belief system allowed the researcher to codify consistency more easily because the teachers were no longer limited to the two-belief system discussed by Muskin (1990). The last interesting factor was that the schools in which Teachers D, L, M, O, and W taught were schools where the administration allowed the teachers to have freedom in conducting their classrooms, i.e. ways which followed their educational beliefs. These same teachers adhered to a Non-Traditional teaching style, implying that these teachers were more willing to experiment with their educational beliefs because they had the freedom to do so (Kilgore and Ross, 1990). However, Teachers B and S taught at schools where their administrators kept strict guidelines regarding teacher practice. Because students need to maintain high grades for acceptance to college, teachers are forced to teach in a style more representative of the Traditional method. Teacher B said, "If I wasn't teaching a group of honors kids, if I wasn't teaching a bunch of kids who were college-bound, I would probably feel less pressure" to teach in the Traditional style.

The purpose of this study was to observe the relationship between the educational beliefs among seven Initial Licensure social studies teachers and their actual teaching practices in the high school classroom. Areas of this study would certainly benefit from further research, but after conducting this study, the researcher was better able to understand the relationship between teacher belief and practice in the high school social studies classroom.

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**Student Preferences for Teaching Styles:
Gender, Student Achievement Levels, and Ethnicity**

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Introduction

If students are not learning in their current learning environments it does not necessarily mean that they cannot learn. If the relationship between teaching style and gender is significant, how should teachers effectively reach both girls and boys? If the relationship between teaching style and achievement is significant how should educators reach both low and high achievers? If different preferences exist among different ethnic groups how do teachers reach heterogeneous classes? Different group preferences cannot only help teachers reach out to students but also help them understand why certain students are or are not learning certain concepts taught in their classes.

The teaching methods that are used most often favor only the students to whom these styles match in terms of learning preferences.

Review of Literature

Teaching Methods

Collaborative learners do best in settings where they are working with other students (O'Toole, Potter, & Wetzel, 1982). A dependent student needs more guidance. When students were matched with their learning style both their attitude and achievement improved (O'Toole et al, 1982).

Charkins, O'Toole, & Wetzel (1985) focused on the dependent learning style as well as the dependent teaching style. In the studies by Horton & Oakland (1997) and O'Toole et al. (1982) the collaborative and intuitive and feeling teaching style benefited all students, because in these types of settings students and teachers work together.

Gender

One study found that differences in teaching methods yielded significant differences in scores related to gender. These differences were also linked to grade level,

school type, student type, and socio-economic background (Beaumont-Walters & Soyibo, 2001). The teaching methods examined in the Jamaican study (Beaumont-Walters et al, 2001) and the Israeli study by Huppert & Lazarowitz (1990) were student-centered curriculums with the teacher as a guide. The conclusion is that girls prefer a different teaching environment than boys; varying types of students prefer different teaching styles (Beaumont-Walters et al, 2001 and Gerber, Rayneri, & Wiley, 2003).

Student Achievement

After observing two seventh grade classes taught by a geography teacher and a literature teacher using traditional lecture-type methods, Hertz-Lazarovitz, Ilatov, Mayer-Young, & Shamai (1998) found that both teachers provided more help to the academically weaker group in one of the classes. Using teaching methods that reach all academic groups may allow the teacher to provide equal attention to all groups.

Ethnicity

In a study conducted by Ramirez and Price-Williams (1974) African American and Hispanic students tended to be more field sensitive in their cognitive style while Caucasian students were more field independent. Low ability classrooms do not lend themselves to social settings, implying that African American and Hispanic students are in learning environments that may not meet their learning styles.

Purpose

The null hypotheses for this study are that there is:

1. no relationship between teaching methods and gender.

2. no relationship between teaching methods and student achievement.

3. no relationship between teaching methods and ethnicity.

4. no relationship between teaching methods and any combination of gender, student achievement, or ethnicity.

Methodology

The research was conducted to find out if a significant relationship exists between teaching style and gender, student achievement, and ethnicity. Students were asked to fill out a questionnaire after watching three videos. Each video illustrated a teaching style, and the questionnaires sought to find what teaching methods students most prefer. The subjects were high school science students ranging in age from 14 to 18. The study

included six different science classes which brought the study population to 108 students, 58 females and 50 males, 35 African Americans, 67 Caucasians, and 6 Hispanics.

Each of the videos portrayed one of three different teaching methods: lecture, group work, and individual work. In video A, lecture, the teacher teaches the mock class using the overhead and a demonstration. In video B, group work, the teacher gives the mock class a group assignment and the students work together. In video C, individual work, the teacher gives each student in the mock class a task to complete individually. All three videos had the same teacher figure. The students in each science class were asked to fill out a questionnaire after watching the three videos each, portraying a different teaching method.

After filling out the questionnaires, the students' gender, achievement level and ethnicity were written on the top of the sheet by the teacher and then the names of each student was cut off the sheet to preserve anonymity. The student achievement levels were simply categorized as high, average, or low achievers by the cooperating teachers.

Results

For every student type, group work is significantly preferred above both lecture and individual work ($\chi^2 < 0.05$). The same percentages (15%) of females and males prefer lecture settings. The majority of both genders prefer group work, but 80% of males prefer group work while a lesser percentage of females (68%) do. Twenty percent of African American females prefer individual work while no African American males chose individual work as a preferred learning environment. The majority of both African American females (70%) and males (87%) prefer group work.

Nineteen percent of high achievers prefer individual work, while 9% of low achievers do. A higher percentage of high achieving Caucasians prefer individual (14%) and lecture (23%) settings than average achieving Caucasians, where 7% preferred individual settings and 14% preferred lecture. Twenty three percent of average achieving African American females prefer lecture settings as do high achieving Caucasians.

Table 1: Video preference distributions for different student types

	Lecture	Group Work	Individual Work	χ^2
Gender				
Female	16%	68%	16%	0.000
Female (Honors)	15%	71%	15%	0.000
Male	16%	80%	4%	0.000
Male (Honors)	20%	76%	4%	0.000
Male (Regular)	12%	84%	4%	0.000
Gender & Achievement				
High Female (Honors)	7%	60%	33%	0.041
Average Female (Honors)	20%	73%	7%	0.000
Average Male (Honors)	8%	84%	8%	0.000
Gender & Ethnicity				
Female African American	10%	70%	20%	0.002
Female Caucasian	14%	72%	14%	0.000
Male African American*	13%	87%	0%	0.000
Male Caucasian	38%	57%	5%	0.000
Achievement				
High Achievers (Honors)	19%	62%	19%	0.005
Average Achievers (Honors)	17%	76%	7%	0.000
Low Achievers (Regular)	22%	69%	9%	0.001
Ethnicity				
African American	11%	78%	11%	0.000
African American (Regular)	6%	88%	6%	0.023
Caucasian	16%	74%	10%	0.000
Caucasian (Honors)	14%	79%	7%	0.000
Caucasian (Regular)	15%	70%	15%	0.000
Ethnicity & Achievement				
Average African American Females (Honors)	23%	69%	8%	0.018
High Caucasian Achievers (Honors)	23%	63%	14%	0.009
Average Caucasian Achievers (Honors)	14%	79%	7%	0.000

When students watched the video, 74% of them chose group work as their preferred class. However when asked what environment in which they learn best, only 59% of that same group chose talking to peers while the option for teacher talking was 34%. The questionnaire given also asked students to qualitatively explain their video choice.

Discussion

The research implies that females may understand better when given time to process information on their own. It is also possible that high achieving African American females may prefer individual work more than high achieving Caucasian females. A large gap between African American and Caucasian males was found when

considering learning preferences, implying that indeed these two particular groups do prefer different teaching styles.

Comments students made about their choice of video B, group work, imply that those who chose group work settings enjoy talking and social interaction. Comments students made about their choice of video C, individual work, imply that those who chose individual work settings enjoy independence. Even students that had selected one type of video cited different learning styles in their favorite classes, implying that, overall, students have adjusted to many different types of teaching styles regardless of whether it is their learning preference.

Conclusion

With the data collected in this research, teachers can start to understand the learning environments that certain groups prefer. This knowledge will help teachers reformat their own styles to meet the preferences of their students. Having the knowledge of their students' preferences will allow teachers to improve their learning environments and their student achievement levels.

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Secondary Social Studies Teachers' Usage of Reading Comprehension Techniques in Inclusive Classrooms

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Introduction

In response to the Education For All Handicapped Children Act (1975), which ensures that every child regardless of disability is entitled to free public education, some schools began the practice of full inclusion, or placing children with special needs into mainstream classrooms in order to ensure equal socialization and opportunities for learning (Bakken & Mastropieri, 1997). However, students with special needs often have trouble learning the large amount of information presented in mainstream classrooms due to the rapid pace of courses like social studies and the large amount of reading required. With reading comprehension being identified as the most prevalent learning problem among adolescents with learning disabilities (Bakken & Mastropieri, 1997), learning disabled students often have trouble succeeding in mainstream classrooms unless something is done to address their unique academic needs. The focus of this study was to see just which techniques secondary social studies teachers use to improve the reading comprehension of LD students in their inclusive classrooms today.

Review of Literature

Despite the difficulties many LD students have in mainstream classrooms, educational researcher John Lederer (2000) does not believe inclusion should be ended. He believes that learning disabled students have difficulty with reading comprehension in social studies because they process information differently, not because they are less developed academically or have a lower IQ (Lederer, 2000). Thus, the social studies teacher is expected to level the playing field in their classrooms by using different reading comprehension techniques that help all students learn.

The push for full inclusion policy is often made by supporters that assume the existence of adequate teacher training, available resources, and teachers' positive attitude toward inclusion that are necessary for easy implementation. Unfortunately, these ideal factors are not always present in the classroom (Bulgren, Davis, Deschler, Grossen, Lenz, & Schumaker, 2002).

Teachers' knowledge, understanding, and attitude concerning learning disabilities determine the success of LD students in their classrooms. Success is based on teachers' understanding of how learning disabilities work (Fuchs and Sáenz, 2002), teacher's awareness of different learning styles (Mosby, 1979), and positive teacher attitude and a willingness to use different, non-reading required assessments for LD students (DeBettencourt, 1999).

Practice and research have proven some reading comprehension techniques are more effective than others. Some effective strategies that help build reading comprehension skills include a combination of strategy instruction and direct instruction (Swanson, 1999), deeper, more thorough, and more engaging instruction (Bryant and Vaughn, 2002), and early intervention (Hickman, Linan-Thompson, and Vaughn, 2003).

Methodology

Six social studies teachers with inclusive classrooms were observed for a total of three hours each and interviewed for ten minutes about their views regarding reading comprehension techniques and full inclusion. Participants were recruited by a district-wide email to all secondary social studies teachers providing a brief but explanatory description of the study. Teachers then received and signed an informed consent form discussing the study in greater detail. Two of the classes observed were regular World History courses, three were regular United States History classes, and one was an Honors World History class. During these observations, all activities that involved reading or helped students with the comprehension of written material were noted. Interview data was categorized by question.

Results and Conclusions

In analyzing the data, the analysis was split into two sections: observations and interviews. The gathered data from each of the observations and interviews was reviewed. Themes, trends, and similarities were then identified within each section and organized.

For the purposes of this study, a theme was defined as a main focus of the researcher's data compilation. A similarity was defined as an observed characteristic that occurred in two observations or interviews, and a trend was defined as an observed characteristic that occurred three or more times.

The first theme noted in the observational data dealt with how information was conveyed to or gathered by students in class. All six of the observed teachers communicated information to students using three modes: *Board/Overhead Projector*, *Text/Worksheets*, and *Notes*. The second theme identified in the observation data dealt with which techniques teachers frequently chose to use. All six teachers observed used oral instructions, all six relied on the read aloud method but did so in a variety of different ways, and all six teachers used one-on-one instruction to aid with reading comprehension. Other unique techniques observed were group work, History Frames, and visual aids.

The three main themes identified in the interview data included how teachers felt about full inclusion; how teachers felt about reading comprehension in their classrooms; and teachers' responses concerning their own abilities to meet the needs of LD students in their inclusive classrooms. Regarding the first theme, four of the six teachers interviewed were advocates of full inclusion. Of the remaining participants, one teacher expressed mixed feelings toward full inclusion, and one teacher was against it. All participants warned against the consequences of not implementing the policy correctly, even though four were in support of full inclusion.

Regarding the second theme, teachers' opinions about reading comprehension in the classroom, four trends emerged. All six teachers recognized reading comprehension as a problem that needed to be addressed in their classrooms; three participants answered that they believed reading comprehension was the learning disability in need of the most immediate attention in their classroom; three teachers interviewed named Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), a disability that often causes reading comprehension problems; and all six of the teachers blamed the reading comprehension problems present in their classrooms on "lack of preparation" in previous grades.

The final theme discovered in the interview data involved teachers' responses concerning their own abilities to meet the needs of LD students in their inclusive

classrooms. Five of the six teachers interviewed commented that it was difficult to meet the need of Exceptional students in their classrooms. Two teachers specifically blamed this on students' lack of outside reading; one contributed the crisis to parent apathy; and one teacher blamed the administration because of its late delivery of Individual Education Plan (IEP) and 504 plans to teachers.

A larger theme discovered in the data analysis was a lack of ideal circumstances necessary for full inclusion to be implemented successfully. With this in mind, the question remains: "Is the successful implementation of full inclusion possible if ideal circumstances do not exist in secondary social studies classrooms?"

The existence of the three communication modes (*Blackboard/Overhead Projector, Text/Worksheets, Notes)* discussed in the first observational data theme, proved that reading comprehension was a necessary skill for all students in the inclusive classroom. However, the techniques used the most by secondary social studies teachers did not focus on improving reading comprehension. Oral instruction, one-on-one tutoring, and read aloud do not necessarily help students gain better reading comprehension skills. Only two teachers used cognitive strategies, such as History Frames or visuals, that are proven to help students learn how to better comprehend what they are reading.

This quick-fix method of teaching is explained by the amount of content teachers are forced to cover in social studies classroom, overcrowding, and time constraints (Debettencourt, 1999). Two teachers interviewed specifically mentioned overcrowding as a major obstacle that keeps them from meeting LD students' needs. The teachers interviewed also proved how difficult it is to cover material deeply and thoroughly, as Bryant and Vaugn (2002) suggest.

These increased time and content pressures being placed on teachers contributed to participants mixed emotions about full inclusion. Although four of the six teachers interviewed were not opposed to inclusion, they all prefaced their response with "I agree with [inclusion] most of the time" because they did not think it was being implemented successfully. Teachers felt that the ideal circumstances necessary for inclusion to work successfully were not present.

Teacher preparation in special needs areas could aid in building reading comprehension skills. Few of the teachers interviewed had training beyond one college

class in special education. One teacher admitted to having no training at all. This trend, combined with teachers' complaints of being overwhelmed by "overcrowding" and "behavior problems," suggested that the better preparation could help teachers to better handle working with learning disabled students.

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Teaching Culture in the K-12 Spanish Program

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Introduction

As of July 1 2003, the United States Census Bureau (2004) reported that
Hispanics were the largest race and ethnic minority (excluding the 3.9 million inhabitants
of Puerto Rico) in the United States, with an estimated population of 39.9 million (U. S.
Census Bureau, 2004). The estimated population increased from 37.4 million in March
2002 by 2.5 million in less than a year. The reported origins of Hispanics in the United
States include Mexico, Cuba, various Central and South American countries, and other
Hispanic origins (Ramirez & Cruz, 2002). As a result of the large Hispanic population,
new cultures abound in American society. It is essential that American citizens learn
about the various cultures that Hispanics represent because cultural awareness is an
integral component of functioning in the multi-faceted society of the United States and
the world.

The foreign language classroom, specifically the K-12 Spanish classroom, is an
ideal place to teach about the cultures of Spanish speaking people. In fact, it is suggested
that language cannot be truly acquired and appreciated without knowing about the people
or peoples who are directly associated with the language (Rowan, 2001).

Review of Literature

The integration of culture into the K-12 foreign language program is a concept of
great importance to foreign language learning. The American Council on the Teaching of
Foreign Languages (ACTFL) developed the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning*
as a national gauge that foreign language educators can follow to determine the content
knowledge students should have in a foreign language during the K-12 continuum of
study (ACTFL, 1996). The standards are based on the five connected goal areas or the
Five C's of Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities.

Standards 2.1 and 2.2 both deal specifically with culture. Standard 2.1 states, "Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied." Standard 2.2 states, "Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied." These two standards are based on the Cultures goal of gaining knowledge and comprehension of the studied cultures. The cultures goal and the standards associated with it make culture a key focus in foreign language instruction (ACTFL, 1996).

Following the national foreign language standards, the *ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners* were also created by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages as a way to measure the students' development of the content knowledge of the standards (ACTFL, 1998). Language use is described by three modes of communication: interpersonal, interpretive, and presentational. The interpersonal mode is communication between individuals, the interpretive mode consists of the interpretation of written or spoken meanings when direct comprehension does not take place, and the presentational mode is the creation of messages that help others to understand. Using these three modes of communication, language performance is measured at three levels: novice, intermediate, and pre-advanced, as students develop proficiency. The areas of comprehensibility, comprehension, language control, vocabulary, cultural awareness, and communication strategies are used to assess progress in each of three modes. Cultural awareness is assessed by a guiding question that pertains to how cultural understanding is reflected by way of students' ability to communicate. Thus, culture is an integral component in students' overall development of proficiency over time, which demonstrates its importance in the greater framework of foreign language study (ACTFL, 1998).

The foreign language classroom is a place where students can gain cultural awareness of people who have different customs and traditions, and where students can acquire a broader worldview (Martínez-Gibson, 1998). Well-trained and prepared teachers are vital to the success of implementing culture into the K-12 Spanish program. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate specific instructional strategies Spanish teachers use to teach and assess cultural knowledge and awareness in the K-12 Spanish classroom.

Methodology

In order to determine specific instructional strategies that K-12 Spanish teachers use in their classes to teach and assess cultural knowledge and awareness, the researcher conducted the study in two phases. Two elementary, two middle, and six high school Spanish teachers who currently teach in public schools in a city in the southeastern United States were chosen randomly to participate in this study. One elementary school foreign language specialist teaches grades 3-5, and the other teaches grades 2-5. The two middle school teachers have grades 6-8. At the secondary level, one instructor has Advanced Placement (AP) Spanish language and Advanced Placement (AP) Spanish literature, three have Level One, one has Levels One and Two, and the other has Levels Two and Three. To protect the identity of all participants, all foreign language specialists are referred to as Teacher A—J with no mention of gender.

In the first phase of the study, the researcher interviewed each teacher for approximately 45 minutes during the months of October and November of 2004. The interview consisted of 15 questions. The interviews were conducted to investigate specific instructional strategies Spanish teachers use to teach and assess their students' cultural knowledge and awareness. The researcher also wanted to determine how the teachers use the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (ACTFL, 1996) and the *ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners* (ACTFL, 1998) to plan and carry out instruction that focuses on the development of cultural awareness. The researcher audio-taped each interview for later reference and analysis.

In the second phase of the study, which took place in November 2004, the researcher observed each of the participants in two of their classes. The purpose of the observations was to learn how Spanish teachers carry out instruction pertaining to culture and to determine strategies they mentioned during the interview that support current research on the teaching of culture. All information gathered during the teacher interviews and the field notes taken during observations were reviewed in order to identify common effective instructional strategies used by teachers to develop cultural awareness in the K-12 Spanish program. The information was also used to determine how the teachers use the national foreign language standards and the performance guidelines to teach and assess cultural knowledge and awareness.

Interview and Observation Results

After completing ten interviews and nine observations of the participating K-12 Spanish teachers, the researcher became further aware of the effects that the national standards have on classroom instruction. All teachers interviewed were familiar with the standards except for one; however the degree of familiarity varied. Nevertheless, all teachers, including the one who was not at all familiar with the standards, implemented one or more of them into their classroom instructional practices. This, in turn, contributed to similarities in practices observed even though instruction was different for each teacher. Because the standards were used in instructional practices of all teachers, each class has the potential to produce students with a higher level of proficiency. Whether or not the students achieve a higher level of proficiency rests with the instruction of the teacher, which was not observed long term.

Nine of the ten teachers interviewed were also familiar with the Performance Guidelines. The teachers stated that they use these guidelines to assess students' proficiency, primarily through formal and informal assessment measures. For example, they discussed the use of teacher-created rubrics based on the guidelines, and the use of the guidelines as a checklist to measure students' proficiency. Some varied in assessment practices used for the three modes of communication, but communication played a large role in student assessment in each of the teacher's classes.

It was evident that all teachers interviewed understand the importance of using the Comparisons goal in their instruction. In the observations, the researcher found that each teacher gave examples from the native language and culture to compare to those of the foreign language and culture in order to foster a sense of connection between the students and the language and culture that they are studying. The researcher observed that students appeared to be open-minded to learning about the differences and similarities between themselves and the people in the foreign culture.

The Cultures goal is one of the main focuses of both the interviews and the observations. During the observations, the researcher found that teachers mostly introduced elements of culture into instruction as opposed to forming instruction around a cultural element. Four teachers (B, D, H, and I) structured a lesson around a cultural topic and discussed it in great detail. For example, Teacher B discussed the origin of

Hispanic names and made comparisons to American names. Two teachers (E and F) who integrated culture as topics arose during instruction also discussed it in great detail. For example, Teacher F integrated much culture into the lesson by discussing ideas such as the running of the bulls in Spain, different cities in Spain and their cultural practices and customs, and the different languages that are spoken in Spain. The researcher noticed that most teachers did not consciously plan to teach culture. Rather, it was discussed as topics were brought up by both students and teachers, and as the text discussed it. In all cases, the researcher observed that the teachers used culture to peak the interest of the students. In some cases, it was not talked about in depth, but it was addressed as something that related to the concept that the teacher intended to teach.

Conclusion

Research shows that there are many possible strategies that Spanish teachers at all levels can use to integrate culture into their instruction. It is the responsibility of the teacher to be knowledgeable of the foreign language national standards and Performance Guidelines in planning effective instruction that develops students' language and cultural awareness. Today's society calls for global citizens who are multilingual and multicultural. It is through carefully designed curriculum and instructional practices based on the national standards and Performance Guidelines that foreign language specialists will be able to prepare future global citizens.

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Developing Writing Proficiency in the Secondary Spanish Classroom

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In today's society, the ability to function competently in another language aside from one's native language has become increasingly important (ACTFL, 1999). In the United States, the educational system should prepare students who are proficient in other languages, especially Spanish, due to the increased Spanish speaking population (ACTFL, 1999). The Hispanic population has grown tremendously over the past few years in the United States reaching 39.9 million and accounting for approximately half of the 9.4 million residents added to the nation's population since the 2000 Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). As the Hispanic population increases, the Spanish language has continued to dominate foreign language enrollment, accounting for almost 70% of all language enrollment in grades 7-12 (Draper & Hicks, 2002).

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages developed the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (ACTFL, 1996), the *ACTFL Peformance Guidelines for K-12 Learners* (ACTFL, 1996), and the *Proficiency Guidelines-Writing* (ACTFL, 2001) to help state and local school districts plan foreign language curricula and assess students' language development in grades K-12. The heart of the national standards and guidelines is communication. However, writing proficiency can sometimes take a backseat to speaking in foreign language instruction. The *Proficiency Guidelines-Writing* (ACTFL, 2001) offers a means for foreign language teachers to develop and assess students' writing according to the levels of novice, intermediate, advanced, and superior. The Performance Guidelines are aligned with the writing guidelines and add the three modes of communication: Interpersonal, Interpretive, and Presentational. In order for a student to communicate effectively in these three modes, his writing ability must be developed in an articulated manner that guides him toward proficiency in the Spanish language.

Review of Literature

 In the 1970's, the manner in which writing was taught shifted to the process approach which identifies writing as a cognitive process involving five interconnected stages: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing (Matsuda, 2003; Barnett, 1989). In the prewriting stage, the student's schema is activated through the use of graphic organizers such as Venn diagrams, thematic maps, semantic maps, and outlines. Another common technique used to activate the student's schema is through teacher modeling, in which the teacher works through the writing process with the class by composing, revising, and editing a writing sample (Holmes, 2003). After the modeling process, they are able to advance to the next stage of writing where their ideas are developed on paper. The drafts are then revised and edited to ensure that the students are making both surface and structural changes to portray a message effectively. In the revising and editing stages, foreign language teachers provide feedback in the form of teacher-student conferences, peer revision, and/or written commentary (Ferris, 2003).

 After the student has completed the writing process, he publishes or shares his work in its final form with others. The foreign language teacher may decide to give a final grade and/or add it to a student's writing portfolio. To assign a grade, the foreign language teacher can use one of three types of rubrics: holistic, analytic, or primary trait (Cooper & Odell, 1977). If the student's work is added to his portfolio, the teacher is able to compare the writing sample to other portfolio works in order to identify which areas the student has not completely mastered (Aninao, Padilla, & Sung, 1996).

 Besides guiding the students through the writing process, teachers must decide the types of writing experiences students will have. One method, the task approach, focuses on four specific writing purposes: descriptive, narrative, expository, or argumentative. Research indicates that lower levels of instruction in high school usually involve descriptive and narrative tasks which are less cognitively demanding, since they follow a more or less linear pattern of thinking (Schultz, 1991). In addition to the writing tasks, teachers should determine to what degree they want to incorporate technology into student writing. According to Krueger (2002), students tend to reflect more on their language usage when using a computer, because it allows for the quick manipulation of

text and access to many resources such as spelling and grammar checkers and bilingual dictionaries.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the strategies that secondary Spanish teachers employ in the teaching of writing with regard to the use of the Performance Guidelines, the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for Writing, the writing process, types of feedback provided, the evaluation process, and the integration of technology to develop a student's writing.

Methodology

In order to determine how secondary level Spanish teachers develop students' writing proficiency, the researcher interviewed eight high school teachers who are currently teaching in a small town in the Southeastern United States. All participants were randomly selected to participate in the study, and they teach Spanish I through V, Advanced Placement Spanish Language, and Advanced Placement Spanish Literature.

Each participant was interviewed between October and November of 2004 using an interview instrument that contains fifteen questions related to the use of the *ACTFL Performance Guidelines for K-12 Learners* (ACTFL, 1998), the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines-Writing* (ACTFL, 2001), prewriting exercises, writing tasks, feedback, and evaluation methods in Spanish instruction. The questions were constructed to elicit responses about the various practices a Spanish teacher uses to develop students' writing proficiency, and with the consent of the participants, seven of the eight interviews were audio taped for later reference.

Results and Conclusion

In this study, the researcher found that most teachers are aware of both guidelines, and they indicated that they try to incorporate them into their instruction. However, these guidelines do not appear to be at the forefront of the teachers' plans. The findings revealed that they focus more on the content of the textbook in order to prepare their students for the next course level or a national exam; therefore, many of the writing activities that they incorporate into their instruction center around textbook themes. It appears that the textbook dictates more or less what types of writing they can assign, because the teachers feel obligated to cover all the chapters in the textbook by the end of the school year.

Even though all teachers interviewed incorporate writing assignments primarily to align with textbook themes and concepts, the researcher found that they understand fully the importance of modeling the writing process. According to the teachers, the students might have learned all the vocabulary and grammar points necessary for an assignment, but they still need guidance to produce their own work. The modeling approach allows the students to see how much language they can generate with their current knowledge of the Spanish language, because the teachers plan the process carefully to elicit students' language. This instructional strategy is utilized at all levels of the secondary program and thus on all the writing tasks; however, this study shows that there is a clear division between which writing tasks are done at the various levels. The lower level classes concentrate on the tasks that are less cognitively demanding such as descriptive and narrative tasks. Exposition and argumentation are covered in the later levels, and most teachers agree that expository and argumentative tasks are the most difficult writing tasks for the students.

No matter what the writing task, the teachers in this study stress the importance of providing feedback. All participating teachers want their students to be able to identify mistakes in their writing. Therefore, all teachers interviewed have developed systems that allow their students to realize specific mistakes they make and how to correct them. Some utilize excerpts from students' assignments and plan instruction based on the errors made, and then ask students to identify and correct the errors. Other teachers utilize student conferences, written comments, and/or an error correction code which highlights errors to provide feedback. The final evaluation of a written work may come in the form of a letter or number grade which is assigned based on a rubric. All the participants in the study use rubrics so the students understand clearly the evaluation expectations for the writing assignment. As a result, the analytic rubric is the most common rubric used in the Spanish classroom, because the students know how many points are allocated to different categories such as punctuation, organization, spelling, and grammar.

In conclusion, the researcher investigated many strategies that Spanish teachers use to develop a student's writing proficiency. In order for students to advance their proficiency level in writing, students must be given as many opportunities as possible to manipulate Spanish in its written form. The study found that all teachers do not stress

writing to the same degree or in the same manner; however, each teacher does incorporate writing into Spanish instruction. Most teachers rely on the textbook to provide an articulated writing sequence, but greater emphasis should be placed on the Performance Guidelines and ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines in Writing in the assessment of student work to ensure articulation of proficiency development.

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Teacher Beliefs and Practices with Respect to Culturally Relevant Teaching

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In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was passed, bringing the plight of minority students in public schools again to the forefront of the national consciousness. As a group, students of color perform significantly more poorly than Caucasian students in almost every indicator of academic success. Socioeconomic status undoubtedly plays a part in the achievement gap, but a potentially more productive line of thought centers on changes in pedagogy. The new accountability brought about by NCLB has re-emphasized the importance of teachers who can reach every student in their classrooms. Educators are starting to realize that to reach out to students from different ethnic groups, teachers must learn to understand ethnic differences, respect those differences, and use the cultural knowledge students already possess to facilitate learning.

Review of Literature

The large majority of students who are successful in American education share the Euro-American values that shape the school system. However, as the country grows more diverse, an increasing amount of students are experiencing what Alan Bishop (2000) calls "cultural conflict" – a dissonance between the values and culture at home, and the values and culture present in the schools. Since the job of the school is to educate the student and to prepare the student for a successful life in America, there needs to be a way of resolving this cultural conflict. Culturally relevant theory is a call for pedagogical reform that will produce teachers who bolster students' cultural identity in a way that encourages critical thinking and increases their academic success.

Currently, the teacher workforce is 90% Anglo-American, mostly female, and "culturally insular" (Edwards, McNamara, & Carter, 2000, p. 3). This presents an increasing problem for public education, because as the teaching force is becoming more homogenous, the student body is growing more and more diverse (Wagner, Roy, Ecatoiu,

& Rousseau, 2000, p. 108). It is clear that teachers must be able to teach to students who possess very different cultural background than themselves. Culturally relevant pedagogy is based on research of effective teachers of minority students, and is designed to inform teachers about the best ways to create an environment of success for all students.

However, culturally relevant theory holds that conditions in the United States are unequal for different ethnic groups, and that cultural stereotypes should not be accepted without question. "For many students, mass media is the only source of knowledge about ethnic diversity… [u]nfortunately, much of this 'knowledge' is inaccurate and frequently prejudicial" (Gay, 2002, p. 109). This is true for minority ethnic groups as well as white middle-class Americans. Teachers need to know what effect media images have on every ethnic group – African, Asian, Latino, Native, and European American (Gay 2002, p. 109). After all, the goal of education should be to prepare a student for life in the United States, and being able to think critically about relevant issues is a very important part of American citizenship (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 162). For this reason, teachers should teach students in a way that encourages them to critique the existing social order.

Culturally relevant teaching holds as an axiom that all children are capable of learning. Placing the blame on the student or on the parents is a dodge that takes responsibility off of where it belongs -- what happens in the classroom (Delpit, 1993, p. 16). However, cultural differences often prevent educators from taking advantage of diverse student's cultural knowledge and traditions. As Gay (2000) argues: "Just as the evocation of their European American, middle-class heritage contributes to the achievement of White students, using the cultures and experiences of Native Americans, Asian and Pacific Islander Americans, Latino Americans, and African Americans facilitates their school success" (p. 14).

Through a survey of high school mathematics teachers in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school district, this study aims to explore whether the beliefs and practices of the teachers interviewed are consistent with the goals and beliefs of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Methodology

Nine high school mathematics teachers were selected for this study in a convenience sample. Each teacher sat down with the researcher for a twenty to thirty

minute interview about their teaching beliefs and practices. All participants were asked the same set of questions, and they were not told ahead of time what those questions would be. The teachers surveyed came from three different schools districts in central North Carolina. All participants were interviewed during November 2004, and all interviews were audiotaped for later analysis.

Results and Discussion

Most of the teachers interviewed had only a vague understanding of culturally relevant theory. Only three teachers said that they were familiar with the term "culturally relevant teaching" and two of those three knew about it only from their graduate education. Only one teacher out of the nine had kept current with the literature on cultural relevance. However, despite this seeming lack of knowledge of the theory, the practices of many teachers fell in line with culturally relevant practices.

All of the teachers expressed strong support for the idea of a "community of learners" -- that students should work with each other and with the teacher towards a common goal. Teacher C used the popularity of the TV show "Survivor" as an inspiration for group work. Teacher D has "center" days, where students work in groups at different "centers" for 20 minute intervals, and then switch. "My integrated class is strictly organized in cooperative groups, every day" said Teacher E. "The only thing they do individually is homework."

However, when asked for ideas on how to make math more accessible to students from other cultures, the other teachers gave a whole variety of answers. Some teachers spoke approvingly of their new textbooks, which include resources for ESL students. A few teachers said that lowering class sizes would be the only way to reach more struggling students.

Teacher A is the only teacher who brought up the achievement gap during the interview. He felt that the gap was due in part to the Eurocentric nature of attitudes about math, which can turn off African-American and Latino students. To combat this, he talks about the Chinese invention of paper, the Mayan calendar, and the belief that Pythagoras' eponymous theorem was actually discovered by the Egyptians. "It's important to have everybody in the class realize that their ancestors and family had a role in developing

what we're talking about," he said. He was the only teacher to express a clear view on how to build off of students' ethnic culture to promote their math abilities.

However, other teachers had other ways of making the material more relevant to students by appealing to youth culture rather than ethnic culture. Teacher B related that she often has athletes in her classes, so she uses basketball as the setting for algebra word problems. Other teachers tried to make the materially more relevant to students' everyday lives. As part of a lesson on slope and rates of change, her class used data from the 2004 election to study how each county in North Carolina voted and compared the vote result to the demographics in the county. In Teacher D's class, students investigated exponential growth using Skittles, and in Teacher F's class, they picked a career and projected how much money they would be earning a few years in the future based on their current salary.

One facet of culturally relevant teaching that most teachers are not familiar with is the idea of mathematics as a tool of social reform. When asked whether or not they saw mathematics as a tool for social reform, some teachers disagreed outright, and many were incredulous, asking for an example of math being used in that manner. Teacher C was the only participant who came back with an instant affirmative answer.

This study suggests that there is room for improvement in teacher professional development. Even when teachers followed culturally relevant practice, they were largely unaware of the underpinning theory. Curriculum requirements are now rigorous enough that teachers may be discouraged from including activities that promote cultural competence and a community atmosphere unless they are confident that these practices will also promote academic achievement. Some teachers are also reluctant to address cultural differences, because they are too concerned about stereotyping and prejudice to accept that there are significant differences in learning styles among different ethnic groups.

With few exceptions, teachers were not familiar at all with the idea of mathematics as a tool for effecting social reform. Since most of the participants were approving of the idea once it was explained, this suggests that this concept of "math as reform" is not receiving enough exposure in teacher education or professional preparation.

This study suggests that this is the largest deficit in teacher practices with respect to culturally relevant pedagogy.

This study also suggests that a re-evaluation of the state-mandated end-of-course test (EOC) is desirable. The teachers almost unanimously indicated the accountability the test provides is necessary, but they thought there was too much emphasis placed on it. In all school districts, the EOC counts for a sizeable percentage of the students' final grade. Because of this, some teachers complained that the test was too lenient. Other teachers from other districts also complained about students who performed at a failing level all throughout the school year, but scored well enough on the EOCs to move to the next level of math. "I'm embarrassed that some of my students go on to college to take math courses," one teacher confided. "I don't want anyone to know I was their teacher."

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Contemporary Allusions in the English Classroom

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Moffett and Wagner state in *Student Centered Language Arts and Reading, K-12* (1992), that, "Words on words strengthen nothing but doubts because they merely shadow what you are trying to teach, which is words on world." More simply, it is not important to only teach literature, but, rather, it is important to teach literature in conjunction with how it relates to the world and to students' lives. This study sought to examine teacher use of contemporary allusions in the English classroom and the effect of such use on student engagement.

Review of Literature

An increasing amount of research has been devoted to the investigation of how to make literature more relevant and applicable to students' lives and much of that research lends itself to the idea that the incorporation of contemporary issues and allusions in the classroom increase student interest and engagement. In writing about her student teaching experience, Jenkinson (1999) discusses a survey she distributed to her students. The responses to the student surveys uncovered that many of Jenkinson's students believed "most classroom assignments were totally irrelevant." As Jenkinson states, "They saw little connection between class work and life." In order to combat such beliefs, educators Tabers-Kwak and Kauffman (2002) offer advice to other educators of ways to teach Shakespeare through "the lens of a new age." Tabers-Kwak and Kauffman reference Louise Rosenblatt's philosophy that literature should be, "lived through the reader," and claim that "if we want our students to share their thoughts and become active participants in the literature, then in the process of setting up the transaction we must focus teaching and learning through the lens of a 'new age' by establishing a connection to our students' experiences." (p. 69) They continue by discussing the ways in which "Shakespeare's characters come alive when students' realize that themes and conflicts in today's world

share common characteristics with lives of long ago." (p. 70) The authors conclude by remarking that assignments which made Shakespeare relevant to the lives of their students brought "even the toughest students on time with a rewarding 'This is awesome.'" (p. 71) Carey-Webb (1993) echoes the same sentiments, making the point that English teachers can make Shakespeare's *The Tempest* exciting for students by emphasizing the issues of young love and the tensions in parent and child relationships within the play, issues that all teenage students can relate to. He adds that exercises that have engaged his class with the text have dealt with comparisons between issues in the *Tempest* and contemporary issues such as the Los Angeles riots and the beating of Rodney King. Stover (2003) additionally reports on ways in which to engage students with a Shakespearean text, although she goes further to discuss the "responsibility of the English teacher to build 'bridges' between our students and the texts we value." (p. 79) She gives an example of using the text *The Lord of the Flies* in conjunction with a viewing of an episode of the popular television show *Survivor*.

Like the previous authors, Cooks (2004) highlights the need for educators to bring relevance into their literature instruction. In addition, however, Cooks offer a specific solution for doing just that. Cooks suggest that, "As educators interested in providing the best teaching approaches for students, teachers may be able to bring hip-hop into the classroom to give students an increased opportunity to become academically successful." (p. 75) He continues, "Some students, who are familiar with the topics, issues, and mentality of people associated with 'rapping,' learn more effectively when the lessons they learn inside the classroom reflect experiences to which they can relate and understand." (p.75) Kane (1996) echoes those same sentiments as she outlines the ways in which she made grammar an interesting subject for her students by using the news stories of O.J. Simpson in the mid-nineteen nineties to teach grammar and usage. Kane reveals in her article that her students, once bored to tears by the thought of grammar, became intrigued by the subject. Finally, like Cooks and Kane, Simmons (1994) outlines the ways in which she uses the famous novel *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley to engage her students in discussions and argumentative writing about the connections between the themes of the text and the similar twenty-first century questions of morals and ethics, especially in the scientific world. She mentions links that students make between the text

and contemporary issues such abortion, the manipulation of DNA, and the medical prolonging of life. She concludes by stating that, in student portfolios at the end of each year, the *Frankenstein* papers are always chosen as the students' favorites.

McCallister (2002) states that, "Teachers would do well to remember that meaning isn't received through the act of reading, it is experienced through the prisms of our perspective, which, in turn, is shaped by context. The elements of context – the people, places, history, and events that place us somewhere in time and space – are our interpretive tools." (p. 10) The evidence conveyed in the above research reports and many others like them suggest that McCallister is correct, that literature is not simply about the act of reading. Rather, it is the ability for students to be able to draw from their reading the ways in which a particular story, character, or event relates to their lives. In order to facilitate such discovery with a text, it is important that teachers of literature take the opportunity to use contemporary issues and allusions to engage students with the texts they are reading, the essays they are writing, the ideas they are presenting. Only then, it seems, will English literature classrooms truly be able to foster a life-long love of reading and language arts in their students.
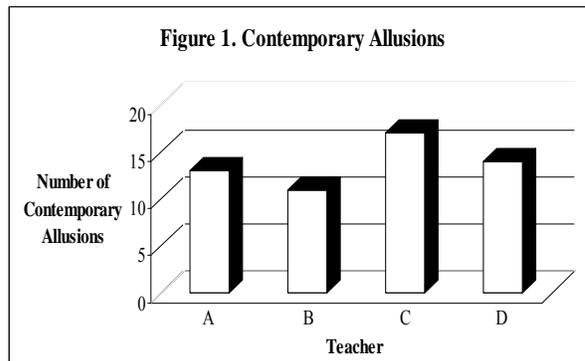
Methodology

The researcher observed nine class periods taught by each of the four participating master teachers at a high school in Winston Salem, NC. The researcher alternated between different class periods and teachers, for a total of 36 observed classes. During non-participant observations, the researcher took note of instances in which the teachers used contemporary allusions in classroom instruction. Such allusions included, but were not limited to, references to contemporary films, music, news items, or cultural trends. The researcher also took note every ten minutes of the number of engaged students versus the number of disengaged students, as well as the number of students who were questionable and did not clearly fall in either category. Signs of engagement included students having their eyes on the teacher as the teacher spoke, students actively reading assigned texts, students actively engaged in class discussion or conversation, and other signs of full participation. All data was recorded on an observation template. The researcher did not record the identity of any of the students.

At the conclusion of the research process, the researcher compiled the gathered data and compared the levels of student engagement between teachers who did use contemporary allusions in the classroom and teachers who did not. In order to secure the anonymity of the teachers, each teacher was assigned a letter (Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher C, and Teacher D).

Results

Teachers A, B, and D all used roughly the same amount of contemporary allusions throughout the course of the observation period (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Contemporary Allusions

Teacher A had the third highest number of contemporary allusions, 13, although Teacher A had the lowest average level of student engagement. Teacher B had the lowest number of contemporary allusions, 11, and the second lowest percentage of student engagement. Teacher D had 14 contemporary allusions, the second highest number, as well as the second highest level of student engagement. However, Teacher C employed the greatest use of contemporary allusions throughout the observation period (See Figure 1) and, correspondingly, Teacher C's level of student engagement was greater than that of any of the other teachers (See Table 1).

Table 1. Percentage of Student Engagement

Observation	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Teacher D
#1	24%	84%	85%	86%
#2	43%	88%	86%	84%
#3	75%	93%	93%	91%
#4	60%	64%	91%	97%
#5	77%	82%	92%	79%
#6	59%	81%	81%	83%
#7	60%	55%	80%	97%
#8	71%	55%	87%	76%
#9	91%	75%	92%	63%
Total	62%	75%	87%	84%

Teacher C did a great job of making difficult texts such as *Gilgamesh* interesting to students by comparing the text to the recent blockbuster film hit *Fight Club*. Teacher C also used contemporary allusions to help qualify certain literary terms and vocabulary words such as catharsis, which Teacher C helped explain by making reference to a recent plane crash in Washington, D.C. or the word "ewe" which Teacher C clarified by referencing the L.A. Raiders cheerleaders, "The Ewes."

Conclusions

The researcher hypothesized that the greater number of contemporary allusions used, the greater the percentage of student engagement. Although the highest rate of student engagement was found in the classes of the teacher with the greatest number of contemporary allusions and the second highest number of allusions was recorded in the classroom of the teacher with the second highest level of engagement, the data from the other two participating teachers did not correspond with the hypothesized outcome. In addition, there was not a much discrepancy between the numbers of allusions used by each teacher. Therefore, no broad generalizations can be made from this study. However, the results do lend some validity to the hypothesis. Perhaps a longer period of observation would yield more contemporary allusions and a stronger correlation between the use of contemporary allusions and student engagement could be found.

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The Use of Discussion in the Secondary Social Studies Classroom

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Introduction:

Thomas Jefferson once said "nothing but good can result from an exchange of information and opinions (Coates, 2004)" and that "difference of opinion leads to enquiry, and enquiry to truth (Coates, 2004)." The National Council for the Social Studies Curriculum Guidelines (NCSS, 2004) clearly states teachers' responsibility to "promote critical, creative, and ethical thinking," and students' need to "engage in reflective discussions as they listen carefully and respond thoughtfully to one another's ideas."

The purpose of this study is to determine if, and how, high school social studies teachers in a Southeastern city use discussion in their classrooms. More specifically, the study investigates important questions about how frequently discussions take place, how long they last, who is involved with the discussion, and what types of discussion are being conducted by going into the classroom to observe the behaviors of teachers and students. By presenting teachers with information demonstrating the strengths and weaknesses of various instructional approaches to using discussion, this study will hopefully lead to the adoption of new techniques and new perspectives in the high school social studies classroom.

Literature Review:

Academic research has found discussion to be an effective tool in the obtainment of several different student learning outcomes. According to Gall and Gall (1990) discussion can improve general subject mastery by engaging higher order thinking. Almost universally, teachers endorse discussion as a key instructional tool throughout the social studies discipline (Alvermann & Hayes, 1989; Wilen, 1990).

Unfortunately, no single definition of discussion is used consistently throughout academic literature. Wilen (1990) focuses on the need for an "educative, reflective, and structured group conversation with students" (p. 3). This definition emphasizes three key components: conversation, or the "social intercourse between familiar people;" reflection, or "encouraging students to think critically and creatively at higher cognitive levels;" and structure, which requires that the discussion is "organized and conducted by a leader(s)" (Wilen, 1990, p. 3).

In reality, however, discussions in classrooms can lack this notion of two-way communication between students or between students and the teacher. Instead of using a more open type of discussion, teachers rely on formalized discussions that they control. Normally called recitation (Alvermann & Hayes, 1989; Roby, 1988), this type of discussion conforms to a strict pattern of talk. During recitations the teacher asks a specific question, with a specific answer, which he or she possesses, and expects to receive that answer from the student (Roby, 1988). These questions tend to revolve around fact finding (Roby, 1988), begin with "who, what, and when" (Alvermann & Hayes, 1989, p. 331), and come in rapid fire succession (Roby, 1988).

Teachers might be more likely to engage in open discussions if it were not for fear of losing control. Studies show that teachers' report their need to control discussions originates from their associated need to control the classroom environment (Alvermann & Hayes, 1989; Larson, 1996). As a result, teachers tend to talk approximately three times as often as their students do (Hoetker & Ahlbrand, 1969). In addition, most teacher talk is considerably longer than student talk, so an even greater majority of class time is dominated solely by the teacher (Hoetker & Ahlbrand, 1969).

Methodology:

The purpose of this study was to investigate if, and how social studies teachers use discussion in their classrooms. This was done through a combination of quantitative and qualitative elements, including classroom observation with data collection, and field notes conducted over a period of approximately two months. The study was conducted in high schools located in a medium-sized urban community in the Southeastern United States. A convenience sample of seven teachers was selected for the study. The seven

teachers came from three different high schools, each of which had a relatively diverse middle-class student population.

Data collection began by observing each of the seven participating teachers. At the beginning of each period, the researcher completed an observation protocol including: school's name, teacher's name, subject area, level of academic rigor, day of the week, time of day, length of class period, and desk arrangement. A quick survey of the class was also collected that included: number of students, students' grade level, number of male students, and number of Caucasian students.

Discussions were observed for three different variables: the pattern of interactions between students and teacher, the type of discussion that took place, and the length of the discussion. Types of discussion were categorized on a scale of one to three. The three categories come from a study conducted by B. Larson (1996). In Type 1: Discussion as Recitation, the teacher is in complete control of the discussion and it mirrors the expected pattern of interaction. Types 2 and 3 gradually increase student participation and control of the discussion.

A brief summary of each class period of observation was prepared that included: the total number of discussions, the number of teacher interactions, number of student interactions, number of teacher-student interactions, number of student-student interactions, and the total length of all discussion in that period. With the results of each teacher calculated, averages for all teachers were then calculated to form a basis of comparison. These results can be found in Appendix 5, Table 5.01.

Results and Implications

While more than twenty-five percent of all instructional time was spent in some kind of discussion, and students and teachers share almost the exact same number of interactions during a class period, these results merely mask a deeper, less attractive situation present in many classrooms. Teacher interactions were, as a rule, much longer than student interactions. Another area of disappointment emerged in the distribution of the interaction pattern. Almost ninety percent of all classroom interactions were teacher to student, or student to teacher. This fact alone suggests that recitation style discussions were quite common in most classrooms. In a more open discussion, students should have

been interacting amongst one and other, rather than just responding to teacher initiated comments or questions.

Perhaps even more important, however, is the number of students being engaged in such teacher-student interactions. During a recitation, the teacher may direct comments at the entire class, but only one student is asked to respond. Therefore, in ninety percent of all discussions, only one student may be engaged at a time. Whereas open discussion give students the opportunity to share in controlling the discussion, recitation is controlled strictly by the teacher. Such a level of control could manifest itself in an increase in student passivity. This problem is only exacerbated further, because it was quite common for one or a few students to dominate a discussion. A second failing of the distribution of interactions in the classroom is the level at which students interact with each other. Only eleven percent of all interactions during discussions were a student comment followed by another student's comment.

The researcher was, unfortunately, not surprised to find a high level of recitation used in high school social studies classes. Discussions were rarely a conversation or encouraged personal reflection. Instead, teachers used discussion as a vehicle to drive their instruction by using fact based questions to draw out student knowledge. Teachers dominate discussion through their control of content, as well as with their high level of talk time. Likewise, it is common for a small number of students to dominate the other side of the conversation, thus risking alienating less assertive students in the class.

Perhaps this study's greatest conclusion is also one of its most significant limitations. The largest amount of open discussion was observed around the presidential election of 2004 which took place at the very end of the observation period. Conducting the study in late October of 2004 meant that the national election on November 2nd was rapidly approaching and a big focus in many classrooms. Civics classes especially took advantage of the presidential election and used it as a common topic for discussions. Important historical events such as presidential elections offer crucial opportunities for student discussion. Discussion allows students the ability to delve deeply into a topic.

Open discussion should not have to take place only around important historical moments like presidential elections. The presidential elections may actually overshadow much of the data in this study. Specifically related to Civics classes, what little open

discussion took place typically revolved around the elections. While this could not be controlled, open discussions could be much less frequent during non-election years or when other major news events are not taking place.

While studies continue to show that discussion is a positive academic influence, to merely demand teachers include more discussions in their classes would not solve the problems evident in this study. This study shows that as the number of discussions in a class period increase, they become shorter and less open. The goal for good instruction should be exactly the opposite. To meet the best definitions of discussions, they must be lengthy and open to all kinds of opinions. In addition to improving openness, the level of student-to-student interaction must be increased. As they work to increase student interaction, they too must remain aware of their own participation in discussion. Teachers should lead and facilitate discussions, not dominate them.

Discussion is about student engagement and building knowledge. It is about broadening horizons and expanding perspective. Discussion allows students and teachers alike to see information from new perspectives and delve deeper than the textbook allows. If enquiry leads to truth, as Thomas Jefferson said so many years ago, can there be any greater pursuit in education than to foster that very thing? Recitation has its place in the classroom, as does teacher-directed discussion, and open discussion. What is truly most important is to not forget the students that may be left behind if they are only served by one form of instruction.

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Differences in Teacher Practices
between Standard and Honors Level History Classes

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Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the pedagogical practices of teachers in standard versus honors level high school history classes. Specifically the researcher sought to determine if standard and honors level students were taught differently. Through qualitative research methods featuring teacher interviews and classroom observation, teacher attitudes; perceptions; and practices were evaluated.

Review of the Literature

Do honors classes receive better instruction from teachers than standard classes? Oakes (1982) argued that, due to inadequacies in teacher perception towards low income and minority students, this is indeed the case. Students from these demographic groups, he states, are often the victim of erred socially constructed notions of intelligence which leads to their placement into groups of perceived low ability. Several studies have indicated a marriage between track placement and demography. Both Resh (1998) and Lucas and Gamoran (1993) revealed a strong correlation between high-level track and high socioeconomic status (SES); and low track and low SES.

Frankel's (1995) study presented numerous characteristics of effective teachers. He portrayed good teachers as those who concentrated on ideas rather than facts, clearly explained concepts, were good listeners and had patience, integrated the curriculum into the life experiences of their students, and placed considerable interest into the thought process of students. He added that good teachers got to know their students personally, and abided by the same principles regardless of whom or where they were teaching. Perhaps most importantly, they taught their honors classes the same as their non-honors classes.

Are standard or honors level classes assigned the best, most experienced teachers?

Hallinan (2000), in his longitudinal study examining the effects of tracking on learning amongst high school students, observed that the more experienced teachers tended to be assigned to higher-level classes.

Methodology

In pursuit of discerning between the teaching practices employed in standard versus honors level classes the researcher used, as his primary instrument, teacher interviews. Seven teachers in all were interviewed. Teacher interviews were supplemented with the observation of two class periods each of four of the participants. One of those observations per participant was of an honors class. The other was of a standard class. Scheduling difficulties resulted in only four of the seven teachers being observed.

The participants in this study were high school social studies teachers who taught both standard and honors level classes. An interview schedule was prepared which included 24 questions. The questions aimed to provide responses as to what teaching practices the selected teachers used, and their reasons for choosing those methods. For the purpose of this study the term *teaching practices* referred to both classroom pedagogy and teacher recommendations. The teachers were referred to as Teachers A-G to protect their identities.

The purpose of the observations was to determine the nature of any differences in teaching methods between standard and honors classes on the part of individual teachers, and to confirm or invalidate claims presented in the interview. Interviews preceded observation in every instance.

Results and Conclusions

Five themes emerged from the data which indicated the classroom practices of teachers and their perceptions about their students. Trends and tendencies were extracted from each theme. A tendency is identified as an idea that is shared by at least two teachers. A trend is one that is shared by at least four teachers.

"Same Game Different Names"

Despite being held accountable by the same state standards and End of Course Tests, all seven teachers reported that they use different teaching techniques between their standard and honors level classes. Reading deficiencies amongst standard students

was mentioned by six of the seven teachers as a reason for the need to alter techniques. Strategies teachers used to improve reading and accommodate students who have difficulty in standard level classes included reading guides, fill in the blank notes, graphic organizers, and numerous vocabulary activities. Though all teachers indicated that the textbook for their honors and standard classes was the same, there was a tendency for teachers to use reading materials other than the textbook for standard classes.

A trend prevalent throughout the study was the propensity for teachers to ask their honors level students to do more "analysis" and "high order thinking" than their counterparts in standard level classes. Observation data yielded that three of four teachers produced high order thinking in their standard students. One encouraged his standard students to think critically just as much as his honors class.

"The Bigger the Challenge, the Bigger the Reward"

Five teachers testified that it is more challenging to teach standard students. The most prevalent explanations were poor behavior and student apathy. Teacher G said, "Anyone can teach the honors kids. Those kids are gonna do what they're supposed to do. Not all of the regular kids wanna learn. I find it fun; it's more challenging to motivate them. Not everyone can do it…Sometimes you do your best teaching with the regular kids in reaching out and helping them to be successful."

Of the seven teachers who participated in this study, only two reported that they strongly prefer to teach honors classes. Overwhelmingly (in six of seven cases) teachers reported that, while teaching honors may be more intellectually stimulating, their most rewarding teaching experiences have come from teaching standard classes.

Ability Grouping

Though teachers used the term "ability" quite often in justifying their practices there was no consensus that emerged as to what exactly ability is. The majority of participants linked the concept of ability to student potential. Only two linked the idea of ability to intelligence. Only one instructor believed there to be a wider range in honors. No single definition of ability could be agreed upon.

When asked whether there is a wider range of ability in standard or honors classes teachers seemed to understand ability, in that context, to mean productivity. They interpreted ability to mean what was currently occurring in their classrooms. Three

teachers believed there to a wider range in standard classes. The same number believed the range was virtually the same in both tracks. Only one instructor believed there to be a wider range of ability in honors classes.

Ready For the Next Level?

The teachers in this study cited several factors as having influence on their recommendation decisions. All seven teachers affirmed the work ethic of students as being central to their recommendation decisions.

Although participants reported varying degrees to which they promote or demote students to standard or honors level classes for the next or current school year, they were unanimous in reporting that it has been much more common for standard students to "move up" than for honors students to "move down." All teachers reported that they currently have several standard students who are capable of performing well in honors classes, along with several current honors students who are not performing at an honors level. One tendency that emerged, explaining the relatively low number of honors students "moving down" to standard despite poor work ethic and academic performance, was parental overrides. In School System X parents have the right to override the recommendations of teachers if they insist on placing their child into a particular track.

Of equal importance to the assignment of students to particular tracks is the assignment of teachers to honors or standard classes. Although every participant reported that the majority of the teachers at their school teach a combination of standard and honors classes, a trend indicated the most experienced teachers are assigned a majority of honors classes.

Closing the Gap

In School system X, as in many others around the nation, minority students are underrepresented in upper level history classes. Of the 95 students who occupied the four honors classes that were observed in this study, only 16 were minority students (16.8%). Five of the seven teachers said the origin of the problem is in the home life, and lack of parental support of minority students. Four of the teachers, like Resh (1998), made a connection between race and socioeconomic status. No teachers cited racism, contemporary or historical, to be a contributor.

While the findings from this study must be interpreted cautiously several important conclusions can be made. First, despite being assigned the same text book and state Standard Course of Study, teachers in this study tended to believe it to be necessary to use different teaching methods between their standard and honors classes. Teaching methods used in standard classes tended to be more structured than those employed in honors. Honors students were asked to work independently more often, and were asked to employ higher-order thinking more often.

The purpose of this study was to examine the pedagogical practices of teachers in standard versus honors level high school history classes, and determine if standard students are taught differently than honors students. This study concluded that standard and honors students are taught differently. The chief reason why they are taught differently is because of a difference in skill level. Honors students, according to teachers, are much more advanced than standard students in fundamental reading and writing. Though honors and standard level students, most often, had access to the same materials, a tendency emerged that teachers spent more time outside of class in preparation for honors classes. Future studies should examine the extent to which this tendency has on student learning between honors and standard classes. According to the participants in this study, parents are the biggest determinant of the track placement of students—both in the learning environment they create at home for their children, and through exercising their right to directly decide the track placement of their children.

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The Effect of Culturally-Responsive Pedagogy on Student Engagement

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A problem whose difficulty is rapidly increasing, the struggle to engage students in the English classroom seems a losing one. Performing extensive library research, wading through the dense language of texts hundreds of years old, and sitting through hours of lecture about literary "greats," interspersed with lessons on proper grammatical usage have never been popular pastimes. In addition, the limited variety of perspectives, experiences, and opinions offered by the texts sanctioned in most schools are appealing to a group of students that is growing smaller by the second. Now complicated by a growing number of diverse learners, along with drastically shortened attention spans due to advances in technology, the study of English has become a thing assiduously avoided by most students, and reluctantly tolerated at best. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy has the potential to negotiate the gap between student interest and the language arts by providing a lens of relevancy through which students can view material seemingly unrelated to their lives. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, in addition to the obvious promise it holds for closing the achievement gap between majority and minority students, also has more general applications. Educators must find some way to relate what happens in the classroom to *every* student's life outside the classroom, or public education in this country will continue to fall short of student potential. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy may be the answer. This research study sought to investigate the pedagogical techniques of high school English teachers, paying particular attention to student engagement, and to determine the extent to which (if any) Culturally Responsive Pedagogy impacted the classroom experience. Did the students seem more excited about class? Did they ask more questions? Did they retain more of the material covered?

Review of Literature

In the book *Education in Multicultural Societies*, Trevor Corner states that "[t]he total school environment must be the unit of change, and not any one element, such as materials, teaching strategies, the testing program, or teacher training. While teacher training is very important, other changes must take place in the school environment in order to reform the school" (Corner, p. 83). As Corner noted, while many of the needed transitions can be facilitated via teacher training, it is the educational environment as a whole that must shift in order to accommodate a rapidly diversifying student population. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, then, is only part of the overall strategy that will lead to more effective, inclusive education.

According to Shade, Kelly, and Oberg (1997), culture is "a social system that represents an accumulation of beliefs, attitudes, habits, values, and practices that serve as a filter through which a group of people view and respond to the world in which they live" (p. 18). Culturally Responsive Pedagogy takes into account, adjusts for, and incorporates that accumulation in order to more fully engage students in their own education. It is simply instructional practice that locates educational material in the cultural milieu from which students daily emerge.

Says Ira Shor (1992) on the subject, "[h]uman beings do not invent themselves in a vacuum, and society cannot be made unless people create it together" (p. 15). In the context of an English classroom, it is not only counter-productive, but gives impetus to bored, uninterested students to remain tied to "traditional" or "tried and true" methods of instruction. If, as Shor also states, "[t]he goals of this pedagogy are to relate personal growth to public life," teachers must admit (and adjust accordingly) to the fact that students engage better, and learn more when taught literature that relates perspectives with which they can identify.

While traditional staples of the English classroom (lectures, the dense language of "outdated" texts, etc.) certainly do not rank as the most scintillating aspects of the subject, they have a rightful place in the curriculum. Those in favor of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy are not pushing for the eschewal of these which constitute the foundation of an English education. In the book, *Global Constructions of Multicultural Education*, Carl Grant and Joy Lei (2001) reference the controversial beginnings of this nation. They

argue that "as the early republic formed in the 18th century, the three main characteristics of an "American" identity were republican, Protestant, and capitalist…[this] ideology of the inherent superiority of White males and inferiority of people of color and females was so naturalized as fact that unequal treatment appeared to be, in context, equal" (p. 206). When we realize that the current climate of education in this country, while markedly different from that of the eighteenth century, is still premised and based upon such notions; when we realize that, indeed, that climate is a prevailing influence of our educational system, we begin to understand the necessity for change.

One problem that has been raised with regard to making classrooms more culturally responsive is the difficulty White teachers have relating to their increasingly higher numbers of non-white students. In the book *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools*, Gary Howard (1999) speaks to this issue, saying "Too often we place White teachers in multicultural settings and expect them to behave in ways that are not consistent with their own life experiences, socialization patterns, worldviews, and levels of racial identity development…we expect White teachers to be what they have not learned to be, namely multiculturally competent people" (p. 4). Howard urges self-examination as the solution, stating "[w]e need to understand the dynamics of past and present dominance, face how we have been shaped by myths of superiority, and begin to sort out our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.

Perhaps Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) offers the most cogent explanation of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy available:

> Specifically, culturally relevant teaching is a pedagogy that empowers students…by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These cultural referents are not merely vehicles for bridging or explaining the dominant culture; they are aspects of the curriculum in their own right (p. 18).

This type of teaching does not require extensive knowledge of a particular student's culture, but merely enough to make connective referents; *any* teacher is capable of doing it. Hollins, King, and Hayman (1994) remind us that "[r]esearch suggests that culturally congruent styles of teaching can be learned. For example, teachers who are not Hawaiian can learn to conduct lessons using talk story-like participation structures (p. 23).

Employing culturally responsive techniques has little to do with the cultural background of the teacher.

Writing in 1980, Margaret Pusch asserted that, above all else, a teacher must be flexible. "Culture is too complex; oversimplification is a constant danger….It is up to the instructor to roll with the punches and be able to capitalize on whatever happens [in the classroom]" (p. 107). Among the other requisite skills Pusch lists are open-mindedness, empathy, accuracy in perceiving differences and similarities, and relationship building skills (91). Clearly a teacher's ability to "reach" a group of students, no matter the cultural differences that may exist, rests on factors that are, to a large extent, within that teacher's control. Perhaps it is best to conclude with a quotation from Robert G. Powell and Dana Caseau's (2004) *Classroom Communication and Diversity*. "Good listeners and good communicators are sensitive to a host of behaviors involved in the communication process….How we come to understand instructional material is a function of communication" (17).

Methodology

The researcher observed nine class periods each of four high school English teachers, alternating between different class periods and teachers for a total of 36 observed classes. During his non-participant observation of the English classes, the researcher noted and recorded activities, texts, dialog, and other pedagogical techniques that located material in the cultural experiences of students—background, music, movies, television, clothing trends, etc. in the course of a normal class-period. The researcher did not record the identity of any students.

Results and Conclusions

Surprisingly, the researcher's observations showed that Culturally Responsive Pedagogy is at work, to some extent or another, in each of the four observed classrooms. The differences in student engagement were correlated rather with the frequency and consciousness of its use. For example, teachers A and B made consistent references to sitcoms, movies, music, and the like (with which the students were familiar) in order to engage them in instructional material. In those two classrooms, student engagement— with regard to the animation and attention in the classroom, as well as the retention from one day to the next—was higher. In the classrooms of teachers D, and C especially,

students tended to engage in off-task activities with more frequency, and were generally less responsive and engaged in what was going on in the classroom. These teachers seemed to only occasionally incorporate something from students' daily lives as part of the classroom discussion or as part of an assignment. When they did, however, responses were in keeping with what was observed in the classrooms of teachers A and B.

The landscape of America has changed with unabated fury in the last decade alone. The diverse cultures, beliefs, and attitudes that students bring to class must each day find resonances in the material they are being taught or public education will have failed them. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy is constituted of the best communicative techniques available, and provides a solution that has broad implications for the betterment of overall student engagement, retention, and understanding. We must hope that those to whom we entrust the education of our children will see its value and apply it.

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Maximizing Discourse:
An Assessment of Male/Female Student Response in the Classroom

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Within the spectrum of high-school English classrooms, students' responses to teacher questions can be enthusiastic at one end and almost non-existent at the other. Previous studies have attempted to provide evidence in favor of particular motivation mechanisms for teachers to engage students in the classroom. The goal of this study is to determine what types of teacher questions evoke greater responses from males or females. Previous classroom gender studies have concluded that there is, indeed, a gender gap in secondary classrooms. Thus, the present study seeks to contribute to or counter previous findings on gender differences in the classroom and to present recommendations that will allow teachers to more carefully evoke responses from all individuals in the classroom.

Review of Literature

Gender issues are widespread in educational research. Research shows a disparity between male and female academic success at the secondary level, and a debate persists regarding the unbalanced achievement of boys and girls in the English classroom. Although many teachers believe they provide equal treatment to both sexes in the classroom, Younger, Warrington, & Williams (1999) argue that gender equity is rarely achieved. Rather, teachers interact differently with girls and boys, respond differently in their questioning and the support they give, and use praise and encouragement in different measures (p.328). Moreover, "boys appear to dominate classroom interactions, while girls participate more in teacher-student interactions which support learning" (Younger, et al, 1999, p. 325). Notably, evidence demonstrates that males respond more frequently, on average, than females to open teacher questions (Younger et al, 1999).

Research also suggests a gender gap specifically regarding achievement in reading and writing; whereas girls like stories, boys are less confident about reading and writing (Barker, 1997). Although research has shown that male students are more

inclined to participate in classroom discussion than females, they seem to "dislike the tedium of reading and writing…they can be good talkers and poor listeners" (Barker, 1997, p. 222). In alignment with other gender studies, however, Salisbury, Rees, and Gorard (1999) cite evidence in favor of male dominance in the classroom (responses, talking, and interactions with the teacher). This ambivalent evidence leads to a powerful and unanswered question in educational research: "If boys enjoy higher levels of teacher pupil interaction than girls, why do they frequently underperform in comparison to girls, particularly in assessments of literacy?"(Salisbury et al, 1999, p. 409).

While many gender educational studies have focused on the effect of unbalanced achievement of male students, others study the repercussions the gender gap might have on female students' education. Although males are, on average, performing lower than females in reading and writing, girls still feel alienated from traditionally "male" subjects, such as science and math. Boys still dominate the classroom environment, however, and some teachers have lower expectations of girls and find boys to be more stimulating to teach. As a result, Warrington and Younger (2000) believe "the gender debate has been captured by those concerned predominately with male underachievement, leaving girls to make the best they can in what often continues to be a male dominated world" (p.493).

Research shows a clear divide among learning styles, motivation, and achievement between male and female students. Rather than passively analyzing these findings, the present study seeks to contribute to established data on gender differences in the classroom and offer evidence in favor of maximizing participation and response from all students, despite gender differences. By looking at male and female student response to general, textual, and personal teacher questions, the researcher hopes to conclude upon questioning styles that might generate greater interest from all students in the English classroom.

Methodology

Research was conducted in the classrooms of four English teachers at a representative high school in a mid-sized United States city. The researcher alternated between class periods and teachers to observe thirty-six classes with approximately twelve to twenty-five students in each. At the beginning of each class period, the total number of students in attendance, as well as the percentage of males and females, was
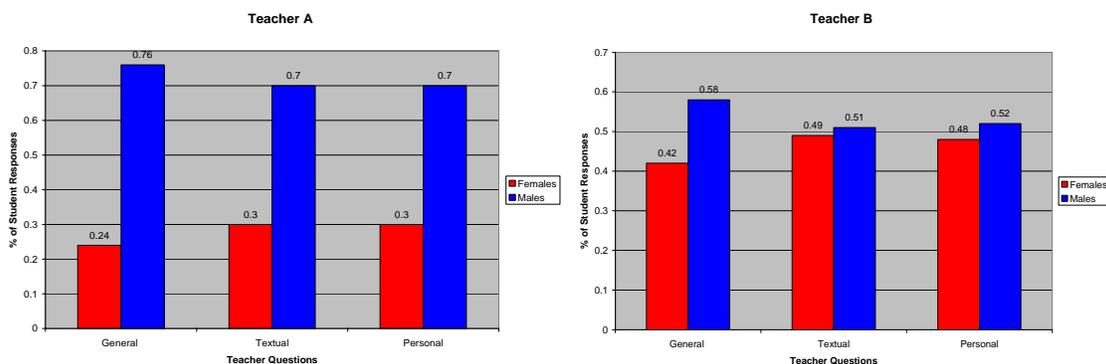
noted. As a non-participant observer, the researcher recorded undirected teacher questions verbatim during each class period. Student responses, if any, were tallied and gender of the respondents was noted. Though gender was documented, no other identifiable student information was recorded.
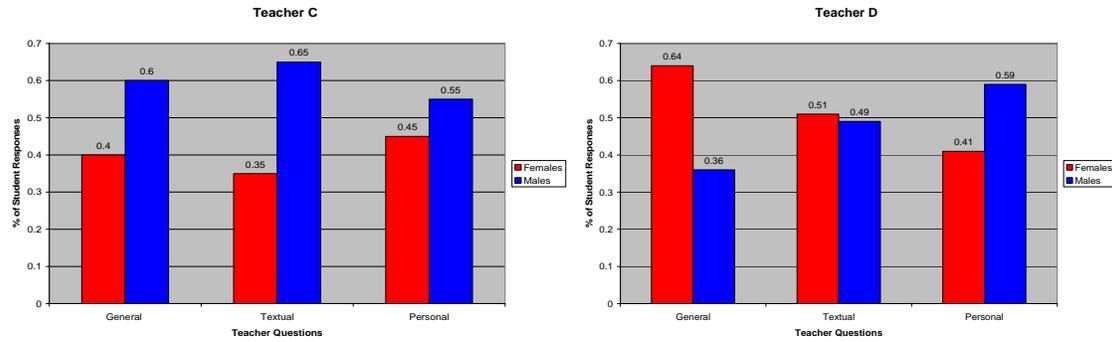
Subsequently, teacher questions were categorized according to *general*, *textual*, and *personal* questions. For the purpose of this study, *general* questions are classified as those referring to a wide range of inquiries with no relation to the text being studied or students' personal lives, *textual* questions ask students to comment directly on elements of literature (such as plot and characters), and *personal* questions invite students to relate their own lives to the discussion.

Upon completion of all classroom observations, the types of questions and gender of respondents were tallied in corresponding tables of proportions. The percentages of male and female response to each type of question were calculated. Additionally, the percentages of student responses were weighted according to the proportion of males and females in each class to account for initial disproportionate gender ratios. The researcher compiled the data in order to make comparisons between type of teacher questions and frequency of male and female student responses, specifically noting similarities, differences, and patterns of responses among both genders. The compiled data was used to draw conclusions as to which types of questions evoke maximum responses from all individuals in the classroom.

Results

As previous research has indicated, male responses to teacher questions were overwhelmingly more frequent than female student responses in this study. The results are indicated in the following graphs:

Teacher C

% of Student Responses

0.7
0.6 — 0.6 (General Males)
0.65 (Textual Males)
0.55 (Personal Males)
0.5
0.4 (General Females)
0.45 (Personal Females)
0.35 (Textual Females)

General | Textual | Personal
Teacher Questions

Females (red) / Males (blue)

Teacher D

% of Student Responses

0.64 (General Females)
0.59 (Personal Males)
0.51 (Textual Females)
0.49 (Textual Males)
0.41 (Personal Females)
0.36 (General Males)

General | Textual | Personal
Teacher Questions

Females (red) / Males (blue)

As can be seen, male responses clearly dominate discourse in Teacher A's classroom. Though males respond more frequently, on average, to all types of Teacher B's questions, the gender gap is much tighter. Again, however, males run away with the discussion in Teacher C's classroom. Unexpectedly, while males continue to dominate responses to personal questions in Teacher D's classroom, females in this class respond slightly more to textual questions and significantly more when prompted by general questions.

In order to determine which types of questions evoke more responses from males or females, the frequency of each question type must be considered. This is shown in the following table:

FREQUENCY OF TEACHER QUESTIONS

	GENERAL		TEXTUAL		PERSONAL	
TEACHER A	69		124		49	
TEACHER B	70		229		54	
TEACHER C	129		181		42	
TEACHER D	111		49		61	
TOTAL QUESTIONS	379		583		206	
TOTAL % OF	F	M	F	M	F	M
MALE/FEMALE STUDENT RESPONSES*	42.5%	57.5%	41.25%	58.75%	41%	59%

* averaged from data in above graphs

Conclusions

Though the data is skewed toward male responses, this study has generated promising conclusions with regard to the types of teacher questions needed to evoke

maximum discourse in the classroom. After the percentage of male and female student responses in each of the four classrooms was averaged, surprisingly, *each category produced similar results*—female responses floundered at 40% while males responded almost 60% of the time. This consistent discrepancy must be accounted for, which can be done by noticing the frequency of different types of teacher questions. As the averaged data shows, the teachers overwhelmingly used textual questions in classroom discussions. General questions followed, leaving personal questions in the dust. Personal questions, underutilized by the teachers in this study, provide powerful opportunities for students to associate literature with their individual lives. Moreover, these questions invite students to individually engage with a work or become personally involved with whole-classroom discussion. While all questions are important in the classroom, if English teachers use more personal questions in classroom discussion, perhaps we can begin to evoke more responses out of every student and gradually bridge the gender gap. Barker (1989) consciously realizes the gender gap in the classroom and cautions other teachers to be aware of the division as well: "we always want our students to relate to what they're reading and bring their own experiences into discussions and essays; making sure that all students—girls included—are involved equally is not hard, but it requires conscious effort on the part of the teacher" (p. 42). Conversation must be at the center of the English classroom. We, as educators, must continue finding ways to evoke responses from every student, regardless of gender, in order to foster maximum discourse, and thus maximum learning in the classroom. Further suggested inquiries within this field of study include the effect of teacher gender on male and female student response and the incongruity of male and female response in standards versus honors courses.

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The Last Five Minutes of Class in Secondary English Classrooms

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Introduction

The scene is familiar: Students begin to shift in their seats, craning their necks to see the clock on the back wall of the classroom. Questions are written on their faces: Is class over yet? How much longer? In light of current controversies about block scheduling and school hours, teachers' use of class time is a charged and relevant issue in education. In today's finance-driven world, administrators are concerned with how to maximize resources while minimizing expenses. Researchers have found that the most time is wasted at the beginning and the end of class periods.

Despite circumstantial challenges that force teachers to spend class time on non-academic tasks, research still indicates that teachers can take steps to maximize instructional time. This study will investigate how a teacher's decisions about the conclusion of class impacts students' general engagement in classroom activities.

Review of Literature

With the pressures of administrative tasks, school calendars, standardized testing, and student absences, teachers are strained to squeeze curriculum into short class periods. Research studies differ in their recommendations for how class should be concluded to maximize student learning, but most agree that the conclusion of class is a significant period of time that, if used deliberately, can help maximize student engagement, and therefore student learning. Sardo-Brown's research (1990) found that teachers' main decisions are about scheduling issues, specifically about how much time the teacher should allot to each pedagogical task. Even if a teacher knows his or her objectives for a particular class period, it is the minute decisions that determine whether or not those goals will be realized (Clough, Smasal, & Clough, 2000).

Stuck and White (1992) found that students are more likely to be on-task if their teachers are consistently prepared, organized and on-task. They go on to say that "modeling is a powerful influence on how people behave" (p. 15). Clough, Smasal, and Clough found that at the end of class, students are given an average of 5.5 minutes of free time. Wasted time teaches students that school time is expendable. On average each day, students have over half an hour in just the ends of classes that is not used for academic purposes. The most cost-effective strategy to increase learning time is for schools to work to correct time wasting (Clough, Smasal, & Clough, 2000).

The goal of classroom time management is student engagement (Intrator, 2004). However, class cannot be a free period, even if students might enjoy it more. Intrator acknowledges that teachers must develop a deliberate classroom pace that compels students to genuine engagement with the curriculum. Though the last five minutes of class should not be empty (Clough, Smasal, & Clough, 2000), Meier and Panitz (1999) warn that rushing through course material is a useless way to end class. Sardo-Brown (1990) summarizes the issue of time management with the observation, "Experienced teachers draw heavily on past experience as they make planning decisions, using what has succeeded or failed with students previously as a guide for future plans" (p. 58). It seems that teachers often rely on time rituals that unfold as their teaching styles develop. If those rituals do not produce trust, interest, and attention in class, the use of time must change.

Meier and Panitz (1999) elaborate about how teachers can act to increase student motivation and engagement through effective time structure. They point out a common mistake in teachers who routinely use phrases like "in conclusion" or "to wrap things up" because those phrases often cut-off student receptivity to learning (1999, p. 145). Meier and Panitz even suggest asking students how to best use the last five minutes. One student told Landry (1996) that "[t]eachers are responsible for 100 percent of student attention by the way they act themselves" (p.10). Though no one can regain time lost or slow time to come, time can be managed in a classroom sense. As research demonstrates, time is a central obstacle as teachers work to capture student attention in the classroom. The purpose of this study is to examine how teachers use the last few minutes of class, and how their method impacts overall student engagement in their classrooms.

Methodology

In order to investigate the effects of the last five minutes of class on student engagement, the researcher observed four teachers' classrooms in a representative in a mid-sized American town. The researcher observed different English class periods and teachers for a total of 36 observed classes—nine classes per teacher. During non-participant observation of the English classes, the researcher noted and recorded the teaching strategies each teacher used during the last five minutes of class using a tally sheet. At seven minute intervals during normal class periods, the researcher recorded the proportion of students who were making eye contact with the teacher or speaker or were at work on the assigned task. The researcher compared student engagement in the classrooms of each of the four Master Teachers, analyzing the relationship between a teacher's use of the end of class and the way each teacher manages to hold students' attention throughout the class period.

Results and Conclusions

All four teachers made efforts to end class before or as the bell rang. Some made specific reference to time, as in: "We only have a few more minutes of class, so let's finish reading and then we'll be finished for today" while others responded to the bell with an immediate comment, such as: "We're out of time. See you tomorrow." Each teacher had specific teaching methods that he or she applied to the end of class, but to the researcher, all of the teachers seemed to acknowledge the importance of some form of closure. In most cases, the four teachers maintained the same pace throughout class time. The approaching end of class did not cause the teachers to rush activities, though it did often cause them to stop an activity and "call it a day."

In the classes observed, teachers most often used the last five minutes of class to have academic discussions. Although many of the teachers varied the last activities from day to day, and there were not stark differences among the four teachers, significant differences did emerge in the last comment each teacher made to his or her class each day. Teacher A's classes were the most engaged in classroom activities, and Teacher A most often ended class with a positive statement such as, "Gee whiz, you guys are great." The one stark difference that did emerge in the ways each teacher spent the last five minutes of class occurred in regard to Teacher A. Teacher A, unlike the other three teachers

whose classes were most often having academic discussion, lectured for 44% of the last portion of class. This teacher is also the one who had the highest level of student engagement in his or her classroom and also the highest level of personal charisma.

Teacher B's last comment to the class was about a homework assignment 89% of the time, which seemed to affect student morale at the end of class; the last communication from the students to the teacher was often groaning and whining about that night's homework assignment. Teacher B's classes demonstrated the lowest percentage of student engagement. The researcher believes that Teacher B's students were the most prepared for class, however. The students often came into class making comments about the homework or the plan for class that day. There were a lot of exclamations of "I don't have my homework because…" but the students were clearly informed as to the plan for class each day. Teacher A's style most nearly mirrored the style of Teacher B in that both gave out homework assignments somewhat regularly. However, Teacher A usually assigned homework slightly earlier in the class period, allowing time for questions and joking about the assignment before the bell rang.

Teacher D rarely assigned homework, which may have been a factor in the lower level of student attention in Teacher D's classes. The researcher observed that Teacher D's students did not seem to feel the same sense of investment in class as the students of other teachers. Teacher D was often quiet during the last five minutes of class and students seemed to understand this reticence as a strong "class is over" message. At 3:25 in a class that ends at 3:30, Teacher D's students were supposed to be working on an individual worksheet. As soon as one student noticed that it was almost the end of class, she began to put on makeup as another student stood up to put on his backpack.

Despite a relative similarity in the ways all four of the teachers use the last section of class, the effects of teachers' decisions were different. Teacher B's class felt the most routinely structured, but it was Teacher A's classes who were the most engaged. The researcher noticed that when a teacher continued teaching right up until the bell, students grew noticeably restless, looking at the clock and packing up their things, and inevitably missed several minutes of instructional time. In Teacher C's classroom, for example, 20% of the last five minutes of class did not include any educational activity. Although some free minutes at the end of class may seem harmless, the researcher observed that

Teacher C's classes often became markedly less engaged with classroom activities as the end of class grew closer.

It is interesting to note that students anticipate the end of class and are able, it seems, to communicate to the teacher when they are unwilling to participate in academic activities. Teacher A, in contrast to Teacher D, only gave up 2% of the last five minutes of class to "Nothing/Packing Up." Perhaps Teacher A's classes were the most engaged because they did not expect to be able to sway the teacher away from academic pursuits. Teacher C sometimes gave students a few minutes of free time at the end of class, but the researcher overheard a student telling another student, "I always pay attention in [Teacher C's] class. [He or she] would go crazy if I didn't!" Structure can provide a degree of classroom control, but the teacher's general personality can make up for a lack of effective structure. If a class knows that inattention is unacceptable, the teacher can end class however he or she wants and will probably still have a high degree of student engagement in their classroom.

Personality plays a major role in the effectiveness of a teacher's classroom structure. The researcher noticed that the teachers with the most personal charisma (Teacher A and Teacher C) were also the teachers with the highest levels of student engagement (94% and 93%, respectively). Part of students' overall impression of a teacher does include the way each teacher chooses to spend instructional time. Further study is necessary to determine the extent of the connection between pedagogical decisions during the last five minutes of class and student attention in class.

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Teaching Native Speakers of Spanish in the K-12 Spanish Program

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Due to the population boom of Hispanics in the United States, there is a great need for research on effective methods to teach native speakers of Spanish enrolled in the K-12 Spanish foreign language classroom. According to Sosa (1998), the population breakdown of Hispanics in the United States includes the following national origins: Mexico (61%), Puerto Rico (12%), Central America (6%), Cuba (5%), South America (5%), the Dominican Republic (over 2%), Spain (over 2%), and other Spanish-speaking countries which contribute to the population in smaller numbers.

The Kaiser Census Surveys (2000) found that first generation Hispanic immigrants retain Spanish as their dominant language (62%) or are bilingual (37%), while second generation Hispanics in the United States are primarily bilingual (74%) and fewer are Spanish dominant (6%)(www.pewhispanic.org p.3). Throughout history, immigrants have abandoned their native language during the acquisition period of English and acculturation into American society in order to lessen discrimination and build better lives for themselves and their children. Lynch (2003) claims that when most bilingual citizens living in the United States reach high school and college, their "acquisition of the heritage language (HL) has become more of a second language (L2) acquisition process than a first language (L1) acquisition process" (p.1). This claim supports the fact that most Hispanics living in the United States usually have better academic skills in English because this is the language in which they are formally educated. As a result of the many factors involved in native speakers' language development, foreign language teachers of Spanish are currently experiencing a noticeable increase in the enrollment of native speakers in their classes. These students have special needs in the development of their first language.

Spanish teachers face many challenges as they endeavor to provide special assistance to native speakers in their classes. One issue that prevents some Spanish teachers from involving their native speakers more in classes is the size of the Spanish classes (oftentimes more than thirty per class). Some teachers feel overwhelmed by the amount of grading and preparation they have and do not know where to begin in altering their instruction for native speakers. North Carolina is addressing needs of Spanish teachers through a newly developed resource called Spanish for Native Speakers Curriculum. This curriculum includes the following strands: cultural knowledge, critical thinking skills, interdisciplinary subject areas, language system, communication strategies, learning strategies, and technology (NCDPI, 2002). These strands address areas that most native speakers need to develop because as Hispanics live in the United States longer, "the customs, culture, and history of the Spanish-speaking world may seem more remote to SNS students" (Carreira, 2003, p. 71).

Additional research is needed regarding how foreign language teachers of Spanish approach the instruction of Hispanic students in their classrooms. Therefore, the purpose of this study is: 1) to investigate how K-12 Spanish teachers design and implement teaching methods to augment their native speakers' language development and 2) to determine specific teaching strategies Spanish teachers and native Spanish speaking students find effective in the Spanish classroom.

Methodology

In order to determine effective teaching strategies that K-12 Spanish teachers use to enhance their native Spanish speaking students' language development, the researcher conducted this study in two parts. Nine K-12 Spanish teachers who currently teach in a public school district in a small city in the Southeastern United States and who teach native speakers of Spanish were randomly chosen to participate. Four high school, one middle school, and four elementary school teachers were selected. The levels taught include: grades two through five, a second grade dual immersion class, middle school Spanish 1, 2, and 3 (continuing sequence) and A, B, and C (beginning sequence), high school Levels I, II, III, IV and V, and a Spanish for Native Speakers course.

During the first part of the study, each teacher was interviewed during October and November 2004. The interview questions were designed to elicit information about

effective teaching strategies that Spanish teachers use in their classes to develop their native Spanish speakers' language development in literacy, speaking, listening, and writing, as well as factors that affect the students' self-concept, and the teachers' approaches to lesson planning and implementation. Each of the four high school teachers recommended two native Spanish speaking students to participate in this study as well, for a total of eight students. The purpose of the student interviews was to collect data on the students' personal and language backgrounds and teaching strategies that they feel are effective.

The second part of the study, which occurred in November 2004, consisted of one classroom observation of each of the nine teachers. The researcher recorded field notes that described the details of the lessons, the teachers' instructional strategies, discipline problems with the native speaking students, and the native speaking students' engagement during the lesson. The information collected during the interviews and the classroom observations were reviewed and analyzed to identify the recurring themes pertaining to the effective teaching strategies used by Spanish teachers for native Spanish speakers' language development.

Results and Conclusion

During the twenty question interview, the teachers provided interesting information about their native speakers and how they help them. The teachers said their native speakers' origins include Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, Colombia, Paraguay, Puerto Rico, Guatemala, Venezuela, Peru, and the Dominican Republic. When teachers were asked to describe factors that affect students' performance in Spanish class, they responded that parental support and educational background are two of the main factors. Teachers stated that parents are often illiterate and cannot read to their children or help them with homework. Also, students are often left alone to care for their siblings because their parents work long hours, and that lack of transportation prevents many Hispanic families and students from becoming involved in middle and high school activities. When asked if Hispanic students interact more with other native speakers or with non-native speakers, the elementary teachers responded that their native speaking students and non-native speaking students enjoy working together because they can teach each other their languages and help one another. However, several high school teachers mentioned

the fact that their native speaking students are reluctant to interact with non-native speakers because they are afraid of the language and cultural barrier.

Teachers were also asked to describe activities that they use to encourage participation of native speakers. Some of the most frequent responses were: celebrating holidays from Spanish-speaking countries, having native speakers bring in cultural artifacts to share with classmates, and planning cultural presentations. Specifically, teachers stated the following as effective strategies they use with native speaking students: the use of native speakers as language models, songs, Total Physical Response (TPR), visuals, charades, centers of varied language activities, group and pair work, listening activities, and videos or *telenovelas* (soap operas in Spanish).

During the observations, the researcher observed that the teachers incorporated writing activities, singing and dancing, hands-on activities, and oral activities. Overall, the elementary teachers used the target language for more of the instructional time than the secondary teachers, while the second grade immersion and Spanish for Native Speakers teachers used Spanish during the entire class period. The majority of the teachers used their native speakers as authentic language models for the non-native speaking students, paired native and non-native students to facilitate language acquisition, and some teachers chose activities that would focus on areas of language development that native speakers need to improve such as grammar.

The eight native speakers (five females and three males) interviewed for this study are high school students enrolled in Spanish classes ranging from Level 1 to Spanish for Native Speakers. Four of the students responded that they are bilingual, two said that they are Spanish dominant, and two replied that they are English dominant. Three of the students were born in the United States, while the other five were born in Mexico, Honduras, or Venezuela. The students were asked to name helpful or enjoyable activities from a given list that their Spanish teachers use. The primary responses were group or pair work, games, writing activities, and Spanish films. When asked about their strengths and weaknesses in Spanish, five students responded that their oral ability is their strongest area, one student said reading is his strength, and two students said that they are strong in all parts of Spanish. Six of the eight students responded that writing is their weakest area in Spanish due to infrequent use and lack of training.

The results of this study show that teachers who take advantage of the linguistic and cultural resources native speaking students provide enhance Spanish instruction for the native speakers as well as the non-native speakers. During the interviews, teachers overwhelmingly stated that they have not received special training to teach native speakers. As a result, teachers would definitely benefit from professional workshops and more materials that include specific strategies and resources on how to plan effective instruction for native speakers. Spanish teachers who typically receive native speakers in their classes should increase awareness among the administrators and guidance counselors of their schools to ensure that native speakers are being placed into the proper levels of Spanish foreign language or Spanish for Native Speakers courses. One solution is that schools could administer placement tests to the native speaking students in order to identify their current levels of reading, writing, speaking, and listening proficiency in Spanish.

Ideally, Spanish teachers should choose instructional strategies that develop native speaking students into "bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural" individuals so that they can be successful individuals in school and in a global society (Spanish for Native Speakers Curriculum, 2003, p. 14). Regardless of what level of Spanish they teach, all teachers should be equipped to help native speaking students develop both language ability and pride in their heritage.

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The Effect of Teacher Instruction and Teacher Behaviors on Student Participation

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A social studies teacher's primary purpose is to help his or her students become knowledgeable, decision-making citizens. One facet of this is student participation in obtaining knowledge (Alexander, Fives, Buehl, & Mulhern, 2002). Participation included direct eye contact, written responses, posing and answering questions, and task completion. The practice of retaining knowledge of content and participatory skills in the social studies classroom increases the probability that students will employ content knowledge and the act of participating in new situations such as making decisions as citizens (Reynolds & Nunn, 1997).

Reynolds and Nunn (1997) found a positive relationship between a teacher's actions and the student's degree of participation. Several teacher actions that have been noted to effect participation are direct eye contact, enforcing accountability, and verbal recognition of student behaviors. Studies also showed a need to vary one's instructional technique through combining lecture, independent and group activities, and class discussion in order to increase student participation (Duffy, Warren, & Walsh, 2001).

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of teachers on student participation in terms of specific teacher cues and instructional variation. Social studies classrooms in the southeastern United States were observed. This provided a holistic view of teacher influence on student participatory behaviors in the classroom which will improve the ability of educators in building students into knowledgeable, decision-making citizens.

Review of Literature

The two main factors found in the literature that promoted the development of knowledgeable, decision-making citizens were student participation and teacher behavior that elicits participation. Participation in the classroom did build a student's belief in self and desire to work within one's community to improve society. It also acted as a catalyst

in a student's ability to internalize knowledge and develop decision-making skills. Studies showed that direct participation by the student first promoted in the classroom can transcend into the student's participation as a citizen in making informed decisions, formulating value judgments on community policies, and participating in community events (Hess & Posselt, 2002; Lampe & Rooze, 1994).

The first factor in the learning process was actual participation. Actual participation in the classroom was characterized as note taking, interacting with peers during classroom discussions or cooperative learning, completing assignments, or answering and posing questions during instruction. The National Council for the Social Studies (2004) curriculum promotes the idea that in order to learn and to retain the necessary knowledge contained in classroom instruction, the learner must participate in the instruction. In researching this idea, Hootstein (1994) and Pringle and Dickinson (2000) found that without this valuable participation students will not get the essential elements of knowledge and decision-making.

The second factor in developing decision-making citizens was the teacher's ability to promote student participation. Reynolds and Nunn (1997) viewed this factor as essential because a teacher's own behavior is one which they can control. Researchers found that specific teacher behaviors promoting student participation during instruction are calling on the students, positively reinforcing students' attempts to answer questions, using eye contact and verbal cues such as comments of praise to promote participation, and holding students accountable for a higher level of thinking (Kanevsky & Keighley, 2003; Small, Dodge, & Jiang, 1996). Many methods of instruction within a class period also provided the practice of participatory skills. During lecture a student learns listening and verbal skills, while in a cooperative learning setting the student learns collaboratory and interpersonal skills. Kanevsky and Keighley (2003) and Frymier and Shulman (1995) found teachers increased student participation through honoring a student's need to talk, question, and experience a variety of instructional techniques. Through these many factors, this study sought to examine how teachers influenced student participation through the use of teacher cues and instructional variation.

Methodology

This study examined the influence teacher behaviors and instructional variation

had on student participation in class. Six social studies teachers from a city county system in the southeastern United States were observed. The teachers were chosen according to their response to the request for participants and their return of the Informed Consent form. Within two forty-five minute class periods, data was collected on observed teacher behaviors, instructional variation used, and students' participatory acts. Classes were varied in their academic level and curriculum content in social studies. Analysis was conducted through observation providing for a naturalistic view and anonymous labeling was used to ensure confidentiality. All data will be confidential and information will be destroyed.

Results and Conclusions

The analysis method involved tabulating the raw data and anecdotal notes from the observation, identifying themes in the data, and formulating a picture of teacher-student interaction. The data collected was categorized in terms of instructional method variation, task completion by student, teacher behaviors witnessed, and student behaviors viewed. Within the analysis several commonalities of teacher behavior and instructional variation surfaced.

Through analysis, four themes emerged that correlated with an overall premise. As the number of teacher cues and instructional variation increased, the number of non-participatory behaviors decreased and task completion and student participation increased. The first theme was a positive attitude towards student effort. The second theme was the use of humor and personal stories to make connections. The third theme was written accountability of student responsibility. The fourth theme was instructional variation. In this study there was a higher level of student participation viewed from teachers who possessed these behaviors and variation in their teaching.

Within the first theme, a positive attitude towards the students and a well-developed relationship produced a higher level of student participation. Teachers recognized class participation through body language such as the nodding of the head and verbal comments such as "very good" and "Perfect!" During instruction teachers focused on students who were lesson-oriented in their participation and ignored those who were non-participatory. Students made attempts to gain attention from the teacher and in order

to gain attention in these classrooms the students needed to be on task and completing the tasks assigned.

The second theme featured the use of humor and personal stories. Personal stories within a lesson increased student participation. Unfortunately much of the humor in some cases caused an increase in non-participatory behavior. A humorous comment or anecdote provided students with an opportunity to laugh and to get off task while they ignored key verbal interaction concerning content between the teacher and other members of the class.

A third theme recognized was the written and verbal accountability towards a student's responsibility which increased student participation. In each teacher's classroom written accountability focused on daily assignment charts with due dates, depiction of classroom rules, and the current lesson objective posted in the front of the room. The combination of written and verbal reminders proved more successful in increasing student participation and task completion. Specifically, one teacher used stamps on homework to award points and another teacher strictly enforced a project rubric. Three teachers who combined the written and verbal accountability during instruction not only had low non-participatory behaviors but had more than eighty percent of students completing tasks.

The fourth theme that emerged was the effect instructional method variation had on student participation. As teachers transitioned from one method to the next, they produced action and participation with the students. Three teachers who continuously transitioned from such tasks as written commentary to discussion to student presentations produced the highest percentages of task completion.

This study investigated the ability a teacher has in building student participation and completion of instructional tasks. A combination of teacher cues and instructional variation decreased the number of non-participatory behaviors and increased student task completion and student participation. Specifically the four themes reinforced the theory that a teacher within the classroom can increase participation. Increased student participation encompassed a positive attitude towards students while creating a well-developed relationship, incorporating emotion and interest with the use of humor and personal experience, enforcing student responsibility with written and verbal

accountability, and producing opportunities to speak, interact with peers, and process information by varying instructional methods. In a highly participatory classroom students will internalize the skills of participation, collaboration and interpersonal communication which will transcend into citizenship qualities for future community involvement (Hess & Posselt, 2002; Lampe & Rooze, 1994).

Some factors not accounted for in this study included background knowledge, dynamics of home life, engrained habits and behaviors, and preconceived notions of the learning process. These factors may have affected student participation. Other factors that may have influenced student participation were those outside of the teacher's control. These factors were academic level which ranged from standard to honor seminar, age of students which ranged from fourteen to eighteen, and curriculum content. Further research can attempt to view all factors responsible for building decision-making citizens within the classroom through student participation. Yet it was the purpose of this study to analyze a teacher's effect on student participation to help educators focus on conduct that increases student participation.

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Teaching Outside of the Box

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As teaching standards become the central driving force in classrooms, many teachers in English are moving away from the use of non-canonical literature and/or literature not typically found in the standard textbook. These departure texts include, but are not limited to, short stories, modern novels and poetry, films, art, and literary criticism. Instead, teachers tend to stick to a more traditional curriculum as dictated by the school in order to satisfy the standards. This may contribute to student disinterest in the English discipline; the discipline may not seem influenced by the changing times.

By incorporating more of these new types of texts, teachers might find students more excited and active in the classroom, thus bringing in outside venues of literature to make other texts come alive. If this is found to be the case, then incorporating more non-canonical literature may be an option for teachers to consider when making their lesson plans and requests for classroom materials. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine the effects, if any, of a teacher's use of non-canonical literature and/or departure literary supplements on student engagement

Review of Literature

In 1993, Culp and Sosa conducted a study on the effects of overall student engagement when teachers used adolescent literature rather than traditional literature. They concluded that students enjoyed adolescent literature because it related to their personal lives as well as to changes in society. The study revealed that many classrooms did not endorse adolescent literature, which provides students with a different type of literature with which to engage.

In 1994, Carroll studied the effect of the changes in literature in one teacher's classroom and the effects of those changes on the class. The teacher presented selections from women's literature and African American literature in addition to the traditional

canonical texts. Students were better able to relate to these non-traditional texts and their enjoyment of to literature greatly increased.

In Hawaii in 1997, Bean, Valerio, Senior, and White conducted a study in which they observed twenty-two high school English students as they engaged an adolescent literature novel. The novel dealt with issues not commonly found in Standard English textbooks, such as ethnic and cultural development among teenagers. Based on student free responses related to the novel, the researchers were able to conclude that students produced more personal and detailed descriptions in their writing. The researchers were able to show a need for students to read and write about texts that evoke similar passionate responses, and suggested that the use of adolescent literature would be a way to achieve that goal.

In 1998, Clinard and Foster investigated the relationship between student engagement and the use of performing arts in language arts classrooms. By incorporating a new medium into the discipline, teachers were able to apply old subjects to current trends relevant to the lives of their students. By using departure texts, in this case the use of performing arts, Clinard and Foster observed an increase in student engagement in the classroom.

Beavis conducted a study in 1999 which concentrated on four teachers who used games in order to enliven textual use in the classroom. The games were specifically computer games which served as narratives in the place of actual texts. Although Beavis noticed a certain degree of chaos in the classroom by allowing such technological freedom, student engagement did increase as the games created a sense of magic and mystery which sparked student attention and participation.

These are just a few studies that look into changes that can be made in English classrooms in order to increase student engagement. All of these studies took place in high schools throughout the country and sought answer the same question: whether or not departure texts would affect student interest. In each of these studies, departure texts can be defined as non-canonical literature and/or literature not typically found in the standard textbook, including, but not limited to, short stories, modern novels and poetry, films, art, and literary criticism. In my study, I focused more specifically on how often teacher

departs from the canon and standard textbook and the effects that change had on student engagement.

Methodology

This is a correlation study that sought to measure the relationship between student engagement and the type of literature that is taught in the classroom. Texts which were provided and used by the teacher and not the school (as a whole) were considered outside or departure literary texts and supplements. These departure texts included, but were not limited to, short stories, modern novels and poetry, films, art, and literary criticism. Also, the text must have been prominent in the classroom for more than five minutes.

The researcher observed two classes (one honors level class and one regular level class) for each of the four teachers five times for a total of 40 observed classes. The difference in ability level was just to ensure diversity in the study and was not used as a basis of comparison. Students were chosen based on the classes in which they were enrolled. Four English teachers and their classrooms were used for the study as a convenience sample. These four classrooms had students aged 14-18 at a public suburban high school in the southeastern United States.

The instruments the researcher used to measure student engagement were as follows:

- A self-developed chart checking whether or not 4 randomly selected students, two males and two females (names were not recorded and will change each day), were on task within 5 minute intervals over 30 minutes of observation
  - A "yes" in each box indicated if the teacher was using a departure text during this 5 minute interval and a "no" signified that no departure text was in use

On task – active participation, hand-raising, asks questions, answers questions, focused on lesson (not wandering in speech or actions), and completes in-class assignments

Off task – no participation, head down, yawning, leaves classroom

The instruments the researcher used to measure the incorporation of non-canonical literature in the classroom was as follows:

- A self-developed chart of how often a teacher uses a departure text per class
  period, how long it was used in the classroom, and what type

Results

After observing forty class periods, ten for each of the four assigned teachers, a total of nine hundred and sixty intervals of five minutes each were recorded. The results were combined to determine the number of intervals that fell into each of the following four categories: on-task with departure text in use, on-task with no departure text in use, off-task with departure text in use, and off-task with no departure text in use. Also, results were tabulated by teacher and by the gender of the students observed.

Based on these results, more students were on-task when the departure text was in use. Of the 803 instances in which a student was on-task, 419 of those times occurred when a departure text was in use in the classroom, which was 52% of the observed time. Also, more students were off-task when the departure text was not in use. Of the 157 times in which a student was off-task, 152 of those times occurred when there was no departure text being used in the classroom, which was 97% of the observed time.

As far as gender is concerned, there were slight differences. When looking strictly at on-task time, the males were more likely to be on-task when the departure text was in use and the females were more likely to be on-task when no departure text was in use. When comparing off-task time, more males were off-task than females when a departure text was not in use and more females were off-task than males when a departure text was in use.

Overall, a departure text was used by the teachers 44.17% of the observed time. This percentage varied greatly from teacher to teacher. Teacher A used a departure text 40% of the observed time, yet his/her students were on-task 92% of the time. Teacher B used a departure text 0% of the observed time and his/her students were on-task 50% of the time. Teacher C used a departure text 70% of the observed time and his/her students were on-task 94% of the time. Teacher D used a departure text 67% of the observed time and his/her students were on-task 98% of the time. In general, the more a departure text was used, the more likely the students were to be on-task and engaged.

Conclusions

The researcher's hypothesis was that there would be an increase in student engagement if a teacher used a departure text in the classroom. While there was a significant difference in engagement when a departure text was used verses when a departure text was not in use, it is difficult to make assumptions since one of the teachers never was observed using a departure text in the classroom. In fact, Teacher B had almost an equal number of students on-task and off-task while never incorporating a departure text. Teacher A, even though he/she used a departure text 40% of the observed time, most of his/her on-task time occurred when a departure text was not in use. However, both Teacher C and D had a much greater percentage of students engaged with a departure text than without one present.

While certain trends did exist during the researcher's observation time, it is not possible to make accurate generalizations at this time. There does seem to be a direct correlation between engagement and departure text use, but then how do we account for the great number of students who were still on-task without that type of text? It appears as if it is easier to make assumptions for each teacher. Since Teacher B never used a departure text and his/her results showed that on-task and off-task were relatively equal, then we might assume that he/she could increase engagement if he/she brought in one of the many departure texts already in use in other classrooms.

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A Study of Attitude toward Mathematics
and Its Relationship to Ethnicity and Gender

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Equity in education includes equal opportunity and quality education for all students. Do all students receive the appropriate education that holds high standards for all? There is a growing concern that certain variables in a student's life such as gender, race/ethnicity, and socio-economic status (SES) may prevent them from receiving the same expectations and outcomes in education, particularly in the fields of mathematics and science. This difference of expectations among groups may lead students to have different attitudes and aspirations in these subject areas. Two of the five goals set forth by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM, 2000) in the Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics are valuing mathematics and becoming confident in one's ability.

Review of Literature

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (2000) has presented a vision of mathematical power for all. This is such a large focus of mathematics instruction that NCTM has placed equity as one if its six fundamental teaching principles. This principle demands "reasonable and appropriate accommodations be made as needed to promote access and attainment for all students" (NCTM, 2000). Despite these principles, studies show that as students progress in high school, their enrollment in mathematics classes and their interest in mathematics-related careers diminishes, particularly for certain groups of students (Maholmes, 2001; Tapia & Marsh, 2000). Therefore, factors such as gender and race and their impact on beliefs in mathematics should be studied further in order to ensure equity, achievement, and attainment in the mathematics classroom.

Gender:

Several explanations have been proposed as to the reasons that male students tend to be more successful in the mathematics classroom than are female students. One important factor is the fact that beliefs about mathematics and students' ability to learn mathematics can be more influential on mathematics achievement for females than males (Walker & Plata, 2000). Many studies report results that students view mathematics as a gendered subject. Studies have also revealed differences of opinion between males and females in two areas: the usefulness of mathematics and mathematics anxiety, with males seeing mathematics as more useful and less stressful (Tocci & Engelhard, 1991).

On the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), males tended to have higher scores in mathematics attitude, thus implying that males viewed mathematics more positively than females (Patterson, Perry, Decker, Eckert, Klaus, Wendling, & Papanastasiou, 2003). When students in college preparatory mathematics courses were assessed on their attitudes toward mathematics, the results were much the same. Male students scored higher than female students in the areas of self-confidence and value of mathematics (Tapia & Marsh, 2000). Overall, females tended to have a lower self-confidence level in mathematics.

Ethnicity:

Recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data continues to show significant gaps between White and African American students in mathematics achievement. However, racial and ethnic trends in mathematics achievement did improve between 1973 and 1992 (Lubienski, 2001; Tate, 1997). One ethnographic study reported interviews with African American high school students that found that most of the students had not specifically defined their beliefs about mathematics, and were constantly changing these beliefs. The study revealed that African Americans were intimidated by higher level mathematics and few of them could see themselves working as mathematicians or in a mathematics-enriched field (Walker & McCoy, 1997).

Other studies found that African American and Hispanic students were more likely than white students to agree with statements such as, "There is only one correct way to solve a mathematics problem" and "Learning mathematics is mostly memorizing facts (Lubienski, 2001; Lubienski & Shelley, 2003)." These results showed that race/ethnicity may have an effect on the importance that students place on learning

mathematics and also showed differences in their beliefs concerning the process of mathematics. Studies showed that African Americans reported liking mathematics and believing mathematics was useful as much as White students (Lubienski, 2001). Overall, White students tended to have more of the beliefs promoted through the NCTM standards such as the importance of mathematics and the connections between mathematics and everyday life. This study will investigate the relationship between gender and ethnicity and a student's attitudes and aspirations in mathematics using high school students with a range of mathematical backgrounds.

Methodology

Data were collected by a survey instrument entitled *School Mathematics Survey*, which was a modified version of the Fennema-Sherman Mathematics Scales (Fennema & Sherman, 1976).   The subtests included in the survey measured Confidence in Using Mathematics, Perceived Usefulness of Mathematics, and Mathematics Anxiety.

Algebra II and Technical Mathematics II were chosen in order to include students varying backgrounds and abilities in mathematics. The classrooms teachers distributed the surveys to their students at a time that was of convenience to the teacher. The teachers did not view student responses to the survey questions.

Results were analyzed through statistical analysis to determine the relationships among these attitude subtests, gender, and ethnicity. There were three dependent variables in the study which were the three subtests of the survey and two independent variables: gender and ethnicity. Each subtest was analyzed using a 2x2 Factorial Analysis of Variance to determine the significant effects of ethnicity and gender and their interaction on each of the subtests.

Results

ANOVA analyses were conducted on the effect of ethnicity and gender and their interaction on the variables of Confidence, Perceived Usefulness, and Anxiety. The results showed that Confidence scores were not different for Ethnicity ($F_{(3, 98)} = .291$, $p > .05$), Gender ($F_{(3,98)} = 1.417$, $p > .05$), or the Interaction of Ethnicity and Gender ($F_{(3,98)} = .135$, $p > .05$). Likewise, Perceived Usefulness scores were not different for Ethnicity ($F_{(3,98)} = .128$, $p > .05$), Gender ($F_{(3,98)} = .044$, $p > .05$), or the Interaction of Ethnicity and Gender ($F_{(3,98)} = .023$, $p > .05$). Finally, the Anxiety scores were not

different for Ethnicity ($F_{(3,98)}$ = .238, p > .05), Gender ($F_{(3,98)}$ = 2.304, p > .05), or the Interaction of Ethnicity and Gender ($F_{(3,98)}$ = .609, p > .05).

Discussion

Looking specifically at the relationship between ethnicity and gender and students' confidence in mathematics, this study found that there was no significant difference among ethnicity and gender groups on confidence. These results are contrary to results of past studies, which have shown that girls have less confidence in their mathematics abilities than do boys (Campbell & Beaudry, 1998; Tapia & Marsh, 2000). Likewise past studies have concluded that ethnicity had an overall effect on a student's self-confidence in mathematics (Tapia & Marsh, 2000). One reason that students in this study may have equal confidence levels in mathematics is that all students were being encouraged to take upper level mathematics courses. Another reason for the leveling of confidence in mathematics may be due to the differentiation of teaching styles within the mathematics classroom to reach all learners.

In this study, a student's ethnicity and gender did not affect their perceived usefulness of mathematics. This study found that there was no significant difference among gender and ethnicity groups on perceived usefulness. These results are contrary to those of previous research which found significant differences of opinion between males and females in the area of usefulness of mathematics (Tapia & Marsh, 2000; Tocci & Engelhard, 1991). Likewise, previous research also showed an overall effect of ethnicity on the value placed on the field of mathematics (Tapia & Marsh, 2000). One major reason for this difference may be the fact that students are growing up in a technological era in which they see more and more females and minorities entering into mathematics related fields and careers. Another reason that all students have the same perception of the usefulness of mathematics may stem from the fact that mathematics teachers are now teaching more and more through real-world contexts. Teaching strategies such as problem-based learning provide students with real-world situations where mathematics is a useful tool.

When comparing the effect of students' ethnicity and gender on mathematics anxiety, this study found no significant difference among ethnicity and gender groups in anxiety. Past studies have indicated that females experienced a higher level of

mathematics anxiety than males, and that ethnicity played a part in mathematics anxiety and feelings of intimidation in higher level mathematics courses (Walker & McCoy, 1997). A reason that this research may not have found significant differences in mathematics anxiety is teacher interaction. As classrooms have become more and more diverse, and more females and minorities have enrolled in mathematics classes, teacher interaction has also changed to include all students.

The results of this study indicate that there are not significant differences in confidence, perceived usefulness, or mathematics anxiety in terms of ethnicity or gender. These findings are encouraging in that all students have generally the same attitude toward mathematics. Situations and attitudes within the mathematics classroom seem to not only be changing, but moving in a positive direction.

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