

Spring 2017

# TEACHING THE BIOGRAPHY OF PEARL S. BUCK: DEVELOPING COLLABORATIVE READING STRATEGIES FOR MULTILINGUAL WRITERS

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TEACHING THE BIOGRAPHY OF PEARL S. BUCK:  
DEVELOPING COLLABORATIVE READING STRATEGIES  
FOR MULTILINGUAL WRITERS

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A Thesis

Presented to

Eastern Washington University

Cheney, Washington

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts in English

Teaching English as a Second Language

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By

Nichole S. La Torre

Spring 2017

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## Abstract

The present study is action research with a narrative inquiry approach, and seeks to determine the benefits and challenges of using a collaborative method to teach reading comprehension strategies in English 112: Composition for Multilingual Students. As Kenneth Bruffee (1984; 1991), Margaret Mount (2014), Chiu-Hsin Lin (2007) and others have determined, there are many challenges English language learners face when reading college-level texts. This study sought to determine whether the use of collaboration would facilitate the learning of reading strategies and self-monitoring of reading skills.

Ten students participated in this study, including nine undergraduate students and one graduate-level Saudi teaching assistant. Students in the English 112 class received direct instruction on a number of reading strategies and worked collaboratively to break down complex texts. The research for this course was completed over 11 weeks during the 2017 winter quarter at EWU. Throughout the course, journals and essays related to reading strategies were assigned. 54 responses were collected to determine: a) challenges multilingual students face when encountering intermediate to advanced-level texts used in the college writing classroom, b) what students have already been taught about reading strategies, and c) how well multilingual students apply what they have been taught about reading strategies—both prior to and during English 112, as well as d) information about the value and usefulness of collaboration in English classrooms across cultures.

Direct instruction of reading comprehension strategies provided several benefits for learners who were anxious about reading college-level texts. This approach encouraged self-awareness, self-assessment of reading skills, and plans for self-study. In addition, the use of collaboration fostered community, engagement, and cross-cultural exchanges.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many people who have contributed to this research project and sparked my passion for teaching and languages. I will be forever grateful to Dr. LaVona Reeves for giving me the opportunity to work with wonderful students, staff and colleagues at Eastern Washington University, and for giving me the chance to expand my knowledge and practice of English language teaching methodologies.

I would also like to thank Dr. McHenry and Dr. Islam-Zwart for their time and valuable input on this project. Their contributions and participation in my thesis committee are much appreciated.

All of my teachers, family members, and friends have contributed to my journey in many ways, and so I would also like to express my gratitude to those who have offered guidance throughout my life. Special thanks to my father, mother, brother, and fiancé, for their support and encouragement.

## Preface

### *Language Learning and Teaching Experience*

“My name is Nichole La Torre, and I am from the United States...” Whenever I give this speech on the first day of class, I have to stop myself from explaining that I did not learn to read, write or speak in the United States, but in England. My American accent only confuses the matter to students who have not yet become accustomed to my voice or intonation. The next question is usually something along the lines of: “So, are you British? You don’t sound British.” I am not, but I spent the first five years of my life in England while my father was stationed at a now decommissioned Air Force base in Little Rissington. My parents are American, but my teachers and peers were British, so I learned to read and write with British English spelling and spoke with a British accent. Now that I no longer have a British accent, few people would guess that I ever lived there. However, this formative experience shaped my methods, views, and perceptions of language learning in ways that I am only beginning to understand.

I have always loved learning and school. At four years old most children in England begin pre-K or kindergarten, and so my parents decided to enroll me in school early. Kempsford Primary School was my first school. The school itself was very old and had a distinctive smell of wet earth that I still remember to this day. I made many friends there and began imitating the sounds my teachers and peers made. Within a few short months, my British accent had become more pronounced. I also learned to read and write the alphabet at Kempsford. During our first week of classes, the teachers sent each of us home with a tin full of little papers. Each little paper had the name of a color printed on it, with the corresponding color underlining the word. We were taught to read the words

by sight and memorize the shape. At school we underlined the color words with a matching color, then traced the letters until we could identify the word and color together. This method of memorizing the shapes of words would be beneficial to me in later years, as I began the arduous process of memorizing Chinese characters by rote.

Although I spent several formative years in England, I also learned the sounds of American English by listening to my parents. My peers and teachers spoke British English, and when we reviewed reading and phonics in school we used British English spellings. Listening to my parents helped me to adjust to the accent of peers and teachers when we moved back to the United States. By the time we left England for our next assignment in Colorado, I was just learning to write. My parents wanted to enroll me in school, but since kindergarteners are on average six years old when they start school in the U.S., my parents decided to wait so that I could attend kindergarten for the second time and would fit in better with my peers. At home my mother and father tutored me in reading and writing, and that extra practice helped me immensely when I did finally begin school. The spelling was very different from what I had learned, but it was so early in my development that the switch was easier to make.

However, adjusting to a new school wasn't easy. I still remember the first time someone asked me if I had to use the restroom. "A whole room, just for resting?! Wow, American schools are really neat," I thought. Imagine my surprise when I was directed to a bathroom. Confused, I went into a stall and wondered why Americans would rest on a toilet. When I didn't come out, my teacher came and scolded me for taking too long. At first, the other students had trouble understanding me. I used "back garden" instead of "backyard", "crisps" instead of "chips", and "trainers" instead of "sneakers". Some things

were just downright confusing or embarrassing to a six-year-old girl, for example, “pants” meant “underwear” in England. However, with each passing year my accent became more Americanized and I gradually made the switch to American English.

After three years in Colorado, we moved to Connecticut where my parents were raised. Students at my new school had never heard me speak with a British accent, and I began to feel like I fit in. As I grew older, this new environment shaped my speaking abilities, and as an avid reader my vocabulary continued to grow. Later, at a new school in a new town, I received several creative writing awards for short stories I wrote. I took AP English my junior year of high school, and petitioned to take AP English and Honors English during the last semester of my senior year. By this point in my life, my love of languages was apparent to all who knew me.

When it came time to look at colleges, my father and I visited a few but I had my heart set on Bennington College. After listening to a professor describe Bennington’s philosophy of “designing your own education” and classrooms as “open forums for discussion” I knew I had found what I was looking for in a college. At Bennington, students decide which courses they will take and meet with a panel of advisors to discuss how each individual course of study fits into their overall plan and future goals. This freedom to choose one’s own path and “follow your passion” influenced my later approach to teaching. Students at Bennington were not instructed in the traditional sense, but collaborated with each other through discussions in class and group projects. The professors took on the role of facilitator, allowing us the space to explore and interpret new information for ourselves. I use this same approach to teaching English language, by encouraging students to take a similarly active role in constructing knowledge.



Learning Chinese was an unexpected undertaking as I had originally entered college with the hopes of studying English. I dropped a course my freshman year and by chance the only available course left was a class called “The History of China through Film”. I did not know much about China before taking the class, but it was fascinating to learn about the history, culture, and language. I realized that there was a large gap in my knowledge of the world, and I became interested in learning more. The next semester, I enrolled in Chinese language classes. One chance encounter with a new language shaped the course of my life forever. Now, after 14 years of Chinese study, I can reflect on how I achieved fluency and the interesting ways in which learning English in England prepared me for this difficult process. Learning Chinese is difficult, and you really have to push yourself to memorize new words and learn new characters lest you forget one crucial stroke, which can change the entire meaning of some words. My experience memorizing the shapes of new words as a child directly aided in memorizing Chinese characters.

In our Chinese classes, Wang Laoshi (teacher Wang) used a wide variety of materials to introduce new words and grammatical concepts. One of the weekly activities was practicing listening through songs. Wang Laoshi recorded Chinese classics on cassette tapes, and gave each of us a tape to listen to every two weeks. We had to read the lyrics, practice singing the songs, and then sing them aloud in class every Friday; each of us taking a turn, with Wang Laoshi joining in from time to time. I found that learning songs in Chinese was the easiest method for me to learn new words and memorize vocabulary, and began listening to Chinese music in my spare time.

During the Moon Festival, Wang Laoshi took us all to a large Chinese grocery in Albany, New York. We bought snacks and he pointed out the different vegetables and

products one would usually find in China. Later, he invited his family to join us that evening as we ate Chinese snacks, drank tea, and sang the songs we had learned in class while we watched the moon rise and set. Our Chinese class had two students at first, and grew to five, but classes focusing on East Asian history or culture were not offered at Bennington at the time. So, I decided to transfer to the State University of New York at Albany (SUNY Albany) in order to take classes in several areas of Asian Studies and participate in the study abroad program.

In the summer of 2004, when I was transferring from Bennington to SUNY Albany, I met Professor Hargett. Dr. Hargett was a humorous and passionate teacher, who truly cared about our language learning and had a passion for Chinese language and culture. Although he was an American, he spoke Mandarin Chinese fluently because he had grown up in Taiwan where his father was stationed at a military base. While we were in his class, we were expected to speak, write, and think in Chinese. Chinese history is very complex, but he made learning history and culture accessible through language lessons that discussed ancient and modern life in China. Outside of regular classes, we could also participate in poetry competitions, lectures on contemporary research, and language exchange with Chinese students.

I was the only female non-heritage student in the class and he told me that if I kept my grades up, I might be able to complete my senior year abroad. This was difficult because several students in the class had been taking Chinese language lessons since they were children or spoke a different dialect of Chinese at home. I studied day and night, and even listened to language CDs in my car, carefully sounding out the vocabulary words for each

lesson. I kept my grades up as promised, earning the highest grade in the class, and was offered the chance to study abroad in Shanghai for the 2005-2006 school year.

I was very surprised when Dr. Hargett also offered me a place in a government sponsored study tour through the Silk Road in the summer of 2005. Since I had never been to China before, he thought it would be a great introduction to the country where I would be studying. I traveled from Beijing to Urumuqi, then Chengdu to Shanghai by train, plane, camel and donkey cart with Dr. Hargett; Dr. Blum, a Japanese Buddhism professor; and nine other students. It was the trip of a lifetime and truly cemented a lifelong passion for cultural studies and language learning.

Before I left to study in Shanghai, Dr. Hargett gave me the best advice: “When you get to where you’re going, don’t be a typical expat. Make friends with locals, try the food, and use Chinese whenever possible. Don’t spend all of your time speaking English and going to foreign clubs. If you do that, you’re just living in America abroad. You might as well stay home!” By taking his advice, I saved money to travel whenever I could, improved my Chinese skills, and made many lasting friendships. I could never thank him enough for all I have learned by heeding his advice. Having navigated much of China with Dr. Hargett, who made time during our summer trip to acquaint myself and another classmate with the university where we would study, I felt confident returning as an exchange student. I hope to instill the same sense of confidence and wonder in my students in the future.

In the study abroad program at Fudan University in Shanghai, students were required to take eight hours of Chinese classes per day, five days per week. I spent many hours studying all of the class materials, and practiced listening in my free time by purchasing

CDs of Chinese music and writing out the lyrics in pinyin and English. I ate breakfast, lunch and dinner in the cafeteria with the Chinese students and listened as they spoke excitedly about a number of topics, while writing down words I didn't understand. It was hard to speak at first, as I was very nervous, even with four years of Chinese learning. However, living abroad helped me to perfect my accent, exposed me to new language and characters, and I was able to hear how pronunciation differed in real life from the books we used in class. This experience shaped the way I interact with students as I always remember the apprehension I felt. I also remember how many cultural brokers made me feel comfortable and cared for in a country far from my own.

Upon completion of the exchange program in Shanghai, I decided to enroll in a master's program at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UH) in Honolulu, Hawaii. The Asian Studies program at UH helped to fill gaps in my knowledge and I was able to develop my language skills further. In Chinese studies at SUNY Albany we had focused on Chinese language and history as well as Sino-U.S. relations, while the program at UH focused on East Asian cultures. By learning more about China, Japan, and Korea, as well as information about Pacific and Southeast Asian cultures, I gained a clearer picture of the complex relationships, history, and cultures of these areas. Many of the courses I took at UH challenged my prior assumptions and allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the East Asian region. The professors I met at UH left a lasting impression on me, and my experience as a graduate teaching assistant inspired me to teach at the college level.

After graduating with an M.A. in Asian Studies, I completed a Certificate of English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA) and moved to Taiwan to teach English. However, I soon realized that Chinese language as it is spoken in Shanghai is quite

different from the dialects of Chinese spoken in Taiwan. At first only a few people understood me, and I had to learn to use different words for objects and foods. I also began studying traditional characters so that I could improve my reading comprehension, as up until that point I had only read and written in simplified Chinese. Over a five-year period, I continued to improve my speaking and listening skills by chatting with Taiwanese friends and colleagues, as well as listening to students, music and TV. I often watched the news and tried to figure out the main ideas or write down new words and repeat after the announcer. The news anchors always spoke very quickly, but I improved my reading comprehension by following along and reading the captions.

After moving to a small town on the west coast of Taiwan, I heard from a friend that one of the universities was looking for an English instructor. I applied and was accepted for the position of English Lecturer at Chienkuo Technology University in Changhua, Taiwan. I spent four years teaching English conversation, writing, reading, drama, and several other courses, while working with many wonderful students and colleagues. In my English classes, I often told students stories of my successes and failures in using Chinese in Taiwan. Laughing at my socio-pragmatic failures relaxed students and relieved their apprehension, for I was a student too. I also told them stories about using British English in America as a young girl, and some of the interesting cultural differences I noticed.

For four years, I did my best to present language in a way that made students feel comfortable and confident. At first, there was no overall curriculum or list of assignments to follow for the classes I was assigned to teach, so I designed my classes using the language courses I had taken as a model. Learning Chinese through Wang Laoshi and

Professor Hargett's example helped me to be a better English teacher, and I used similar activities to develop the same sense of community in my own classes. By the time I left Taiwan, I had achieved a higher level of fluency in Chinese and a better sense of my strengths and weaknesses as an English instructor. Thinking back on my first experiences in China and Taiwan, I realized how much I had learned and how much I still have left to learn. Learning a language is a life-long process, and I hope to continue speaking, reading and writing in Chinese.

In 2015, I decided to pursue a second Master of Arts degree in English/TESL emphasis, with a focus on teaching English as a second language, at Eastern Washington University. At EWU, I have had the opportunity to work with many English learners and teachers. As a Graduate English Composition Instructor, I have also had experience teaching native and non-native English speakers how to build their writing skills and complete academic research at the college level. At first, I was nervous about teaching native speakers and wondered how this would fit in with the M.A. English/TESL program; however, I feel that this experience has encouraged me to reflect on writing and reading processes for a wide variety of learners.

In our graduate courses with Dr. LaVona Reeves, Dr. Tracey McHenry, Dr. Justin Young, and Dr. Lynn Briggs, I gained a wealth of knowledge and learned more than I could have ever hoped to through their expertise. Joining this program has also had a significant impact on my view of English language, English teaching worldwide, and my role as an educator. Working on projects with my graduate cohort, completing activities, and discussing issues in class with other English teachers and learners has been a remarkable experience. Prior to my time at EWU, I had few opportunities to work with

learners from Saudi Arabia or to really consider why people learn new languages for specific purposes. After my time interning and teaching the English 112 class, I understand that there are many motivations, interests, and experiences that lead learners to study a language.

Reflecting on my experience using English and Chinese, I believe that if it weren't for the particular method my parents and teachers used to teach me how to read I might not have been as successful in achieving fluency in Chinese. Without the tin of words my teachers assigned at Kempford or my parents' tutoring, I might not have been able to memorize Chinese so easily or have had the patience and drive to continue. Identifying characters by sight was much easier because I had been taught my native language by recognizing words and objects by the shape. Rote memorization in Chinese and repeated character writing seemed to come faster to me than it did for others. Moving from England to America also meant that I was also familiar with the "fish out of water" feeling that led many other exchange students and foreign teachers to deal with culture shock negatively. Ortega writes that identity and experience play a crucial role in a learner's language acquisition (Ortega, 2009, p. 242), and I believe my experiences in England and America aided me greatly in code switching between cultures – English and American, American and Chinese, Chinese and Taiwanese.

My experience living between many cultures prepared me for a career working with a diverse population of students, and enables me to empathize with learners in my courses. I am very grateful for my parents, teachers, cultural brokers, and all of those people who have helped me throughout my journey. I aim to ease language learners' feelings of apprehension and instill confidence in themselves in the same way my teachers

encouraged and instilled confidence in me. Through my experience learning my first and second languages, I understand the challenges students face when acquiring second or other languages. I recognize the reluctance of apprehensive students and use words of encouragement and praise as often as I can, as others have done for me.



### ***Teaching Philosophy***

My philosophy of teaching continues to evolve after several years of experience working with English language learners and writers. My goal is to encourage learners to be comfortable expressing their ideas and experiences through writing and discussion. Above all, I hope to instill a sense of confidence in my students. By using a collaborative, multimodal, student-centered approach to teaching, I aim to foster a classroom environment where students can share their work and discuss their ideas openly. I encourage them to contribute ideas to others and guide them towards an appreciation for learning from failure. I aim to impart self-reliance and the courage to try, fail, and try again, with the ability to apply rhetorical and conversational conventions in order to best convey their message to the world.

I spent several years tutoring and co-teaching in many different environments with native and non-native English speakers before deciding on a career in teaching. I began my undergraduate studies at Bennington College, with an East Asian languages and arts focus. During my first year, I completed a voluntary three month teaching internship in kindergarten and pre-k classrooms at Oakdale Elementary School, in Connecticut, and later volunteered as a mentor for the Big Brothers Big Sisters program in Bennington, Vermont. In 2004, I transferred to the State University of New York (SUNY) at Albany to pursue a B.A. in Chinese Studies, and tutored exchange students from Japan and China in my free time. During my last year at SUNY Albany, I participated in a year-long academic exchange program at Fudan University in Shanghai, China. While completing the immersion program, I volunteered to co-teach Business English classes and this experience gave me a new perspective on language acquisition. This shift to Chinese

studies shaped my perceptions later as an English language teacher; remembering the long hours spent studying, occasional successes, and the socio-pragmatic failures I experienced reminds me to be conscious of student needs. Having studied a second language, I can understand many of the challenges adult learners face. Teaching and tutoring others while in college and graduate school gave me an appreciation for language and writing instruction, and sparked my interest in a career teaching English.

After completing the study abroad program and graduating from SUNY Albany, I enrolled in a Master's program in Asian Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. While pursuing the M.A., I had the opportunity to work as a Graduate Teaching Assistant. This was my first experience working in higher education, and I really enjoyed assisting professors and learning how to develop a curriculum and plan lessons. I also tutored native and non-native English-speaking learners, and helped struggling students to develop their writing skills. After graduation, I completed a Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA) at the Intercultural Communications College in Hawaii. The CELTA gave me an excellent foundation for approaching language in the classroom and an introduction to language teaching methodologies. Following successful completion of the CELTA, I moved to Taiwan in October of 2008. My experience working with international students and adult learners during CELTA training provided insight and allowed me to develop strategies for learners in later years.

During my first year in Taiwan, I taught at several "cram schools" to students aged 5-65 in small classes and one-on-one tutoring. As a summer English teacher, I led writing workshops and helped students to prepare for speech competitions. In 2009, I was offered a contract teaching college-level English conversation and writing at Chienkuo

Technology University (CTU). As an English Lecturer, I taught 12-15 hours of college-level English courses per week, and participated in community outreach and recruitment programs for CTU each semester; including, English language workshops for Yuanlin Home Economics and Commercial Vocational Senior High School students, courses sponsored by the Ministry of Education, and Business English classes for local companies. Although I did not speak Chinese in class with my students, I felt that I understood their desire to study English and the challenge of learning a language a little differently than instructors who had never learned another language. I often told students stories of my successes and failures in using Chinese in Taiwan. Laughing at my socio-pragmatic failures relaxed students and seemed to relieve their apprehension, but this also encouraged students to share their stories and practice English speaking and writing skills. As the only American English instructor, I took great responsibility in creating an environment where students could practice necessary skills for using English in daily life while developing academic writing conventions.

When I first began teaching at CTU, the Chair of the Applied Foreign Languages Department recommended exploring various methodologies and approaches to teaching English learners in an effort to revitalize the traditional curriculum. I discovered that students had previously spent quite a lot of time memorizing dialogues in books and wanted to learn more about how English is used in conversation or writing in “real life”. Over the course of the first few semesters, I developed several units by surveying students about their interests and future goals. Then, I spent a considerable amount of time sourcing articles, textbooks, video and audio files to create lesson plans that incorporated areas of student interest along with the grammar or subject focus. In

conversation classes, I encouraged students to write dialogues and short skits based on an aspect of discussion and practice they had chosen. In writing classes, I introduced units on research and the academic essay but also included poems, narratives, letter writing, and journals. I found that when students chose the focus of their work, their levels of engagement and participation improved. They felt a personal connection to the work and its purpose; which I believe are crucial for fostering self-reflection, self-correction, and self-confidence. Teaching a wide variety of courses and working with English learners from Taiwan, China, Korea, Russia and the Czech Republic, led me to enroll in a Master's in English: Teaching English as a Second Language program upon return to the United States.

For the past two years, I have been working toward a Master of Arts in English/TESL emphasis while teaching English composition and working with multilingual writers at Eastern Washington University (EWU). Through this program, I have been able to build upon previous approaches and methodologies while working directly with student writers and English language learners. Each quarter, I had the opportunity to teach English composition, argumentation and academic research to native and non-native English speakers in English 101, 201, and 112 classes. While working with a diverse group of learners, I noticed that some students had difficulty breaking down academic texts or read and translated assigned readings word by word. This led to the development of an initial question about how to approach instruction of reading comprehension strategies in college-level English classes, which formed the basis of my thesis research.

As part of the requirements of the M.A. English/TESL program I designed a curriculum and materials for a Composition for Multilingual Students course, which I

taught during the winter quarter of 2017. I observed that several students were anxious, uninterested, or struggled to read scholarly journal articles and academic texts; however, students were comfortable discussing ideas, new concepts, or any questions they had with peers. The use of a collaborative approach aided students in building their writing skills and developing their reading comprehension. Direct instruction and discussion about the use of reading strategies, and practice breaking down texts in groups, led to increased meta-cognitive awareness and self-monitoring of comprehension. However, through this experience I also gained insight as to the challenges multilingual writers face when asked to read or write in English classes. Through their written work and class discussions, I found that some students had received a significant amount of negative feedback in other classes, which led to an insecure or apprehensive attitude toward English and writing.

Minimizing student reading and writing apprehension has been a major goal during my time at EWU, and I have worked hard to provide positive feedback and promote constructive criticism in peer review groups, so that student writers could feel comfortable sharing their work. I have an open-door policy, hold peer reviews and individual conferences regularly, and provide suggestions on each draft of their essays and in-class responses. It is important that students know their instructors are actually reading and reflecting on their work, and many have expressed appreciation for this approach. When working with multilingual students, I focused on intelligibility and clarity rather than accuracy when writing and communicating ideas. Whereas in classes with more native speakers, I focused a little more on accuracy with the goal of connecting ideas effectively and supporting examples with evidence or elaboration. Further, I encouraged students to write about and discuss lived experiences, topics of interest, or

areas of research pertaining to their majors. I connected each genre or focal point of the lesson to practical applications and “real world” examples. By relating topics and conventions we discussed in class to students’ daily lives, I aimed to demonstrate the importance of literacy and critical reading.

One of my most crucial influences during my time at EWU have been the discussions and readings in my graduate courses. Graduate composition instructors have a lot of freedom to discuss common issues in their classes, and share ideas about how to present and practice materials. The readings led me to question a lot of the assumptions I had about teaching English writing to native and non-native speakers. At first, I was surprised to find that we were to teach without emphasis on grammar and syntax and use minimal marking. Even though target language and conventions were not explicitly emphasized, I found that coaching students through the writing process allowed for a greater focus on content and clarity. Grammar and syntax errors were revised and refined by individual writers with each successive draft, and peer reviews also aided students in identifying errors. Giving students autonomy and agency stimulated their interest in assignments and many reported feeling pride in their work after many years of responding to tired, old prompts. Ideas and theoretical frameworks for these approaches can be directly attributed to discussions of student voice, flipped learning, differentiated instruction, the writing of Shor, Elbow, Ellis, Krashen, Freire, Bruffee and others, in my graduate-level classes. I was able to use many ideas from second language acquisition, composition pedagogies, modern language methodology, and other courses, to inform my teaching practices, create lesson plans, and modify approaches or procedures used in the previous quarter.

Through the M.A. English/TESL program, I gained in-depth knowledge of second language acquisition and approaches to teaching English language and composition, while working with student writers from underrepresented populations. Previous work in the CELTA program gave me a wonderful foundation for the first part of my teaching career, and the M.A. English/TESL program provided a deeper understanding of the theoretical underpinnings while enhancing prior knowledge and practices. Through the M.A. in Asian Studies I learned many aspects of East Asian history, language and culture, but this knowledge was also extremely helpful in later years as a teacher trying to understand L-1 interference in Chinese speakers. After studying university level Chinese for six years, and living and working in a predominately Chinese-speaking country for five years, I can truly understand the ups and downs of the language learner experience. This perspective and understanding continues to shape and inspire my approaches to teaching English writing and conversation.

Second language acquisition is a complex process involving an interplay between teachers, students, and individual learners' motivations. It is important for instructors to understand this dynamic process as both extrinsic and intrinsic. Teachers can provide materials and develop lesson plans focusing on various skill sets, but the learner's acquisition is guided by motivation, experience, interest, and many other factors. While this may make English teaching seem like a difficult task, if teachers are aware of these factors then shaping course content and lesson plans becomes less about following a model for acquisition and more about developing activities to suit learner needs. When it comes to student involvement and acquisition, the task of teaching language must be

pointed and purposeful, but also enable students to connect class discussions and prompts to practical applications.

In my classes, I strive to minimize apprehension in speaking and writing, while aiding students in developing a writing process and strategies for revision or self-correction. My overall aim is to encourage students to feel comfortable expressing themselves through the spoken or printed word; to feel confident discussing reviews of their work and contributing to the work of others; to learn how to fail and learn from failure; to develop an individualized process; to analyze the work of others and learn from their words; and to understand that effective language use is a skill that like any other can be perfected and refined through practice and application.



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## Chapter 1

*“To know how to read is to light a lamp in the mind,  
to release the soul from prison, to open a gate to the universe.”  
(Pearl S. Buck, Pavilion of Women, p. 292)*

### Introduction

Reading can be a great adventure, a source of inspiration or knowledge, a comfort or a solace. The experience of reading can be transformative and emancipatory. Once I learned how to read, I never stopped looking for new sources of information, new perspectives, and new worlds. Whether acquiring knowledge or reading for pleasure, the exchange of ideas and experiences between writer and reader is powerful. However, for some to read is not to “open a gate to the universe” (Buck, 1946, p. 292) but an attempt to move past a locked door, and finding the key to comprehension can seem unachievable. If a text does not appeal to a reader, or if the reader is apprehensive, reading can become a chore, a drudgery, or a hurdle that seems impossible to overcome. Reading in a foreign language can present further challenges or add another layer of difficulty to the already challenging process of acquisition.

As an undergraduate, I chose to major in Chinese Studies, and this experience has aided me in understanding the challenges that English learners face when encountering difficult texts. Speaking and listening in Chinese can seem simple when compared to English, yet reading and writing in Chinese can be very difficult. Reading in English, due to its many spelling and pronunciation anomalies, can feel equally difficult to speakers of Chinese. After working with a diverse group of students over the past several years, whose native languages may or may not have included a phonetic alphabet, I realized how complicated reading in English can be. Further, because reading is such a necessary

skill it is one that can cause learners a lot of anxiety. Reading is often viewed as a solitary activity and students are often asked to read alone, which can further compound these issues if readers feel that they cannot or should not ask for help.

### ***Statement of the Problem***

Reading is a fundamental skill that all college-level students must master in order to successfully complete their programs of study. English language learners often engage with a variety of language learning texts, but report feelings of inadequacy or anxiety regarding college-level reading (Gao, 2013; Namjoo & Marzban, 2013; Lei et al., 2010; Philippot & Graves, 2009; Bruffee, 1981; 1984; 1994). Reading at the college level requires analysis, evaluation, critical thinking, and knowledge of specialized terms (Gao, 2013; Philippot & Graves, 2009; Bruffee, 1994). Researchers have found that “good” readers actively engage in their reading and use several strategies to facilitate understanding of the text (Lei et al., 2010; Philippot & Graves, 2009; Bruffee, 1981; 1984; 1994). Yet, few university or college programs offer additional training in the use of reading strategies build comprehension skills (Lei et al., 2010). Direct instruction of strategies that can be used to break down complex language or specialized terms in a wide range of academic texts may be beneficial to English learners.

English language learners often face challenges when reading academic texts at the college level due to several factors. These factors include: heavy reliance on dictionaries when reading (Fuqua, 2015; Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002), significant experience with teacher-centered pedagogical approaches (Cheng, 2015; Chun, 2012; Bruffee, 1981; 1984; 1994), cultural factors (Mount, 2014; Nassaji, 2013; Yang, 2012; Chi, 1995), lack of motivation, confidence, or interest (Yeh, 2014; Ortega, 2009; Tsuo, 2005; Ellis, 1994;



Bruffee, 1994), and anxiety (Yeh, 2014; Yang, 2012; Wu & Lin, 2014). Due to increasing international ties and a growing population of native and non-native English speakers, English reading comprehension and conversational skills have a greater effect on employability and future success. The perceived importance of English proficiency can lead to anxiety if learners have difficulty comprehending what they are reading (Lei, et al., 2010). For learners who are studying or plan to study in countries where English is the primary language of instruction, direct instruction of reading strategies may instill confidence and foster learner autonomy. Learners who read efficiently and gain a deep understanding of a text employ several strategies, which could be enhanced through the use of collaboration in English classrooms (Snow & O'Connor, 2016; Bruffee, 1981; 1984; 1994). The purpose of this study is to determine the benefits and challenges of using a collaborative approach to teaching reading comprehension strategies to English language learners.

### ***Evolution of the Research Question***

At Eastern Washington University, I had the opportunity to complete an internship twice in the English 112 class during the summer quarter of 2015 and the fall quarter of 2016. As an intern, I worked with several students in small groups. Although I had worked in groups throughout my education in the U.S., and regularly planned group work in classes I had taught, I had never experienced a significant amount of group work with English learners from many different countries. In my previous occupation as an English lecturer at a university in Taiwan, we regularly hosted exchange students from a few neighboring countries each semester in our English program. However, outside of meeting with groups during project work, thesis advising, and in testing situations, I had

little experience working with a diverse group of English learners as a student or intern. While working with the English learners in the 112 class, like Mount (2014) and Lin (2007), I noticed that students struggled with their reading comprehension skills, felt anxious about their ability to read college-level, academic texts, or reported negative feelings toward reading in general.

When working in groups, I observed that learners felt more comfortable asking peers for help than asking the teacher in front of the whole class. Despite the knowledge that the instructor and supervisor of the English 112 class, Dr. LaVona Reeves, could answer any question they might have had students were concerned about their speaking abilities or embarrassed to admit that they did not understand something we had read. The observation that students feel more comfortable discussing questions with peers has been one constant throughout my teaching experience in the U.S. and abroad. After working with several groups in the English 112 class, I began to develop an idea for implementing collaborative strategies in my own courses. Since many of the students I worked with in these classes also struggled with reading comprehension, I was curious as to whether using a collaborative approach to teaching reading strategies would be beneficial to English learners.

The research question was also shaped through experience working with students in my graduate cohort. Over the past two years, I have worked with one graduate student from Saudi Arabia on a number of research projects and assignments. The student, Mohammad, completed an internship in my English 112 class during our second year in the program, under the direction of Dr. LaVona Reeves. His writing also appears in this study. When he first started the M.A. English/TESL program, Mohammad read every

word of each assigned text. He approached me for help with one of the more complex reading assignments and I realized that he was using the dictionary often enough to significantly impact the time he spent reading. Mohammad told me that reading word by word and translating was his primary reading strategy, and that it was causing a considerable amount of anxiety regarding his ability to complete assignments on time.

After reviewing a few strategies I used to break down difficult texts, Mohammad reported feeling relief and increased confidence. This practice of reading word by word or “lack of a methodical approach utilizing effective reading strategies” is a common observation among educators (Fuqua, 2015, p. 25; August, 2011; Mokhatri & Sheorey, 2002). My experience helping Mohammad and others in my graduate cohort led me to research the best methods or practices for teaching reading comprehension strategies, in order to build English reading skills, encourage apprehensive readers, and better prepare English language learners for English 101, 201, and other college courses at EWU.

As a Graduate Composition Instructor at EWU in the English 101 and 201 classes, I have observed that native English speakers also struggle to break down complex academic texts. The first reading assignment in the English 101 course, “Literacy and the Politics of Education” by C. H. Knoblauch (1990), introduces specialized terms that many students have difficulty understanding during their initial reading of the article. Mount (2014) also found that students in her classes struggled with Knoblauch’s article. Students who participated in her study reported that despite reading and rereading the article they could not understand it, and they felt sad, or frustrated, or were apologetic about their inability to meet the instructor’s expectations (Mount, 2014, pp. 79-80). Mount reported that her students had to use a dictionary to look up at least 20 new words

in the first few pages alone (p. 79). My experience teaching Knoblauch's article has been similar, as many native and non-native English speakers have reported spending hours rereading, checking the dictionary, and decoding new words or concepts.

Knoblauch's (1990) article deals with the political and philosophical underpinnings of critical literacy and problematizes these constructs as they relate to education. This is a challenging article for those who have not been introduced to critical literacy nor have a background in rhetoric or composition, but is vital for beginning the process of discussion and inquiry in the English 101 and 201 classes. I have found that reviewing reading strategies in English 101 and 201 can aid both native and non-native speakers in breaking down complex texts and identifying new terms. As Mokhatri & Sheorey (2002) wrote:

It is important for all readers, whether native or non-native, to be aware of some of the key strategies proficient readers use before reading (e.g., thinking about what one knows about a subject, knowing the purpose for which they read), during reading (e.g., concentrating well while reading, monitoring one's comprehension), and after reading (e.g., understanding how pieces of information fit together, evaluating what one reads).  
(p.6)

Mokhtari & Sheorey (2002) and Lei, et al. (2010) observed that many students may not be aware of the wide range of reading comprehension strategies available and their application in academic reading. However, direct instruction of reading strategies could improve readers' awareness, encourage self-monitoring, and increase efficiency and comprehension. Determining which reading comprehension strategies to introduce and when can be challenging for educators, as direct instruction of strategies takes a considerable amount of time (Mount, 2014; Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002). For this reason, I decided to research reading comprehension strategies and develop a curriculum for the English 112 class in which students could practice using these strategies collaboratively.

### ***Objectives and Research Questions***

The objectives of this research are to: 1) identify challenges multilingual writers face when reading, 2) provide insight for teachers on how to use collaborative strategies for reading comprehension, and 3) allow students to identify their academic cultural differences in order to develop reading habits and strategies. Journals and essays collected from students enrolled in the English 112 class, who agreed to participate in this study, will be analyzed to determine:

- a) challenges multilingual students face when encountering intermediate to advanced-level texts used in the college writing classroom;
- b) what students have already been taught about reading strategies and;
- c) how well multilingual students apply what they have been taught about reading strategies—both prior to and during English 112;
- d) the value and usefulness of collaboration in English classrooms across cultures.

### ***Framework***

The present study uses a foundation in TESOL methodology and pedagogy, rhetoric and composition theory, socio-constructivist theory, and cultural studies. This research builds on the work of Bruffee, Freire, Knoblauch, Giroux, Krashen, Ellis, Snow, hooks, Richards, Weaver, and many others who have contributed to the field of rhetoric, critical literacy, cultural studies and language learning. Research for the present study also seeks to expand on the work of Mount (2014), Lin (2007), Van Tyne (2004), and many other thesis projects completed in the M.A. English/TESL program.

This study is action research designed to investigate the use of collaborative reading strategies. Action research includes “cycles of planning, action, observation, and

reflection that problematize (in a positive sense) issues, dilemmas, or gaps that concern us in our teaching situations” (Burns, 2010, p. 19). It is a process that brings “action” and “research” together, and can be described as “exploratory teaching”; with a wide range of possibilities for reflection and practice (Burns, 2010, pp. 17-19). Action research offers educators the opportunity to tailor learning to students’ needs, based on a process of investigation, contemplation, planning and implementation (Lin, 2007; Nunan, 1988). Using this process, teachers reflect on successes or challenges observed in their classrooms then research and implement methods for improving students’ learning experience. In the present study, action research was used when developing materials, writing and revising a curriculum for the English 112 class, teaching, and reviewing collected materials, in order to enhance and refine the research query.

The steps to action research, as outlined by Burns (2010), “involve many interwoven aspects”: exploring, identifying, planning, collecting information, analyzing, reflecting, hypothesizing and speculating, intervening, observing, reporting, writing and presenting. Although there are more “fixed” approaches to conducting action research, such as the model popularized by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), Burns’ (2010) model of action research was chosen for its recursive properties (pp. 8-9). The works of these authors and the oversight and advice given by my thesis advisor, Dr. LaVona Reeves, have contributed enormously to the philosophical and theoretical foundation and implementation of this research.

By drawing upon research from several studies related to collaborative and communicative approaches, reading, English language learning, and anxiety, I aim to investigate the benefits and challenges of using a collaborative approach to teach reading

comprehension strategies. Research for this study was collected from student journals and essays completed as part of our regular coursework in the English 112 class. A narrative inquiry approach is used to analyze journals and essays included in this study. Along with materials written by students in English 112, I include my own observations and reflections as well as those of our graduate intern. In the role of instructor of record, I developed a curriculum based on the life of Pearl S. Buck. As a participant-observer, my role in the research project was to instruct the course, observe discussion and student interactions, collect materials, and note student progress.

### ***Developing the English 112 Curriculum***

The curriculum for the English 112 class was developed in the graduate-level English 581 Curriculum Design course as a requirement for the Master's in English TESL program. The English 112 course curriculum usually focuses on an American who made a significant contribution to society or culture, and graduate students in the English 581 course choose a biography or an autobiography of an American to develop and design their curriculum. Due to my background in Asian Studies and interest in Chinese language and culture, I decided to write a curriculum based on the life of Pearl S. Buck for the English 112 class based on *Between Two Worlds: A Story about Pearl Buck*, by Barbara Mitchell, along with selections from two recent biographies, written by Peter Conn and Hilary Spurling, as well as Pearl's autobiography.

Pearl S. Buck was an American author, activist, and humanitarian whose novels were widely read in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. She was the first American woman to win a Pulitzer Prize and a Nobel Prize in literature; the only woman who did not have to share the honor with a male colleague. Raised in China as the daughter of Presbyterian missionaries,

Buck occupied a space between several worlds and promoted cross-cultural exchange by demythologizing the Other at a time when Americans had little knowledge of Chinese culture. Buck's interest in writing began at an early age and she became a prolific writer in later years publishing 46 novels, 11 works of non-fiction, two biographies, and two autobiographies, as well as numerous short stories and articles (Conn, 1996). Her novels about life in China were inspired by her experiences, stories she had heard or read, and the lives of friends and families she had known. She is noted for her beautiful prose, use of Chinese literary conventions, and ability to accurately portray the lives of peasants in early 20<sup>th</sup> century China.

Although her writing influenced many heads of state and great leaders, including Gandhi, Eleanor Roosevelt, and several U.S. presidents, her writing was largely ignored after the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (Conn, 1996). After her initial success in the 1930's, her work fell under harsh criticism due to socio-political factors of the time. Her writing was snubbed by American authors who thought her style was too simplistic and Chinese intellectuals wrote scathing indictments of her work (Liao, 1997; Conn, 1996). During the Cultural Revolution in China, Buck was named as an "American cultural imperialist" and her works were heavily criticized by the Communist government. She was regarded as pro-Communist by Americans, and anti-Communist by the Chinese government (Block, 2010; Conn, 1996). Despite near constant pressure from many detractors Buck continued writing and working to establish orphanages for children deemed "unadoptable" at that time; usually children who were of Asian or mixed heritage and those left behind by American soldiers stationed in Asia (Conn, 1996). Buck created a bridge between cultures at a time when Orientalism dominated Americans' views of



China, and some credit her work as having a major impact on the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act (Liao, 1997).

### ***Rationale and Analysis of Course Materials***

Several books have been written about author and humanitarian Pearl S. Buck. As compared to many other famous American figures, however, the range of reading levels for biographies about Pearl Buck is surprisingly narrow. Most biographies are between 250-400 pages long (Spurling, 2010; Gao, 2000; Liao, 1997; Conn 1996; Sterling, 1983), and are written for more advanced readers. Although there is an abridged version of Pearl Buck's autobiography for young readers, sourcing enough copies for a class with more than ten students can be challenging and expensive. Although Barbara Mitchell's book *Between Two Worlds: A Story about Pearl Buck* is also out of print, library copies are easily obtained through online retailers and used-book stores. It is also relatively short for a biography at only 64 pages, but includes illustrations which can be useful for comprehension of complex themes and a number of in-class activities.

For these reasons, I chose to use this biography as the main course book for the English 112 class, and supplemented it with complementary sections from two other biographies by Hilary Spurling (2010) and Peter Conn (1996), as well as Pearl Buck's own biography (1954). The reasons for supplementation are three-fold: the use of biographical and autobiographical accounts provides multiple perspectives on historical events; students can critically analyze the variety of tones, stances, purposes, and themes in each author's work; and while the Mitchell book provides an excellent overview of the major events of Pearl's life, there are many presences, absences and omissions which require further context and detail.

Throughout the book, Mitchell has chosen to tell Pearl's story through third-person narration punctuated with dialog. She focuses on the first 40 years of Pearl's long life, drawing clear inspirations from her autobiography. Although the book is not arguing for a particular point of view in a traditional sense, it may make many arguments through its inclusion or exclusion of subjects and figures as well as word choice. I.A. Richards and Richard M. Weaver both argue that rhetorical choice, and words in particular, can be laden with multiple levels of meaning for the author and reader (Foss, Foss & Trapp, 2014). What an author says – or doesn't say – can reveal their position, stance, or assumptions about a subject or audience. In analyzing *Between Two Worlds*, three distinct categories begin to emerge:

- 1) Word choice
- 2) Gender and presence/absence of voice
- 3) Omissions

The particular events that Mitchell focuses on are best viewed with more context, especially for those who are unfamiliar with the history of early 20<sup>th</sup> century China and the United States. The supplemental biographies and information presented in the English 112 class gave students further detail about omissions in Mitchell's book and context for each time period. Possible reasons for rhetorical choices were also discussed and analyzed as a class, and comparisons were drawn between each biographical representation of Pearl Buck.

*Between Two Worlds: A Story About Pearl S. Buck* was published in 1988 by Carolrhoda books, which is owned by Lerner Publishing. It is a small, hardcover book, and while the cover art includes a beautifully illustrated image of Pearl Buck

(foreground) and a ship on the ocean (background) in muted tones, the pictures inside are printed in black and white. The page-length, hand-drawn images that accompany the book were created by Karen Ritz. Although Ritz maintains a personal website and portfolio of illustrations, information about Barbara Mitchell is difficult to find. There is no “author bio” or “about the author” section included in *Between Two Worlds*, and internet searches for *Between Two Worlds* yield several books for young learners about American inventors, scholars, and activists, but no personal websites for Barbara Mitchell or biographical information. Additionally, the Carolrhoda books page of the Lerner Publishing website does not list any information for Barbara Mitchell. Since not much is known about the author and her motivations for writing the book are not available, readers can consider the possible reasons why she chose to include or exclude certain people and events.

### 1) *Word Choice*

Word choice and use of terminology can have unintended consequences on the understanding of a text. Rhetorician I.A. Richards wrote about the many functions and processes that arise in conversing and writing, and comprehending or interpreting conversations and written texts. Richards wrote that these functions and processes are complex, and that language has “several tasks to perform simultaneously” (Foss, Foss & Trapp, 2014, p. 30). Richards argued against what he called “Proper Meaning Superstition”, or “the belief that a word has a meaning all its own about which everyone should agree” (Foss, Foss & Trapp, 2014, p. 27). Words can carry many meanings for the speaker or writer that may not be shared with the audience. In outlining functions of discourse, Richards discusses “emotive” and “referential” language. “Emotive” language

refers to language that conveys feelings and attitudes, whereas “referential” language refers to language that is used for references invoked or is tied to objective reality (Foss, Foss & Trapp, 2014, p. 32). According to Richards, miscommunication occurs when speakers or writers and the audience have different expectations or references and that comprehension is dependent upon audience awareness and understanding.

In Mitchell’s book, there are many examples of “emotive” and “referential” language. Many of the instances of “emotive” language are used in description or to give a sense of atmosphere, while “referential” uses of language are tied to a location or an explanation of events. For example, the first line in *Between Two Worlds* is, “Little foreign devil!” (Mitchell, 1988, p. 7). While this might shock a reader with little knowledge of Chinese culture or language into continuing to read, it also gives an immediate impression about Pearl’s difference and apparent hostility toward foreigners in China. The term “foreign devil” or “foreign devils” was used in China to describe people from countries that threatened to take control of China or succeeded in taking Chinese land or goods by force. Although this term may have been in use prior to the Opium Wars in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, in this particular context it refers to the feelings of the children of Chinese peasants who lived near Pearl when she was a little girl.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, foreign powers pushed further into China creating tensions against foreigners and missionaries, which rose to a fever pitch during the Boxer Rebellion (1900). Eight allied nations, including Japan, Russia, Britain, France, the United States, Germany, Italy, and Austro-Hungary, formed a coalition which quelled the rebellion; leading to further decline of the Qing dynasty and resentment among Chinese people. The use of the term “foreign devil” is interesting for both referential purposes and

the potential emotive response from readers. Mitchell chooses to focus on Pearl's difference rather than give background about unequal treaties, war, and politics, however these are not topics or themes that are completely omitted in later pages. The choice of the term "foreign devil" seems to be to situate Pearl as a visible minority in a country that is not her "own", yet the historical significance of the term carries deeper meanings.

Richard M. Weaver argues that word choice and rhetoric function beyond the limits of the author and audience. Rhetoric is connected to culture because it deals with actions in real situations and ideals, creating a "storehouse of universal memory" (Foss, Foss & Trapp, 2014, p. 163). Language functions as a bond for cultures because it "emanates from a group's imaginative picture of the world or its tyrannizing image...it conveys the permanent values of the culture..." therefore, "being objective about anything is impossible" (Foss, Foss & Trapp, 2014, p. 163). Weaver also believed that the type of argument a person uses can reveal their character or intentions. He makes a connection between the source of an argument and how they interpret and view the world.

Weaver also analyzed the ways in which parts of speech allow the speaker to relay a message to the audience, as well as the ways in which the audience can understand the speaker's worldview through word choice. He wrote that each culture had "ultimate terms", or words that are paid the highest respect, are uncontested in their meaning or value, and are widely accepted (Foss, Foss & Trapp, 2014, p. 170). There are three major categories for ultimate terms: "god", "devil", and "charismatic" terms. A "god" term is a word that carries the greatest meaning or "blessing" in a culture, whereas a "devil" term is a "term of repulsion". For example, in the U.S. the terms *progress* and *technology* could be "god" terms; *terrorism* and *fascist* could be "devil" terms (Foss, Foss, & Trapp,

2014, p. 170). A “charismatic” term has a popular appeal and is given power by the populace; for example, *freedom* and *democracy*. The use of ultimate terms can also reveal a speaker or writer’s worldview, in that language conveys values, beliefs, and meaning which contribute to their “vision of the world” (Foss, Foss, & Trapp, 2014, p. 171). When analyzing texts in English classrooms, it is important to consider word choice as a factor in shaping not only how the audience understands a text but also how this contributes to a vision or view of the world.

At the time when *Between Two Worlds* was written (1988), diplomatic relations between the United States and China were warming in the post-Mao era. Chairman Deng Xiaoping was guiding China through the process of “opening up” following domestic stabilization and a series of economic reforms. The rekindling of Sino-U.S. relations led to the writing of many books and articles in the West about China and Chinese history. These texts made liberal use of the word “Communist” or “red”; yet Mitchell’s book uses the term “Communist” sparingly. In Mitchell’s book, the word “revolutionary” is favored over the word “Communist” when describing several events. If we apply Weaver’s “god” and “devil” terms to Mitchell’s use of these words, we can investigate the reasons why “revolutionary” is chosen over “Communist”. One reason may be to show solidarity or to resist Othering within her text. Another possibility is that the term may have been too laden with negative connotations due to Western views at this time; which may have had an effect on book sales, especially for young readers. Perhaps, like Pearl Buck, Mitchell wanted to avoid criticism of a pro- or anti-Communist view.

While in one case Mitchell has chosen to use “revolutionary” over “Communist”, these are not the only terms that have interesting implications. Other terms Mitchell chose to

use or substitute in the book are the words: “foreign colony builders”, instead of “imperialists” or “colonists”; “servant girls” instead of “prostitutes”; “keep company with” instead of “date”; and “break up” instead of “divorce”. Due to the intended audience, Mitchell may have used these terms to soften the content or avoid bias.

Mitchell treats both Communist revolutionaries and foreign occupation of land with equal sensitivity, if not almost avoidance. She describes the ways in which foreign powers had divided China early in the book, but the term “foreign colony builders” is much softer and less threatening than the term “imperialist”. Although the reasons for Mitchell’s use of these terms is unknown, the possible interpretations of these rhetorical choices and the many layers of meaning ascribed to “god” and “devil” terms create an opportunity for analysis among readers.

## 2) *Gender*

According to Pearl Buck’s autobiography, there were four men who had a substantial impact on her early life: her father, Absalom Sydenstricker; her teacher, Teacher Kung; her husband, Lossing Buck; and her second husband, Richard Walsh. While Teacher Kung is mentioned only briefly in Mitchell’s book, his significance in her life is noted. However, despite the presence of Absalom, Kung, Lossing, and Richard in other biographies, the men have little voice in Mitchell’s account. Although Pearl and Lossing were married for 18 years and raised two children together for almost 14 years, Lossing only speaks once in the book. Lossing speaks when the two are discussing Pearl’s daughter, Carol, and her disability. Pearl is worried that her daughter is not sitting up or focusing her eyes at one year old. “All the children on my side of the family were slow developers”, Lossing says, and later Mitchell adds, “Lossing did not have a way with

words” (Mitchell, 1988, p. 35). Mitchell notes Lossing’s presence at events, silence, and lack of interest in reading anything but agricultural texts; however, after they divorce in 1935, his name does not appear in the book again.

The divorce is alluded to as a “break up” earlier in the book, but on pages 54 and 55 the divorce is mentioned once, in a paragraph that quickly shifts the focus to adoption.

In Richard Walsh, Pearl had found a soul mate. Not since her mother, had anyone understood her so well as a writer. In 1935, Pearl and Lossing Buck were divorced. Pearl married her publisher. Soon after they were married, Richard and Pearl decided that they wanted more children. “What would you think of having some brothers and another sister?” they asked Janice. More children would be nice, Janice agreed. The three of them together went through the process of adopting two baby boys. Soon afterward, another baby boy and another baby girl were added to their family. (Mitchell, 1988, p. 55)

Pearl and Lossing’s “break up” is almost hidden among positive news for the reader. Despite discussing famine, war, and “bad things” that soldiers had done in China, Mitchell’s brief mention of their divorce may be telling in the way it swiftly changes topics. Richard is also referred to as her “soul mate” and compared to her mother, who has more voice than any other character besides Pearl. Since the divorce also led to a scandal within the missionary community, perhaps avoiding the topic was a way of protecting more traditional sensibilities or sparing a lengthy or value-laden description of the unusual circumstances of her divorce. That Pearl was married and divorced within one hour, with the blessings of both Lossing and Richard’s ex-wife, could be seen as too complex or inappropriate. This is, incidentally, the last time that Lossing’s name is mentioned in the book.

Richard never speaks. Not alone. This might show his perceived compatibility with Pearl, but is interesting in that he is a prominent figure in Pearl’s autobiography and other biographies. The only time his voice is acknowledged in Mitchell’s book is in the same



paragraph that mentions the divorce (above quote). The line “they asked” implies that Richard is also speaking, but he never speaks to Pearl or anyone else directly. Their compatibility is foreshadowed in an earlier chapter, however his voice is more or less absent. By contrast, Absalom Sydenstricker speaks four times in the book. His real-life absences are briefly touched on and the severity of Pearl’s clashes with her father early in life are toned down. Further, their reconciliation is never explained, nor is his death.

The female characters have much more speaking time in Mitchell’s biography. In particular: her mother, Carie; her nanny, Wang Amah; her daughter, Janice; and Mrs. Lu, a woman who saved Pearl and several family members by hiding them in her house during the Nanjing Incident. These four women speak several times throughout the book. In each chapter, women are well-represented and their stories are given more detail than their male counterparts. For example, Carie speaks more often than Absalom, and her comments are primarily meant to reassure Pearl during times of high anxiety. The power of the women in Pearl’s life is apparent through their presence in Mitchell’s book, yet in Pearl’s account and others their power appears to be one of resistance rather than dominance.

Mitchell does not state outright that during this time women were living under strict guidelines regarding femininity nor does she mention their social exclusion or oppression. However, her choice to include more female voices, rendering them as more dominant in Pearl’s life, could also be seen as a form of resistance. In Spurling and Conn’s biographies, the women and men in Pearl’s life are discussed in an equal fashion, without the feeling of more presence or absence than others. Mitchell’s choice to include more women in Pearl’s life story may be to show how her intimate conversations served

as inspirations for her writing. The dominant female representation can also be viewed as a means of bringing women who influenced Pearl to the foreground.

By positioning these women as present, vocal allies, Mitchell may be emphasizing their presence in an attempt to show their profound impact on Pearl's later life and work. In this way, Mitchell's story can be read from a feminist view as "transforming relationships and the larger culture" in a way that "alienation, competition, and dehumanization that characterize human interaction can be replaced with feelings of intimacy, mutuality, and camaraderie", as hooks discussed in her work (Foss, Foss & Trapp, 2014, p. 277). bell hooks wrote about marginality as a "site of radical possibility, a spece of resistance", and perhaps Mitchell's account of Pearl's life focuses on the female perspective as a method of resistance (Foss, Foss & Trapp, 2014, p. 276). Although the voices of the men in Pearl's life are absent in Mitchell's account, they are certainly not absent in Pearl's autobiography. The four men who influenced her most feature as prominently in her accounts as the women, and her writing was influenced by their stories too. Students in the English 112 class noted the absence or presence of influences in Pearl's life by comparing Spurling and Conn's biographies. In this way, students discussed how absence, presence, and omission can affect the audience's understanding, perspective or views, and the author's purpose.

### 3) *Omissions*

One major area of omission in *Between Two Worlds* is the criticism and controversy Pearl faced during her lifetime. Much of this criticism was based on gender, socio-political issues, and literary style. As an American who was raised in China, Pearl's writing occupied a transnational space that few literary agents thought would interest an

American audience. However, she achieved success after the John Day Company published *The Good Earth* in 1931. The market for novels about China had been vastly underestimated, and her novels are viewed as having significantly shifted American views and attitudes toward the Chinese people (Liao, 1997; Conn, 1996). Yet, despite her success, Pearl also had many detractors. Many critics claimed that her writing was not sophisticated enough or that her genre and style was not worthy of a Pulitzer Prize or a Nobel Prize. Many Chinese critics also wrote that Pearl could not possibly understand China as a foreigner, and felt that her focus on peasant life cast a negative light on modern China (Liao, 1997). Others could not accept that a 38 year old woman could write a novel deserving of these accolades (Spurling, 2010; Gao, 2000). Due to her subject matter and refusal to gloss over injustice and oppression, others thought Pearl's novels were too foreign, dark, frank or sensual (Conn, 1996).

In *Between Two Worlds*, Mitchell writes about some of the disappointment that Pearl faced when her manuscripts were rejected, but avoids the debate and criticism surrounding *The Good Earth* entirely. The chapters in the book end in the year 1938, with Pearl's acceptance of the Nobel Prize. However, the Chinese delegation's refusal to attend her acceptance speech is not mentioned (Conn, 1996). The postscript for the novel covers 40 years in 2 pages. Most of the criticism mentioned relates to rejection of Pearl's early manuscripts and her inability to find a publisher:

She promptly sent a letter to the first of the two agents she had discovered. Would he be interested in a novel about life in China? she asked. The agent's reply was disappointing. He knew of no publisher interested in Chinese subjects. Pearl decided that an actual story about China would prove more fruitful. She sent a second letter accompanied by her "Winds of Heaven" manuscript. David Lloyd's reply was cautious. He would be glad to read the story, but in all honesty, he had never heard of a publisher interested in China. (Mitchell, 1988, p. 45)

Yet, other biographies devote entire chapters to discussing the harsh criticisms that Pearl faced (Spurling, 2010; Gao, 2000; Liao, 1997; Conn 1996; Stirling, 1983). When discussing the Nobel Prize, Mitchell writes that Pearl won “for all her works of literature” and that her works made her a “much-loved” American author”, but the absence of criticism is noticeable when compared to other accounts.

Another major omission is any discussion of The Chinese Exclusion Act (1882-1943). While Pearl and her family travel between the U.S. and China many times in *Between Two Worlds*, there is no discussion of restrictions on Chinese immigration. The Chinese Exclusion Act was signed in response to waves of migrants from China who settled in California in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (Spurling, 2010; Conn, 1996). Due to fears of overcrowding, wage stagnation, and ethnocentric views in the U.S. at that time, the act was passed in order to cease the flow of migrants. Further restrictions on movement between China and the U.S. went into effect throughout this period of time. Even after the signing of the Magnuson Act, which repealed The Chinese Exclusion Act, only a small quota of people from China were allowed per year. Many researchers now credit Pearl’s work as the catalyst for ending The Chinese Exclusion Act, by providing a sympathetic and realistic view of “the Other” and changing American’s views toward the Chinese people (Liao, 1997; Conn, 1996). However, it was not until the Immigration and Nationality Act was passed in 1965 that immigration from China was possible for a large group of people.

There are many reasons why Mitchell might have chosen to omit these two major areas from *Between Two Worlds*. Discussing these omissions and the ways in which they might undermine the intended message or author’s purpose can aid students in understanding

the complex nature of historical representations in biographical accounts. By bringing major omissions to light, readers can consider the ways in which absence of historic events and events in a person's life can shape understanding of the story in positive and negative ways.

Using theories outlined by Weaver, Richards, hooks, and others, the choice of words or terms, gender, presence/absence, and omissions in Mitchell's account of Pearl's life can be evaluated. Although this book is shorter than other biographies, the terminology or events Mitchell wrote about can be analyzed and discussed to uncover layers of meaning and explore reasons for inclusions or exclusions. By encouraging English language learners and all students to think critically about the biographical accounts they read, new interpretations and examinations of texts can contribute to construction of knowledge. In this way, I aimed to promote critical literacy and embolden readers to consider presence, absence, word choice, representations of gender, and omissions in others' works. This created an opportunity for discussion and critical analysis for students in the English 112 class, who will need to understand these key concepts for English 101 and 201 courses.

The course book and supplementary readings were chosen based on several themes that would facilitate discussion, encourage collaboration, and build community. Themes such as food traditions, family, and teachers gave students the opportunity to share their experiences and cultures early in the quarter. Topics related to marriage and gender roles, "double consciousness" and living between two cultures or "worlds", disabilities, and helping and service to others, gave students a chance to analyze, reflect, and think deeply about their assumptions or experiences. Finally, themes related to future goals and dealing with criticism allowed students to explore their interests and hopes while

developing positive outlets for negative experiences. A course overview, including a full list of themes and supplementary readings given to students in the English 112 class in Week 1, is available at the end of this chapter and in Appendix C.

### *Assumptions*

In all ethnographic research, Teacher of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), our international professional organization, requires us to disclose our assumptions, biases and backgrounds. To that end, I want to explain that I made the following assumptions as I began this research project:

- 1) Students may be aware of some reading strategies;
- 2) students may rely on definitions rather than context when encountering difficult texts, and therefore may attempt to translate every new word;
- 3) students have their own strategies which have facilitated reading comprehension thus far;
- 4) students will encounter texts with many new words during their course of academic study, and will not have time to translate every word;
- 5) students must know how to break down a difficult text and build reading comprehension skills in order to participate in English 101, 201, and other courses at EWU;
- 6) direct instruction of strategies for reading comprehension, using a collaborative approach, can lead to less reliance on a dictionary and help readers to identify main points in a difficult text.

### ***Thesis organization***

This thesis is organized as follows: Chapter 2 is a review of literature related to collaboration in English learning environments, reading comprehension strategies, and engaging apprehensive readers and speakers in discussion groups. Chapter 3 includes the research design for the present study, methods, participants, and data collection. Chapter 4 is an analysis of the data collected in the English 112 class based on students' journal responses. Chapter 5 will focus on a discussion and analysis of the reflection essays. Chapter 6 is a discussion of the results of the present study and instructors' observations, and will also return to the assumptions outlined in Chapter 1. Chapter 7 will include a conclusion, limitations of the study, implications, recommendations for future research, and a reflection on the present study. References and appendices follow these chapters.

### Course Overview

Week	<b>Between Two Worlds</b> (main course book) Barbara Mitchell	<b>Pearl Buck in China</b> Hillary Spurling	Supplementary Readings	Themes
1	<b>Chapter 1</b>	Chp 1 p. 1,6-10 (Intro & family) <b>(5)</b>		<b>Storytellers &amp; Family</b>
2	<b>Chapter 1-2</b>	Chp 1 p. 22-23 (living conditions), 54-55 (reading habit) <b>(4)</b>	<b>Buck:</b> p. 20-22 (food), 33-36 (1900)	<b>Childhood memories &amp; Description</b>
3	<b>Chapter 2</b>	Chp 2 p. 50-52 (Kung warning), , 58-59 (Kuling) <b>(5)</b>	<b>Buck:</b> p. 50 (Teacher Kung), 52 (mental bifocals)	<b>Teachers &amp; Influence</b>
4	<b>Chapter 3</b>	Chp 3 p. 70-72 (Randolph Macon), 79-82 (1911, Carie's illness) <b>(6)</b>	<b>Buck:</b> p. 94-95 (experience at Randolph Macon) <b>Conn:</b> p. 53-54 (after graduation)	<b>"Mental bifocals" &amp; "Double consciousness" New beginnings</b>
5	<b>Chapter 3-4</b>	Chp 4 p. 92-93 (Lossing) 97-98 (surveying), 103-104 (married life) <b>(6)</b>	<b>Conn:</b> p. 61-62	<b>Marriage &amp; Gender roles</b>
6	<b>Chapter 4</b>	Chp 5 p. 126-127 (decides to write) 147-150 (Carol) 181-183 (Vineland school) <b>(9)</b>	<b>Buck:</b> 249-250 (bringing Carol to the US) Or <b>Conn:</b> 176	<b>Disabilities &amp; Pearl Buck's daughter, Carol</b>
7	<b>Chapter 5</b>	Chp 5p. 152-154 (Nanjing uprising) Chp 6 p. 162-163 (refugees), 178-179(tension), <b>(8)</b>	<b>Buck:</b> 206-208 (Nanjing uprising)	<b>Helping others &amp; Service to others</b>
8	<b>Chapter 5-6</b>	Chp 7 p. 193-196 (response to work)197-200 (raising funds for famine) 217-218 (criticism) <b>(8)</b>	<b>Conn:</b> 131 or 238-240	<b>Dreams &amp; Future plans – Pearl fulfills her dream of writing</b>
9	<b>Chapter 6</b>	Chp 7 219-222 (RW and Green Hills) 229-231 (1938-54) <b>(6)</b>	<b>Buck:</b> 347-349 (Nobel reception)	<b>Dealing with criticism &amp; Overcoming obstacles</b>
10		<b>Postscript</b> (Ss assigned sections of the last chapter- pages will be divided equally)		<b>Student Presentations: Pearl Buck's life 1935-1972</b>

(Figure 1)



## **Chapter 2**

### **Review of Literature**

Over the past 40 years, there has been a major shift toward using student-centered approaches in ESL and EFL classrooms. One method that has been widely researched and implemented is the use of collaboration to facilitate English learning. A collaborative approach emphasizes a student-centered learning experience which serves to construct knowledge based on relationships between peers and encourage critical thinking (Hawkes, 2008; Bruffee, 1981; 1994). Several studies have shown the benefits of using a collaborative approach to writing and speaking (Kuo, Chu & Huang, 2015; Gao, 2013; Lei et al., 2010; Ortega, 2009; Tsou, 2005; Ellis, 1994; Bruffee 1981; 1984; 1994). Yet, few studies have examined the benefits of using a collaborative approach to teaching reading comprehension strategies to English language learners at the college level.

Reading is not a singular process that relies solely on input (Gao, 2013; Namjoo & Marzban, 2013; Nassaji, 2003; Bruffee, 1994). Rather, it is a multi-level process that relies on both meta-cognitive and social factors (Mountain, 2015; Wichadee, 2014; Gao, 2013; Nassaji, 2003; Bruffee, 1981; 1984; 1994). Several scholars have outlined the need for direct instruction and practice of reading comprehension strategies for college-level students (Fuqua, 2015; Gao, 2013; Philippot & Graves, 2009; Bremer et al., 2002).

English learners who encounter difficult academic texts may rely on word by word translation as a primary strategy. August (2011) asserts that “readers may concentrate so intently on individual words that they lose the meaning of the beginning of a sentence by the time they have struggled to the end” (p. 14). Practicing reading comprehension strategies through a collaborative method boosts efficiency, requires active participation

rather than passive, maximizes critical thinking skills, aids students in making intertextual connections, and fosters deep understanding of a text (Grabe & Stoller, 2014; Lei et al., 2010; Philippot & Graves, 2009; Lemke, 2004; Bremer et al., 2002; Bruffee, 1981; 1984; 1994).

Collaborative strategic reading or reading as a collaborative process focuses on background knowledge and peer input to facilitate deep understanding of a text at all stages of the reading process: pre-reading, reading, and post-reading (Grabe & Stoller, 2014; Philippot & Graves, 2009; Bremer, et al., 2002; Bruffee, 1994). Many scholars have called for further research into how a collaborative approach to reading can benefit English language learners (Kuo, Chu, & Huang, 2015; Grabe & Stoller, 2014; Wichadee, 2014; Gao, 2013; Nassaji, 2003; Smit, 1989). This review of literature seeks to explore the differences and similarities between cooperative and collaborative approaches, the benefits of using a collaborative approach to teaching reading strategies to English language learners, and how several reading strategies can be utilized in a collaborative learning environment.

### ***Collaborative vs. Cooperative methods***

A fundamental aspect of the collaborative approach is the belief that knowledge is socially constructed (Lemke, 2004; Bruffee, 1984; 1994). Instead of positioning the instructor as the ultimate authority, collaborative learning relies on interdependence and “making the most of knowledgeable peers” (Hawkes, 2008; Bruffee, 1994). While discussing texts, students draw from their prior knowledge and background in a subject, analyze, evaluate, create, and make connections between the text and their experiences (Philippot & Graves, 2009; Bruffee, 1981; 1994). Drawing upon multiple sources in a

social setting aids in connecting symbols within the text to other texts; a process that J. L. Lemke refers to as “intertextuality” (Lemke, 2004). Lemke and Kenneth Bruffee write about the interaction between individual and text as rooted in social practices, rather than text or author to object (Bruffee, 1994; Lemke, 2004). Both collaborative and cooperative methods of instruction shift authority to student groups and use direct instruction of reading or writing strategies, but allow groups to create meaning from the text rather than relying on an instructor’s interpretation (Bruffee, 1994; Matthews, et al., 1995; Bremer, et al., 2002; Sweet & Svinicki, 2007; Kuo, Chu, & Huang, 2015). There are several similarities between collaborative and cooperative approaches, but there are also many differences in theory and application.

In their article, “Building Bridges between Cooperative and Collaborative Learning”, Matthews, Cooper, Davidson, & Hawkes (1995) discuss the major differences and similarities that occur between collaborative and cooperative approaches. Matthews et al. (1995) explain that cooperative and collaborative approaches are used in many disciplines, but there seems to be a “deep divide between practitioners” of either approach (p. 36). Although both focus on group work and peer discussions, collaborative and cooperative approaches differ in their implementation, focus, and amount of teacher interference or authority (Matthews et al., 1995; Bremer, et al., 2002; Sweet & Svinicki, 2007). Both cooperative and collaborative approaches are student-centered, however the role of the teacher, emphasis on group dynamic, and structure of assignments differ.

A cooperative approach to group work in the English classroom uses direct instruction or training in social skills, such as active listening or giving constructive feedback (Matthews et al., 1995; Bruffee, 1981). Cooperative approaches use structured activities

in group work, and roles for each group member may be assigned by the instructor. During group work, the instructor actively monitors each group for a short time and may interject to give comments and corrections as they deem necessary. Materials are collected and graded after group work is performed and students might evaluate their group work or individual roles. Practitioners of the cooperative approach have historically been linked to social psychology, sociology, or education (Matthews et al., 1995, p. 37). The cooperative approach was intended for application at the K-12 level, and for this reason many scholars agree that the “lions share” of research has been collected in K-12 classrooms rather than colleges or universities (Matthews et al., 1995; Bremer, et al., 2002; Sweet & Svinicki, 2007).

When using a collaborative approach, students are asked to determine or negotiate their own roles within the group. In a collaborative learning situation, students may not be as actively monitored as in the cooperative approach, and major questions may be redirected back to the group to resolve or investigate (Matthews et al., 1995; Bruffee, 1981; 1994). Group work may or may not be collected, may serve as an example or scaffolding for larger projects, or may be revised or submitted as a draft at a later time. Students receive no formal training on small-group social skills, and instructors might feel that students “already possess the social skills necessary for group work” (Matthews et al., 1995, p. 36; Bruffee, 1981; 1994). There are few to no formal critiques or evaluations of group cohesion and individual roles, and participation issues are often left to groups to resolve on their own unless teacher intervention is necessary (Smit, 1989; Bruffee, 1981; 1984; 1994). There is less teacher monitoring in group work, and the power dynamic is shifted to a more student-centered approach (Matthews et al., 1995;

Bruffee, 1994). Practitioners of the collaborative approach have historically tended to work in the humanities and social sciences (Matthews et al., 1995, p. 40; Sweet & Svinicki, 2007).

Practitioners of the collaborative approach make connections to and explore feminist pedagogy, theoretical, political, and philosophical issues, the construction of knowledge and the role of authority in the classroom (Bruffee, 1994; Matthews et al., 1995). Cooperative learning, by contrast, tends to use a structured approach based on guidance and direct training of social skills or group dynamics (Bruffee, 1981; Matthews et al., 1995). In short, cooperative learning takes a more structured approach to group work, while a collaborative approach assumes students can discuss issues without direct teacher intervention (Smit, 1989; Bruffee, 1981). Teacher authority stems from being a part “of a prestigious knowledge group”; and giving space creates an opportunity for students to articulate new language, “renovate” what they already know, and “negotiate membership in a new community of peers” (Hawkes, 2008, pp. 30-31; Bruffee, 1994). It has been argued that this difference renders collaborative learning a more “realistic” environment, with the goals of creating cohesion and developing negotiation and critical thinking skills through group membership (Bruffee, 1981; 1994).

Many scholars have asserted that disagreement between collaborative and cooperative practitioners arose because of how these approaches have been implemented and theorized in different disciplines. “Followers of the two traditions have published in different journals, created bibliographies with few common names, sponsored different conferences, and for many years, had little contact with each other” leading to a “rigid sense of orthodoxy” (Matthews et al., 1995, p. 40). Recently, scholars have sought to

explore similarities or a “convergence of purpose” between the two approaches (Matthews et al., 1995, p. 35), arguing that there are many overlaps in implementation (Kuo, Chu & Huang, 2015; Sweet & Svinicki, 2007, Bremer et al., 2002). The degree of structuring in group activities may differ between individual instructors or may be altered in different settings and for different purposes. The initial instruction of reading strategies, for example, may involve more structure while subsequent discussions may involve less structure over time; however, this depends largely on the instructor or the perceived needs of their learners (Smit, 1989). This is one way in which cooperative and collaborative approaches may overlap.

Kenneth Bruffee (1981), one of the most widely cited researchers in collaborative learning, has written extensively about the collaborative method. As a professor of English at Brooklyn College during the commencement of Open Admissions policies in the 1970’s, Bruffee began questioning the role of authority in the classroom and created a drop-in tutoring center where students could help each other with their writing (Hawkes, 2008). Drawing from the work of Edwin Mason, M.L.J. Abercrombie, Paulo Friere, Henry Giroux, Kyle Fiore, Thomas Kuhn, Nan Elsassar, Lev Vygotsky, and others, Bruffee developed and analyzed collaborative approaches for college-level students who were underprepared or struggling with college-level reading and writing (Hawkes, 2008; Smit, 1989; Bruffee 1981; 1984; 1994). Bruffee wanted his students “to recognize that knowledge does not exist in some sort of correspondence with objective reality but that knowledge is a social artifact produced by culturally and linguistically situated communities” (Hawkes, 2008, p. 30; Bruffee, 1984). In Bruffee’s classes, students worked together to analyze and break down a text or assist each other in the writing

process through conversation. This conversation was structured only by the goals of the assignment, conventions of academic discourse, and conventions of English (Bruffee, 1994).

The use of a collaborative approach follows a strengths-based or asset-based model, as opposed to a deficit model, and encourages learners to use prior knowledge gleaned from a variety of texts and experiences (Philippot & Graves, 2009). Bruffee (1981) asserts that: “The primary aim of collaborative learning in my view is to help students test the quality and value of what they know by trying to make sense of it to other people like themselves –their peers” (p. 745). In this way, a collaborative approach fosters community in the classroom, and a positive relationship between peers as they analyze and evaluate texts (Ellis, 1994; Bruffee, 1981; 1984; 1994). As compared to a cooperative approach, there is less emphasis on reflecting on roles within the group and less focus on social dynamics, with more emphasis on learner autonomy (Matthews et al., 1995; Bruffee, 1994). While Bruffee has long touted the benefits of using a collaborative approach, some scholars have disputed his claims.

### ***Benefits and critiques***

Collaborative approaches to constructing knowledge rely on learners as active participants who practice meaning-making and negotiation of texts (Gao, 2013; Lemke, 2004; Bruffee 1981; 1984; 1994). Collaborative learning “gives students a stronger sense that knowledge itself is an inherently social artifact and learning an inherently social phenomenon; the sense that, as Karl Jaspers put it, ‘truth is bound up with communication’” (Bruffee, 1981, p. 745). Lemke (2004) also calls for a

reconceptualization of how literacy and its role in society are viewed, and the many ways in which the social relates to text:

Literacies are always social: We learn them by participating in social relationships; their conventional forms evolved historically in particular societies; the meanings we make with them always tie us back into the fabric of meanings made by others. Literacies are legion. Each different register, genre, or discourse formation is the product of some particular subcommunity going about its special business. (Lemke, 2004, p. 73)

While individual learners can interpret and analyze a text alone, the potential intertextual connections and meanings a group of individuals can make is powerful. Texts are not constructed in a vacuum and are imbued with a number of possible meanings; they are meaningful because they are “in some way socially meaningful” (Lemke, 2004, p. 72). In college-level reading, texts may be the product of a specific discipline or a combination of disciplines. By using a collaborative method to comprehend college-level texts, individuals gain a wide variety of perspectives and knowledge through their group discussions (Bruffee, 1981; 1984; 1994). Yet, there are some who have taken issue with this approach.

Several scholars who are opposed to the collaborative approach or have written critiques are concerned with potential negative outcomes of group work (Smit, 1989; Bruffee 1981; 1984; 1994). One such critic is Richard Gebhardt, who wrote an article for *College English* (1980) promoting the need for sensitivity training or group counselling for students who report a negative emotional impact as the result of group work (Bruffee, 1981). Gebhardt’s critique focuses on issues between students in groups and the possibility that some may feel left out of group rapport. While Bruffee acknowledges that emotion is an important part of the learner’s experience and attainment of knowledge, he argues that sensitivity training and group counselling techniques are not necessary in collaborative learning (Bruffee, 1981). In his view, “establishing rapport is seldom the



problem once the ice is broken. The problem is to channel the mental energy that establishing rapport releases in each individual, and to do so without reverting to a traditional teacher-student relationship” (Bruffee, 1981, p. 746). In order to avoid “reverting”, Bruffee (1981) suggests that instructors should be aware of group dynamics and how people work together in groups in order to keep groups on task and deal with conflicts, but that these do not necessarily need to be taught.

David Smit (1989) also discussed the potential issues that may arise in group work in his critique of collaborative learning. In his article, he cites Thomas Johnson, who felt that collaborative methods promote “authoritarian leveling toward the norm through peer pressure” which he associates with the techniques for social engineering used by “Nazism, Fascism, and Communism” (76)” (Smit, 1989, p. 48). Smit argued that collaboration does not create consensus but rather a wide variety of views, which are sometimes at odds with the instructor’s views – so pressure for consensus may silence students who disagree with peers. In his critique, Smit wrote that there are three arguments offered by proponents of collaborative learning: 1) lecture and traditional methods are failing, 2) collaborative approaches mirror the social nature of reading and writing, and 3) research into use of the collaborative approach show positive results (Smit, 1989, p. 46). Smit asserts that lecture and traditional methods of teaching should not be completely ruled out, that notions of the “real world” application were questionable, and that studies into collaborative learning have not provided enough evidence of positive outcomes (1989, pp. 46-54). His view is similar to Lei et al. (2010), who agree that while lecture may not be appropriate for all learners, it may serve as a type of background knowledge which can aid in information processing.

Although Smit disagrees with the assertion that collaborative learning always creates positive learning outcomes or social progress, he does agree that there is some value to using the approach. If students have a better attitude toward the class, they may have a better view of reading and writing, and if they interact and participate in discussion they can learn how to critically analyze others' writing (Hawkes, 2008; Smit, 1989). He argues that while studies demonstrating the value of collaboration are structured, the underlying pedagogical framework is not. Further, the social change practitioners of collaborative learning seek, "seems to be beyond the scope of a single pedagogical method" (Smit, 1989, p. 48). However, Bruffee's (1989) view is that the "value of collaborative learning is that it affects the emotional element in learning *contextually*, through the social context of peer influence, not through the teacher's conscious application of pedagogical or psychological techniques" (p. 746). Level of student interest, engagement, and fluency might have a negative impact on group or individual performance, yet they may have the potential to reinforce negotiation strategies or improve learning outcomes (Kuo, Chu & Huang, 2015; Gao, 2013; Bruffee 1981; 1994).

While Smit, Gebhardt and others have focused their arguments on several potential challenges, one common assertion from both proponents and critics has remained central in the debate about the use of collaborative approaches: the need for further research (Kuo, Chu, & Huang, 2015; Wichadee, 2014; Gao, 2013; Nassaji, 2003; Matthews et al., 1995; Smit, 1989).

Properly executed, collaborative practices may constitute an effective pedagogy; but to be certain, we need a great deal more evidence – evidence clearly rooted in consistent theory, and tightly reasoned and documented by the methods best suited to test the hypotheses of that particular theory, whether they be historical, philosophical, critical, experimental, clinical, formal, or ethnographic. (Smit, 1989, p. 55)

More recently, a wide variety of research projects and studies which focus on the use of collaborative approaches to teaching in ESL and EFL contexts have been conducted. The benefits of using collaborative learning to foster positive leaning outcomes has been well-documented for writing, listening, and speaking skills (Gabe & Stoller, 2014; Ortega, 2009; Hawkes, 2008; Philippot & Graves, 2009; Bruffee, 1994; Ellis, 1994). Bruffee wrote that using a collaborative approach “trains students to be better readers” because they must analyze and evaluate the writing of peers and others (Hawkes, 2008; Bruffee, 1981; 1994). However, more research into the use of collaborative approaches to teach reading comprehension strategies to English language learners would aid in determining group dynamics and the challenges learners face in developing the necessary skills to understand and analyze college-level texts (Kuo, Chu & Huang, 2014; Gao, 2013; Namjoo & Marzban, 2013; Lei et al., 2010).

### ***Strategies for Teaching Collaborative Reading***

Readers who are confident in their reading skills or adept at interpreting and analyzing often have a number of strategies or resources they use to decode texts (Gabe & Stoller, 2014; Wichadee, 2014; Gao, 2013; Philippot & Graves, 2009). For learners who feel less confident in their skills or who struggle with academic reading, a direct approach to teaching reading comprehension strategies can aid in breaking down complex texts (Gao, 2013; Namjoo & Marzban, 2013; Lei et al., 2010; Ortega, 2009; Philippot & Graves, 2009). There are a vast number of reading strategies that can be incorporated using a collaborative approach in ESL and EFL classrooms (Namjoo & Marzban, 2013; Lei et al., 2010; Philippot & Graves, 2009; Bremer et al., 2002; Ellis, 1994; Bruffee, 1984; 1994). While there are many different approaches to using reading strategies, the goal of

the collaborative approach is to encourage learner autonomy (Philippot & Graves, 2009; Ellis, 1994; Bruffee, 1981; 1984; 1994). When reading a college-level text, students can benefit from the knowledge of their peers and investigate questions they may have together in face-to-face or digital environments (Kuo, Chu & Huang, 2014; Yang, 2012).

In using less structure to guide group practice over time, instructors transfer authority to the students and guide them toward autonomy. After teaching reading strategies, Philippot & Graves (2009) recommend, “scaffolding so students gradually adopt these practices independently, all students can grow into independent readers who have at their disposal a wealth of practices to enhance their understanding of texts” (p. 115). Philippot & Graves (2009) and Bruffee (1994) recommend that instructors and teachers check reader comprehension periodically, and stress the importance of understanding that each learner will use these strategies at different rates with varied levels of success. Reading comprehension strategies require flexibility, conscious effort, and knowledge of appropriate applications (Lei et al., 2010; Philippot & Graves, 2009; Bruffee; 1994). Since we are unable to view the inner workings of a reader’s mind, we must focus on the creation or product of that process of meaning-making; through verbal, written, or other forms of output (Gabe & Stoller, 2014; Philippot & Graves, 2009).

As Namjoo & Marzban (2013) and Lei et al. (2010) point out, few graduate programs offer reading certification for instructors, and universities rarely offer reading classes for college-level students. Lei et al. (2010) give a brief history of the teaching of reading strategies in English language learning classrooms, beginning with the SQ3R method (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review) developed in the 1940’s by Francis Robinson. They give an overview of the benefits and drawbacks to using different reading

strategies, and like Smit (1989) debate the merits of lecture-based approaches. Lei et al. (2010) assert that collaboration and class discussion are fundamental to the process of building on prior knowledge and breaking down written and visual texts (p. 32). They propose a series of steps to teaching reading strategies: **1) background knowledge or experiences** **2) homework and classwork** and **3) learning aides and the instruction of strategies**. Each step builds on discussion and analysis, and learning aides such as quizzes, charts, activities and creation of study guides can aid in processing of texts and nurture learner autonomy.

In Namjoo & Marzban's (2013) view, two of the most crucial strategies for ESL and EFL reading classes are *text-structure* and *critical thinking awareness* (pp. 3750-3751). The text-structure strategy involves a preview of the type of text students will read (expository, narrative, argument, research or others), in order to determine the structure and find the main points. Readers then read the primary text while noting the structure, and discern how the contents are put together, then distinguish the main idea and supporting details. The critical thinking awareness strategy relates to meta-cognition and the knowledge of one's understanding of the text, as well as applicable strategies (Gao, 2013; Philippot & Graves, 2009; Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002). Namjoo & Marzban (2013) also discuss Ridgway's (1999) study of pre- and post-tests of 20 students over 14 weeks, which determined that teaching meta-cognitive strategies positively affected the range, quantity, and quality of students' critical reading skills (p. 3750). Their review study surveys multiple research projects which have determined that knowledge of one or both of these strategies aids in active reading and encourages higher-order thinking (Namjoo & Marzban, 2013, p. 3752).

Philippot & Graves (2009) give a comprehensive overview of eight different reading strategies for English language learners in their book *Fostering Comprehension in English Classes*. Like the process advocated by Lei et al. (2010) these eight strategies are interrelated and build on knowledge in one or more areas. The eight strategies for teaching reading comprehension are: **1) Using prior knowledge 2) Asking and answering questions 3) Determining what is important 4) Summarizing 5) Making inferences 6) Dealing with graphic information 7) Imaging and 8) Monitoring comprehension** (Philippot & Graves, 2009, pp. 107-114). The use of prior knowledge relates to the cognitive theory of ‘schema’, or “units of knowledge that individuals internalize” (Philippot & Graves, 2009, p. 7; Gao, 2013; Ellis, 1994). Prior knowledge can aid students in making intertextual connections between experience and texts. Lei et al. (2010) and Philippot & Graves (2009) suggest using videos, images, or other visual or written texts along with discussion to activate schema and introduce topics and events before reading. Learners can ask and answer questions before, during, and after reading to draw attention to information and focus on meanings of the text (Philippot & Graves, 2009).

The strategy Philippot & Graves (2009) call “determining what is important” can be compared to *skimming for the gist* or *scanning for information* as outlined by Bremer et al. (2002) in their study of 26 English language learners. When readers determine what is important, they make a conscious decision or judgement to focus on what is or is not crucial information (Philippot & Graves, 2009). After the pre-viewing or pre-reading stage, learners are given a text and asked to skim the headlines, images, bolded or underlined text and consider what the text will cover (Philippot & Graves, 2009; Bremer

et al. 2002). Readers then focus on the introduction or the skim the first and last sentences of each paragraph and scan for information such as names, dates, or words that are repeated.

After pre-reading and reading stages are complete, learners determine which sections are key to understanding the text or concept and distill the information into a written or verbal list or summary (Gao, 2013; Philippot & Graves, 2009; Bremer et al. 2002). The instructor or readers can ask each other or themselves to *answer 5 W and H questions* (Who, What, When, Where, Why and How) to determine whether or not key information has been included in the distillation (Philippot & Graves, 2009; Bremer et al. 2002). According to Bremer et al. (2002) using this collaborative method in conjunction with other approaches also had a positive influence on readers with learning disabilities who spoke English as a second language.

Summarizing is one of the most common methods for determining readers' understanding of a text and comprehension of deeper meanings (Gabe & Stoller, 2014; Kuo, Chu & Huang, 2014; Gao, 2013). As with asking and answering questions and determining what is important, using the *summarizing* strategy encourages readers to distill main points into sentences and consider the most important details of a text (Philippot & Graves, 2009; Bremer et al. 2002). Gao (2013) and Wichadee (2014) conducted research into the use of summary writing in an EFL context. Gao's (2013) review study examined the effects of summary writing on reading comprehension and determined that not only are there are undeniably strong connections between reading and writing, but both also engage learners in actively constructing meaning (p. 43). Gao, like Bruffee (1981; 1994), Smit (1989) and others uses Vygotsky's (1978) proposal that

higher-order thinking in children develops through several mediators to connect reading and writing. Gao (2013) writes that reading materials can be viewed as “language mediators”, while writing can be viewed as a task mediator that “helps language learners to achieve self-regulation (comprehension) through symbolic tools” (p. 45). Gao stresses that reading can provide input and writing can provide output as well as opportunities for higher-order thinking, based on Krashen’s Input Hypothesis; which states that learners make progress when introduced to language slightly more advanced than their current level (Ellis, 1994).

Gao (2013) and Wichadee (2014) discuss several studies which consider the effectiveness of summary writing and urge instructors to find level-appropriate mediators (reading tasks) that can facilitate comprehension for individual readers. Wichadee’s (2014) study examined the effectiveness of using text-structure, summary, and transactional strategies while students work in groups to encourage meta-cognitive awareness of reading strategies. The quasi-experimental study used control and experimental groups of 80 EFL students who completed summary testing and questionnaires (Wichadee, 2014). Both Wichadee (2014) and Gao’s (2013) studies determined that using a transactional or collaborative approach aided readers in developing awareness of strategies and improving writing and reading comprehension.

Gao (2013) argues that English courses should incorporate more summary writing tasks, and stresses that objects-regulation (reading) and self-regulation (writing) are connected and should be complemented by others-regulation (teachers’ scaffolding) (p. 47). However, Mokhtari & Sheorey (2002) removed “summary writing” and “discussion” from their Survey of Reading Strategies instrument (p. 4). Their reasoning was that these



do “not specifically constitute reading strategies as conceived in the current research literature on metacognition and reading comprehension” (Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002, p. 4). Yet, many studies have included summary writing as a beneficial reading strategy for English language learners. Gao (2013) and Kuo, Chu & Huang (2014), Wichadee (2014) and others have determined that the process of writing summaries in groups benefits individual English language learners’ understanding and learning outcomes.

While asking and answering questions, determining important information, and summarizing, readers can also make inferences. Readers practice *making inferences* when they infer or deduce meanings from the text (Philippot & Graves, 2009). “No text is entirely explicit, so readers must constantly make inferences to construct the full meaning of what they are reading” (Philippot & Graves, 2009, p. 111). Wichadee (2014) and Bremer et al. (2002) also note the importance of inferring connections, events, and background information, as well as the relationship between inference and background or prior knowledge.

Another strategy that may relate to making inferences is *dealing with graphic information and imaging*. Some texts will include charts, graphs, graphics, or visual components which can be broken down or decoded by reading groups (Lei et al., 2010; Philippot & Graves, 2009). Students can determine the importance of information presented in visual components and infer possible intertextual connections. Conversely, the process of creating a visual or mental aid, or *imaging*, can also allow readers to process information they have read and draw from several reading strategies to understand a text (Gabe & Stoller, 2014; Philippot & Graves, 2009). Readers can imagine a scene or create charts, graphs, tables, pictures, Venn diagrams, graphic organizers and

semantic maps related to the text in order to categorize, distill, or organize information (Mountain, 2015; Lei et al., 2010; Philippot & Graves, 2009). Each strategy can be enhanced through collaboration in groups and the sharing of background or intertextual knowledge.

The strategy of *monitoring comprehension* is another term for meta-cognition (Philippot & Graves, 2009) or the critical thinking awareness strategy discussed in Namjoo & Marzban's (2013) study. Awareness of reading strategies and where or when to apply them in a given context, as well as self-monitoring of reading processes and progress, are crucial practices that successful readers employ (Gao, 2013; Philippot & Graves, 2009; Nassaji, 2003; Bremer et al., 2002; Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002). As Mokhtari & Sheorey (2002) asserted: "Teaching students to become strategic, thoughtful, and constructively responsive readers can be a powerful way to promote skillful academic reading" (p. 6). Self-monitoring and self-awareness of students' reading comprehension can be facilitated through direct instruction and discussion of reading strategies.

The eight strategies outlined in this review of literature can serve to promote higher-order thinking and heighten meta-cognitive awareness, as well as applicability of reading strategies to different texts (Lei et al., 2010; Philippot & Graves, 2009; Bremer et al., 2002). Philippot & Graves (2009) give a taxonomy for questions that promote higher-order thinking to be used in conjunction with each strategy. This taxonomy was generated from a combination of Bloom's Taxonomy (1956), Anderson's and Krathwohl's taxonomy (2001), and the research of Galda & Graves (2007); and can be used in any order, at any point in the teaching of reading comprehension strategies.

Philippot & Graves (2009) advise instructors to consider how to use each type of question in each session, in groups or as a class, and state that they should be at the “forefront” of an instructor’s planning (pp. 135-136). Shirley Jackson’s “The Lottery” was used for the following example questions:

- **Literal comprehension:** recalling direct information from a specific text;  
*Example:* Who presides over the drawing for the lottery?
- **Understanding:** constructing meaning from instructional messages, including oral, written, and graphic communications;  
*Example:* Why do the villagers continue holding the lottery?
- **Applying:** carrying out or using a procedure in a given situation;  
*Example:* Identify a contemporary tradition in society that you consider dangerous or foolish. What steps can be taken to abolish it?
- **Analyzing:** breaking material into its constituent parts and determining how the parts relate to one another and to an overall structure or purpose  
*Example:* Why does the author repeatedly describe everyday events, such as doing the dishes and stacking wood, as the lottery is about to take place?
- **Evaluating:** making judgments based on criteria and standards;  
*Example:* If you were in Mr. Hutchinson’s place, what would you have done upon learning your family was selected in the lottery?
- **Creating:** putting elements together to form a coherent or functional whole, reorganizing elements into a new pattern or structure;  
*Example:* Assuming that rituals and traditions are important and necessary practices in society, what might the villagers have replaced the lottery with in order to preserve the significance of a ritual but with less harmful consequences?
- **Being metacognitive:** being aware of one’s own comprehension and able and willing to repair comprehension breakdowns when they occur.  
*Example:* Did you find any parts of the story confusing as you read? If so, what did you do to help clarify your confusion? Are there steps you might also have taken?

(Philippot & Graves, 2009, pp. 135-136)

Philippot & Graves (2009) also offer four sequences for teaching reading strategies: **1) KWL procedure or chart 2) Notice and Wonder 3) Reciprocal teaching and 4) Tableaux.** A **KWL procedure** is a three part process that asks learners to consider: What I already *Know* (about a topic), What I *Want* to learn, and What I *Learned* (Philippot &

Graves, 2009, p. 121) [appears at the end of Chapter 2 as Figure 2, and in Appendix D]. Readers can discuss answers to these three questions in the pre-reading and post-reading phases, or write and organize this information in a chart (Gabe & Stoller, 2014). The *Notice and Wonder* strategy can be applied during the reading phase, and asks readers to question elements or aspects of a text as they read to question why an author includes certain details or facts (Philippot & Graves; 2009). As in imaging, a *Tableaux* helps students to visualize key elements in a text and choose important details to represent a scene; this strategy also provides a kinesthetic approach to making meaning from texts (Philippot & Graves, 2009; Ellis, 1994). These sequences provide additional resources for readers to draw from and incorporate students' multiple intelligences in the areas of observation, sequencing, processing and determining important information (Philippot & Graves, 2009).

In the Bremer, Vaughn, Clapper & Kim's (2002) study, the researchers used modified *reciprocal teaching* methods in cooperative learning groups to highlight the main idea, summarize, and ask and answer questions. Although the article focuses on collaborative strategic reading (CSR), it is important to note that the authors make no distinction between collaborative and cooperative methods. Like Sweet & Svinicki (2007), Bremer et al. (2002) use collaborative and cooperative interchangeably. In reciprocal teaching, an instructor uses direct instruction to teach reading strategies while giving more control to student groups over time with the eventual aim of group or learner autonomy (Philippot & Graves, 2009).

In their study, Bremer and colleagues (2002) also used a *click or clunk strategy*, where students work collaboratively (or cooperatively) to apply the strategies they have learned

in peer-led groups. Each student can be assigned a role, and students work together to share “clicks” (parts of the text that are understood) or “clunks” (parts of the text that are not understood) and use “fix-up strategies” to figure out the word or gist (Bremer et al., 2002, p. 4). Fix-up strategies include: rereading the sentence or “clunk” to look for key ideas and help figure out the word or phrase, rereading the sentences before and after the clunk to look for clues, looking for a prefix or suffix in the word that might help, or breaking the word apart and looking for smaller words that you know (Bremer et al., 2002, pp. 4-5). The instructor’s role is to circulate and provide guidance while students collaborate to find the key ideas and help each other fix or figure out “clunks”, with less guidance or intervention over time.

One further approach to teaching reading strategies, advocated by Lee Mountain (2015), is the *morphemic approach to literacy*. Like Bruffee (1981; 1984; 1994), Philpott & Graves, (2009), Bremer et al., (2002) and others, Mountain (2015) suggests using discussion to determine how affixes and roots can carry meanings that are “central to each content area” (p. 561). In her study, Mountain (2015) describes how 36 graduate students in education with different areas of specialization were able to break down commonly used terms into roots and affixes. This approach encouraged students to think of terms as “families of words”, by creating “word trees” that showed how terms with similar affixes or roots were related (Mountain, 2015, p. 565). Mountain (2015) also used a KWL chart to determine what students wanted to know more about, and motivate them to find the answers to their questions.

Like the readers in Nassaji’s (2003) study, the advanced readers in Mountain’s study used higher and lower-level text processing skills “automatically and unconsciously”

prior to using this approach (Mountain, 2015, p. 562). Students were grouped by their content areas in sciences, English, math, and history, and used various reading strategies to determine lists of terms and break them down into units of meaning. This approach allowed readers to understand how morphemes had both general and discipline-specific applicability, which could benefit readers at all levels (Mountain, 2015; Nassaji, 2003). Fuqua (2015) and August (2011) also found that an orthographic approach, based on a review of spelling and punctuation, was beneficial for developing reading and writing skills (pp. 25-27). Each of these strategies provide benefits for English language learners using a top-down or bottom-up approach to encourage critical thinking, active learning and engagement with complex texts.

Mount (2014), Lin (2007), and Van Tyne (2004) offer further insight into reading strategies that can be used to facilitate comprehension and autonomy in English classes, based on research completed in English 112 classes at Eastern Washington University. Lin (2007) provides a framework for using *self-questioning* in her study. Self-questioning is a transactional strategy, in which readers adjust their experience and expectations based on the purpose of reading: “aesthetic” (reading for meaning) or “efferent” (reading for information) (Lin, 2007, p. 10). Through her research, Lin found that readers used at least six types of responses to critically analyze texts: *summarizing*, *elaborating*, *inferring*, *evaluating*, *associating*, and *transferring* (pp. 49-50). Similar to Gao (2013) and Wichadee’s (2014) findings, students who used self-questioning strategies in Lin’s (2007) study provided positive feedback, and found models from the instructor or peers to be helpful in developing questions (p. 82). Lin’s (2007) study found

that the self-questioning strategy can aid in developing meta-cognitive awareness and self-monitoring of reading comprehension among English language learners.

Mount's (2014) study also addresses some major issues students had when reading texts in English 101 and 201 classes at EWU. In her thesis, Mount (2014) set out to determine questions and concerns to consider when developing composition programs that meet the needs of English language learners (p. 4). Mount (2014) described many challenges that students from Saudi Arabia faced after enrolling in the English 101 course. According to the student writing included in her thesis, participants felt that the course readings were very complex or frustrating, and they reported spending up to five hours reading one or two pages of one article (Mount, 2014, pp. 79-80). Mount found that while student writing developed significantly as her research progressed, the curriculum for English 112 did not adequately prepare students from Saudi Arabia for the English 101 or 201 courses at EWU (p. 114). Mount (2014) suggested several activities and lessons in her thesis which facilitated discussion and helped learners to break down complex readings.

Van Tyne's (2004) thesis research focuses on *reflection, self-storying and mindfulness* as alternate strategies to enrich reading comprehension. Van Tyne asserts that these processes can aid in monitoring student progress and awareness of others' perspectives (p. 5). According to her research, introspection through diary entries (or journals) can also elicit mental processes, support self-monitoring, and checking progress (Van Tyne, 2004, pp. 52-60). Van Tyne suggests that when readers read for pleasure or have a choice in materials or topics they are more engaged and take ownership, have more opportunities to activate schema, and develop reading habits they can build on throughout their lives

(pp. 54-56). Like Van Tyne, Mount (2014) also recommends sourcing readings and developing writing topics based on student interest. In her study of reading and writing in the English 112 and 101SL classes, Mount found that “social justice topics lead to lesson success” (p. 53). Students reported positive views and engagement in each of the studies conducted at EWU, and researchers noted an increase in student interest and participation in discussion groups.

### ***Willingness to Participate in Discussion and Anxiety***

According to Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis, negative emotions such as anxiety, fear, apprehension, and boredom may play a crucial role in language acquisition (Ortega, 2009; Ellis, 1994). In order to build linguistic competence, language learners need high motivation and low anxiety, an interest in learning, a desire to learn, and positive views of the target language and culture (Ellis, 1994; Wu & Lin, 2014). Motivation has lasting effects on continued learning, and is mediated by anxiety and willingness to communicate (Wu & Lin, 2014). Some researchers have asserted that effects of mandatory testing and socio-cultural expectations are also directly linked to anxiety or low levels of confidence in English learners (Wu & Lin, 2014; Yang, 2012). Perceptions of interlocutors, gender, social status, degree of acquaintance and number of speakers, along with context for communication, were all underlying factors identified as mediators of student anxiety (Yang, 2012, p. 23). When promoting a collaborative approach, it is important to consider group dynamics and individual participants’ willingness to communicate with others (Bruffee, 1989; 1994). A sense of community and willingness to participate may “lower” the affective filter Krashen hypothesized in his research (Ortega, 2009; Ellis, 1994). English language learners can feel anxious about



reading and discussing college-level texts individually, but a collaborative approach may generate interest in topics, alleviate apprehension, and build confidence.

Language learners must have the experience of making language errors, correcting errors based on feedback, and navigating socio-pragmatic failure, in order to improve language skills and avoid fossilization (Ellis, 1994). Discussion, which “promotes group orchestration of comprehension re-reading and re-thinking of the textual content” allows students to share information, and “balance, compare, re-examine, re-value and re-judge their own comprehension and interpretations compared with others” (Chi, 1995, pp. 4, 16). Chun (2012) asserts that this is a fundamental process of negotiation and meaning-making that can significantly affect production and dissemination of academic discourses (p. 166). Despite reporting some feelings of anxiety, students in discussion groups exhibit greater engagement and interest in the text than groups that focus on traditional methods (Tsuo, 2005). In Chi’s (1995) study of Taiwanese learners, students in English classes gained a “sharpened, heightened sense of self” through collaborative activities:

When personal meanings are shared with communities of readers, different interpretations enhance potential meaning-construction for all. More importantly, members of the group felt comfortable and confident bringing their voices to the shared community. (p. 15)

As low motivation and willingness to speak are directly linked to anxiety, researchers suggest interest and motivation can alleviate the pressure of conversing without error (Chi, 1995; Wu & Lin, 2014; Yeh, 2014).

Due to the fact that many students report asking peers or teachers for advice when faced with challenges, utilizing group-based discussion may be preferable to traditional teacher-centered approaches (Cheng, 2015). Students may feel uncomfortable asking questions or contributing to whole class discussions, but working in peer groups provides more opportunities for L2 output, error correction, self-reflection, interpretation of texts

(Chun, 2012; Tsuo, 2005; Chi, 1995). In Yang's (2012) study, some students reported feeling anxious when discussing texts and asking questions class, but more felt anxious in high-stakes situations or situations where they had to use English in conversation with native speakers (p. 32). Most of the students surveyed were concerned about inadequacy, miscommunication, or situations where social interactions could lead to negative impressions (Yang, 2012). Research suggests that anxiety over language production negatively impacts the desire to learn and perceived oral proficiency plays a vital role in willingness to speak and participate (Wu & Lin, 2014; Yang, 2012). Offering communicative and group-based tasks creates a space for learners to practice without fear of inadequacy. Although reading is traditionally an individual activity, a collaborative approach to using reading strategies can provide an environment where students build confidence through asking questions and aiding peers in breaking down complex texts.

### ***Mediating Anxiety through Collaboration***

Researchers have found that student anxiety is directly related to motivation and willingness to participate in discussion (Wu & Lin, 2014; Yang, 2012; Ortega, 2009). Wu & Lin (2014) clearly define the relationship between anxiety, motivation, and willingness to communicate, and assert that "high motivation and low anxiety about speaking a foreign language are needed to support second language learners' willingness to speak" (p. 796). There is also a direct correlation between contact, self-confidence and attitude (Ortega, 2009; Ellis, 1994). Learners' self-perceived communicative competence develops through contact with native and non-native speakers of English, interactions in class, experiences outside of the classroom, and test scores (Cheng, 2015; Wu & Lin, 2014; Yang, 2012; Ortega, 2009). The more contact and positive input an English

language learner has with the target language and culture, the less language use is viewed as an anxiety-inducing activity. Further, if students are motivated or interested in a particular subject or topic of discussion, then the level of anxiety can be reduced.

Speakers in high-use L2 environments exhibit higher communicative competence due to successful, positive experiences and complex, high-stakes language use (Ortega, 2009). By contrast, speakers in low-use L2 environments have fewer opportunities to use language in context and lack of experience leads to higher anxiety due to low self-perceptions of communicative competence (Ellis, 1994; Ortega, 2009; Wu & Lin, 2014). Further, socio-pragmatic failures or unsuccessful attempts at language use may outweigh positive experiences (Ortega, 2009), and low scores on speaking tests may reinforce negative self-perceptions (Cheng, 2015; Yang, 2012). Frequency and quality of experience is fundamental to raising self-confidence and increasing communicative competence (Ortega, 2009).

The traditional English classroom environment may not provide the experience and contact that language learners require. In large, teacher-centered classes, students may only produce limited output and receive low input, resulting in perceived lack of ability in the target language (Ellis, 1994; Ortega, 2009). Snow & O'Connor (2016) also address the fact that, "some English learners arrive in the United States having experienced very challenging circumstances, and have not had access to the kinds of background knowledge that students from more stable and affluent circumstances have had" (p. 5). Prior experiences such as interruptions in education, minimal formal education, low-use L2 environments, and teacher-centered learning may affect students' motivation or willingness to engage in discussion (Snow & O'Connor, 2016; Ortega, 2009).

In a two year study conducted by Betsy Rymes, a teacher reported that one of the English language learners was initially reluctant to speak in class (Ortega, 2009). However, when Rymes observed the class she found that class discussions were dominated by the teacher or a particular group of students. After several weeks, an opportunity for language output presented itself during a lull in class discussion and the student spoke about a topic they not only knew very well, but also had a vested interest in discussing (Ortega, 2009). “Rymes emphasized that these productive moments usually happened when the students emerged as experts and the teacher was momentarily repositioned as a cultural novice in the interaction” (Ortega, 2009, p. 238). Instead of using lecture or teacher-centered approaches, situating peer discussions as opportunities for language output using a topic of interest to learners may provide motivation to speak. When “invisible expertise is made visible” students’ learning outcomes are greatly improved and motivation increases (Ortega, 2009, p. 238). As motivation and interest increase, students may feel more confident speaking English in groups or as a class.

Yang (2012) asserts that self-perceived communicative competence plays a “vital role in reducing anxiety” in EFL and ESL contexts (p. 25). Increased opportunities for discussion and contact inside or outside of the language classroom allow for socialization, collaboration, and decoding of cultural constructs (Yang, 2012; Ortega, 2009; Chi, 1995). Negotiation and meaning-making can take place with peers or English speakers through personal communication. “With an increase in socio-pragmatic knowledge and communication experience, it is likely that learners will experience an increase in their perceived language competence and a reduction in anxiety” (Yang, 2012, p. 27). Identifying topics of interest in the target language and increased contact with

English speakers inside and outside of the classroom also prepares students for continued English learning after course completion or graduation (Cheng, 2015; Yang, 2012).

Collaborative approaches to using comprehension strategies may reduce anxiety about reading through shared experience and knowledge, and may also increase communicative competence through self-expression.

Since many English learners may not continue reading complex academic texts in the target language after graduation and may not have the opportunity to converse regularly with English speakers, learner autonomy is crucial. Cheng (2015) found that “successful” students, who scored highest on the TOEIC test, developed personal learning strategies outside of class, leading to increased contact hours with the target language (p. 745). Due to high levels of motivation, these students exhibited increasing levels of proficiency and reduced anxiety (Cheng, 2015). Motivation is positively correlated with learning performance, which in turn adds value to self-perceptions of communicative competence (Cheng, 2015; Ortega, 2009; Wu & Lin, 2014; Yang, 2012). In using collaborative methods of instruction teachers can model strategies, options, or outlets for extracurricular or post-graduate self-study.

More time spent participating in active reading and discussion shapes attitudes toward the target language and aids learners in developing communicative competence. Positive experiences with peers and the ability to ask questions can mediate anxiety and allow students to gain confidence in their skills; with the potential to “save face” when socio-pragmatic failures occur (Ortega, 2009; Ellis, 1994). Each group member can contribute personal experience, knowledge, and areas of expertise to discussions. As in Rymes’ study, interest in topics of discussion or course readings can encourage anxious learners

to share knowledge (Ortega, 2009). Discussing course readings and collaborating with peers also creates opportunity for negotiation, meaning-making, self-reflection, and inquiry (Lin, 2007; Van Tyne, 2004; Bruffee 1981; 1994). Practice using reading comprehension strategies in a low-stakes environment aids students in developing personal learning strategies, fosters learner autonomy, and may increase motivation to communicate in the target language.

### *Discussion*

Reading requires several processes and strategies that advanced readers employ intentionally (Mountain, 2015; Gao, 2013; Lei et al., 2010; Philippot & Graves, 2009). Meta-cognitive awareness and self-monitoring can aid struggling or anxious readers to consider which strategies to employ for particular genres or text-structures (Gao, 2013; Namjoo & Marzban, 2013; Philippot & Graves, 2009; Nassaji, 2003; Bremer et al., 2002; Bruffee, 1994). Discussion and collaboration among peers can encourage English language learners to work together to solve issues and define new terms or concepts; aiding in the construction of knowledge, the process of meaning-making, and development of intertextual connections (Mount, 2014; Lemke, 2004; Bruffee, 1984; 1994). Bruffee (1981) writes that the, “enormous educative power latent in peer influence derives from that emotional aspect of learning, tapped through the relationship, the emotive tie, developed among several students organized to work collaboratively” (p. 746). The relationship between peers shifts the power dynamic of the instructor’s traditional authority to a student-centered approach, which shapes the “emotional conditions in which students learn” (Hawkes, 2008, p. 30; Bruffee, 1981). English language learners can draw from their experience or background knowledge to activate

schema while evaluating key terms or concepts and making inferences about the text (Ortega, 2009; Philippot & Graves, 2009; Ellis, 1994).

There are a wide range of reading comprehension strategies and methods instructors can choose from, but many scholars agree that collaborative or cooperative approaches provide emotional, social, and meta-cognitive benefits that reading alone may not. Many studies have shown that group discussion, whether in person or online, offers individual readers a vast array of experience and knowledge as well as a variety of viewpoints to consider. Readers can discuss content and deeper meanings of a text independent of the teacher's interpretations.

By becoming active readers, students engage with the text and in meta-cognition while reflecting on which reading strategies can be used to break down a difficult text. English learners benefit from the process of negotiating, transacting, and analyzing in groups; which in turn has a positive effect on written and spoken output. However, further information about possible tensions in group dynamics, willingness to participate in collaborative activities, and the challenges English language learners may face when using reading comprehension strategies is necessary. Further research can provide additional insight into the perceived effectiveness of reading strategies and the use of collaborative approaches in English language learning environments.





## Chapter 3

### Research Methods and Data Collection

Chapter 3 provides a brief overview of the research design and methods, participants' background information, procedures and data collection. Data analysis and results appear in Chapters 4 and 5, and these chapters include a discussion of journal responses and reflection essays written by participants in the English 112 class. A discussion of the results of this study appears in Chapter 6.

The present study utilizes action research and narrative inquiry as research methodologies. This research was conducted in the winter of 2017, in the English 112: Composition for Multilingual Students course, at Eastern Washington University (EWU). Journal responses and essays written by students enrolled in the English 112 class were collected over an 11-week period during winter quarter. Quarters at EWU are usually 12 weeks long, however instruction during the winter quarter of 2017 took place over 11 weeks. As the primary investigator and the instructor of record, I also acted as a participant-observer in the following ways:

- *Observation:*
  - Instruction, learning arrangements, group and pair work (direction and facilitation);
  - daily journal, essays, and in-class writing and reading assignments;
  - group discussion and peer work; individual activities;
  - proctoring weekly Friday in-class essay;
  - final PowerPoint presentations and group meetings;
  - interactions between students on presentation days;

- and interactions among students and the graduate intern over the 11-week period.
- *Participation:*
  - Creating and developing an English 112 course curriculum, in the English 581 Curriculum Design graduate-level course as a requirement for the Master's in English TESL program;
  - including: materials; activities; handouts; weekly supplemental reading packets and comprehension questions; journal and Friday essay prompts;
  - creating, explaining, and collecting IRB form;
  - leading daily classes; conferring with intern to determine student interest; engagement, and reading comprehension;
  - direct instruction of reading strategies;
  - writing and aiding students in writing daily journals and weekly Friday essays;
  - circulating and answering questions;
  - facilitating group and peer discussions;
  - meeting with students individually in class and during office hours;
  - collecting and scanning student writing for research.

In the role of instructor of record, I implemented direct instruction of reading strategies and utilized verbal and written student feedback to reflect on the course and plan lessons. The English 112 course curriculum was designed and implemented using a classroom-based “action research” approach. Action research is a recursive, meaning circular or repetitive, research process requiring investigation, observation, speculation, intervention, exploration, and reflection on lessons and activities (Burns, 2010, pp. 17-19). This recursive, learner-centered process is defined by David Nunan (1988) as a planned,

implemented, and assessed curriculum (pp. 137-138). Through this process, instructors can modify future teaching approaches and tailor the curriculum to students' needs. Action research offers educators the opportunity to develop effective learning strategies to share with students, based on student responses (Lin, 2007). When using an action research approach, teachers reflect on successes or challenges observed in their classrooms then research or implement methods for improving students' learning experience.

Typically, in the English 112 class, students, interns, and the instructor journal for five minutes at the beginning of class, Monday through Thursday. On Friday, students write an essay related to a weekly theme based on the course book and/or materials for 45 minutes. The objective of journaling and essay writing is to connect the course book and materials to students' own lives, and practice college-level English writing conventions. In the English 112 class analyzed in the present study, students read *Between Two Worlds: A Story about Pearl Buck*, by Barbara Mitchell, and were assigned reading packets with supplementary readings each week. Journaling and essay writing gave students an opportunity to engage deeply with the texts and topics discussed in the English 112 course. A course overview with weekly topics can be found in Appendix C, and a complete list of journals can be found in Appendix E.

The journals written in the English 112 class are based on quotes from readings in the primary text or related poems, videos, and supplemental readings. The instructor reads the prompt aloud or asks for student volunteers to read before journal writing begins. These journals do not receive a grade, but the instructor collects, reads, and comments on them to study the students' knowledge and reflections. In this way, the instructor gets to

know the students, and they get to know one another as well; building community in the classroom. An environment in which English language learners can express their concerns regarding college-level reading aids educators in determining what needs to be taught or reviewed in class. These are standard procedures for teaching English 112, and were used to collect student responses for the present study.

### ***Narrative Inquiry***

The analysis of written materials utilizes “narrative inquiry” as a methodology. Narrative inquiry is a “flexible tool that can be appropriated for a number of differing research perspectives across disciplines” and has roots in feminist and constructivist theory (Jones, 2016, p. 479). Research using narrative inquiry is focused on the experiences of participants as valuable forms of knowledge (Jones, 2016; Xu, et al., 2007). Although some researchers are critical of the use of narrative inquiry, Xu, Connelly, He & Phillion (2007) argue that this methodology is “solidly empirical” (p. 418). They compare the use of narratives collected over time, in close contact with participants to data sets from a series of interviews (Xu, et al., 2007). Jones (2016) also argues that the use of narrative inquiry “privileges the experiences of participants, breaks down dichotomies between a participant and a researcher (or a designer and a user) and promotes dialogue by considering participants’ perspectives on a holistic manner” (Jones, 2016, p. 480). Utilizing narrative inquiry allows researchers to collaborate, and participate, while describing and discussing experiences with participants.

Narrative can be a powerful tool for constructing meaning and exchanging knowledge, through written or spoken means. Narrative inquiry is a collection of data related to individual narratives and ways of knowing. An event described in a narrative is a kind of

storytelling, and is imbued with the author's understanding, values, self-perceptions, or worldviews (Jones, 2016; Foss, Foss & Trapp, 2014; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Freire, 1985). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) provide several dimensions and characteristics of narrative inquiry in their book on using narrative inquiry as a research methodology. These may include some of the following:

- **inward:** internal conditions; feelings, reactions, hopes, morals;
- **outward:** the environment, situation, setting or “existential conditions”;
- **backward and forward:** the past, present, and future;
- **place:** physical spaces and “topological boundaries of inquiry landscapes”.

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pp. 50–51)

Xu, Connelly, He & Phillion (2007) elaborate on these dimensions and characteristics of narrative inquiry in their study of an immigrant student's experience. Connelly, who worked with Clandinin on the book which provided the previous five dimensions, co-authored this study with Xu, He & Phillion (2007). While this study uses narrative inquiry to explore the immigrant experience, and most of the students participating in the English 112 study are exchange students, the five key characteristics Xu and colleagues (2007) have determined as crucial to narrative inquiry are valuable to this research. In their study, Xu and colleagues (2007) elaborate on the original research dimensions outlined by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), and provide five key characteristics of narrative inquiry methodology:

- **experience:** knowledge gleaned through experience; structured in narrative form;
- **time:** sufficient time with participants allowing for extensive empirical data base;
- **intensity:** related to time participating in “narrative inquiry space”; intense discussion;

- **collaboration:** active engagement with participants in discussion and description of experience; fundamental for necessary time and intensity;
- **following leads:** flexibility in definitions and boundary of study; following-up with participants or changing location, etc. to “provide field texts of relevant experience”.

(Xu, et al., 2007, p. 417)

Researchers using a narrative inquiry methodology build rapport with participants and collect narrative evidence to provide a basis for reflection. More than merely a collection of data, narrative inquiry seeks to interpret and transfer human knowledge. Critical reflection and consciousness are vital aspects of knowledge, which are connected and liberatory (Freire, 1985). These concepts are fundamental to socio-constructivist theory and cultural studies.

The use of narrative inquiry and action research was suggested by the thesis advisor, and supervisor and director of the English 112 course, Dr. LaVona Reeves, to determine a) challenges multilingual students face when encountering intermediate to advanced-level texts used in the college writing classroom b) what students have already been taught about reading strategies and c) how well multilingual students apply what they have been taught about reading strategies—both prior to and during English 112; as well as d) the value and usefulness of collaboration in English classrooms across cultures.

### ***Participants***

Teacher-created journals and essays were collected from this convenience sample of ten participating student volunteers out of fifteen students enrolled in the English 112 class during the winter quarter of 2017. The participants included nine undergraduate students and one graduate intern. The nine undergraduates were enrolled in the English 112 class in order to improve reading, writing, speaking, and listening abilities following

completion of study in the English Language Institute at EWU. One volunteer for this study was a graduate intern enrolled in the Master's in English TESL program at EWU, who had previously completed all levels in the English Language Institute and an undergraduate degree in English in his home country of Saudi Arabia.

All ten participants had completed high school or college-level English classes and/or English learning programs in their home countries. Some of the participants also completed intensive English language programs at other universities in the United States and the United Kingdom. Many of the volunteers were first-year students enrolled as engineering majors at EWU. Almost all participants had plans to return to their home countries after completion of their undergraduate degrees. Participants' ages ranged from 19-38. Pseudonyms were used in this study to protect students' privacy, and participants approved the general language and background information provided.

### ***List of Participants***

#### *Rachel*

A focused and engaged student, Rachel was one of only two female participants in the present study enrolled in the English 112 class. Rachel was a French speaker from West Africa, who planned to study international affairs. She often worked with Chen, and the two were quick to finish peer and individual work. Rachel had completed the English Language Institute program at EWU and had a high level of proficiency in reading, writing, speaking and listening. She always offered to read to the class aloud and regularly contributed to discussion. She was organized and patient with others, rarely missed class, and always completed course work on time.

*Chen*

Chen was an outgoing and kind student from China, and one of only two female participants in this study. She completed course work in the English Language Institute, and was planning to study accounting. Chen also had a high level of speaking, reading, writing, and listening ability, and often worked with Rachel. She volunteered to read regularly, and contributed during peer and class discussions. Chen had only been living in the U.S. for a short time before enrolling; however, she reported that she had made many friends inside and outside of the English 112 class. She was engaged, helpful and motivated to complete all coursework on time and to the best of her ability.

*Mustafa*

Mustafa was a male student from Saudi Arabia, who was enrolled in the technology, engineering, and design program. He worked very well in peer discussion groups and asked many clarifying questions. Mustafa often worked with Abdul, Hamza, and others. He was married, however his family could not accompany him while he was attending school. He was determined to complete his undergraduate degree, and often spoke about his experience studying English in the U.S. and his family. Although he wrote about several challenges he faced, Mustafa was good-humored, helpful, and rarely absent.

*Abdul*

A shy but motivated student, Abdul often preferred working with peers to speaking or reading aloud in front of the class. Abdul was also a male student from Saudi Arabia, and he planned to major in electrical engineering. Although his family was in Saudi Arabia, he had made a few close friends through the English Language Institute and other classes



at EWU. Abdul was quiet in class and writing 100 words for the daily journal was a challenge, but he worked well in groups; especially when paired with Mustafa.

### *Hamza*

Hamza was a bright and inquisitive male student from Saudi Arabia, who was planning to major in electrical engineering. He had completed an English program in the U.S. before enrolling at EWU and joining the English 112 class. His speaking skills were excellent, but he sometimes struggled with reading and writing. Hamza worked well in groups and individually, and never hesitated to ask questions or clarify. Hamza regularly volunteered to share his experiences, contributed during class discussions, and took the lead in group or pair work.

### *Ahmed*

Ahmed was a male student from Saudi Arabia, who was planning to major in technology, engineering and design. Initially, Ahmed was quiet but engaged in his work with peers; however, later he contributed many ideas and questions during class discussions. Ahmed often volunteered to read the course book aloud to the class, and had excellent listening and speaking skills, but struggled with writing. He faced several challenges outside of class, and this had an impact on his classwork early in the quarter, but he was determined to complete all course work on time. Ahmed's level of engagement and interest improved throughout the quarter.

### *Khalid*

Khalid was also a male student from Saudi Arabia. He had only been living in the U.S. for a few months prior to joining the English 112 class. He was planning to study accounting at EWU. His speaking, writing, and listening abilities were excellent, but he

sometimes had difficulty reading. Although he seldom joined whole class discussions, Khalid was kind and patient. He often helped Saleh and others who were struggling.

#### *Rashid*

A very inquisitive and amiable student, Rashid had some experience studying in English language programs in the U.S. before enrolling at EWU. Rashid was a male student from Saudi Arabia, who had very high-level speaking and reading skills, but sometimes had difficulty writing timed essays in class. He often volunteered answers in peer groups and whole class discussions, and was always cheerful. Rashid was studying mechanical engineering and was struggling in other classes, but made use of office hours to clarify questions about class work or reading. In class, Rashid spoke about his desire to help others and often discussed his experience volunteering.

#### *Saleh*

A determined and energetic learner, Saleh was a male student from Saudi Arabia, whose primary goal was to achieve fluency in English. Saleh was majoring in business management, and had a vested interest in learning English for his future career. Saleh's family was able to accompany him to the United States during his studies, but they were also English learners. This led to many challenges as Saleh became the primary caregiver and cultural broker for the family. However, he was engaged and active; particularly in peer and group discussions or when working with Khalid and Mohammad.

#### *Mohammad*

As a graduate intern in the English 112 class, Mohammad completed all of the course work with the undergraduate students and helped lower-level speakers and writers with class assignments. He was a male graduate student from Saudi Arabia, who was enrolled

in the Master's in English/TESL program at EWU. Mohammad had been studying English for several years before enrolling at EWU, having completed his undergraduate degree in English in Saudi Arabia several years prior. I had known Mohammad for two years before teaching the English 112 class through course work in the graduate program. Mohammad was a welcome addition to the class, as he was active, engaged, and always willing to help struggling learners. His dream was to become a professor of English, and he enjoyed the extra practice reading and writing. He often volunteered to speak to the class to share his experiences, and gave advice for studying English. As an intern and colleague, his observations and input were of immense value to this study.

### ***Data Collection Procedure***

After the IRB consent form was explained and distributed to members of the English 112 class at the beginning of the second week of the quarter, volunteers submitted the signed consent form. Data collection for the present study and direct instruction of collaborative reading comprehension strategies began following IRB consent form submission. Students read a combination of the course book, *Between Two Worlds: A Story about Pearl S. Buck* by Barbara Mitchell, supplemental reading packets, and short articles adapted from longer readings using topics related to weekly themes. At least once per week, students practiced reading to each other from the course book with peers or in groups. I also read a section of a chapter from the course book or reading packet aloud each week. Then I asked students to volunteer to read the remaining text aloud, pausing briefly to ask and answer comprehension questions or review new vocabulary in context. Reading strategies were introduced using direct instruction, and students practiced using them to break down complex texts in groups and individually.

The activities and discussions focused on a weekly theme related to the course book, as well as selections from Pearl Buck's autobiography and two recent biographies, which were distributed to students in weekly reading packets. Themes included but were not limited to: food culture, teachers and influential people, living between cultures, gender, marriage, disabilities, helping others, dealing with criticism, and dreams and goals. Class activities and discussions included both efferent and aesthetic reading, writing, listening, speaking and viewing components. A complete overview of course themes by week can be found in Appendix C. While students were working, the instructor facilitated, observed, circulated, and/or participated in discussions and took notes. At least one assigned journal or essay written by the students was collected from participants and copied each week.

#### *Weeks 1 and 2*

During the first two weeks of the quarter, students introduced themselves to their classmates. Activities focusing on community-building and introductions were used to develop a foundation for collaborative work later in the course. Participants were asked to change groups or seats and work with peers they did not know. After the IRB consent form was signed, students answered journal prompts in Week 2 about their experience and understanding of academic reading and reading comprehension strategies. The purpose of the journal prompt and the class discussion which followed was to determine which strategies students used when reading difficult texts and their thoughts about reading for academic purposes. I used the students' responses to determine which reading strategies should be introduced within the first few weeks.

*Weeks 2 and 3*

During the second and third weeks of the quarter, students in the English 112 class received direct instruction in reading strategies and practiced individually, then in groups. The initial strategies taught included skimming for the gist and scanning for information. A copy of the “Collaborative reading process handout” [Appendix B] was also distributed in Week 2 to model collaborative methods for discussing texts in groups and peer work. After practicing skimming and scanning alone at the end of Week 2 and beginning of Week 3, students worked together in groups to answer questions about a text. By the end of Week 3, students worked with peers or members of an assigned group to skim and scan the course book and in-class readings. They worked collaboratively to find the answers to 5W’s and H questions (Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How), and wrote a short summary or gist of a text. Students also practiced predicting and making inferences about Pearl’s life as we read the course book.

*Weeks 4 and 5*

In Weeks 4 and 5, students continued practicing reading strategies with a focus on summarizing. Direct instruction of the differences between summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting in MLA format occurred early in Week 4. Students practiced summarizing and discussing the main points of texts during this two week period, then practiced these skills individually. This unit on reading comprehension strategies culminated in a Friday essay where students were asked to summarize and paraphrase or quote the course texts, using MLA format. A KWL chart [Appendix D] was also distributed during Week 5 to begin using questioning and reflective strategies.

*Weeks 6 and 7*

During the sixth and seventh weeks of the quarter, students practiced chunking and reflecting on the text and their experiences. In Week 6, several pages from an academic article were distributed. Students were asked to discuss the article in groups, break the text into manageable “chunks” of information, and help each other to understand new terms or guess meanings based on the context, then write a short summary about the article with at least one quote. Students determined which areas of the article were most important and worked together to find the main ideas. In Week 7, students reflected on experiences they had in the past with volunteering and helping others. They were asked to reflect and make connections between the course texts and their own experiences, as well as ask questions about Pearl’s experience or their classmates’ experiences. A KWL chart was distributed at the end of Week 7 to lead into the self-questioning and inquiry unit.

*Weeks 8 and 9*

During the eighth and ninth weeks of the quarter, students worked collaboratively to ask questions and use morphological approaches to breaking down complex texts. To begin the process of inquiry and self-questioning, students watched videos related to events occurring in American and Chinese history and wrote down questions they could research further. Journal prompts and activities related to self-questioning and self-awareness of reading strategies were assigned, and students discussed benefits and drawbacks to using reading strategies in peer groups. In Week 8, students considered future plans and goals, predicting the language skills they would need to succeed in their intended careers. In Week 9, a morphological approach to breaking down new words in

complex texts was discussed and a list of common Greek and Latin affixes was given to each group. Students found words containing these affixes in the reading packet and guessed the meaning of new terms based on the context. Later, students were asked to write and present a summary of an assigned section of the text as a group. At the end of Week 9, students were asked to write an argumentative essay analyzing criticism about Pearl S. Buck's writing using the information they found while writing the summary.

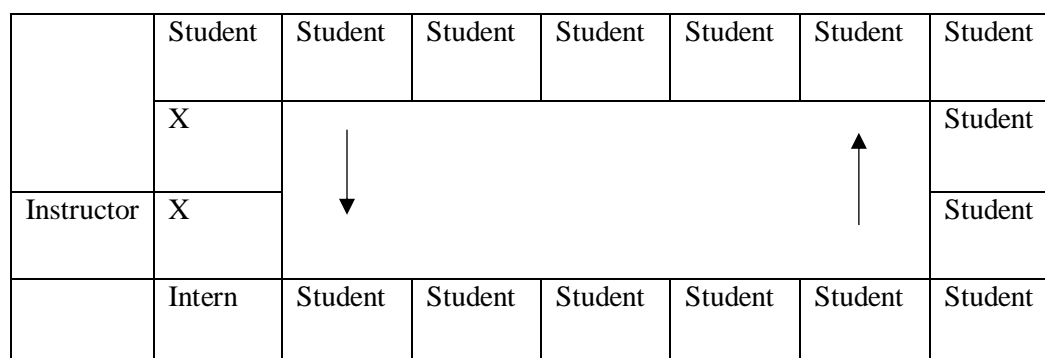
#### *Week 10*

In Week 10, students gave a presentation in groups. Beginning in Week 4, students were assigned a ten-year period to research and report to the class. Due to the fact that the main course book, *Between Two Worlds: A Story About Pearl S. Buck*, by Barbara Mitchell, did not cover the last forty years of Pearl S. Buck's life, students were tasked with covering her major accomplishments and discussing American history and culture during the assigned time period. Students were assigned sections of the supplementary course materials to facilitate research, but major events in American history and culture required further research and reading. Students were required to present a PowerPoint, dividing roles and research equally. Following the presentation, students participated in a whole class question and answer (Q&A) session and discussion. For the Week 10 Friday essay, students were asked to write about the process and experience of collaborating with peers to create and present their PowerPoint. Students were also asked to write about the challenges and benefits of working collaboratively, then to summarize and evaluate a PowerPoint presented by at least one other group.





In Weeks 7 through 11, the learning arrangement was changed to facilitate group discussion as a whole class. When class convened at the beginning of Week 7, the students and I noticed that the arrangement of desks and chairs had been changed. Originally, the desks were in rows of two, facing the instructor (Figure 3) but in Week 7 they were moved to form a square shape (Figure 4). After using the desks in this formation for one class period, I held a vote to decide if the desks should remain in rows or in the square shape. The students voted to keep the desks in the new position, and the square arrangement was used for the duration of the quarter. Although the change in desk formation was not intentional, it was fortuitous. The change in seat locations, classroom orientation and square shape placed less emphasis on the instructor as a focal point. Students were seated across from one another, creating a learner-centered orientation which facilitated whole class discussions. This learning arrangement (Figure 4) allowed students to discuss issues and experiences as a whole class or in small groups as a community of learners.



(Figure 4)

### *Collection of Data for Analysis*

Journals and essays were collected in the English 112 class from each of the ten participants over 11 weeks during the winter quarter of 2017. The course materials were designed or sourced by the instructor and adapted for the English 112 class. Each week, at least one journal or essay prompt related to reading or the use of reading strategies was written by the 112 students and intern, then scanned or copied by the instructor. An analysis of the journals collected for the present study will appear in Chapter 4 and an analysis of the reflection essays can be found in Chapter 5. A discussion of the collected data and student responses will appear in Chapter 6.

Reflection essays from each participant and responses to six out of 37 journal prompts assigned throughout the quarter were analyzed for this study, along with students' reflection essays. Criteria for selecting the journals included in the analysis section of this study were: 1) complete data sets, 2) prompts including discussion of reading skills or use of reading strategies, and 3) journals that educators and future teachers could benefit from reading. A complete list of daily journal prompts can be found in Appendix E, and student responses to prompts selected for analysis can be found in Appendix F. Complete student journals from the data set will also be analyzed in Chapter 4, and students' reflection essays will be discussed in Chapter 5. The present study used action research and narrative inquiry methodologies to determine the value or usefulness of a collaborative approach to using reading comprehension strategies in college-level English classrooms.

## Chapter 4

### Data Collection and Journal Analysis

Chapter 4 includes a discussion of the data collected from student journal responses for the present study, and Chapter 5 is an analysis of students' reflection essays. Chapter 6 returns to assumptions listed in Chapter 1, and includes a discussion of the results of the whole study. Conclusions, implications, limitations of study, recommendations for future research, and final reflections appear in Chapter 7.

#### *Collection of Data*

Journals and essays were collected in the English 112 class from each of the ten participants over 11 weeks during the winter quarter of 2017. In the English 112 class, students read a biography, *Between Two Worlds: A Story about Pearl S. Buck* by Barbara Mitchell (1988), and weekly reading packets which included supplementary readings from two other biographies by Peter Conn (1996) and Hilary Spurling (2010), as well as selections from Pearl Buck's autobiography. The students also read articles and poems related to a weekly theme [Appendix C], or related to early 20<sup>th</sup> century American and Chinese history. Themes for the course were determined by events and issues students read about in the course book and reading packets. Through the readings and in-class activities, students learned a series of reading strategies for comprehending complex, college-level texts. Each week, at least one journal or essay prompt related to reading or the use of reading strategies was written by students enrolled in the English class. The journals and essay responses written by students participating in the study were collected for research and analysis. This analysis of student responses seeks to determine the

benefits and challenges English language learners face when using a collaborative approach to practicing reading strategies.

For the present study, reflection essays from each participant and responses to six out of the 37 assigned journal prompts were analyzed. Criteria for selecting the journals included in the analysis section of this study were: 1) complete data sets, 2) prompts including discussion of reading skills or use of reading strategies, and 3) journals that educators and future teachers could benefit from reading. Complete data sets included journals and essays written by students who volunteered for this study, and who were present on the days when reading related journal prompts and essays were written in class. Students who did not participate or who were absent on the days when selected prompts were written were not included in the complete data set.

Elimination criteria for journals and essays not included in this study were as follows: 1) journals and essays not related to the research question, 2) journals with fewer than six participant responses, 3) essays that did not include reflection on reading strategies and discussion/peer work. A full list of journal prompts assigned in the English 112 course can be found in Appendix E. Complete student journal responses can be found in Appendix F, but will also be discussed and analyzed in this chapter. The reflection essay prompt and complete reflection essays will appear in Chapter 5.

### ***Framework for Analysis of Collected Data***

The present study used action research and narrative inquiry methodologies to determine the value or usefulness of a collaborative approach to using reading comprehension strategies in college-level English classrooms. Action research was used while designing the curriculum for the English 112 class in the English 581 course, as

part of the requirements for the Master's in English/TESL degree, and while teaching the English 112 class during the winter quarter of 2017. When using action research, teachers reflect on successes or challenges observed in their classrooms then research and implement methods for improving students' learning experience. Researchers use student responses and observations to tailor instruction to suit learner's needs.

A narrative inquiry methodology was used to analyze journals and essays collected from participants in the English 112 class. Narrative inquiry is a collection of data related to individual narratives and ways of knowing, which "privileges the experiences of participants" and "promotes dialogue by considering participants' perspectives" (Jones, 2016, p. 480). An event described in a narrative is a valuable form of knowledge, and is imbued with the author's understanding, values, self-perceptions, or worldviews (Jones, 2016; Foss, Foss & Trapp, 2014; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Freire, 1985). The use of narrative inquiry allows researchers to work closely with participants in a study through discussion and reflection.

Information and procedures for qualitative research, data analysis, and case studies outlined by the TESOL International Association were also used in the present study.

According to the TESOL International Association's guidelines for qualitative research:

More recently, TESOL case studies have adopted the more subjective and interpretive stance typical of case studies in education and other fields (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996; Johnson, 1992; Stake, 1994, 1995), with less emphasis on the acquisition of discrete linguistic elements and more emphasis on such issues as learners' and teachers' identities, skill development and its consequences for learners, teachers' professional development experiences, and the implementation of language policies in programs and countries. (TESOL.org, 2017)

The use of action research and narrative inquiry in this study are also focused on learners' experience and knowledge, rather than the learning of specific features of the English language. The researcher's assumptions were also disclosed in Chapter 1 and will

be discussed in Chapter 6, according to the TESOL International Association guidelines for qualitative research. Although I took notes on interactions between participants and recorded several observations and throughout the quarter, this study emphasizes English language learners' narratives and responses. My observations appear in Chapter 6, along with a discussion of the results and major findings.

### ***Participants and Journal Collection***

The participants in this study were a convenience sample of student volunteers enrolled in the English 112 class during the winter quarter of 2017. Due to the small class size, I had the opportunity to work with each student closely. Students submitted journal responses and essays as part of the requirements for the English 112 class, and through their daily writing assignments and journals I was able to understand more about their experiences and motivations for studying English. As the instructor of record, the primary investigator, and a participant-observer, I became acquainted with students over the 12-week quarter through their writing, in-class activities, class discussion, and meetings during office hours. Language and background information about English learners who participated in this study can be found in Chapter 3, but a general overview will precede students' journal responses as they appear in the data sets.

Participants' responses to six journal prompts were chosen for the analysis, along with reflection essays which were written by each participant at the end of the quarter. The participants for the study included nine students enrolled in the English 112 class, and one graduate intern enrolled in the Master's in English/TESL program. The journals featured in this analysis were hand-written by students during the first five to ten minutes of class, and students were encouraged to try to write at least 100 words in response to

the prompt. Journals were collected from each student as part of required course work, and participants' responses were copied then transcribed. Spelling and grammar were not changed or altered in any way, unless otherwise noted.

In the following sections, the journal and essay responses will be analyzed and discussed. In the first section of this analysis, Chapter 4, student responses to selected journal prompts will be discussed. In the next section, Chapter 5, reflection essays will be analyzed to determine students' thoughts and feelings about the experience of collaborating with peers and using reading strategies over the quarter. Table 1 includes a brief overview of the journal prompts chosen for this analysis. Altogether 54 samples of student writing, including 44 student journals and 10 reflection essays, were analyzed for this study.

<b>Table 1: Journal prompts analyzed for the study</b>			
<b>Journal prompts</b>	<b>Dates assigned</b>	<b>Student responses</b>	<b>Topic</b>
<b>Journal 2.4</b>	1/19/2017	7	What do you do when you are required to read a difficult or complex piece of writing? Do you use any reading strategies? Explain your process:
<b>Journal 3.3</b>	1/25/2017	8	What is "reading for academic purposes"? How do you feel about it?
<b>Journal 6.3</b>	2/15/2017	8	How is your academic reading coming along? Do you have questions? What is positive/negative about your experience?
<b>Journal 9.1</b>	3/6/2017	7	What are the benefits and challenges to using the reading strategies we have discussed?
<b>Journal 9.2</b>	3/7/2017	6	How do you feel about reading? What do you think about the quote above? Do you feel prepared for reading in English 101? What will you do to prepare?
<b>Journal 9.4</b>	3/9/2017	8	What is your favorite genre/type of book you like to read? What type/genre of reading or writing will you use in your future career?

**Journal 2.4 – Week 2, Day 4**

**Prompt:** *What do you do when you are required to read a difficult or complex piece of writing? Do you use any reading strategies? Explain your process:*

**Writers' responses:**

**Rachel:** A bright and motivated student from West Africa, Rachel was one of two female students in the English 112 class to volunteer for the present study. She was a French speaker who enjoyed learning English, and had high-level language skills. She often volunteered answers or read aloud to the class. Rachel was planning to study international relations, and often worked with Chen.

**Response:** When sometimes I required to read a difficult text; first I read the whole text underlining words that are difficult for me. I don't look for the definition of difficult words at each paragraph. I read twice or three times the text to see what I can understand without the explanation of difficult words. With that method, I often understand the meanings of difficult words without checking in the dictionary and then it's also more easy to retain them. What facilitate more the comprehension of a difficult text is to locate the main idea and to know the context of the text.

Word count: 102

**Comments:** In this journal response, Rachel outlined her process for breaking down difficult texts. Rereading and finding the main idea or context were two of her primary reading strategies. She was one of the only students to write that she preferred not using a dictionary when possible. Through her response, Rachel demonstrates self-awareness of reading strategies and purposeful implementation of strategies to facilitate comprehension.

**Chen:** Chen was an amiable student from China, and one of the two female participants enrolled in the English 112 class who participated in this study. Chen



often worked with Rachel, and regularly contributed during peer and class discussions. She was highly motivated and planned to study accounting. She often wrote about her challenges and successes regarding language acquisition.

**Response:** When I am required to read a difficult text I'm often following some strategies below:

- 1) I would like to know about the background of the text, the autor, and overview
- 2) I'm willing to underline the vocabularies I don't know, then I will figure them out using dictionary when I finish one or two chapters.
- 3) Then I highlight some sentences and words that I like.
- 4) Finally, I can ask my friends or teachers if I still can't understand some context or sentences. And I'd like to share what I got with them.

Word count: 95

**Comments:** Chen listed and numbered her steps for reading complex texts in her response to the journal prompt. She wrote that the reading strategies she used included finding the background or context, underlining new terms, and asking others. She was the only participant to include discussion or asking others in her initial response.

**Mustafa:** Mustafa, a male student from Saudi Arabia, was planning to major in technology, engineering and design. He was a kind and helpful student who often assisted struggling students and asked many clarifying questions. Despite facing several challenges throughout the quarter, Mustafa was rarely absent, engaged and focused.

**Response:** There are some of important ways to read any text.

First, we should figret out mine idea for book or article. Because if we know the mine idea, we will know what the articl about.

Second, skim is very important way to save your time and figret out some important details. Finally scan is also important to find any date or name very fast.

Word count: 64

*Comments:* Mustafa also provided an outline of his strategy for breaking down complex texts, such as books and articles. In his journal response, Mustafa wrote about his process for breaking down any text, but did not address academic reading specifically. Finding the main idea, skimming, and scanning were his primary reading strategies. He wrote that by scanning, readers could find information quickly.

*Abdul:* Abdul was also a male student from Saudi Arabia, who was planning to major in electrical engineering. He was quiet in class and seldom contributed to whole class discussions, but worked well in peer groups. Abdul was shy but focused, and although writing the daily journal and Friday essays were challenging initially, through hard work and determination his writing improved.

*Response:* As English is the second language to me, so some time I face difficulty text. I like to read a newspaper. But it is very difficult to me. When I see world that I don't know I try to guess the meaning, and it help me. I think the best idea if you face difficulty reading text, is to guess the word.

Word count: 62

*Comments:* Abdul wrote that he had difficulty reading texts because he spoke English as a second language. He liked reading newspapers, even though they were difficult for him, and wrote that guessing the meaning of the word was his strategy for breaking down complex or difficult readings. Abdul used the words “difficult” or “difficulty” three times in his response, and focused on one strategy instead of explaining his process.

*Ahmed:* A quiet but motivated student, Ahmed was a male student from Saudi Arabia who planned to major in technology, engineering and design. He was one of few

students who had family in the U.S. He faced a few initial challenges outside of the English 112 class, but later in the quarter the quality of his written work improved and he frequently contributed to class discussions.

**Response:** Off course, some of international students have difficult to read a text. When I get this problem while I am reading. First, I will read the whole of text without translate for the vocabulary. Even know, I haven't understand it. Next, I will go through the text again, and I will make underline for those difficult vocabularies. Then, I must to translate them. The third time for reading will let me understand more than the first time. So I recommend for all student whom have difficult for reading any kind of text. The student should do these steps to let them understand clear.

Word count: 103

**Comments:** In his response, Ahmed outlined a procedure for reading complex texts.

Ahmed wrote that he would read a text several times to understand the content clearly.

He preferred to underline new words and use a dictionary to translate new words.

Rereading, underlining, and translating were his primary reading strategies. Like Abdul,

Ahmed also used the word "difficult" three times in his response.

**Khalid:** Khalid was a male student from Saudi Arabia, who was planning to major in accounting. He was kind and cheerful, but quiet during whole class discussions. However, he often helped Saleh and others who were struggling, and asked many questions after class. Khalid had high-level listening and speaking skills, and his writing improved throughout the quarter.

**Response:** Reading sometimes is difficult especially when you read something in academic formal language. For example, my native language is Arabic and my problem was defined the academic words. I could solve the problem by following some strategies, which is skipping the word or the sentence and write it down on a separate paper than I keep reading the whole chapter until I finish it. When I finish reading, I return back to the sentences or the words which I wrote it down

and try to do search and find the meaning. I think this strategy is appropriate for me.

Word count: 99

*Comments:* Khalid was one of few students to write his journal response about academic reading and give reasons as to why he felt academic reading was difficult. Khalid wrote that in order to break down complex texts, he would write down new words on a separate piece of paper then “search and find” the meaning of the new words. His strategy of writing down new words was different from other writers, but his use of a dictionary was similar. Khalid also wrote that he felt that this strategy was “appropriate” for him.

***Rashid:*** Approachable, kind, and inquisitive, Rashid was a male student from Saudi Arabia who was studying mechanical engineering. Like others, he had completed an English program in the U.S., and often volunteered to share his experiences. Rashid had high-level speaking and reading abilities, but struggled when writing daily journals and essays in class due to the five to ten minute time limit. He aimed to continue improving his writing skills through his classes at EWU.

***Response:*** If I read a difficult text I have some strategy to do. First I’ll break up the text to make easy. Second, I will dictionary that help when I read.

Word count: 30

*Comments:* In his journal response for Week 2, Rashid gives a brief outline of his reading strategies. Rashid’s strategies were similar to others in that he reported using a dictionary to “help” him while he read. However, he was one of the only students to mention breaking up the text (or chunking). Rashid wrote that he used some strategies, but it is unclear as to whether or not he used other strategies besides chunking and using a dictionary due to the brevity of his response.

### *Discussion*

The journal question for Journal 2.4, Week 2 Day 4, was used to determine which reading strategies English learners already knew before joining the English 112: Composition for Multilingual Students class. Several of the students participating in this study had taken English classes in their home countries or in the U.S. prior to enrolling at Eastern Washington University. One of the assumptions for this study was that the students might have been aware of or might have already been using some reading comprehension strategies before taking the course. After receiving responses and an explanation of students' process for breaking down complex texts, I determined which strategies would be implemented first (an outline of reading strategies used in the course is available in Chapter 3). After analyzing the responses, it was determined that "skimming for the gist" and "scanning for information" would be the first two strategies introduced, as only one student reported using these strategies in his process (Mustafa).

This journal was designed to encourage learners to explain their process for reading complex texts, and to determine which strategies were already known. Many of the participants cited rereading (four out of seven) and highlighting or underlining (three out of seven) as their primary strategy for reading difficult texts. Other participants mentioned looking for the main idea or context (three out of seven). While one person reported asking others, more participants wrote that if rereading and finding the main idea or context did not help then they used a dictionary (four out of seven). Only one student wrote about breaking up the text (or chunking), and one student wrote about predicting/guessing, but no one mentioned discussing or summarizing.

Along with steps for reading difficult texts, the students also provided reasoning as to what was difficult or why they felt it was hard to understand some texts. Ahmed and Khalid wrote that as international students from Saudi Arabia, they felt that it was harder for them to read academic texts in English. Both mentioned difficulty with new vocabulary, but out of all seven participants who submitted responses to this prompt only Khalid mentioned academic words specifically. Ahmed and Khalid outlined a strategy that included rereading, underlining a new word or writing it down, and translating using a dictionary or “search and find” (Khalid). When asked about “search and find”, Khalid responded to the instructor verbally that he meant “online, like Google.” Although Chen’s strategy was similar, she also reported looking for contextual clues such as “the background of the text, the autor [sic], and overview.” Chen was the only student to mention asking others, such as teachers or friends, and sharing knowledge and information that she already knew with others.

Like Chen, Rachel also suggested looking for the context and wrote that she did not look up words in each paragraph, but determined the meaning by looking for clues in the text. She wrote that, “what facilitate more the comprehension of a difficult text is to locate the main idea and to know the context of the text.” Rachel reported that by determining the meaning through context it was easier to retain new words. Similarly, Abdul wrote about guessing new words, and suggested others use this method. However, the two most mentioned strategies were rereading (four out of seven) and looking up new words in a dictionary or using a translator (four out of seven).

Through these responses, it was determined that the strategies of rereading and using a dictionary (four out of seven), and underlining/highlighting (three out of seven) were the

most used or well-known strategies. Table 2 provides a chart of the reading strategies students reported using to comprehend difficult texts at the beginning of the quarter. Although three of the participants in this study were not present on the day this journal was assigned, it was clear that students were already using several strategies or had knowledge of some. Yet, many of the strategies used were time consuming and heavy reliance on dictionaries and translators was evident. Based on participants' responses, skimming and scanning were introduced early in the quarter as only one student (Mustafa) wrote about these in his response. Every week or two, a new strategy was introduced over the 11-week period, and students assessed their learning in journals and essays.

Table 2: Reading strategies used by participants prior to English 112										
	Rachel	Chen	Mustafa	Abdul	Hamza	Ahmed	Khalid	Rashid	Saleh	Intern
Skimming			X							
Scanning			X							
Summarizing										
Rereading	X	X				X	X			
Discussing										
Guessing				X						
Dictionary/ Translating		X				X	X	X		
Underline/ Highlight	X	X				X				
Finding the Main idea	X		X							
Asking others		X								
Writing new words							X			
Breaking down words										
Breaking down text (chunking)								X		
Other					NR				NR	NR
X = strategies students reported using to break down difficult texts NR = not reported										



**Journal 3.3 - Week 3, Day 3**

**Prompt:** What is “reading for academic purposes”? How do you feel about it?

**Writers’ responses:**

**Rachel:** Reading for academic purposes as its name indicate is a reading class which purposes are to strengthen non-English native students skills in university reading and to help those students to be familiarize with more difficult words. It helps students to be at ease whenever they are in front of an university class reading. They are more confident. I’m so glad to have to take this class. I’m seeing it like a kind of facilitator of our transition, the transition from class in our native languages to class in English. I think that so far, it’s very helpful and I’m happy that E.W.U. has instaured something like that.

Word count: 107

**Comments:** In her response, Rachel gave a definition of reading for academic purposes and writes that it is related to English language learning. She focused on the benefits of reading for academic purposes and why it may be helpful. Rachel made an interesting observation about how the English 112 class aids multilingual writers in preparing for college-level reading and writing. She wrote that she saw the class as a “kind of facilitator” of the transition and reported that the course was helpful.

**Chen:** For me, reading for academic has two purposes - preview and review. If you are willing to be good at some of subjects, I think you love to prepare something before the class. For examples, you need to read for academic to figure out what you are going to learn, what the content is, what the main idea is and so on. On the other hand, sometimes teachers hardly tell you all the details about what you’re leaning, then you should look up academic books to review and find answees that you were confused before. However, I feel that I’m getting used to the way I learn, and it helps me to study well.

Word count: 114

**Comments:** In her definition of reading for academic purposes, Chen described two purposes for reading: preview and review. Her response focused on finding the main idea and the usefulness of previewing and reviewing. She wrote that these were also useful for

finding more information when students need details or have questions that were not answered by the teacher. She also reported feeling content with her learning process.

**Mustafa:** In my opinion, the most academic purposes made me interested is Psychology for many reason.

First, if we want to know how other people feel at us in the first impression, use should know the part of psychology. For example, if you meet someone in the first time, he or she will make how the relationship between you and them. So, if the first meet was good, the relationship will be successful. However, if it was negative, the relation will be unsuccessful.

Word count: 82

*Comments:* In his response, Mustafa discussed a specific academic subject that interests him. He did not give a definition for reading for academic purposes, but wrote about why he enjoys psychology instead. Based on his response, his feelings about academic reading and understanding of reading for academic purposes are difficult to discern. However, it is clear that psychology is one academic subject that he really enjoyed learning about, and he shared a little about what he had learned in his response.

**Abdul:** Reading the best way to develope your knolege as we know if we in univeresity you have to read for academic purpose some time if is hard to read acdmic text, but you have to. I hate academic reading but I believe reading will raise my kolege. So I have to read. Reading is important to every one in this life, because without it we can't do any things. If you want to study you have to read. Also, if you want to work with our problems and to got out of mastakes we have to read. In short I think life will be hard without reading, and if you want to make it easier just read.

Word count: 117

*Comments:* In his response, Abdul focused on the benefits of reading for academic purposes and his extreme dislike of academic reading. This was an interesting response because although he wrote that he hates academic reading, he also understands why it is important. He gives several reasons why students must learn to read academic texts, but

does not define what reading for academic purposes means. However, his feelings on the subject of reading are quite complex.

**Hamza:** A friendly and inquisitive student, Hamza was male student from Saudi Arabia who planned to major in electrical engineering. He struggled with reading and writing, but his spoken English was excellent. Hamza regularly volunteered to share his experiences with the class and worked well with his peers. He was absent when the first journal prompt included in this study was assigned, but his responses and essays provided valuable input about students' self-perceptions of English language learning.

**Response:** I believe that reading for academic purpose it is compleitly different too other purpose, "fun in free time" academic purpose needs to be more specific and more in academic way. Also academic methods such as scaming or skinng are different.

What I feel about it is that can be excieiting same time especially if it take about atracte me.

Word count: 59

**Comments:** In his response, Hamza made a distinction between reading for fun and reading for academic purposes. His response was one of the only responses to give a definition and name specific strategies. He wrote that academic reading required a specific purpose and was done in a "more academic way." Although he wrote that academic reading was not like reading for fun, he also wrote that it could be exciting if the topic appealed to him.

**Ahmed:** Well, There are many ways for reading. For example, reading for fun or sometime we have to read ariticle that we take in Eastren. These ariticles are acadmic. The Second type is reading jornal or reading for fun. Also, the reading ahs lots of amazing benfits and skills for the reader. In my opinon any one who can read, he or she can study, or get job. I think no one can have job without

reading. I mean people can not get job if they can not read or write. We should let the children love reading from the begging of their elementary school because reading can help the children to let them improve their skills.

Word count: 116

*Comments:* In his journal response, Ahmed focused on different types of reading and gave a brief example of reading for academic purposes. He mentioned that reading for academic purposes was related to reading articles or journals, like the ones he had read in classes at EWU. Like many of his peers, Ahmed also focused on the “amazing benefits” and importance of reading. He suggested instilling a love of reading early to improve students’ reading skills.

**Rashid:** Reading for academic purpose mean that you read about something that you want to know or most likely teacher assign by your teacher. Academic things seem to be hard because of words content or formal.

I feel good and happy because that it helps me to be educated to understand things. Even so it sometimes looks hard but it would great in the end.

Word count: 64

*Comments:* Rashid was one of few students to mention that reading for academic purposes could be related to texts assigned by a teacher. He also wrote that these readings seemed hard because of the content or subject-specific terms. However, he wrote that despite the difficulty of academic reading he felt happy and understood that the result of his hard work would be “great in the end.” Like Ahmed, Hamza, Abdul and others, Rashid’s response reveals a complex relationship with academic reading.

**Mohammad (intern):** As a graduate intern, Mohammad worked hard to complete the course work for the English 112 class and his internship, while helping struggling students with their assignments. Mohammad was a male student from Saudi Arabia enrolled in the M.A. English/TESL program at EWU. We had worked

together in previous classes in the M.A. English/TESL program, and I had known Mohammad for almost two years before he joined the English 112 class as an intern. He was a welcome addition to the course, as he often contributed to class discussions.

**Response:** Reading for academic purpose is when I read to get information to write answers or for school. Reading for academic can not be for fun because we need more focusing and anlysing. I think textbook authors want to write more hard to teach student to analyse. I hate to read text-books, but I love reading in the same time.

Word count: 59

*Comments:* Mohammad's response to Journal 3.3 focused on reading at school. He wrote that he believed that academic reading could not be fun because students needed to learn to analyze and focus. Like Abdul, Mohammad reported hating academic reading and textbooks in particular. However, he also wrote that he loves reading at the same time. Many of the students had similar responses: although reading was difficult it was also important, and although academic reading was something they disliked it could also be interesting.

### ***Discussion***

The journal question for Journal 3.3 was designed to assess students' thoughts and feelings about academic reading, and to identify individual definitions of reading for academic purposes. In Week 2, students practiced skimming, scanning, and finding the main idea. In Week 3, the students continued practicing these strategies and began discussing differences between reading for academic purposes and reading for other purposes. After assigning Journal 3.3 at the beginning of class, students shared their responses with peers and a discussion about reading for academic purposes, critical

literacy, and meta-awareness of reading strategies followed. Few of the research participants could define reading for academic purposes directly, however many wrote about the importance or benefits of reading.

Six out of eight participants made connections between reading for academic purposes and school or university. Many gave examples related to classes (Chen), articles read at Eastern (Ahmed), textbooks (Mohammad), texts assigned by the teacher (Rashid), or university-level reading (Rachel, Abdul). Seven out of eight student responses mentioned academics as the main reason for reading, and one discussed a specific area they were interested in reading about but did not make an explicit connection between the topic and university reading (Mustafa). Several students mentioned that academic texts included difficult or formal language. The students noted the benefits and challenges of reading for academic purposes in their responses.

Abdul and Mohammad reported hating academic reading or reading textbooks, but understood the importance of reading college-level texts. Abdul wrote that he still hated reading, but it was the “best way to develop your knowledge.” Hamza, Mohammad, and Ahmed determined that reading for academic purposes was different from reading for fun, and each described why they felt it was beneficial. Ahmed wrote that reading can have “a lot of amazing benefits and skills for the reader” and discussed the importance of reading skills in finding a job. Hamza and Mustafa wrote that reading academic texts that interested them could be exciting, while Mohammad focused more on developing analytical skills. Rashid wrote that while academic words and content could be difficult, he “felt good and happy” and even though it “sometimes looks hard but [sic] it would be

great in the end.” Abdul wrote that without reading life would be harder and that reading could help students to work out problems or mistakes.

Although Chen wrote that one of her main challenges was finding the main ideas and understand details at times, she found that reading for academic purposes helped with course work. Chen wrote, “I’m getting used to the way I learn, and it helps me to study well.” Others who responded to the journal prompt also focused on the positive aspects of reading for academic purposes. Rachel’s response outlined the many benefits, one of which was that knowing how to read academic texts “helps students to be at ease whenever they are in front of an [sic] university class reading.” She wrote that students who read for academic purposes will feel “more confident” and that she was “glad to have to take this class.” Rachel’s response also provided helpful feedback about how students might be feeling about the English 112 class in particular, as opposed to specific topics students were interested in or general use of reading strategies. She wrote that she was “seeing it like a kind of facilitator of our transition, the transition from class in our native languages to class in English. I think that so far, it’s very helpful and I’m happy that E.W.U. has instaured [sic] something like that.” These responses were key to understanding how students viewed the course, and which aspects of reading were considered problematic and/or could be reviewed.

Students who responded to the journal prompt connected reading for academic purposes to school or assignments, but few gave a definition. Several participants wrote that academic reading was difficult, but that it was important to their future success. Although many reported that they felt academic reading was challenging, or that they hated it, they also wrote that it could be fun if the subject was interesting. These

responses reveal a complex relationship with reading for academic purposes and individual writer's motivations for wanting to improve their skills.

### ***Journal 6.3 - Week 6, Day 3***

***Prompt:*** *How is your academic reading coming along? Do you have questions? What is positive/negative about your experience?*

#### ***Writers' responses:***

***Rachel:*** This quarter I don't have a lot of academic reading like the last quarter. My main academic reading for this quarter is the one of my English 112 class. So far, I think that I'm doing good but I don't know what my professor is thinking about my performance. The reading packages of the English 112 are average for me, they are not too easy neither too difficult. Also the professor helps us with many tips and the comprehension part is very helpfull to fully master the reading. Personally I don't have any questions everything is going pretty good and if a question come along I'll go talk with the professor about that. The positive thing about this experience is that I'm improving either my reading and writing skills; my vocabulary also is becoming better.

Word count: 135

***Comments:*** Rachel's response focused on the reading assigned in the English 112 class.

In her response, Rachel mentioned the weekly reading packets and seemed confident in her ability to break down the complex supplementary readings. She reported that they were not too easy or too difficult, and she felt that she could ask the instructor questions. Rachel mentioned several skills that she felt had improved and gave an overall positive response to the prompt.

***Chen:*** My academic reading is quite useful and complicated, sometimes I have to read word by word if I need to figure out some concepts and phrases. I think one of the positive experience is I am able to know about many academic words and improve my ability that I can read long sentences and articles. The negative experience might be I have to spend a lots of time studying it. However, once I could get used to reading academic articles or textbooks, I was able to read



quicker than before, and it was easier to understand the academic books and articles.

Word count: 101

*Comments:* Chen gave a more general response related to academic reading and some of the positive and negative experiences she encountered. In her response, Chen wrote that acquiring new vocabulary and reading long sentences or articles had been a positive experience. However, she also wrote that she had to spend a lot of time studying in order to comprehend academic texts. Although she her experience included some challenges and successes, Chen wrote that after she was used to reading academic articles or textbooks she could read faster and comprehend the content.

***Mustafa:*** If I want to talk about how is academic reading in the U.S., I should tell my story when I came to the U.S. First of all, I came to the U.S. since 2015, and I started studying English at SCC. In that time my teache was face for reading and writing. So, I was start with easier story, but after four weeks this reading became more diffecelt because the vocablarie were more academic. So, in the first time I wondered why we use academic vocabularies because we don't use them for speaking. I realized that we always use them when we want writing or inside college. So, academic vocablary is important to us because we can't write or understand what we read in college.

Word count: 125

*Comments:* Mustafa wrote a short narrative about his experience with academic reading at Spokane Community College (SCC). He also gave reasons for learning and using academic language. He wrote about wondering why students learn academic vocabulary when many words are not used in conversational English. The reason Mustafa gives for learning academic vocabulary and reading academic texts is that without it people could not understand reading or writing in college. While he did not write about his feelings directly, it seems that Mustafa initially questioned learning academic vocabulary, but now feels that it is important.

**Abdul:** I have read a lot of academic reading and every time I read, I have difficulte reading time. I don't like to read, but some time I have to read. Also I have to improve my skills in reading and vocabulary. If I have questions I always ask google and it give me all the information that I need.

Word count: 59

*Comments:* Abdul reiterated in his response his disdain and appreciation for reading. He wrote that he didn't like to read, but that it was necessary. He also wrote that whenever he had a question, he would use Google to search for the answer. He found this to be a helpful strategy when reading difficult texts. Although many reading comprehension strategies had been introduced in the English 112 class by Week 6, Abdul did not seem to be comfortable using them yet. However, he also expressed a need to build his vocabulary and reading skills.

**Hamza:** My academic reading has been increasing since I started English 112. Do I have questions? Yes, please. How can I improve my reading summary? One positive thing I have had experience with is that when I read about exac story or topic from different writer is extermily helpful because that help my understanding and my reading skills. I do not have negative experience until this moment!

Word count: 66

*Comments:* In his response, Hamza wrote that he felt his reading had improved in the six weeks that he had attended the class. He wrote that he still had some questions about how to improve his reading summary. The reading summary he mentioned was an in-class summary students wrote each week in groups, pairs, or individually, based on the course book or an article related to the weekly theme. In the English 112 class, students read a main course book, *Between Two Worlds: A Story about Pearl S. Buck*, by Barbara Mitchell, as well as a weekly reading packet which included short selections from other biographies about Pearl S. Buck. Supplementary sections in the weekly reading packets

complimented the events outlined in the course book. Students would read about events in Pearl Buck's life from three to four different authors each week, and compare the accounts and events described in each text. Hamza's comment about reading the exact story or topic from different authors may be related to these assignments. He found reading different accounts to be "extremely helpful" for understanding the content.

***Khalid:*** Reading is important skill that student has to earn it. At the same time, reading help to succeed. Everything has been related to reading. For Example, most of professors ask student to read to be able to finish their homework. Reading also will affect in person's life. It helps the reader be knowledge. It helps the person to be aware of different subjects. It helps also to be a good writer because by reading a lot, you will earn a different writing strategies. Improved focus and concertation, vocabulary expansion, and memory improvement, these skills will the reader earn by reading a lot.

Word count: 102

*Comments:* In his response, Khalid gave a general overview about the importance of reading and gives examples related to school. He wrote that "everything has been related to reading", meaning that reading is not only important academically, but also for many situations in life. Khalid made an excellent connection between reading and writing, and wrote that by reading people could learn writing strategies. He also listed several benefits of reading, but did not write about his own experience with academic reading in his response. In the previous weeks when new reading strategies were introduced, Khalid had been very ill. A more generalized approach to the prompt could be due to the fact that he was working to catch up, or perhaps he wanted to discuss his feelings regarding the overall importance of reading and writing but not specifically related to the English 112 class.

**Rashid:** My reading is starting to get hard as we get close from final exam.

Word count: 14

*Comments:* Rashid did not write much in his journal response, but he wrote that his reading was becoming more difficult as the quarter went on. At this point, Rashid was feeling challenged academically and expressed some difficulty with the amount of reading and writing in all of his classes.

**Mohammad (intern):** My reading enhanced because of three reasons. First, I learned from my teacher, who is Nichole La Torre, some strategies such as skim and scan strategy, and read topic sentence and conclusion sentence for every paragraph. Second reason is practicing reading with my teacher, Nichole La Torre. She was reading to the class aloud, as we read silently follow her. In addition, Nichole La Torre taught us to use KWL chart to analysis the reading text. I learned from her how to facilitate the reading for ESL students. Nichole La Torre recommended us to read, and we should not stop if we don't understand the meaning of the word, and we should guess the meaning from the context.

Word count: 118

*Comments:* Mohammad wrote that his reading had improved since joining the English 112 class as a graduate intern. In his response, he wrote about several reading strategies that had enhanced his reading comprehension skills; specifically, skimming, scanning, reading topic sentences and concluding sentences, practicing reading aloud, KWL charts, and guessing the meaning from the context. Mohammad wrote that all of these strategies had enhanced his reading skills, and that he had learned how to teach or “facilitate” reading for English language learners.

### ***Discussion***

On Day 3 of Week 6, students were encouraged to write about how their use of reading comprehension strategies was going and any positive or negative experiences they had when using the strategies or discussing and practicing them in groups. Journal question

6.3 was designed to assess how students felt about reading strategies at the halfway point in the quarter. The question was left broad on purpose, in order to avoid influencing perceptions about students' reading skills. Many students mentioned the relationship between reading skills and building vocabulary. Each participant discussed successes and challenges they faced as well as their experience of reading thus far.

Six out of the eight students who responded to the prompt and participated in this study reported more confidence in their skills or an increase in reading abilities. Although three out of eight students mentioned specific reading strategies, many focused on positive or negative experiences. Abdul and Rashid mentioned that reading was still difficult or becoming more difficult for them as the quarter came to a close. Abdul mentioned his hatred for reading, but determined that improving his skills in reading and vocabulary was necessary. He did not seem to be relying on the strategies introduced in class as much as he relied on the dictionary or internet. Abdul wrote "If I have questions I always ask google and it give me all the information that I need." Chen also wrote that she sometimes struggled with reading in class. She wrote that, "sometimes I have to read word by word if I need to figure out some concepts and phrases", and also that she "had to spend a lots [sic] of time studying it." Yet, with practice she felt it became easier and also focused on the positive aspects of her experience in the English 112 class. "I am able to know about many academic words and improve my ability that I can read long sentences and articles" (Chen). Several students reported that they still experienced difficulty in some areas, but the responses were mostly positive.

Hamza, Chen, and Rachel reported an increase in vocabulary or reading comprehension as a result of taking the English 112 course and learning various reading strategies. Each

reported reading faster than they had before and felt that it was “easier to understand the academic books and articles” (Chen). Mohammad and Hamza mentioned specific strategies (skim and scan, KWL charts, and summarizing) that facilitated their reading comprehension, while Khalid and Mustafa focused on the importance of reading academic texts in general. Rachel wrote that the reading packets were “neither too easy or difficult” for her, and that the “tips and comprehension part [of the course] is very helpful to fully master the reading.” Overall, most of the participants reported that the use of reading strategies (or tips) and reading practice in the English 112 course was beneficial.

One major difference between this set of journal responses and the previous two data sets (Journals 2.4 and 3.3) is that the words “difficult” and “hard” are used far less in students’ writing. One reason for this might have been because of the journal question in the first data set (Journal 2.4: What do you do when you are required to read a difficult or complex piece of writing?) or because of students’ perceptions of reading for academic purposes (Journal 3.3). Although students outlined their negative experiences with reading in Journal 6.3, the responses were mostly positive or focused on the importance of reading academic texts.

### ***Journal 9.1 - Week 9, Day 1***

***Prompt:*** *What are the benefits and challenges to using the reading strategies we have discussed?*

#### ***Writers’ responses:***

***Rachel:*** In English 112, we have talked about many strategies for an effective reading, some of them are breaking down long words, summarizing, find the main idea and discussing in groups. Those strategies had helped me a lot in my reading this quarter. The reading strategies helped me understand quickly what I am reading, my vocabulary had grown, and I am more confident to find the main idea and to

understand something I'm reading. I don't think I have challenges again as the reading strategies learned are so helpful for me, however, some readings are so complex that I have to check the meaning of some very difficult words and access my own formal knowledges about the subject to understand the reading package.

Word count: 123

*Comments:* In her journal response for Week 9, Rachel wrote about many of the strategies that had been introduced in the English 112 class over the quarter. She focused on four of the strategies that had been beneficial to her understanding of complex texts: breaking down long words, summarizing, finding the main idea, and discussing in groups. Overall, she felt that her vocabulary had increased and that her reading comprehension had improved. Rachel wrote that she did not feel that the academic reading she had encountered so far was too complex, but that sometimes she did have to check the meaning of very difficult words. However, before checking the meaning of new words, Rachel used many strategies to break down the text into manageable sections and made connections to what she already knew. She wrote that the reading packets were not too difficult or too easy in Week 6 (Journal 6.3), and in this response she wrote that at times she had to "access her formal knowledges" about a topic in order to understand the text. Rachel also wrote that she was feeling "more confident" in her reading skills and in finding the main idea after using the reading strategies introduced in the English 112 class.

*Chen:* I have some challenges to using the reading strategies, for example, when I read academic essay or book, I often have problems that is complex and long sentences. It's really difficult for me to understand, if I just scan or skim them, I have to read them word by word, and read them very carefully. Even though sometimes I could break down the words and sentences, it's still spending my time a lot. However, there are some benefits to writing strategies. I improve my reading skills and enrich my words. Also, I am able to summarize the main idea of articles. Sometimes maybe I can't understand the meaning of every words in

the article, but I can catch the main idea and know what the article is talking about. This is a good experience.

Word count: 134

*Comments:* In her response, Chen wrote about the challenges and successes of using the reading strategies introduced in English 112. She wrote that reading long sentences and complex texts could be difficult, and that sometimes she had to reread each word carefully. However, she felt that she had improved her reading skills and her vocabulary had increased. Summary writing and finding the main ideas were two strategies she reported using. Despite struggling with longer sentences, Chen wrote that she felt learning the reading strategies was an overall positive experience.

**Mustafa:** The good strategies to using the reading for me is summarizing. Summary make me feel or understand any reading more than other strategies. Because, if I use summarizing I be save the important information. For example, I always use summarizing after I read any novels to remember what I read it about. Also, if I discuss with my group about something, I will be more strong information.

Word count: 67

*Comments:* In his response, Mustafa wrote about the benefits of using summarizing as a reading comprehension strategy. He wrote that using summarizing was helpful because he could record or “save” they key points of a text in writing, which made it easier to remember the information later. He also wrote about the benefits of group discussion and collaboration, which he felt strengthened his understanding of the information he had read.

**Abdul:** I benefits from what we had studed about learning strategies a lot. If I do the reading strategies, the reading is becoming easier and I can find the main idea faster and understand it. Also, if see long word, I try to breake it down. That help me to understand long word. All students should learn there strategies and use them while they are reading. The strategies is three and they are: breaking down



the long word, find the main idea and summarizing. I think the best one is to find the main idea because if you find it, you will know what the reading talks about.

Word count: 107

*Comments:* Abdul wrote that he had benefited from learning the reading strategies introduced in the English 112 class. This was the first journal response he wrote that did not mention his hatred of reading, and did not mention using Google or guessing as primary reading strategies. Abdul wrote about three strategies that had helped him to comprehend complex academic texts: breaking down long words, finding the main idea, and summarizing. Out of the three strategies, he wrote that finding the main idea was the best strategy he had learned.

**Ahmed:** The discussing in groups is one of the best benefits for reading strategies. For example, last discussing was talking about reading packets. It was how to get the negatives and obscure things, so we were finding the sentences me and my group so fast. In conclusion, I want to mention discussing with group better than working by your self especially in reading strategies.

Word count: 63

*Comments:* Ahmed focused his response on the benefits of discussing in groups and collaborating with peers in his journal response. He wrote about an in-class activity that he and his group members had completed in Week 8. Students were assigned three to four pages of the Week 8 reading packet to read in groups, and were tasked with identifying the types of criticism Pearl Buck faced. Each group read a section and took notes about the main ideas or points each author made. Then, they presented the information to the class. Students took notes while their peers presented, and used them to write an essay on Friday about dealing with criticism; for which they were required to use specific examples and quotes. Ahmed wrote that he and his group members were able to find the information they needed from the assigned section “so fast”. He stated that

working in groups was better than working individually, especially when reading and practicing reading strategies.

**Rashid:** The benefits of the reading strategies is that I will understand all the reading with more than one strategy. In the beginning some of the strategies are hard but after awhile it will be easy.

Word count: 35

*Comments:* In Rashid's journal response no specific strategy is named, however he wrote that he had benefited from using more than one reading strategy. He also wrote that at the beginning the strategies were difficult to use or understand, but that "after awhile it will be easy". It is hard to tell whether he felt that the reading strategies had become easier to use, or would become easier to use in the future. However, since he wrote about the benefits of using more than one strategy in his first sentence, perhaps he meant that over the past nine weeks he felt that using the strategies had become a little easier and might be even easier with continued use.

**Mohammad (intern):** I learned from Nichole La Torre in the class English 112 some of reading strategies, and I'm a graduate student. I have many homework in my program. For example, I have to read articles, textbooks, and looking for sources. I became knowing my goal after I learned the strategies, I do not take more time to find the main ideas, and I... [stopped writing to help a student]

Word count: 68

*Comments:* Mohammad began writing a response to this journal prompt, however he had to stop writing in order to help a student. In the first part, he wrote that he had also learned many reading strategies through the English 112 class and elaborated on the type of reading he had to complete for the Master's in English TESL program. He focused mainly on the amount of reading he had to do for homework and research, and about how finding the main idea and using other reading strategies had saved him time.

### *Discussion*

During the last few weeks of the quarter, a series of journals were assigned to determine specific strategies the students determined to be beneficial to their reading comprehension, whether or not they felt prepared for reading college-level texts in English 101, and what the type/genre of text they liked to read. Journal 9.1 was assigned to determine specific strategies students found helpful and challenges they encountered when using reading strategies implemented in the English 112 class. For Journal 6.3, only three of the eight responses collected addressed specific strategies students had used. Although most students focused on positive aspects, as the primary investigator I questioned whether or not the specific strategies I introduced were beneficial to students' overall comprehension. Therefore, I asked my advisor and director of the English 112 class, Dr. LaVona Reeves, for advice and we decided to ask part of the research question directly. For Journal 9.1, we decided to ask students directly and encourage them to share benefits and challenges to using the reading strategies we discussed in the English 112 course.

Out of the seven student responses collected for Journal 9.1, six participants named specific strategies they used, and one reported using several strategies but did not give specific information (Rashid). Summarizing, discussing, and breaking down words were the most helpful strategies self-reported by participants. Four out of seven students mentioned summarizing as a beneficial reading strategy, and four out of seven also mentioned finding the main idea. Three out of seven wrote that discussing and using reading strategies in groups was beneficial, and one (Ahmed) recommended discussion as

the “best” reading strategy. While many focused on the benefits, a few students also wrote about the challenges they faced.

Rachel and Chen reported feeling more confident in their reading skills and understanding the main idea of academic texts; however, they also outlined areas of difficulty. Chen wrote that her main challenge was understanding long and complex sentences, and stated that skimming and scanning did not always aid in understanding of the text. When reading long, complex sentences, Chen wrote “I have to read them word by word, and read them very carefully.” However, she believed that these strategies were helpful for understanding the main idea and reported that this was “a good experience.” Rachel also wrote that some of the readings were so complex that she had to “check the meaning of some very difficult words and access [her] own formal knowledges about the subject to understand the reading package.”

Since reading packets were comprised of selections from two biographies and Pearl S. Buck’s autobiography, the language and terms used were quite complex or antiquated. However, both Rachel and Chen reported that skimming and scanning were helpful for finding the main idea. After reflecting on students’ journal responses, I reviewed the purpose of using skimming and scanning. I reiterated that it was necessary to reread a text at times and that the aim was to reduce the amount of time spent checking a dictionary rather than not using it at all. Information about benefits and challenges students were facing was helpful, as it allowed for some review of the purpose and use of strategies discussed earlier in the quarter.

Although Rashid was concerned about difficult readings in Week 6, he reported that using the strategies was easier after a while, especially when using more than one

strategy. This was also the first journal about reading in which Abdul's response did not include any statements about hating reading. He wrote that he "benefits from what we had studied [sic] about learning strategies a lot. If I do the reading strategies, the reading is becoming easier and I can find the main idea faster and understand it." Abdul also did not write about using the dictionary or Google for this response, stating that "if see long word, I try to breake [sic] it down. That help me to understand long word." He concluded that "all students should learn there strategies and use them while they are reading." The three strategies he found most helpful were breaking down long words, finding the main idea and summarizing. Mohammad, Rachel, and Chen also wrote that by breaking down the text or longer sentences, they were able to find the main idea or determine what the text was about.

Many of the students found that certain strategies were more beneficial for developing personal reading comprehension skills. Mustafa and Abdul wrote that summarizing was helpful for remembering information and determining the main point of a text. Ahmed and Mustafa mentioned the benefits of collaborating with others. Ahmed stated that discussion was "better than working by yourself especially in reading strategies [edited for clarity]." He also wrote that "the dicssing [sic] in groups is one of the best benefits for reading strategies." Likewise, Mustafa wrote that "if I discuss with my group about something, I will be more strong information." Both students felt that discussing texts with peers and practicing reading strategies as a group were beneficial for comprehension and retention of new terms.

Rachel also wrote that reading strategies in general "helped me a lot in my reading this quarter" and "helped me understand quickly what I am reading, my vocabulary had

grown, and I am more confident to find the main idea and to understand something I'm reading." Although the journal question did not address mitigating anxiety or building confidence directly, that students included these feelings gave valuable insight as to the usefulness of teaching reading strategies and students' perceptions about collaborative activities.

Each student wrote about the ways in which their reading skills had benefited from direct instruction of reading strategies over the quarter, but few listed major challenges. This could be due to knowledge of the present study after signing the IRB form, or wanting to help me, the instructor of record and primary investigator. However, the fact that a few students did include challenges in their responses was helpful for assessing needs during the last few weeks of the course. Further, at least one student reported feeling increased confidence in their reading comprehension skills. Table 3 provides an overview of the benefits and challenges students wrote about in their responses to Journal 9.1. Based on the information visually represented in the table, students found many of the strategies to be beneficial; especially summarizing, finding the main idea, and discussing with peers. Some strategies, such as skimming and scanning, were reported to be challenging. However, all students wrote about a plan for future study and reflected on methods for improving their reading comprehension skills in their journals. When compared with Table 2, Table 3 demonstrates that several students found summarizing and discussion to be more beneficial than rereading and using a dictionary in later weeks.

<b>Table 3: Benefits and challenges to using reading strategies reported by participants in Week 9</b>										
	Rachel	Chen	Mustafa	Abdul	Hamza	Ahmed	Khalid	Rashid	Saleh	Intern
Skimming		C								
Scanning		C								
Summarizing	B	B	B	B						
Rereading										
Discussing	B		B			B				
Guessing										
Dictionary/ Translating										
Underline/ Highlight										
Finding the Main idea	B	B		B						B
Asking others										
Writing new words										
Breaking down words	B			B						
Breaking down text (chunking)										
Other					NR		NR	NS	NR	
<b>B</b> = strategies reported as beneficial <b>C</b> = strategies reported as challenging <b>NS</b> = no specific strategy named <b>NR</b> =not reported										

**Journal 9.2 - Week 9, Day 2**

*“To know how to read is to light a lamp in the mind, to release the soul from prison, to open a gate to the universe.”*

*(Pearl S. Buck, Pavilion of Women, p. 292)*

**Two-part journal prompt:**

1. *How do you feel about reading? What do you think about the quote above?*
2. *Do you feel prepared for reading in English 101? What will you do to prepare?*

**Writers' responses:**

**Rachel:** I think that reading is very amazing, as you are an effective reader, you have a plus over those who don't read. Reading leads us to be more open-minded, we access more knowledges and we are more creative or imaginative which can help us in many situations. Pearl Buck's quote about reading is so true because reading is to be open to other views, to be lost in imaginary and or wonderful worlds and being more wise than those who don't read or don't know how to read.

For the reading in English 101, I can say that I am prepared. I'm feeling prepared through all the reading strategies we had learned in this English 112 class. I think I just have to follow all the instructions about reading we had accessed this quarter in order to be more ready for the English 101.

Word count: 143

**Comments:** In her response, Rachel wrote that reading was “amazing” and that reading led people to become more creative, imaginative, and open-minded. She wrote about the benefits and advantages of being an “effective” reader. She also stated that she felt prepared for the English 101 class because of all of the reading strategies she had learned in English 112. Further, she wrote that to prepare she felt that she should “follow all the instructions” for reading comprehension strategies that she had learned throughout the quarter in English 112. Based on her response to Journal prompts 9.1 and 9.2, it seemed that Rachel felt that she had benefited from learning reading strategies in many ways.

**Chen:** As for me, I always think reading can help people change their life, because you are able to know about other life you never experience, and you have a chance to enter another life. Then, you will have different ideas and perspectives. As



Pearl said, “reading is to light a lamp in the mind, to release the soul from prison, to open a gate to the universe”. Because of reading, we can see the truth and inside of us.

I notice that we have to read a lot in English 101, and it will be sort of difficult than English 112. I will spend much time reading for English 101, and improving my skills.

Word count: 113

*Comments:* Chen wrote that she agreed with the quote and that by reading people could find truth and understand many different perspectives. In her response, she did not address whether or not she felt prepared for English 101 but wrote that she perceived the reading to be more difficult in a higher-level class. She wrote that she would spend a lot of time reading for English 101. This statement echoed her earlier comments about the challenges she was facing in Journal 9.1. Although Chen found the reading strategies to be very helpful, she was concerned about the amount of time she had to spend reading. In her response to Journal 9.2, Chen’s concern about the amount of time spent reading was similar, however she wrote that she aimed to improve her skills during the following quarter.

**Mustafa:** Bersonality, I have intersiting about reading if the topic is intrsiting. Also, I like write any quote about “Don’t give up” or about future because that make me heartiness and optimism. I thing, I’m prepared for English 101 because when I was study at (X), my teacher recommended that I’m ready to get English 101. But in EWU I didn’t get placement test. So, I’m getting now 112 with my good teacher La Torre. Also, I will do more practice for reading and writing.

Word count: 84

*Comments:* In his response, Mustafa reiterated that reading could be interesting if the topic appealed to him. He also wrote that he enjoyed writing journal responses about overcoming challenges and the future, because he felt optimistic after writing them.

Mustafa also wrote that he felt prepared for English 101 due to his experience at a former

community college he attended (X) and the recommendation of his former professor.

However, because he did not pass the placement test he was enrolled in English 112. He planned to practice reading and writing before taking the English 101 course.

**Abdul:** I did not like reading, but unfortunately I have to. I'm agree with this quote because reading is important. Reading can open your mind an make you understand meny things around you. Also people how read a lot have good life. I will take English 101 nexst quarter, so I have to read to prepare for it. I had read a lot to prepared for it. I believe reading is my guide in this life. "book the best friend".

Word count: 79

*Comments:* Abdul also reiterated feelings he discussed in earlier prompts, specifically that he did not like reading but found it to be necessary. In his response, Abdul focused on the benefits of reading and stated that it was an important skill for understanding the world and having a "good life." Despite hating reading, Abdul also wrote that books were a guide for life. He wrote that he would also have to read a lot to prepare for English 101. This journal response is similar to earlier responses written by Abdul (Journals 3.3 and 6.3) and other students, because it demonstrates complex perceptions of reading among English language learners. Abdul does not say whether or not he feels prepared for English 101, but like Chen and Rachel he explained his plan to prepare.

**Hamza:** (1) I feel reading is that the soul, everyone in the plants needs to do it. I think the quote above is true. Human should keep reading everytime in order to see something might not see it in normal universe. (2) Not reall keep reading academic handbook or textbook.

Word count: 49

*Comments:* In his response, Hamza wrote that while he agreed with the quote, he did not really feel prepared for English 101. Hamza, like many others, felt that reading was important and that it was something everyone should do. Although he did not feel

prepared for English 101, he wrote that he would keep reading academic books and textbooks in order to improve. Despite his excellent attendance rate, Hamza reported that reading and writing were two areas where he often struggled but that speaking and listening were easier.

***Mohammad (intern):*** I agree with Pearl Buck that reading is a gate to the universe. We want to be educated to be human. By reading, we will do all what we want. The world is big and we can contact with all people ideas by reading. The reading is the food for brains, and we can nuturate our brains by reading as we nuturate our bodies by food.

Word count: 67

*Comments:* Mohammad focused his response on the benefits and importance of reading. As a graduate intern in the M.A. in English/TESL program, Mohammad would not be enrolling in the English 101 class the following quarter. He chose to base his response on the quote, and made interesting connections between nurturing brains with reading and nurturing bodies with food.

### ***Discussion***

Journal 9.2 was designed to gather further information about students' perceptions concerning the importance or usefulness of reading, and level of preparedness for English 101. Most of the students answered both parts of the two-part journal prompt, with the exception of the intern (Mohammad) who was not planning to enroll in English 101 in the following quarter. Out of the six students who were present when the journal was assigned and agreed to participate in the study, two reported feeling confident about reading in English 101 (Mustafa and Rachel), and two discussed their plans to prepare before enrolling in the class (Chen and Abdul). Only one student felt that they were not

prepared for readings assigned in English 101 (Hamza), but also mentioned his plan to prepare before taking the class.

Many students responded to the quote for Journal prompt 9.2, which was written by Pearl S. Buck, in her book, *Pavilion of Women*, “To know how to read is to light a lamp in the mind, to release the soul from prison, to open a gate to the universe” (p. 292). Of the six students who responded, five discussed their thoughts about the quote. Chen wrote: “Because of reading, we can see the truth and inside of us.” Hamza also connected the idea of reading to personal, by writing that reading is the soul and that it is something everyone needs to do. Both Chen and Rachel related reading to the idea of losing yourself in new worlds, creativity, imagination, and understanding others’ experiences. Similarly, Mohammad wrote that, “the world is big and we can contact with all people ideas by reading”. Abdul also stated that reading could, “open your mind and make you understand many things around you.” Each student demonstrated self-awareness and described their thoughts about the importance of reading. Although Mustafa did not respond directly to the quote, he wrote that he enjoyed reading and writing about quotes with positive themes about not giving up.

One interesting response to this journal prompt was written by Abdul. For the previous two journal data sets (Journal 3.3 and 6.3), Abdul wrote that he hated academic reading and preferred using Google to look up words. In this journal, he wrote that although he “did not like reading” he also believed that “reading is my guide in this life” and stated that, “book the best friend.” While he did not say whether or not he felt prepared for the English 101 class, he wrote that he “had read a lot to prepare for it.”

Five of the six participants responded to the second part of the journal prompt: “Do you feel prepared for reading in English 101? What will you do to prepare?” Out of the five students who responded, two reported feeling prepared to take the English 101 course, and three included plans for self-study and improvement. Only one student reported that he was “not really” ready for college-level reading in the English 101 class, but also mentioned a plan to improve his reading skills (Hamza). The two students who only included plans for improvement did not write that they were unprepared, only that they felt it might be difficult (Chen) or needed to prepare (Abdul). The two students who reported feeling prepared also wrote that the English 112 class had helped them to prepare for English 101.

Rachel was one of the students who responded that she felt prepared for the English 101 course. Rachel wrote: “For the reading in English 101, I can say that I am prepared. I’m feeling prepared through all the reading strategies we had learned in this English 112 class.” In her response, she also wrote that she planned to use the strategies and instructions to prepare more before taking English 101. Mustafa also felt prepared to take English 101, although his positivity may be related to the fact that a previous teacher at another college had recommended he take English 101. He wrote that he took English 112 because he did not pass the placement test for English 101. Both students stated that they would like more practice in reading and writing. Although the participants did not state when they aimed to prepare in their responses, the implication was that they were planning to study during the spring break immediately after winter quarter.

Most of the participants wrote plans for self-study, which included reading and writing practice. Even though Hamza reported that he did not really feel prepared for reading in

English 101, he also had a plan to “keep reading academic handbook or textbook” to prepare. Likewise, Chen and others wrote that they planned to prepare for the English 101 course by practicing reading and writing. In their responses, many students evaluated their skills and discussed what they planned to do in order to improve. Planning for future study and self-evaluation of reading comprehension skills demonstrates meta-cognitive awareness and self-monitoring. Students were not only aware of the reading strategies and how to use them, but also their individual abilities regarding comprehension and how to “repair” perceived weaknesses in comprehension (Philippot & Graves, 2009, p. 136). Students who responded to journals with a plan were practicing self-monitoring by assessing their skills and organizing procedures for improvement.

While analyzing these journals, it also became clear that the students had a complex relationship with reading. They felt that it could be difficult, frustrating, or boring, but they all agreed that it is an important skill that can help us to understand our world and others’ experiences. Many were concerned about their academic reading skills and readiness for college-level reading, but wrote that reading itself was essential to work and life.

***Journal 9.4 - Week 9, Day 4***

***Choose one prompt to respond to (or both if there is enough time):***

- a) What is your favorite genre/type of book you like to read?*
- b) What type/genre of reading or writing will you use in your future career?*

***Writers’ responses:***

***Rachel:*** I used to read a lot but now I don’t read too much like before. My favorite type of book is mystery, however I like reading every type of books except romance one’s; I don’t know why but I quickly get bored of them whenever I

tried to read one. Mystery books are my favorite because it involves the reader, as you have to guess what is coming next, who is the murderer or something like that; you have to be involved to see if you can resolve the mystery and that makes the reading very fun. Talking about my future career, I don't really know what type of reading and writing I'll be doing but considering my major I can guess that it will be legal documents.

Word count: 128

*Comments:* Rachel wrote that she did not have as much time to read for pleasure as she did before, but that she enjoyed reading a wide variety of genres. Her favorite genre was mystery, because she felt that it was more engaging than other genres. She reported that being “involved” in the story was fun and interesting. Rachel wrote that she would most likely read legal documents in her future career. She was planning to study international affairs and wrote that she guessed she would be reading legal documents in her future career.

**Chen:** There is a genre of book will help me in my future career, which is very professional book – accounting book. Because of my major, I have to read more books about my major to improve my knowledge. Actually, these books are always complex and boring. I would like to read non-fiction, fiction, novel, and a few short articles which are meaningful and interesting. Comparing to the different types of books, the first one that I have to read, another one is what I really like. For me, the professional book I always have to focus on my attention, but the novels I just relax myself and find the fun of books.

Word count: 111

*Comments:* Chen also wrote about reading texts related to her major, which was accounting. She stated that accounting books were always complex and boring, but that they were necessary for her future career. Chen wrote that she enjoyed reading many different genres in her free time, and that she often read in order to relax. Chen compared the types of reading she did, and what she looked for or hoped to acquire from each type.

**Mustafa:** The most interesting reading in my life is about a technology. Because we live in 21<sup>st</sup>, so we have many of technologies in our life. The clean energy the

most important part in my favorite topic technology. I like to research about it because I want to create something unique in future such as, energy by sands because my country Saudi Arabia has deserts more than any countries. I wish I have chance to make it in future. Also, I want make clean energy by humidity because my weather in my city is very humidity!

Word count: 96

*Comments:* Mustafa's response focused on reading about technology, and he wrote that he really enjoyed reading about clean energy specifically. He felt that clean energy and technology were important in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and explained a form of clean energy he would like to create in the future. Mustafa wrote that he would like to develop a form of clean energy that used sand, due to the fact that he lived in a country with many deserts. He also wrote that he hoped to use humidity to power a form of clean energy. Unlike Chen and Rachel, who read genres outside of their major for fun or relaxation, the type of reading Mustafa enjoyed most was related to his intended major in technology, engineering, and design.

**Abdul:** In my future career I want to be a manager so that request a lot of reading and writing. To be a manager of a big company, I have to read a lot of file and I have to understand them. Also I have to read the news every day and read my mail. In addition, my position request a lot of writing time. I have to write to the employees what they should do. Writing and reading will be one things in my job. I like to read books but not the speech. I like to read about sports and something interesting that I enjoy while I'm reading it.

Word count: 110

*Comments:* In his journal response, Abdul wrote about his future plans and how reading and writing were related. Although Abdul was planning to major in electrical engineering, he wrote that he wanted to be a manager of a big company someday. As a manager, Abdul felt that reading the news, mail, and other documents related to his business would be important. He also wrote that writing would be a necessary aspect of his future career. While Abdul had written in previous journals that he hated reading, he



also wrote that he knew reading was vital for a “good life” and career. Based on his response to Journal 9.4 it seems that Abdul continues reading academic texts, despite disliking them, due their importance to his future dreams and goals. However, Abdul wrote that he did enjoy reading books sometimes.

**Ahmed:** I learned a lots of types in my life. For the best type of writing that I am going to do in my futer career. I will do the organization for my writing career like the essay, introduction, bodies, and the conclusion at the end of my writing. Also, my favorite type of book is fiction. For example, I used to read book for tv show, after that I watched the tv show. The book is a Trukish language, but the writer translate the book and TV show to Arabic language.

Word count: 91

*Comments:* Ahmed chose to focus his response on writing rather than reading, and wrote about what he liked to read. Ahmed was planning to study technology, engineering, and design, and felt that organizing his writing would be essential for his future career. In the English 112 class, students wrote essays each Friday using an outline for each section, and learned about how to organize academic essays with and without guided prompts. Perhaps this is what Ahmed means when he writes “like the essay.” Ahmed also wrote about the type of reading that appealed to him, and like others who participated in this study he really enjoyed fiction. He also gave a brief overview of a book he had read recently about a Turkish TV show that he really liked.

**Rashid:** I will read a lot of scientific research, report, and number because of my carrer which is ME [mechanical engineering]. I like to read fiction books and self-development.

Word count: 29

*Comments:* Rashid, who was planning to major in mechanical engineering, wrote that he would most likely read scientific research and reports in the future. Like many others who participated in this study, Rashid wrote that he really enjoyed fiction. Chen, Rachel,

and Ahmed mentioned that they preferred reading fiction as well. What was interesting about this journal response was that Rashid also mentioned liking self-development books. He was the only student besides Saleh to mention self-help, self-improvement or education.

**Saleh:** Saleh was a male student from Saudi Arabia, who was motivated to learn English for business. Despite the fact that few of his journals appear in the data sets, Saleh's perspective as an English speaker who struggled with reading comprehension is valuable to this study. Saleh was determined to achieve fluency in English and worked hard to complete the reading and writing assignments for the English 112 course.

**Response:** The education very significant now. I know a lot of people did not complete the schooling because they have difficult life. I really like reading books about the education because there is very significant and amazing. I know we have a lot of people are not aware of the importance of the education about complete schooling.

Word count: 56

**Comments:** Saleh wrote that education was crucial for success in life, and that he thought that people who did not complete their education would have a difficult life. Therefore, he enjoyed reading books about education and felt that they could be "significant" and "amazing." He did not name a specific book, but wrote about the importance of education overall. Saleh wrote many journals and essays about the importance of education and was very motivated to complete his degree.

**Mohammad (intern):** I like to read to types of reading. First of all, I like to read newspaper and novels. I use some skills in reading newspaper such as skim and scan. I don't to like to read all newspaper, I like only to read some news which related to me, or news which are helpful. However, in reading novels, I'm reading in details. I reading between lines. During the novels reading, I ask myself 5 W's,

what, when, where, why and who to know what is the story. Some stories the writers answer, or they write clearly, but some writers, I need to figure out. In my academic life, I'm using what I learned about reading skills to doing my homework when I read textbook.

Word count: 124

*Comments:* Mohammed wrote that he enjoyed reading the newspaper, especially stories that were important to his life or that interested him. He also wrote about using reading strategies when reading novels for fun. He discussed some challenges he faced when reading complex or wordy texts, but also reported that the reading strategies he used helped him to understand these texts. Mohammad also mentioned reading “between the lines” and reading in detail. In his response, he wrote about how he used the reading strategies he had learned in English 112 when reading for school or for pleasure.

### ***Discussion***

Journal 9.4 was assigned to determine the topics that students enjoyed reading about, and the types of texts they thought they would need to read in the future. Because so many participants wrote about feeling excited when they read texts that appealed to their interests, it was determined that this information may be helpful to educators and future teachers. Eight of the students participating in this study responded to this journal prompt, and included answers to both questions. Out of the eight participants, four reported that they liked to read fiction, and two responded that they often read the news.

Most of the topics students reported interest in were related to their majors. Many of the participants responded that texts about technology, science, or education and self-help were interesting. Several were interested in reading novels, mystery, science fiction, or texts about sports and TV shows in their free time. Participants also responded that for their careers, they would most likely be reading texts related to technology (Mustafa),

accounting (Chen), textbooks (Mohammad), legal documents (Rachel), or scientific journals and reports (Rashid). In the English 112 class few of these texts were read as part of the course materials, however discussions and videos did relate to some of these topics. In future reading classes, it may be helpful to survey students earlier in the quarter or semester to determine interests and tailor materials to student needs. Interest in a text can provide motivation and willingness to read and participate in discussions.

Despite the fact that the journal responses for Journal 9.4 do not discuss reading strategies used, knowledge of the topics students like to read about and the types of texts students feel they need to know how to read can be beneficial to educators. This journal was included in the data sets for the present study for three reasons: to determine students' level of interest in reading for fun, the types of texts students feel they will need to read for a specific purpose, and predicting which types/genres of texts they will need to know how to read for their future career. This information may be valuable to educators who are planning or researching reading activities for their own classes. While different groups of students will have divergent needs and interests, these responses may provide a starting point for educators or future researchers.

### ***Reflection***

Writing daily journals in the English 112 class offered students the opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences with peers, and also provided valuable input for the instructor. Reading students' journal responses gave me a chance to check their comprehension, determine areas for review, and monitor students' progress. Moreover, assigning journals also offered students a chance to explore their thoughts and feelings about issues raised in the English 112 course, and reflect on their experiences. Although I

rarely assigned journals in previous courses, this experience demonstrated the necessity of timed reading and writing practice on a daily basis. Reviewing students' responses allowed me to reflect on the curriculum and learning materials as they were introduced. Based on the journals included in the data sets, it is clear that direct instruction of reading strategies and group discussions were viewed as beneficial to students' overall comprehension. Although many students reported that some improvement was necessary or that certain strategies were more challenging than others, the journal responses demonstrate an increased self-awareness and monitoring of reading comprehension skills.

## Chapter 5

### Analysis of Reflection Essays

In Chapter 4, students' responses to six journal prompts written by participants in the English 112 class between Weeks 2 and 9 were analyzed. In this chapter, the reflection essays written by each student participant in the English 112 class are analyzed and discussed. Chapter 6 includes further discussion of the data collected for the entire study as well as my retrospective observations as the curriculum designer and instructor.

On Monday of Week 11, students began writing a reflection essay for the final exam in the English 112 class. As requested the week before, when they were informed that they would be writing this essay, each student brought a laptop or was given lined paper to write on. After I gave directions read the prompt aloud, and answered questions, the students had 90 minutes to write the reflection essay. Like some other Friday essays assigned in English 112, this was a guided composition which meant that I provided the structure, the thesis statement, and topic sentences for each paragraph, though I told them that as long as they covered all of the points they could deviate from this structure. Once students began writing the essay, they could ask me for help or for more information about any of the required components.

Completed reflection essays and final portfolios were due online on Canvas or via email by Friday of finals week, giving students about five days to complete the reflection essay and assemble a final portfolio of their work in the English 112 class. Due to the fact that the reflection essay was required as part of the final portfolio, along with typed final drafts of all Friday essays written between Weeks 1-10, additional time was given to complete the essay. This was the only weekly essay that was completed outside of class,

so I could not control for the possibility of input from friends or peers. For the most part however, the quality of their writing matched the Week 10 Friday essay, which was written in class.

Over the 11-week period, students in the English 112 course were introduced to many methods for breaking down complex texts in peer groups and individually. For the reflection essay, students were asked to write about the reading, writing, listening, speaking and viewing activities assigned throughout the quarter, and assess their language learning. Students were asked to give examples and explain how their English improved, as well as what they planned to improve in the future. The Reflection Essay Prompt includes the essay outline distributed to students and the guidelines for writing the essay. A discussion and analysis of the reflection essays follows.

### ***Reflection Essay Prompt***

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Audience: New students who will be taking English 112 next quarter. They know nothing about the course or the book.

Prompt: Write an essay of at least 500 words and include the following—six paragraphs or more:

1. Introduction
  - a. Describe English 112.
  - b. Explain why multilingual writers must take this course and pass it with 2.0 or better in order to enroll in English 101. Give the future students at least one piece of advice about how to succeed in this class.
  - c. Explain the course goals—the main goals
    - i. Speaking—explain what kinds of speaking we do and why.
    - ii. Reading—write the name of the book we read and why we read it.
    - iii. Writing—explain why we write daily journals and Friday essays
    - iv. Listening—discuss the kinds of listening we do in class.
    - v. Viewing—discuss the kinds of videos we watch
  - d. Thesis statement
    - i. The purpose of this reflection essay is to look back on the course so far and analyze what I have learned, how I learned it, what materials and activities helped me to improve my English, and what I still need to work on in English 101.
2. First, I will describe and analyze the viewing and listening activities.
  - a. List at least **three** videos that we watched. Summarize and describe each video.

- b. Give at least one important lesson for each video, and focus on what you learned from each one.
  - c. Why do you think we watched these videos?
3. Next, I will explain what kinds of reading we do and what I learned from reading the biography of Pearl S. Buck. I will discuss how my reading has changed this quarter.
  - a. Give a short summary of the book and what you learned.
  - b. How has your reading changed over the quarter? What are your strengths?
  - c. What do you still need to work on? I still need to work on these parts of my reading in my next English class, because \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Next, I will discuss the speaking we do in this class. I will explain the value of these activities and what I learned from them.
  - a. Explain pair work and group work, and what you did during these activities.
  - b. What did you learn? What can others learn from these activities?
5. Next, I will explain the kinds of writing we do in class and what I learned from each kind:
  - a. Explain how we write journals, responses to peers' journals, and Friday essays.
  - b. What did you learn from each kind?
6. Finally, I will discuss two areas I still need to work on as I complete English 112 and go to English 101.
  - a. Discuss two areas you need to work on. How do you plan to work on them?
  - b. Give one final suggestion, one big lesson you learned, or one last piece of advice for new students in English 112.

### ***Reflection Essay Rubric***

10 points each:

1. Directions—followed directions & included the thesis & topic sentences.
2. Organization—you have organized this essay and each paragraph.
3. Length—500+ words minimum
4. Development—minimum of 6 paragraphs
  - a. Each paragraph has details
  - b. Each paragraph has examples from the course
5. Analysis
  - a. You analyzed the course in detail
  - b. You show that you were in class and understood the activities.
  - c. You describe in detail the value of the activities.
6. Reflection
  - a. You reflect on your own learning.
  - b. You show deep understanding of your own experience.
7. Clarity
  - a. You explain clearly what we did.
  - b. You use words correctly and accurately.
8. Depth
  - a. You show a deep understanding of the materials we studied.
  - b. You look deeply into the purpose of the work we did together.
9. Vocabulary
  - a. You use appropriate vocabulary to describe the course.
  - b. You avoid slang or conversational English.
10. Sentence structure & grammar.
  - a. You have correct sentence punctuation.
  - b. No run-ons. No comma splices. No fragments.



## *Writers' Reflection Essays*

**Rachel**

Final Exam: Reflection essay prompt

English 112 is a class for multilingual students that attend Eastern Washington University, most of which are international students. It is a class in which we improve or acquire new skills mostly for reading and writing. It can be hard for English non-native students to break down all the academic packages they will be facing in U.S. universities and the English 112 goal is to help those students to be more at ease in the future when facing those kinds of problems in their other classes. Students in English 112 need to show at the end of the quarter that they have learned something new and that they master some basic keys of reading and writing; I think it is why multilingual writers must take this course and pass it with 2.0 or better to enroll in English 101. As in every class, you need to learn and get involved in the course to be successful in English 112. In English 112, we talk about the readings packages we had assigned, we talk about the difficulties we are facing in the class so the professor can help us with them; we read about "A Story about Pearl Buck" of the author Mitchell. We write daily journals to more clearly notice our improvements and what we need to change about our way of writings and we write Friday essays to summarize what we have learned through the week and to link with a story in our life. We watch videos about topics related to the readings packages and we listen to some staffs for a better understanding. The purpose of this reflection essay is to look back on the course so far and analyze what I have learned, how I learned it, what materials and activities helped me to improve my English, and what I still need to work on in English 101.

First, I will describe and analyze the viewing and listening activities. Through the quarter, we watched a lot of videos that were related to the reading we did in the class, three of them are: The Fugees which is a story about refugees; "I have a dream" of Martin Luther King and "Overview of The Great Depression." In the Fugees, we saw how a woman with no resources began a humanitarian action by helping refugees children; in the "I have a dream", we watched the speech of Martin Luther King about his dream for America; and in the Overview of The Great Depression, we saw how things were in the U.S during the Great Depression and how people were suffering. Respectively from those three videos, we had learned that helping people is very important and we do not have to be Bill Gates to help person in needs; we also have to not given up on our dreams instead we must take steps towards their accomplishments and we learned what people passed through during the Great Depression.

Next, I will explain what kinds of reading we do and what I learned from reading the biography of Pearl S. Buck. I will discuss how my reading has changed this quarter. The book we used this quarter is a biography of Pearl Buck, a well-known author of the U.S at her time, she came across many difficulties on her way becoming an author, she faced many problems such as her daughter disease, the war in China and some couple's problems but she overcame all those to achieve her dream of being a novelist; Pearl spent her childhood and most of her time once adult in China what inspired her to write a lot about China so Americans and people as me could know a bite about the Chinese at that time. Over the quarter, I learned many new words and it is easier for me now to break down a reading text, I am more confident when reading; however, I still need to work on the main idea's identification because sometimes even with the breaking down it's difficult for me to locate it.

Next, I will discuss the speaking we do in this class; I will explain the value of these activities and what I learned from them. In this class, we mostly worked in pair, two students working

together and sometimes in group which involved more than two students. During those activities we worked on the videos, the listening and some readings for better comprehension and we did a presentation in group. I learned that working on group or on pair is very helpful as you have to put your ideas together and then the others can correct you whenever you are wrong on some points.

Next, I will explain the kinds of writing we do in class and what I learned from each kind. From Monday to Tuesday, we wrote journals about topics related to the readings packets we had for the week in which we were, we also responded to some quotes or gave our opinions about them; and sometimes we had to talk about our native countries or ourselves compared to what we had read or had learned in the class. Friday essays are always longer than the daily journals and we mostly had to follow some instructions for them; we first talk about Pearl Buck on a given topic and then talked about ourselves or our opinions on the same topic. I learned a lot from each kind because there were some topics I never thought about and those journals and essays helped me discover new things about my country and about myself; I learned how to think critically when responding to quotes and reinforced my writing skills.

Finally, I will discuss two areas I still need to work on as I complete English 112 and go to English 101. Despite the fact that we had watched a lot of videos that involved our listening skills, I still have to improve that skill and also improve my vocabulary. I hope I will really improve my listening skills by keeping watching videos in English and listening to English song instead of French's ones; I will read a lot of books in English and do some vocabulary games on my phone to know enough new words for my vocabulary. I learned that the English language is not as difficult as I used to think, we just have to know the real tips to master it and English 112 was full of tips, it was very helpful for me as a multilingual student.

Word Count: 1086

*Comments:* Rachel's reflection essay provided an excellent overview of the lessons and activities assigned in the English 112 class. In the first section, she wrote that there are many reading "packages" students will need to complete in college-level classes. I believe that she might have been referring to the reading packets, which were assigned in the English 112 class each week and included advanced-level supplementary readings. She wrote that the goal of English 112 was to help students learn how to "master basic keys of reading" and break down complex texts. In her reflection, Rachel included detail about the activities she felt were most beneficial to her language learning, and reported feeling more confident in her reading skills. She also wrote about the benefits of learning reading comprehension strategies and writing journals. Rachel wrote that by writing daily journals she learned about herself, her country, and ideas that she had never considered,

while developing her critical thinking skills. Her essay was beautifully written and very helpful for determining the benefits and challenges students encountered in the English 112 course.

## **Chen**

### Reflection Essay

This quarter, I take the English 112 which aims to improve the speaking, reading and writing skills for multilingual students and I learn from the class a lot. In this class, every multilingual student has to take it and pass it with 2.0 or better in order to enroll in English 110. As a second language student, I need to make a great effort to learn English and get a good grade to get further. This class helps us to practice English more and sets up a fundamental basis to learn English 101 and 201 which are much harder than 112. If you are going to take English 112, I will suggest go to class every day and finish your assignments on time. I believe you will get wonderful grade in this class. The purpose of this reflection essay is to look back on the course so far and analyze what I have learned, how I learned it, what materials and activities helped me to improve my English, and what I still need to work on in English 101.

First, I will describe and analyze the viewing and listening activities. We have watched many videos that covered music, history, biography technology and so on during class. There are three videos that makes me impression. For example, one is an American teacher who was from Sudan to help many refugee children who weren't able to get education and get involved in American life. Another video is talking about Pearl S. Buck's foundation. Because of Pearl's daughter, she wanted to help more children to change their life. Pearl set up a foundation in 1960's to provide house, education and hope for children who were homeless and ill. The last one video which was related to American history---the Great Depression. That video showed us how terrible and serious the Great Depression was, and many people lost their jobs, houses and money; Also, many companies went bankrupt. The economics was going down and people were fearful. From this video, we could look at the whole picture at that time and know about the history at that period. Someone says that our eyes are easier to help us to memorize something important rather than words, because they have more powerful. In my opinion, we watched these videos, which made us understand our topics clearly and improve our listening skills as well.

Next, I will explain what kinds of reading we do and what I learned from reading the biography of Pearl S. Buck. I will discuss how my reading has changed this quarter. I just had a little bit knowledge about Pearl Buck before I read the book; however, I'm familiar with her much more than before. Pearl Buck was an American author, but she had been living in China for a long time and she loved China and people who were living there. I'm so glad to read what she had written for China and I'm so glad to read her books. Because of this class, I meet with Pearl and many people I never heard about. With gradually reading, I notice that I am acquaint myself with academic reading, and I am able to reading some essays which are very long and complex. Well, even if I know I am getting better, I still need to work on these parts of my reading in next English class, because it will be more difficult and challenging for me. At present, I am supposed to keeping reading and expand my words; then, I could read more complicated essays and textbooks.

Next, I will discuss the speaking we do in this class. I will explain the value of these activities and what I learned from them. We all have a group to present in this class and it's a good opportunity to express my ideas and practice our speaking. Each of us needs to do a lot research and present around 10 minutes. For me, it is very challenging; luckily, our group did wonderful job and I made it. I think everyone had a lesson from these presentations, such as the reflection of war, the development of technology and the history from 1940 to 1975.

Next, I will explain the kinds of writing we do in class and what I learned from what I wrote. We write a journal every day and write an essay every Friday that are including every aspect of our life. Actually, I always record my ideas into my journals, and recall something special and meaningful, I will put them into my essays. That is a good opportunity to look back upon these days that in my deep mind. Once I recall it, I feel I gain different things again.

Finally, I will discuss two areas I still need to work on as I complete English 112 and go to English 101. One thing is I will keep studying English hard. Another thing is I will read more to know about more grammar and words. For instance, I will go to class every day on time and try my best to finish assignments. Also, I would like to read more English books and poems to experience the beauty of English and get involved in the American life. Well, I'm glad to take this class which is so awesome and the teacher is so nice and friendly. In this class, I met some friends and see the different people and cultures that gave me various of perspectives to see the world and life. That really means a lot. I hope I could have more experiences like that.

Word count: 935

*Comments:* In her reflection essay, Chen also included a lot of detail about the benefits of learning reading comprehension strategies and discussing in groups, as well as the challenges she experienced throughout the quarter. Chen wrote that she felt like her reading was “getting better” but that she wanted to continue improving her reading skills in future classes. Her reflection on the final presentations and group work was positive overall, as were her comments on journal writing. Chen wrote that she had learned about various perspectives through discussion with classmates, and that this experience meant a lot to her. Although she did not directly state that she felt confident about college-level reading, Chen outlined a plan for future study and wrote that her reading skills had improved. Chen’s reflection essay shows that despite some trepidation about the English 101 course, the reading strategies and collaborative activities were beneficial not only for building comprehension but also lowering the “affective filter” through friendship.

## Mustafa

### La Torre's Ways to Teach English

English 112 at EWU with La Torre Teacher has many benefits to improve our skills such as writing, reading, speaking and listening because my teacher La Torre has different or unique ways to teach us how we improve our skills. The purpose of this reflection essay is to look back on the course so far and analyze what I have learned, how I learned it, what materials and activities helped me to improve my English, and what I still need to work on in English 101.

First, I will describe and analyze the viewing and listening activities. My teacher La Torre showed us many videos during this quarter such as Martin Luther \*(King), Pearl Buck, and great depression for the U.S.A. La Torre is really smart because she wanted us to connect between reading, writing, and speaking. So, when we watched any videos, she let us to write or discuss about it. Because of that, our skills of writing or speaking improved. For example, she showed us about Pearl Buck and how she had hard time to become a writer in 1928 to 1975. My teacher La Torre let us wrote about how women in our countries doing and what the different between best \*(past) and now for the women.

Next, I will explain what kinds of reading we do and what I learned from reading the biography of Pearl S. Buck. I will discuss how my reading has changed this quarter. My teacher La Torre gave us Pearl Buck's book "Between Two Worlds" and she gave us many of questions to let us improve our reading, and how we use skim and scan to answer the questions. However, I still need to work on these parts of my reading in my next English class, because I read very slowly. In our class 112, my teacher La Torre let us working groups. For example, we did presentations last week, and we did that with group. I learned how I work with group and how I organize what I want to tell the students to present the group presentation.

Next, I will discuss the speaking we do in this class. I will explain the value of these activities and what I learned from them. La Torre use different ways to improve our writing such as, write essay evry Fridays and write journals evrydays. So, I improve my skill of writing more than before.

Next, I will explain the kinds of writing we do in class and what I learned from each kind: Finally, I will discuss two areas I still need to work on as I complete English 112 and go to English 101. For me, I need more practice to improve my speaking skill because I still need to do that. I will do what my teacher suggestion for me to go everyday 5 minutes international clup \*(club) to improve my speaking.

Word Count: 482

\*transcribed from written submission and changes made for clarity

*Comments:* Mustafa chose to deviate a little from the outline, which was encouraged in the English 112 class in later weeks as long as the required content was addressed; however, I was surprised that he chose to focus on how my teaching methods helped him to improve. Mustafa used several activities and lessons as examples of assignments that

were beneficial. He wrote that he learned a lot by working with his peers, especially when creating and presenting the final PowerPoint presentation which was required for all students in the English 112 class. Like Chen and Rachel, Mustafa also explained what he aimed to work on in the future and outlined a plan for self-study. He felt that his speaking skills could use improvement, and planned to join an English club on campus. He also wrote that he hoped to improve his reading. These plans and assessments reflect self-monitoring of comprehension and willingness to improve.

## **Abdul**

### Reflection essay

English 112 is one of the classes that multilingual should take and pass it with 2.0 or better to enroll in English 101. In this class, students take four different subjects which are reading, writing, speaking and listening. In these subjects, students learn new strategies to improve their skills in reading and writing. They have to read a book and write journals every day. Also, students learn how to improve their listening and speaking by watching videos and have discussions. The purpose of this reflection essay is to look back to the course so far and analyze what I have learned, how I learned it, what materials and activities helped me to improve my English, and what I still need to work on in English 101.

First, I will describe and analyze the viewing and listening activities. To improve my skills in listening, I have to listen to American people as they are talking. In this class, my teacher showed us some interesting videos that we can learn from. The first video was about some refugees who came to U.S. These refugees came to United States because of the war in Sudan. When they came to the United States, they saw everything different than they used to live and this video showed us their story. Another video also was about some refugees who had a hard life in U.S. and, a woman helped them to improve their life. She gave all her time to help the refugees, and she opened a school to educate them. The third video was about life in America in the Great Depression and what happened after that. All these videos were interesting and they helped me to improve my listening skills as well.

Second, I will explain what kind of reading we did and what I learned from reading the biography of Pearl S. Buck. I will discuss how my reading has changed this quarter. In this class, I did a lot of reading to improve my skills in reading. I had to read a book that talked about Pearl Buck's life. Pearl Buck is from China and America, and she had a hard time when she was young. She was born in China, but she had to leave China and go to America. She had a hard time to understand American people. When she got older she started to write novels. People like her novels. So she became a women writer. She wrote a book that talked about freedom, and she got the Nobel Prize. I read a book about her life, and I enjoyed that. Also in this class I learned some strategies that can make the reading easier. My reading has improved and right now I can read faster than before.

Third, I will discuss the speaking we did in this class. I will explain the value of these activities and what I learned from them. In this class, we did discussions as a group. In these discussions, students can talk about what they like in the videos we watched and what they did not like. Every week we discussed what Pearl did in her life, and if students had hard understanding we explained to them. Also, we shared our ideas about what we will do in the future and what we learn from this class. In addition, we did a personation that talked about Pear and United State. This part helped me to improve my skills in speaking and speak fast.

Next, I will explain the kind of writing we did in this class and what I learned from each kind. In this class, we have two kind of writing. The first one is to write a journal every day. Every day we have a different topic that we should write about and we should write at least a hundred words in every journal. Our teacher tried to give us interesting topics. Another kind is to write essay every Friday, and it must have at least five hundred words. I learned from the first one how to write fast and the second one is how to write with good grammar and good spelling.

Finally, I will discuss to areas I still need to work on as I complete English 112 and go to English 101. I need to work on my spelling and reading. I will work to improve my spelling by write a lot and fast and if I spell a word wrong, I will repeat that as much as I can. When I write fast, I made many mistakes, so I will try to improve my spelling mistakes. Also, I read very slowly, so I should improve that by reading a lot. In this class I learned many things, but the important thing that I learned was writing. My advice to the student who will take this class is to work hard and know new words as many as they can.

Word Count: 817

*Comments:* Abdul's essay was very well-organized, and he included several examples and details about his experience in the reflection. Abdul wrote that he enjoyed the activities and assignments in the English 112 class, and that he felt his reading and writing skills had improved. He also wrote that the group discussions and final PowerPoint presentation were beneficial to his speaking skills. He explained that if students did not understand a concept or word they could ask each other and share information, and that discussion in groups was a regular feature of the course. Although Abdul wrote that he was improving and able to read, write, and speak quickly, he still wanted to continue building skills in these areas. He wrote that despite an increased reading speed, he still felt that he read "very slowly" and mentioned this feeling twice in his essay. He also acknowledged that while writing quickly was a great improvement, he sometimes misspelled words. Abdul wrote that although the class as a whole was beneficial, writing was the most important aspect of the course in his view.

**Hamza**

## Reflection Essay

The purpose of this replication essay is to look back on the course so far and analyze what I have learned, how, and by what? Also, what should I focus on in English 101 to improve my skills?

First, I will describe and analyze the viewing and listening activities. Learning from videos which talked about facts or reality is very helpful especially for me as English learner because it is easy to understand and memories even if I did not catch the details, it is still I can get the main idea. Pictures and people reactions are understandable for any not negative speaker. I think we had watched these videos because in some way it is easy and much beneficial like what I already mentioned above. Also, sometimes people or things can convince me or explain to me with a clear way not because what they said or had are objective, but because there is body language or pictures which they usually gave me clear understanding, make me sympathy, or agree with them.

Next, I will explain what kind of reading we do and what I learned from reading the biography of pearls Back. I will discuss how reading has changed this quarter. Honestly, my reading has not changed a lot for many reasons such as other class and so on, but here is the thing, I could do better if I organized my time and I made the right priorities. However, I promise that I will study hard for all classes in Spring quarter and I will get things done more successfully. Nevertheless, I still need to improve my academic reading in order to dominate it notably.

Next, I will discuss the speaking we do in this class. I will explain the value of these activities and what I learned from them. I learned how stand up and gave a speech in front of people not briefly, but with much confidence and clear message.

Next, I will explain the kind of writing we do in classes and what learned from each kind. I had a problem with my slow writing, but my English instructor asked us to write in within 5 or 6 minutes and this helped me to improve my quick writing and I just get a start. I learned from each them how to write with diversity because each one of them needs different skills.

Finally, I will discuss two areas I still need to work on as complete English 112 and go to English 101. I suggest that focusing on important methods like what my instructor taught me already such as how can I scan [sic], summarize, write with my own prompt and these are important tools and I will use them more in English 101.

Word Count: 459

*Comments:* Hamza's reflection essay was brief but honest. He wrote that he enjoyed the viewing activities and that his writing and speaking improved, but that he did not see an improvement in his reading comprehension skills. Hamza wrote "Honestly, my reading has not changed a lot for many reasons such as other class and so on, but here is the thing, I could do better if I organized my time and I made the right priorities." He went



on to say that he promised to manage his time and study hard in English 101. Although he didn't feel as though his reading had improved over the quarter, Hamza did mention several strategies in his reflection essay that he would like to continue working on in future classes. He wrote that while he did not spend enough time studying for the English 112 class, he believed that the methods he learned were "important tools" which could aid in comprehending complex texts in English 101. This demonstrates a willingness to continue learning and building comprehension skills, and perhaps reflecting on self-perceptions of successes and failures enabled Hamza to organize or manage his time better.

## **Ahmed**

### Reflection Essay

English 112 is a vary basic class, that let you understand more in both reading, and writing. English classes are required for all of student in any university in the world. Because my language is a second language, I must take English 112. I have to get 2.0 at least in English 112, so I can take English 101 next quarter. We had a group presentation at the end of this class, we did a lot of speaking activities in the group presentation. Our article was taking about the time and how Pearl did between 1950 to 1960. For the reading part in English 112, we had a lot work in the reading packets. All of the Reading packets were talking about Pearl Buck's book Between Two Worlds. Of course in this class we had lots of writing activities. We have to write journal everyday because the main point in this class, students must write faster because this way will help us in future. Also, every Friday we have to write an essay in class, after we finished writing essay in class, we must type it in submit it on the canvas. In English 112 we watched videos, these videos were talking about history, music, and technology. For the listening part, the presentations were a big part of listening. The purpose of this reflection essay is to look back on the course so far and analyze what I have learned, how I learned it, what materials and activities helped me to improve my English, and what I still need to work on in English 101.

First, I will describe and analyze the viewing and listening activities. 4 weeks ago we watched video, the video was talking about Sudanese Refugees come to America. The second video is the best video I have ever watched, the video was talking about how the racism in U.S. and how African American have a dream in those days. The last video I want to mention. We watched video was talking about how the U.S. in 1940. I think we watched those videos because we have to learn and collect the Ideas to help our writing in every week.

Next, I will explain what kinds of reading we do and what I learned from reading the biography of Pearl S. Buck. I will discuss how my reading has changed this quarter. I learned that Pearl Buck is a mental bifocal because she used to live by two clutters \*(cultures). She described her childhood in China as daughter of American. At the begging of this quarter, I started got interested into this book. There are a lot of things that I learned in reading. For example, I learned

how to summarize the articles. I still need to work on these parts of my reading in my next English class, I must understand the main idea because sometime when I tried to read a difficult article, I did not understand the main idea by first time, so I will try to improve myself in this part.

Next, I will discuss the speaking we do in this class. I will explain the value of these activities and what I learned from them. Me, Rashid, (X), and (X) had a group presentation, and our article was about Pearl's life in 1900, and how was the world between 1950 to 1960. Its good thing that we are group because everyone in this group have a point, so it was very helpful that we were have a lot of ideas. It's a great thing that we did Speaking part because we learned how to summarize, organize, and to improve the speaking skills.

Next, I will explain the kinds of writing we do in class and what I learned from each kind. Everyday in English 112 we have to write journals because the point of the journal how to write fast and smart. Every Friday we must write essay in class. The journals that we wrote everyday, they were helping us before every Friday essay. I learned how to write fast, and how to write with good grammar. Also, its visible how much my spelling and punctuation have improved.

Finally, I will discuss two areas I still need to work on as I complete English 112 and go to English 101. Reading is the most part for myself, I should improve my reading skills by reading more articles. Also, I think sometimes I have issues with grammar, and I plan to fix this issue by reading novels. My advice to on coming students would be to read all of the reading packets.

Word Count: 771

(X) declined to participate in this study

\*transcribed from written submission and changes made for clarity

*Comments:* In his reflection essay, Ahmed wrote about his progress over the quarter and aspects of the course that he enjoyed. Like Abdul, Mustafa, and others, Ahmed wrote that group discussion and learning how to summarize, organize, and present information for the final PowerPoint presentation were "very helpful". He gave examples and detail about the benefits of the reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing activities assigned in the English 112 course. Ahmed wrote that summarizing, finding the main idea, and discussing with peers aided him in developing reading and writing skills, especially his punctuation and grammar. However, he also stated that these were areas he planned to continue improving over time. Like Rachel and Chen, Ahmed wrote about the benefits and challenges of using each strategy, while outlining his plans for self-study.

**Khalid**

## Reflection Essay

The helpful way to prepare for English 101 is to practice English 112. English 112 is a writing course help to reinforce basic principles of composition learned in English 101. It also helps to get to know a lot of information and strategies. There are four main goals for this class which is speaking, reading, listening, and writing. Each section has its own method in learning. In this class, I have learned many things in each section. The purpose of this reflection essay is to look back on the course so far and analyze what I have learned, how I learned it, what materials and activates helped me to improve my English, and what I still need to work on in English 101.

First, I will describe and analyze the viewing and listening activates. During the quarter, we have watched more than on videos. I will mention three of them. The first one was Luma mufleh, the girl who helped refuges and offered them a good life. The second one was the best defining moments in the USA in 1970. When the technology had improved. The third one was about Martin Luther King, who tried to make people treat African American people equal. These videos have expanded my knowledge and I have earned many information and words.

Next, I will explain what kinds of reading we do and what I learned from reading the biography of Pearl S. Buck. I will discuss how my reading has changed this quarter. This book helped me to improve my reading skills. There is wisdom says “reading helps the reader become more mature and aware of everything surrounded him/her”. The book was amazing not bored at all. I enjoyed while I was reading it. It was talking about how the person believe in dreams and as much as you struggle in your life it will pay off. Pearl’s life was interested because she struggled in her life until she became the first American women who won the Nobel prize. As much as I read I still need to improve more and more.

Next, I will discuss the speaking we do in this class. I will explain the value of these activates and what I learned from them. I have done a presentation with my group. It was helpful activate because I had more than five minutes’ present in front of students. In addition, I was preparing myself to discuss with the students about the presentation. I learned what happened in the USA in the years 1970-1975. Many things had changed in the technology or politicalizes. At the same time, we provided the students for the important things changed in the USA life.

Next, I will explain the kinds of writing we do in class and what I learned from each kind. Eleven essays during the quarter were enough to get to know the strategies of writing. I can see the difference in my writing skills. It has improved and I feel ready to take English 101. Journals were helpful too, because it helps how to summarize the ideas and arrange them in one paragraph. I learned a lot of vocabulary and grammar. I still need to dedicate my time to develop more and more.

Finally, I will discuss two areas I still need to work on as I complete English 112 and go to English 101. Reading and writing are the most important sections that I need to work on them. I plan to read two pages in different subjects every single day. Then, I will try to write and summarize them in one paragraph. I believe that since I practice a lot I will learn more.

Word Count: 613

*Comments:* In his reflection essay, Khalid described many of the activities which he found to be helpful and discussed his progress over the quarter. He stated that he felt “ready” to take English 101 and explained which strategies would be beneficial for reading in future classes. Khalid, like Rachel, Chen, Abdul, and Ahmed, also wrote that he really enjoyed reading about Pearl Buck’s life and was interested in the course readings. He commented that, “The book was amazing not bored [sic] at all.” Like Ahmed, Hamza, and other students, Khalid wrote that summarizing and discussion were two strategies that helped him to improve his comprehension skills. In the final paragraph, he outlined his plan for self-study and wrote that he planned to practice reading and summarizing a wide variety of texts every day.

## **Rashid**

### English 112

English 112 is the class before English 101 and it makes you ready for English 101 and the intensive work in it. Also, you need at least 2.0 of 4.0 to pass the class which is 70 percent. I really recommend that future student study at least one hour each day to make this class easy and read the book. In addition, this class focus in five skill that you need in your college which is speaking, writing, reading, listening, and viewing. The purpose of this reflection essay is to look back on the course so far and analyze what I have learned, how I learned it, what materials and activities helped me to improve my English, and what I still need to work on in English 101.

First, I will describe and analyze the viewing and listening. I remember we watch a video about Sudanese who are refugees came to the U.S. they did not like the life here because it is different than Sudan for culture and life. Other video is, about Luma Mufleh which she helped refugees people from different countries. She took the wrong exit to see young refugees who played soccer, and she remember her country. From this she started help all those young people and their family as well. Also, we watched Martin Luther King Jr. speech. It is one of the best speech I have seen in my life. It will teach you how to fight and do not give up easier. I think we watch those videos to learn English and life lessons.

Next, I will explain what kinds of reading we do and what I learned from reading the biography of Pearl S. Buck I will discuss how my reading has changed this quarter. I read the book about Pearl Buck’s story. I learned to much about her. I learned how much she fought for her dream and future. Her life was not easy at all. People tried to hurt her while she was in China, because she is white. All this happened because of the war. Also, people did not like that she was a writer and wanted to publish her book, so too many people made her life hard. After a while she won two

Prizes. I still need to work on these parts of my reading in my next English class, because my major needs a lot of reading

Next, I will discuss the speaking we do in this class. I will explain the value these activities and what I learned from. My group talked about the 1950's period. We included Pearl's life in the presentation. Also, we were talking about what was happening at period of time in the world. I learned to find information in the internet and how to use the source. Also, it gave daring to give speech front of people.

Next, I will explain the kinds of writing we do in class and what I learned from each kind. First writing journals was really helpful for us, and make us prepare from Friday essay. Each week we had different essay that last week. I remember we had argument essay which was really helpful for me, and of course I will not forget that Nichole helps us with step to write a perfect essay. She guided us from the beginning to the end. (thank you so much Nichole you been a great teacher and great friend as well).

Finally, I will discuss two areas I still need to work on as I complete English 112 and go to English 101. I need to work in my Writing and Reading. My writing still not good I am still repeating the same mistake in most of the essays. Also, I need to read a lot because my reading is really slow. I will take me a while to finish 20 pages, so need to read a lot. My advice for new student that they should meet with instructor once a week or more to find out how they are doing in the class and what they are missing, and what their weakness in the class.

Word Count: 689

*Comments:* Rashid described what he learned from the activities assigned in English 112 and assessed his reading, writing, and speaking skills. He does not mention a specific reading comprehension strategy in his reflection essay, but does includes some information about group discussion and the final PowerPoint presentation. He also wrote that he really enjoyed the viewing activities, as did Hamza. Rashid stated that his writing skills had improved over the quarter through the weekly Friday essay assignments and revisions, but he felt as though he was making similar errors in writing assignments. He also wrote that he would like to improve his reading, because like Abdul he still felt that his reading speed was too slow. Rashid struggled with reading and writing timed essays and journals, but through daily practice he had made a lot of progress throughout the quarter.

## Saleh

### The English 112

The English 112 is very important to us. I want to development everything in English Reading, writing, listening and speaking before I took this class. I really like this course. I became better than before in English. When I took the class I want to development everything, However, now I solved my problem in this course we practice a lot of essays so that we can correct writing and we were reading about Pearl's buck story and her adventure. This course 112 developed a lot of seeking to develop our English language skills. The purpose of this reflection essay is to look back on the course so far and analyze what I have learned, how I learned it, what materials and activities helped me to improve my English, and what I still need to work on in English 101.

First, I will describe and analyze viewing and listening activities. We have learned about American history and technology development music with my team. When I made with my team we took some video about what happened in America in 1970-1975. We saw how technology developed at the time. MacPropos began by manufacturing computers, television and video games. At the time, people did not have computers at home because they were expensive. Those who used the computer at that time were the government, universities and hospitals. Music had a big role at the time.

Next, I will explain what kinds of reading we do and what I learned from reading the biography of Pearl buck I will discuss how my reading has changed this guarded. Pearl S. Buck was born Pearl Comfort Sydenstricker on June 26, 1892, in Hillsboro, West Virginia. At the time of her birth, her parents, both Presbyterian missionaries, were taking a leave from their work in China after some of Buck's older siblings had died of tropical disease. She loved reading stories and her dream of becoming a writer. Then she returned to America by the war in China. After graduate school, Pearl S. Buck returned to China yet again. It was 1926, both of her parents were ailing, and her family's finances were in dire straits. Buck decided to start writing in hopes of earning a better living. And became famous. In 1933, she went back to graduate school—this time at Yale University—and earned an additional master's degree. She was helping the poor and the children. then Pearl S. Buck died of lung cancer on March 6, 1973, in Danby, Vermont.

Next, I will discuss the speaking we do in this class. I will explain the value of these activities and what I learned from them. When we have a teamwork, we have a positive and negative thing, but when I worked with my team I did not have any problem. Because I really liked work with team. When we work with the team is a great shortcut to time there are many ideas. I think Teamwork achieves great success.

Next, I will explain the kinds of writing we do in class and what I learned from each kind. I learned a lot of academic words and learned how to arrange ideas in the classroom and train every week of his article and this developed my skill in writing significantly.

Finally, I will discuss two areas I still need to work on as I complete English 112and go to English 101. I have learned a lot of skills in writing and a lot of academic words and how to arrange ideas. I am happy because I developed in writing skills. when I will go to English 101 I will development more than more.

Word Count: 608

*Comments:* In his reflection essay, Saleh described the benefits of learning reading comprehension strategies and discussion, as well as his plan to improve his abilities in the future. Saleh mentioned positive experiences with group work or “team work” throughout his reflection. He stated that “Teamwork achieves great success”, and wrote that working in groups aided him in developing his organization and writing skills. Although he only made mention of discussion and did not address other reading comprehension strategies, Saleh did develop a plan for self-study which involved writing and learning academic vocabulary. He wrote that he was satisfied with the amount of progress he had made in his writing skills. Although few samples of his writing are included in earlier data sets, Saleh made remarkable progress with his Friday essays over the quarter. When to quote and how to use an in-text citation can be challenging for English learners and was still problematic for Saleh. There are several sentences sourced from an unreferenced text in the middle of his reflection essay. However, when I contacted him about the quote Saleh responded that he planned to review MLA format and guidelines for using others’ writing prior to taking English 101.

**Mohammad**– Graduate intern/TA

Reflection Essay

English 695c is a requirement class in TESL program. In Winter 2017, I registered to be as an intern with Nichole LaTorre in English 112. I have a little experience in teaching, and my goal was to observe Nichole LaTorre to learn from her how to teach ESL students. I know Nichole LaTorre well, and I know her rules in classrooms. In the beginning, I chose to be with Nichole LaTorre for two reason. First, Nichole is expert in teaching, and if I have shortcoming in teaching, she will compensate it. For example, if any student asked me, and I did not have exact answer, Nichole will answer. Second, Nichole is one of the best example in teaching ESL students, and I want to practice her activities in the future. In this paper, I would like to write about what I learned from Nichole LaTorre, how my learners changed, reading activities and skills we learned in the class.

I learned from Nichole when I was an intern in English 112 how to control your time, how to control the class, how to learn adult how they can respect each others, how to do your duties as teacher honestly, and how smart teachers treat with students. Nichole is one of people who

sanctify the time. She emailed her students to be on time, in conferences, Nichole asks students to be on time, and she always is on time. In my culture, if someone told you that he or she would come to see you in exact time, he or she would not come on time. There are people in my country the same as Nichole, but the majority are not on time. Since Nichole likes students to be on time, she encourages them, and she grades their attendance in class. Nichole give a Japanese student extra credit because he never was absent or come to class late. Regarding to how Nichole teaches adults to respect each others, and how they should treat each other, she says that mistakes are not acceptable in the society, and she talks about how good behavior could make others better than the others. Nichole behave wisely, and she did not hurt anyone or point to anyone, but she talks generally. All her students love her, and she close of all students who need help.

My learner's names are Saleh, Saudi student, and (X), a Nepalese student, and we learned from each other. We are students in Nichole class, and Nichole was asking us to do some activities together. These activities prepared me to know what students want their teachers to teach them. While they were asking me, they learned me to use another approach or method to explain for them. In the beginning, they were writing only one sentence in five minute when Nichole asked us to write a journal every class. In the end of quarter, (X) and Saleh became able to write more than 100 words in five minutes.

Nichole LaTorre taught us some reading skills such as scam and skim, reading topic sentence and conclusion sentence, and try to guess the meaning from the context without using dictionary. These skills helped us to read faster and we became able to understand the meaning and main ideas. We practiced the reading in the class, and Nichole was using many activities. First, she was reading first to show us how we can pronounce English, and she asked us to read. Between the paragraphs, Nichole discuss us, and she was asking about the main idea, vocabularies. In addition, Nichole asked us to work as (work pair) after writing journals, and she asked us to read the journals if we want to read, but if we wrote about something special, we can tell her "I can not share".

In short, I finished this class, and I learned from Nichole how I can teach English for Arabic speaker, and I improved my English skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Word Count: 662

(X) declined to participate in this study

*Comments:* Mohammad's reflection essay includes detail about the kinds of activities students completed in the English 112 class, and provides valuable observations and input. Like Mustafa, Mohammad made a surprising choice to focus his reflection essay on what he learned through my instruction rather than speaking generally about the course. Mohammad wrote about his experience as an intern, and his thoughts about the direction and content of the course. He was surprised by the amount of progress the students made after writing daily journals for several weeks, and discussed the work he



did with Saleh and other struggling learners. He wrote that he also benefitted from additional reading and writing practice, and explained some of the reading comprehension strategies introduced in the English 112 class. As the instructor, it was interesting to read that the teaching methods and practices he found most helpful were ones I had not planned for; such as, time management, respect for others, and creating a comfortable learning environment. Mohammad also wrote about what he learned from working with students in small groups, and reflected on the ways in which they taught him new ideas and methods for learning English.

### *Analysis of Reflection Essays*

Many students who participated in this study and wrote a reflection essay responded that the reading strategies used in class were beneficial. Students focused on several positive and challenging aspects of using the strategies. Rachel wrote “I learned many new words and it is easier for me now to break down a reading text, I am more confident when reading.” Ahmed also wrote that the reading strategies were helpful. “There are a lot of things that I learned in reading. For example, I learned how to summarize [sic] the articles.” Kahlid, Rashid, Mohammad and Abdul also wrote that their reading had improved over the quarter. Abdul responded that learning the reading strategies “made reading easier” and wrote “My reading has improved and right now I can read faster than before.” Nine out of the ten participants mentioned that specific strategies, such as summarizing, finding the main idea, breaking down longer texts and words, or skimming and scanning, helped them to improve their reading comprehension skills.

Other benefits mentioned in the reflection essays included working in pairs and peer groups. Nine out of ten participants wrote about positive experiences using collaboration.

Rachel wrote that she learned that working in groups or pairs was very helpful because, “you have to put your ideas together and then the others can correct you whenever you are wrong on some points.” Abdul also wrote that:

In this class, we did discussions as a group. In these discussions, students can talk about what they like in the videos we watched and what they did not like. Every week we discussed what Pearl did in her life, and if students had hard understanding we explained to them.

Chen, Mustafa and Ahmed also mentioned working with peers to complete PowerPoint presentations in Week 10. Ahmed said that it was helpful to work on the presentation as a group because each person could contribute ideas. He wrote that it was a “great thing” because while working in groups, “we learned how to summarize, organize, and to improve the speaking skills.” Mustafa also mentioned that working in groups helped him to organize his thoughts and determine what he wanted to present. Chen described her experience as follows:

We all have a group to present in this class and it’s a good opportunity to express my ideas and practice our speaking. Each of us needs to do a lot research and present around 10 minutes. For me, it is very challenging; luckily, our group did wonderful job and I made it. I think everyone had a lesson from these presentations, such as the reflection of war, the development of technology and the history from 1940 to 1975.

Mohammad, the class intern, also wrote that he benefitted from working in a small group with two students who were struggling. He worked with Saleh and another male student daily, but also circulated and joined different discussion groups throughout the quarter. By working with the students, Mohammad wrote that he learned more about how to direct a group and find the best method for instructing individual learners according to their needs. Saleh also wrote about working in this study group in his essay, and commented on the group work he completed for the PowerPoint presentation:

When we have a teamwork, we have a positive and negative thing, but when I worked with my team I did not have any problem. Because I really liked work with team. When we work with the team is a great shortcut to time there are many ideas. I think Teamwork achieves great success.

Student perceptions of use of collaborative activities and approaches to using reading comprehension strategies were overwhelmingly positive, with many reporting that group work was beneficial to their understanding.

The course book, activities, and types of reading and writing assigned in English 112 were also mentioned by several students. In the English 112 course, students read a biography, *Between Two Worlds: A Story about Pearl S. Buck* by Barbara Mitchell, and were assigned a reading packet each week with selections from two other biographies about Pearl Buck, along with relevant pages from her autobiography. Students were encouraged to read the accounts of Pearl's life from several different authors and compare the ways in which each author chose to depict and describe events in Pearl Buck's life. The course book was written for younger readers, but the supplementary texts in the weekly reading packets were written using advanced-level English. Although the reading packets were designed by the instructor to be challenging due to the use of new terms and specialized language, students found the course readings to be interesting and helpful for improving their reading and vocabulary. Rachel describes how the reading packets were used in class: "In English 112, we talk about the readings packages we had assigned, we talk about the difficulties we are facing in the class so the professor can help us with them." Each week students were encouraged to share any challenges they had reading the packets and share definitions to new terms, in order to facilitate exchange of knowledge and meaning-making.

Many of the students mentioned that they enjoyed reading the course book and learning about topics related to Pearl Buck's life in their reflection essays. Early in the quarter in his journal responses, Abdul mentioned that he hated reading for academic purposes (Journal 2.4, 3.3, and 6.3), however in the reflection essay he wrote that he "enjoyed" reading about Pearl Buck and, "learned some strategies that can make the reading easier."

In his reflection essay, Khalid wrote:

The book was amazing not bored at all. I enjoyed while I was reading it. It was talking about how the person believe in dreams and as much as you struggle in your life it will pay off. Pearl's life was interested because she struggled in her life until she became the first American women who won the Nobel prize. As much as I read I still need to improve more and more.

Chen, a student from China, was also interested in the course book and materials.

Although she reported knowing a little about Pearl Buck's life before the course, she wrote that she was happy to learn more about the contributions she made. Chen responded: "I'm so glad to read what she had written for China and I'm so glad to read her books. Because of this class, I meet with Pearl and many people I never heard about."

Other students were interested in the qualities that Pearl Buck possessed and about how she continued to write despite facing harsh criticism. Rashid wrote that he, "learned how much she fought for her dream and future." Saleh also responded that he "really liked" this course, and that he enjoyed "reading about Pearl's buck story and her adventure."

Each student was able to connect personally to at least one of the topics and themes that were related to the book, which were discussed in class each week (an overview of course themes can be found in Appendix C).

Khalid, Rachel, and Mohammad also wrote that the journals were very helpful. Journal prompts for the English 112 class were written by the instructor and related to the themes discussed each week (Appendix F). Students wrote journals every Monday through

Thursday, during the first five to ten minutes of the fifty-minute class period. In writing the journals, students are encouraged to connect the course book and themes to their own lives. It was also an opportunity to practice writing at least 100 words in five to ten minutes, and use new words gleaned through course readings and discussions. Khalid wrote that journals were helpful for students because, “it helps how to summarize the ideas and arrange them in one paragraph. I learned a lot of vocabulary and grammar.” In her reflection essay, Rachel wrote:

I learned a lot from each kind because there were some topics I never thought about and those journals and essays helped me discover new things about my country and about myself; I learned how to think critically when responding to quotes and reinforced my writing skills.

Mohammad, the course intern, gave a comprehensive overview of the types of activities used in class, reading strategies that were implemented and discussed, as well as journal writing:

Nichole LaTorre taught us some reading skills such as scan and skim, reading topic sentence and conclusion sentence, and try to guess the meaning from the context without using dictionary. These skills helped us to read faster and we became able to understand the meaning and main ideas. We practiced the reading in the class, and Nichole was using many activities. First, she was reading first to show us how we can pronounce English, and she asked us to read. Between the paragraphs, Nichole discuss us, and she was asking about the main idea, vocabularies. In addition, Nichole asked us to work as (work pair) after writing journals, and she asked us to read the journals if we want to read, but if we wrote about something special, we can tell her “I can not share”.

Students were encouraged to share their journals with peers after writing. However, due to the personal nature of the journal responses, students were told that any information they wished to keep confidential did not have to be read by peers. This practice is what Mohammad referred to when he wrote that if journals had “something special” students could say that they “cannot share”. By allowing students to maintain their privacy if they

felt it was necessary, they were free to write about personal connections without fear of embarrassment or over-sharing.

While the majority of responses focused on positive aspects of the course, reading materials, and use of reading strategies, there were also some challenges mentioned in the reflection essays. Rashid wrote that he still needed to work on his reading and writing, and that he was “still repeating some of the same mistake [sic] in most of the essays.” He also felt that his reading speed was “really slow”, and that it took him, “a while to finish 20 pages, so need to read a lot.” Khalid and Abdul also wrote that although the use of reading strategies and collaboration helped them to improve their reading skills, they still felt that they read too slowly. Like Khalid and Abdul, Chen also wrote that while her reading had improved, she would like to continue building on these skills:

With gradually reading, I notice that I am acquaint myself with academic reading, and I am able to reading some essays which are very long and complex. Well, even if I know I am getting better, I still need to work on these parts of my reading in next English class, because it will be more difficult and challenging for me.

Rashid, Khalid, Abdul and Chen all wrote that they were planning to use the strategies learned in class to prepare for the English 101 course.

Hamza was one of the only students to write that his reading did not change over the quarter. From the beginning of the course, he maintained that his speaking abilities were stronger than his reading and writing skills. In his reflection essay, Hamza wrote:

Honestly, my reading has not changed a lot for many reasons such as other class and so on, but here is the thing, I could do better if I organized my time and I made the right priorities. However, I promise that I will study hard for all classes in Spring quarter and I will get things done more successfully. Nevertheless, I still need to improve my academic reading in order to dominate it notably.

Although Hamza was rarely absent, he sometimes struggled to keep up with the supplementary readings or other course work. He noted that this was most likely due to

lack of organization and time management and that he aimed to work on these areas in his next English class.

Each student outlined a plan to improve their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills prior to taking the English 101 class. Six out of the ten participants wrote that they felt their reading and writing skills needed improvement or would continue to improve as they took more English courses at EWU. One student mentioned listening (Rachel) and another mentioned speaking (Mustafa) as the skills they would like to improve most. Yet another (Abdul) mentioned spelling and grammar as two skills he hoped to improve in later courses. Although nine out of ten mentioned specific reading strategies that helped them to improve their reading skills over the quarter, they also mentioned specific strategies they would like to work on in the future. Rachel wrote that she had learned many reading strategies over the quarter, “however, I still need to work on the main idea’s identification because sometimes even with the breaking down it’s difficult for me to locate it.” Ahmed also stated that understanding the main idea could be difficult at times and that “sometime when I tried to read a difficult article, I did not understand the main idea by first time, so I will try to improve my self [sic] in this part.” Further, he wrote that he planned to “fix this issue by reading novels.” Like Rachel and Ahmed, Chen also wrote about difficulties locating the main ideas and planned to work on this in future classes.

Hamza, Khalid, and Abdul also wrote about issues they would like to work on in English 101. In his reflection essay, Hamza wrote:

I will discuss two areas I still need to work on as complete English 112 and go to English 101. I suggest that focusing on important methides like what my instructor taught me already such as how can I scam [sic], summarize, write with my own prompt and these are important tools and I will use them more in English 101.

Khalid wrote that his plan to improve his reading skills was to “read two pages in different subjects every single day. Then, I will try to write and summarize them in one paragraph. I believe that since I practice a lot I will learn more.” Writing summaries was one of the strategies Khalid found to be beneficial to his understanding of the text, whereas Abdul focused on conventions and grammar errors. Abdul wrote:

When I write fast, I made many mistakes, so I will try to improve my spelling mistakes. Also, I read very slowly, so I should improve that by reading a lot. In this class I learned many things, but the important thing that I learned was writing.

Mustafa also wrote that he aimed to work on his reading comprehension skills using the strategies introduced in English 112. In his journals (2.4 and 9.1) and reflection essay, he named skimming and scanning as two strategies he found beneficial and that he would like to continue using in the future.

Finally, students wrote about the skills they would take away from the English 112 course and gave recommendations to future students. Rachel and Khalid wrote that they felt “confident” and “prepared for the English 101 course.” In his reflection essay, Khalid responded that his skills had “improved and I feel ready to take English 101.” Rachel also wrote about what she learned.

I learned that the English language is not as difficult as I used to think, we just have to know the real tips to master it and English 112 was full of tips, it was very helpful for me as a multilingual student.

Saleh, who had a hard time keeping up with readings and faced many challenges when writing in the English 112 course, felt that he learned a lot of skills in this class; such as “a lot of skills in writing and a lot of academic words and how to arrange ideas.” He wrote “I am happy because I developed in writing skills. when I will go to English 101 I will development more than more.” While some focused on the improvements in their



abilities and the skills they wanted to build on, Chen wrote about the reasons why she enjoyed the course. At the end of her reflection essay, Chen wrote:

Well, I'm glad to take this class which is so awesome and the teacher is so nice and friendly. In this class, I met some friends and see the different people and cultures that gave me various of perspectives to see the world and life. That really means a lot. I hope I could have more experiences like that.

The graduate intern for the English 112 course, also wrote that he learned about teaching methods and instruction by working closely with the instructor and helping students in peer groups. One of the main lessons Mohammad stated that he learned from the course was the value of collaborating with students. In his reflection essay he wrote:

I learned from Nichole when I was an intern in English 112 how to control your time, how to control the class, how to learn adult how they can respect each others, how to do your duties as teacher honestly, and how smart teachers treat with students....These activities prepared me to know what students want their teachers to teach them. While they were asking me, they learned me to use another approach or method to explain for them. In the beginning, they were writing only one sentence in five minute when Nichole asked us to write a journal every class. In the end of quarter, (student who declined to participate) and Saleh became able to write more than 100 words in five minutes.

Mohammad also discussed the importance of managing time and modeling the importance of respectful behavior to students.

All of the reflection essays written by students make mention of specific activities completed in the English 112 class, the benefits and challenges to using reading comprehension strategies, and positive experiences collaborating with peers. Direct instruction of reading strategies, and the use of pair or group work to practice using them, allowed students to share knowledge and help each other to understand new words or concepts. By the end of the quarter, nine out of ten participants in this study identified at least two reading strategies introduced in the English 112 course that helped them to improve their reading skills and build confidence in their abilities. One out of the ten

participants (Rashid) did not identify one strategy, but wrote that the use of “more than one” reading strategy had helped him to improve his skills.

Overall, students reported that the use of collaboration and direct instruction of reading strategies improved their English language abilities and/or comprehension. Table 4 provides a brief overview of the reading strategies students mentioned in their reflection essays. Skills students determined were useful and skills they reported as needing improvement are noted in the table. Based on the students’ responses, the reading strategies that were most beneficial were discussing, summarizing, and finding the main idea. Although many of the participants in this study were concerned about the amount of reading or difficulty of readings in English 101, a few felt confident and prepared. Many students wrote that they found at least one of the strategies introduced in the English 112 class to be helpful for breaking down complex college-level texts, while others had made plans for self-study and aimed to improve their reading skills in the future using these methods.

### *Discussion*

In their reflection essays and final journal responses of the quarter, students identified several areas for improvement and assessed their reading skills. By identifying specific aspects of reading to improve and evaluating their reading comprehension, students demonstrated meta-cognitive awareness and self-monitoring of reading strategies. Almost all of the students who participated in this study identified an area to improve and one strategy or collaborative activity which aided in their understanding of texts. Table 4 gives an overview of the strategies students reported as beneficial or needing improvement in their reflection essays. Only one participant (Rashid) did not name a

specific strategy in his reflection essay, but discussed several ways in which his comprehension had improved over the quarter, as well as his plans for future study. Through both journal and essay responses, it was clear that although the reading comprehension strategies could be challenging students were willing to continue improving their reading skills in order to understand complex academic texts.

Although decoding and comprehending college-level readings could be challenging, student response were largely focused on the benefits of learning reading strategies and collaborating with peers. The reflection essays demonstrate that although students were still a little apprehensive about reading college-level texts after taking the English 112 course they planned to use several strategies when reading in the English 101 course. Students were able to develop meta-cognitive awareness of the use of reading strategies, which fostered learner autonomy as they determined which strategies were more suited to their individual needs as readers.

<b>Table 4:</b> Benefits and challenges to using reading strategies reported by participants in Week 11										
	Rachel	Chen	Mustafa	Abdul	Hamza	Ahmed	Khalid	Rashid	Saleh	Intern
Skimming			B							B
Scanning			B		B					B
Summarizing					B	B	B			
Rereading										
Discussing	B	B		B					B	B
Guessing										B
Dictionary/ Translating										
Underline/ Highlight										
Finding the Main idea	I					I				B
Asking others										
Writing new words										
Breaking down words	B									
Breaking down text (chunking)	B	I								
Other					B			NS		
<b>B</b> = strategies reported as beneficial <b>I</b> = strategies reported as needing improvement <b>NS</b> = no specific strategy named										

## Chapter 6

### Discussion of Results

Chapter 6 includes a discussion of the results and major findings of this study. This section returns to the assumptions listed in Chapter 1 and examines how they were confirmed or unconfirmed. A conclusion, limitations of the study, implications and recommendations for future research will follow in Chapter 7.

The present study used action research and narrative inquiry methodologies to determine the value or usefulness of a collaborative approach to using reading comprehension strategies in college-level English classrooms. Chapter 3 included detailed information about the research methodology and procedure, and Chapters 4 and 5 included an analysis of data collected in the English 112 class over the winter quarter of 2017. Over 11 weeks, ten students participated in this study, including nine students who were enrolled in the English 112 class as undergraduates and one graduate intern enrolled in the Master's in English/TESL program.

As the primary investigator, and the instructor of record for the English 112 class, I designed a curriculum in the English 581 class based on a biography of American author Pearl S. Buck. Students read the biography *Between Two Worlds: A Story about Pearl S. Buck*, by Barbara Mitchell, and learned about early 20<sup>th</sup> century American history through her story. Students also read a variety of articles, poems, and selections from other biographies about Pearl Buck, as well as Pearl Buck's autobiography. Students were assigned daily journals, and wrote an in-class essay on Fridays related to a weekly theme. Weekly themes, including marriage and gender roles, "double consciousness", living between two cultures or "worlds", disabilities, helping and service to others, and

many other topics related to the assigned readings, gave students a chance to reflect on their experiences. An overview of the course materials and weekly themes appears at the end of Chapter 1 and in Appendix C. Journals and essays written by the participants in this study were collected over the 11-week period.

Responses to six out of 37 journal prompts assigned over 11 weeks were chosen for the analysis, along with reflection essays written by each of the participants. Journal responses and reflection essays were analyzed in this study to determine the benefits and challenges to using collaboration in the English language classroom. 54 samples of student writing, including 44 student journals and 10 reflection essays, were analyzed for this study in Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 included an analysis of these journal responses and Chapter 5 focused on an analysis of reflection essays. In this chapter, the results for the entire study are discussed. The researcher's assumptions, which were also disclosed in Chapter 1, are discussed in this section according to the TESOL International Association guidelines for qualitative research. As the primary investigator, instructor of record, and a participant-observer, I took notes on interactions between participants and recorded several observations and throughout the quarter. This section will include a brief discussion of my observations of collaboration and the use of reading comprehension strategies in the English 112 classroom.

### ***Major Findings***

#### *Discussion of assumptions*

- 1) Students may be aware of some reading strategies.

This assumption was confirmed. At the beginning of the quarter, the instructor of record, who was also the primary investigator, assigned a journal to the students (2.4) and

asked them to explain their process for reading difficult texts. Through the students' journal responses, the primary investigator was able to determine that students were already using several reading strategies. Many students who responded to the journal prompt mentioned rereading, highlighting or underlining new words, and looking up words in a dictionary as their primary reading comprehension strategies. Students mentioned a variety of strategies in their individual responses, including: highlighting/underlining or writing down new words, breaking up the text, guessing/determining meaning of new words from the context, and skimming and scanning.

However, few students wrote about using more than one strategy, and only one student wrote about asking others or discussing difficult texts and sharing knowledge (Chen). Four out of the seven participants in this study who submitted Journal 2.3 and were present on the day the journal was assigned wrote that rereading (Rachel, Chen, Ahmed, Khalid) and using the dictionary were two strategies they often used (Chen, Ahmed, Khalid, Rashid). Three out of seven wrote about highlighting or underlining new words (Rachel, Chen, Ahmed), and two responded that finding the main idea was important (Rachel, Mustafa). Students were aware of some strategies, but few had used or did not name the strategies that were introduced in English 112 class over the winter quarter in their first reading-related journal [Appendix F].

- 2) Students may rely on definitions rather than context when encountering difficult texts, and therefore may attempt to translate every new word.

This assumption was partially confirmed. In the first journal prompt (2.4) analyzed in this study, four out of seven participants reported using a dictionary as one of the

strategies they used for breaking down difficult texts (Chen, Ahmed, Khalid, Rashid). These participants reported using a dictionary as their second, third, or last step when explaining their reading process. Initially, students used dictionaries or translators on their cell phones when reading articles or assigned texts in class. The instructor and intern observed students using dictionaries regularly during the first few weeks of the quarter. After several reading comprehension strategies were introduced, students were asked to try not to use a dictionary unless the meaning of a new word could not be determined through context or discussion with peers. The frequency of dictionary and translator use decreased over the quarter except on Fridays, when the weekly Friday essay was written in class.

However, students wrote about several reading comprehension strategies they used regularly in their responses to Journal 2.4. Two participants in this study wrote that they avoided using a dictionary or used an alternate strategy. Rachel specifically stated that she did not look up each new word but tried to find the context or main idea, and Abdul wrote that he often guessed new words. Some students were already using reading strategies rather than relying on dictionaries, but the most frequently mentioned strategies in participants' responses were: rereading, using a dictionary, and highlighting or underlining. While many students reported using a dictionary, each student also identified at least one other strategy used for breaking down difficult texts. This assumption was partially confirmed because although a few participants did not rely on definitions, several participants did attempt to translate every new word.

- 3) Students have their own strategies which have facilitated reading comprehension thus far.



This assumption was confirmed. In their responses to Journal 2.4, participants named strategies, such as skim and scan or guessing/predicting, that were already in use. All of the students who responded had at least one strategy that they employed to facilitate their reading comprehension. A few of the learners' self-reported reading comprehension strategies included less than three steps, but many reported using several steps to breaking down difficult texts. Even if their only steps included breaking up the text (Rashid) or rereading, or writing new words and checking the dictionary (Khalid), each participant in this study had been using at least one reading comprehension strategy prior to enrolling in the English 112 course. All participants had some knowledge of reading strategies and used strategies they felt were "appropriate" for them (Khalid). Some of the students enrolled in the English 112 course had received direct instruction on reading comprehension strategies in previous classes, while others had developed reading strategies independently through experience.

- 4) Students will encounter texts with many new words during their course of academic study, and will not have time to translate every word.

This assumption was confirmed. In the English 112 class, students read a variety of texts, including: biographical texts, informational texts, articles, narratives, and poems. They also read the writing of their peers and examples written by the instructor. During class time, students were given ten to fifteen minutes of a 50-minute class period to read course texts each day before or after in-class activities. Many of the course texts included academic words or specialized terms that students were unfamiliar with. At first, many students used dictionaries, but found it difficult to read and fully comprehend the assigned readings when they stopped to look up a definition. Scholars have found that

reading word by word and reliance on dictionaries are common issues among English language learners, which can lead to a significant amount of time being spent on translating academic texts rather than engaging with the contents (Fuqua, 2015; Lei, et al., 2010; Nassaji, 2003; Mokhatri & Sheorey, 2002).

As students practiced using reading comprehension strategies and discussed texts during peer and group work, they reported that their reading of academic texts was quicker (Rachel) or easier than before (Abdul). Discussing the new words with peers and guessing from the context in groups were identified as being two of the most helpful methods for quickly understanding the main idea of a text. By the end of the quarter, several students reported reading faster than before, even if the overall speed of their reading was slower than they would have liked. A few students reported that with more practice they were confident that their reading speed and accuracy in finding the main ideas would improve.

- 5) Students must know how to break down a difficult text and build reading comprehension skills in order to participate in English 101, 201, and other courses at EWU.

This assumption was confirmed. Although students knew of some reading strategies and preferred a few methods for breaking down difficult texts, the primary strategies they used were rereading, underlining or highlighting new words, and using a dictionary. Few students reported summarizing, finding main points, and discussing in groups, all of which are important skills necessary for successful completion of the English 101 and 201 courses. Initially, students voiced concern about the length and complexity of

supplementary texts in the instructor-created reading packets for the English 112 course, and were worried about reading in higher-level English classes.

As a graduate composition instructor, and the instructor for English 112 during the winter 2017 quarter, I am aware of the level of difficulty of the required readings for English 101 and 201. Having had experience teaching both English 101 and 201 courses at EWU, I was able to anticipate which strategies might be beneficial to students later. Using an action research approach, I determined which strategies to implement in the English 112 class based on student responses to journals and discussions about reading strategies already in use. Both native and non-native English speakers previously enrolled in my English 101 and 201 classes reported that the readings were complex and included many new terms. For this reason, I tailored the English 112 curriculum to developing reading comprehension strategies in the hope that this would prepare students for college-level reading in English.

As most English classes at EWU use a learner-centered approach, the ability to discuss new terms and concepts with peers is also crucial. Using a collaborative approach to practicing reading strategies in groups aided students in building comprehension skills and encouraged them to ask others, rather than relying on a dictionary or reading word by word. Since many students had trouble breaking down short college-level articles and texts at the beginning of the English 112 course, it was determined that students would need to learn how to break down longer texts in order to participate in later English 101 and 201 classes.

Over an 11-week period, students were introduced to many methods for breaking down complex texts in peer groups and individually in the English 112 course. Learners were

able to develop meta-cognitive awareness of the use of reading strategies, which fostered learner autonomy as they determined which strategies were more suited to their individual needs as readers. Responses to the reflection essay prompt at the end of the quarter demonstrate that although students were still a little apprehensive about reading college-level texts after taking the English 112 course, they planned to use several strategies to prepare/began planning methods for overcoming challenges. Through self-monitoring, students developed habits for assessing their reading skills and proposed solutions for improvement.

- 6) Direct instruction of strategies for reading comprehension, using a collaborative approach, can lead to less reliance on a dictionary and help readers to identify main points in a difficult text.

This assumption was also confirmed. In their reflection essays, many students wrote that discussion with peers was one of the most beneficial strategies for finding the main points or main ideas in a difficult text (Rachel, Chen, Abdul, Saleh, Mohammad). Direct instruction and review of reading comprehension strategies were planned each week in the English 112 course. Students discussed the text with their peers in pre-reading, reading, and post-reading stages throughout the quarter. Students also read a variety of texts to supplement the course book and discussed the main ideas in groups through a wide variety of collaborative activities. Although student journal responses written early in the quarter reflect some reliance on dictionaries, they were used less over time as participants practiced using the reading strategies and asked each other for help with new words.

Many students who responded to initial journal prompts about reading strategies reported rereading, highlighting and underlining, and/or using a dictionary to look up new words were the strategies they used most often to break down difficult texts. Chen was the only student to mention asking others, such as teachers or friends, and sharing knowledge and information that she already knew with others. Discussion and asking peers for help with difficult vocabulary or texts were not mentioned by other participants in this journal response (2.4), but several focused on the benefits learning reading strategies using a collaborative approach in later responses.

One student in particular, Abdul, reported guessing new words or using the dictionary early in the quarter (Journal 2.4, 3.3, and 6.3) [Appendix F]. He wrote that by searching for new words through Google, he could find out anything he needed to know. However, by the end of the quarter, Abdul wrote about several other strategies he had been using to break down difficult texts; primarily, breaking down long words, finding the main idea, and summarizing. Abdul wrote that these three strategies had been very helpful to him and recommended that other students use these strategies (Journal 9.1). In his reflection essay, he also wrote that discussing in groups and working collaboratively were also beneficial.

Later in the quarter, a few students still relied on their dictionaries for very difficult or specialized terms (Rachel, Chen), but most reported reading faster than before. For example, Rachel wrote in her response that the reading strategies helped her to read “quickly” and that her “vocabulary had grown” (Journal 9.1). Abdul wrote that he could find the main points “easier than before” (Journal 9.1). Although students still used their dictionaries, they no longer relied on them for word by word translation. Instead, students

focused on new words that had a direct effect on their understanding of a key concept or main point. Before looking up new words in the dictionary, students were encouraged to try to discern the meaning from the context or ask peers what they thought a new word meant. By determining which words were critical for understanding the main points and using contextual clues, students used time spent reading more efficiently.

In their responses to Journal 9.1 and their reflection essays, students wrote that using the reading strategies they had learned made it easier to find the main idea and/or that they would like to continue building on this skill in future classes. Students developed their self-monitoring and meta-cognitive awareness by assessing their understanding and making plans to continue improving their reading comprehension skills. Seven out of ten students reported in their reflection essays that the use of collaboration and group work was beneficial for learning and practicing reading strategies. Overall, students found that discussion, summary writing, and finding the main point of a text were all helpful for building reading comprehension skills. Direct instruction of reading comprehension strategies using a collaborative approach did lead to less reliance on dictionaries, and according to learners' self-reported results also aided in identifying main points easily.

### ***Observations***

#### *Group and peer work*

Collaboration in the English 112 class was encouraged in two ways: through daily activities in class and final presentations. Students completed in-class work in pairs or groups, and worked with one group to create and present a final PowerPoint presentation. The groups observed in this study were not grouped by personality, as in Kuo, Chu & Huang's (2015) study, but were grouped according to both self-organized groups and

instructor-organized groups. During in-class activities, students in English 112 were encouraged to work with “neighbors”, meaning students who were in close proximity or sitting closest to each other. Students self-organized into groups of two to five students, and peer groups often changed based on attendance and seating arrangement. The second learning and classroom arrangement outlined in Chapter 3, where desks were moved to form a large square, resulted in different peer groups toward the end of the quarter. This allowed students to work closely with several different partners over the 11-week period. Students worked with peers to complete assigned activities, share written responses to journal prompts and question sets, and discuss texts or visual materials and new words.

For the final PowerPoint presentation, students were grouped by the instructor. The final presentation was assigned in Week 4 and presented in Week 10, giving students six weeks to discuss assigned sections of the final chapter, research additional information, and create a PowerPoint presentation. While students chose partners and groups for in-class work, presentation groups were chosen based on the following: 1) a mix of high-level and low-level English speakers and writers, 2) students of the same gender, 3) students who had no history of conflict, and 4) no more than five students per group. The reason for grouping students according to gender was due to cultural expectations and the comfort of students enrolled in the class.

One student, who chose not to participate in this study, was a Saudi female who worked well with male and female students during class time. However, since the final presentation required working closely with other students outside of class hours and after school, the Saudi female expressed a preference for working with other female students on the project. Since the class included a large group of male students from Saudi Arabia

and only two other female students were enrolled, the female students were grouped together. The instructor held individual conferences during office hours and consulted the class intern, Mohammad, who was also a Saudi male, to determine the best fit for students within a group. Students who had experienced conflict or misunderstandings during the first few weeks of the quarter were grouped separately. Finally, students were grouped according to their written and spoken English abilities based on samples of writing and observations of peer discussions. The groups were chosen carefully out of respect for cultural and/or religious beliefs and to ensure individual student comfort.

### *Collaboration*

In class, students worked in groups or with peers to complete a number of activities. Students worked together to summarize texts or identify main points, read the course book or assigned texts aloud, practice reading comprehension strategies as they were introduced, share answers or responses to journals, respond to videos, poems, songs, and more. Students worked together to complete at least two activities per class period, and students were also asked to share their daily journal responses with a partner. Students who did not wish to share their journal responses, or felt that the journals were too personal, could discuss another topic or experience instead. Students were also encouraged to change partners or work with different groups, in order to build community in the classroom and to exchange ideas or experiences.

Reading strategies were implemented using direct instruction, and students practiced using each strategy and shared answers to reading question sets in groups. Using direct instruction to teach students in the English 112 class reading strategies, then using pair or group work to practice allowed students to share knowledge and help each other to



understand new words or concepts. As Kenneth Bruffee (1991, 1994) observed in his research, students were more comfortable asking each other questions than they were asking the instructor or speaking in front of the class. The use of collaboration in the English 112 class permitted students to have more time to ask questions, clarify content, and exchange information in a low-stakes environment.

In Week 7, when desk orientation and learning arrangement changed, students felt more comfortable collaborating as a large group and joining whole class discussions. Desks were moved into a square position, which changed the focal point from instructor-centered to learner-centered (Chapter 3). Students were encouraged to work with new partners after the arrangement changed, and also worked with their assigned presentation groups after class to complete the final presentation. Through the use of a collaborative approach to learning inside and outside of the classroom, students gained confidence in their reading and speaking abilities. In their journals and reflection essays, many students gave positive reviews of collaborative activities and peer work. Nine out of ten students wrote about the use of collaboration and how it helped them to improve their abilities in English by promoting an exchange of ideas (Chapter 5). In their reflection essays, students wrote that they “really liked” and “enjoyed” collaborating with peers. Many of the students who participated in this study also wrote about the benefits of using a collaborative approach to practice reading comprehension strategies.

### *Tension*

Although there was some conflict between students at the beginning of the quarter, after groups were assigned and students became more familiar with classmates tension was minimal. In the second week, one student reported feeling very angry because

another student was not paying attention and/or looking at his phone under his desk during class time. The student explained that in Saudi Arabia, teachers are respected, and that he felt that the student who was not paying attention was openly disrespecting the instructor and others around him. The student who was not paying attention was not from Saudi Arabia, and rarely spoke to other students.

After reflecting on this issue, the instructor decided to take an indirect approach. Instead of calling on the student directly, the instructor aimed to resolve the dispute by separating the students and following-up with a class discussion about expectations of students in their home countries and how students show respect to their teachers. A journal about teachers was assigned for the next day, and most of the class activities that followed included information about teachers and expectations of students in the U.S. A whole class discussion followed videos about teachers who had helped problem students, and what the students did to improve their behavior. Students discussed expectations of teachers and students in their home countries and shared their experiences, while some volunteered to teach the class the words for “teacher” and “student” in their first language.

After the class discussion, the instructor discussed cell phone use with the student and asked him to keep the phone use to a minimum except in the case of emergency. The instructor also asked the class intern, Mohammad, to begin working with the student and one other learner who was struggling, in order to minimize tension in group work and introduce the student to his classmates. After this initial period, there were few to no observations of tension within student groups. However, interpersonal tension was not

disclosed by participants in this study, so it is possible that tension between students might have occurred but was not reported.

### *Anxiety and Reading Apprehension*

While participants in this study did not address feelings of anxiety directly in their writing, many reported that reading was something difficult, boring, or an activity that they “hated”. Early in the quarter, two participants reported hating academic reading in their journal responses. Others did not want to read journals to the class or share experiences, and some did not like to read aloud during discussions about the course book or reading packets. However, by Week 6 and Week 9, student journals began to reflect or make mention of feelings of confidence. At the end of the quarter, many students reported that they still had some feelings of apprehension about the English 101 class, but were making plans to prepare and felt up to the challenge. Others wrote that group activities had allowed them to improve their speaking and listening skills, and that reading aloud helped them to build confidence as well. In the reflection essays, several students also reported feeling more confident or prepared for college-level after taking the English 112 class.

At first, college-level reading was perceived as “difficult” or “hard” (Journal 2.4, 3.3), but by the end of the quarter students had adopted several reading strategies that could help them break down complex texts (Journal 9.1). Even students who “hated” reading, or expressed concern about reading aloud in groups or in front of the class, would regularly volunteer to read later in the quarter. Feelings of apprehension and anxiety seemed to improve after students learned several reading strategies that could help them to comprehend college-level texts. However, as few mentioned anxiety directly in their

written responses, it is difficult to determine the extent to which it abated. Collaboration and promotion of a learner-centered community in the classroom might also have mitigated the feelings of anxiety or apprehension that students reported at the beginning of the quarter.

*Final presentations: peer work, collaboration, and community*

At the end of the quarter in Week 10, students gave a final PowerPoint presentation about an assigned period of American history (1940-1975), and worked together to write short speeches, create a PowerPoint presentation, and present their findings to the class. Although many were nervous about giving their presentations, several students wrote in their reflection essays that “teamwork” or the ability to work on the project in groups was very beneficial. During the presentation week, one student group gave a presentation each day, Monday through Thursday. Students were asked to write a presentation that would take between 20-30 minutes to present, with the speech and creation of materials distributed evenly between group members.

After the presentation students were asked to lead a “Q&A”, or question and answer session, where classmates could ask for clarification or more information. During the presentation week, each group presented for a minimum of 20 minutes, with the Q&A session often lasting the duration of the class period. When presenters had a hard time remembering part of the speech or pronunciation of a word, students in the audience helped or gave their peers words of encouragement. After the presentations, students asked the presenters questions and discussed socio-cultural, economic, political, or technological issues amongst themselves; uninterrupted or lightly facilitated by the instructor, for between 20-30 minutes.

I had planned several activities for Week 10, but due to the students' level of interest in discussion I decided to continue the Q&A session for as long as students remained engaged in conversation. This sustained conversation among English language learners might not have been as lively had the use of collaboration not been a major aspect of the English 112 course. The use of peer work and collaboration had created a sense of community in which students felt comfortable expressing experiences, feelings, and opinions with each other, allowing for valuable exchanges of knowledge and ideas.

### *Discussion of Results*

The objectives of this research were to 1) identify challenges multilingual writers face when reading 2) provide insight for teachers on how to use collaborative strategies for reading comprehension 3) allow students to identify their academic cultural differences in order to develop reading habits and strategies. Journals and essays collected from students enrolled in the English 112 class, who agreed to participate in this study, were analyzed to determine:

- a) challenges multilingual students face when encountering intermediate to advanced-level texts used in the college writing classroom

English language learners who responded to journal and essay prompts in this study discussed several challenges they faced when reading advanced-level texts, but were overall positive about their ability to continue building skills that would facilitate comprehension and fluency. Participants wrote that it often took a significant amount of time to read academic texts and that new words or jargon could be difficult to understand. Several students who responded to initial prompts wrote that as non-native speakers, reading academic texts could be very difficult and they were concerned about their ability

to complete assigned readings on time. Many students also wrote that they reread texts several times and used a dictionary often, however others wrote about reading strategies they had learned previously or had developed independently. Participants wrote that academic vocabulary and specialized language were especially challenging, as were long or complex sentences. Students mentioned in their journals and in class discussions that spoken English and academic English could be very different. Some students reported that they could understand certain words when they were spoken or read aloud, but might not recognize the words when written or typed. However, students remained confident in their later journals and reflection essays that academic reading and acquiring academic vocabulary would become easier over time and with repetition.

Other factors that may have compounded the challenge of reading college-level texts and doing college-level work in general occurred inside and outside of the English 112 classroom. As exchange students or students who had recently immigrated, English learners in the 112 class wrote about several issues they were facing as they adjusted to living in the United States. While some of these issues were related to their academic studies, others concerned feelings of homesickness, missing their spouses or children, culture shock, or even small differences in their daily lives. According to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, emotional variables may have a significant effect on language acquisition (Ortega, 2009; Ellis, 1994). Many of the students in the English 112 class wrote about times when emotional issues outside of class work affected their in-class work or performance. One student often wrote about how he would stay up late to talk to family, others wrote that issues in their home countries were causing distress during their study abroad experience, and some had trouble finding daycare for their

children, resolving financial issues, or maintaining relationships. Each student had several personal challenges they identified concerning reading skills, however it is important to note that emotional factors may play a significant role as well. These factors could have a major impact on the challenges multilingual writers face in the English classroom or when reading college-level texts.

b) what students have already been taught about reading strategies

In their initial journal responses, several students outlined the reading strategies they used for breaking down complex texts. A few students who responded were using strategies for breaking down complex texts prior to enrolling in the English 112 class. Yet, many still used rereading and checking the dictionary as primary strategies for comprehending college-level reading assignments. This meant students took a considerable amount of time to read assignments, and this was something they were concerned about. If participants in this study did learn reading strategies prior to enrolling in English 112, then few named them in their journal responses. Among the strategies named were: finding the main point, breaking up the text, guessing, determining meaning of new words from the context, asking peers, and skimming and scanning. However, a few students did not name any strategies and instead focused on the difficulties they faced when encountering academic terms or when reading for academic purposes in general.

c) how well multilingual students apply what they have been taught about reading strategies—both prior to and during English 112

Students in the English 112 class were able to use the reading strategies they learned in groups, and participants in this study reported that they were beneficial for comprehending complex texts when collaborating or reading independently. It was clear

that a few students had either learned reading comprehension strategies prior to enrolling in the English 112 class or developed independent strategies for breaking down complex texts. However, several participants reported that they had not used many of the reading strategies introduced in the class. Prior to English 112, students found academic reading to be very complex or difficult, and a few reported hating it. Yet, all of the students wrote about the importance of developing effective reading habits in order to achieve their future dreams and goals.

Throughout the quarter, students were encouraged to try new strategies for breaking down college-level texts in groups and with peers. Each student tried several strategies and learned when or how to apply them for different purposes. Overall students exhibited a high level of interest and engagement during the introduction of new strategies and in-class activities. By mid-term, students wrote that specific strategies had already improved their reading comprehension skills, but that they still wanted to practice or improve their use of others. For example, one student wrote that she felt it was easier to break down texts and that she could find the main points faster than she could prior to the English 112 class, she still found that some long or complex sentences were too difficult to skim or scan through. Another student wrote that while he had benefitted from the use of more than one strategy, they would like to keep building on the skills he had learned in order to achieve fluency and confidence.

During the last few weeks of the quarter, students reported feeling confident or prepared for the English 101 course based on the reading skills they had acquired in English 112. Some were still apprehensive about moving on to a college-level course, but viewed the English 112 course as a way to facilitate their transition or learn strategies



they could continue cultivating in the future. Participants' journals and essay responses exhibited a complex relationship between interest in reading and perceived importance. Many students reported that although academic reading could be tedious, boring, or difficult, it was still vital for understanding the world and securing success in the future. Therefore, students were interested in learning how to read efficiently and effectively, even though it was not their favorite aspect of language acquisition.

Between Weeks 2 and 12, students mentioned at least two or more strategies they felt were helpful for understanding academic texts in their journals and essays. Table 5 is a visual reference which includes all of the reading strategies mentioned in student journals and essays from the data set. Most students reported the strategies they named in their written responses as useful or beneficial. A few students wrote about strategies that they needed to work on and improve for future use, while some reported strategies that were both beneficial and needed improvement. Seven out of ten participants in this study mentioned summarizing in their reflection essays as a helpful strategy. Six out of ten participants mentioned finding the main idea as a beneficial strategy, but one they would also like to improve in future classes. Overall, students were engaged in their reading practice and felt that learning reading comprehension strategies was useful for their future studies.

d) the value or usefulness of a collaborative approach to using reading comprehension strategies in English classrooms across cultures

Using a collaborative approach to practicing reading comprehension strategies in the English 112 class was a valuable experience. As students worked in peer groups, they shared ideas and experiences from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds and personal

perspectives. Prior knowledge and experience gained from working with others aided students in considering multiple points of view and filled gaps in their understanding of various subjects. Students from Saudi Arabia, China, West Africa, Japan, and Nepal worked together and shared their knowledge of linguistic and social practices and issues. A cross-cultural approach to sharing information and experiences were reported as positive by most students who participated in this study and enrolled in the English 112 class.

Through journal and essay responses as well as class discussions, students shared information about collaboration in their home countries. In Saudi Arabia, collaboration was reported as seldom used as an approach to using language in English classrooms. Many students wrote that they were used to traditional lecture style or “call and response” instruction. They anticipated some collaboration and group work would occur in college classrooms in the United States through prior experiences, but wrote that it was different from the style used in Saudi Arabia. Students from China, Japan, West Africa, and Nepal reported that although they used some collaboration in group projects or during class time, their English lessons in their home countries were largely teacher-centered.

Despite less time spent working collaboratively in previous classes, students reported that they enjoyed this approach and that it was beneficial to their learning of reading strategies and academic vocabulary. Students were able to compare and contrast their experiences and expectations, which made many of the activities completed in English 112 meaningful to students personally. However, there were times when students wrote or stated in discussions that they preferred lecture style for certain topics. For some

linguistic features, such as grammar, punctuation, or organization of essays, students preferred a lecture followed by practice in groups or individually.

Students enjoyed collaborating with peers, but were sometimes concerned that they would cement language errors or that no one would correct their mistakes. Yet, almost all of the participants in this study wrote that collaborating with peers was one of the most helpful aspects of the course in their reflection essays. A collaborative approach to using reading strategies and decoding academic texts in groups was perceived as valuable and effective to participants in this study.

By working in pairs or with a group of peers, students were able to share information and help each other break down complex texts. While comparing their answers with peers or working together to write a summary or complete a task, students were able to build on individual knowledge. Students also shared their understanding of various reading strategies and aided each other in using them. Reading comprehension strategies mentioned in student writing throughout the quarter appear in Table 5. Through assessing their own abilities, students were able to plan methods for improving and self-study in the future. Group work enhanced students' meta-cognitive awareness of reading strategies and contributed to self-monitoring.

The value of peer groups and collaboration extended beyond language use, as several wrote that they enjoyed working with their peers. One student wrote early in the quarter that she did not know many people in the United States, but by the end of the quarter she had made many friends (Chen). This enjoyment and interest led to a willingness to participate, and may have also contributed positively to affective (or emotional) aspects of language learning. Collaboration and cross-cultural exchanges provided an opportunity

to exchange knowledge and cultural information, help each other to use reading comprehension strategies, improve reading comprehension skills, foster meta-cognitive awareness, and make language learning in the English 112 course meaningful on a personal level.

<b>Table 5:</b> Reading strategies mentioned in participants' journals and essays between Weeks 2-11										
	Rachel	Chen	Mustafa	Abdul	Hamza	Ahmed	Khalid	Rashid	Saleh	Intern
Skimming		XI	X							X
Scanning		XI	X		X					X
Summarizing	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Rereading	X	X				X	X			
Discussing	X	X	X	X		X			X	X
Guessing				X						X
Dictionary/ Translating		X				X	X	X		
Underline/ Highlight	X	X				X				
Finding the Main idea	XI	X	X	X		I				X
Asking others		X								
Writing new words							X			
Breaking down words	X			X				X		
Breaking down text (chunking)	X	I								
Other					X			X		
<b>X</b> = strategies reported as useful and/or were beneficial <b>I</b> = strategies reported as needing improvement and/or more practice <b>XI</b> = strategies reported as useful/beneficial but still needing improvement/practice										

## **Chapter 7**

### **Conclusion**

This chapter includes the researcher's conclusions, implications, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and final reflections. In Chapter 3, the methodology for this study was outlined, and in Chapters 4 and 5 the collected data was analyzed. Chapter 6 included observations and a discussion of the results of this study, returned to the assumptions listed in Chapter 1, and described the major findings.

#### ***Conclusions***

English language learners studying at the college level often encounter complex academic texts and struggle to decipher the contents or find the main points. While some students may have learned strategies for breaking down difficult reading assignments, many rely on dictionaries or word by word translations (Fuqua, 2015; August, 2011; Mokhatri & Sheorey, 2002). This can lead to several challenges when students enroll in multiple reading or writing intensive courses, as they find it difficult to complete assignments when a significant amount of their time is spent reading, rereading, and consulting a dictionary. It is important for native and non-native speakers of English to be aware of the strategies experienced readers use to decode academic texts. Based on the results of this study, the use of a collaborative approach to introducing and practicing reading comprehension strategies can benefit English language learners.

Students in the English 112: Composition for Multilingual Students class volunteered to participate in this study over an 11-week period during the winter quarter of 2017. As the instructor of record and primary investigator, I developed a curriculum as part of the requirements for the M.A. English/TESL program and was able to use this to teach the

English 112 class. Using an action research approach, I introduced several reading comprehension strategies based on participants' initial journal responses. Under the guidance of Dr. LaVona Reeves, who is the supervisor of the English 112 class and director of the M.A. English/TESL program, I determined which reading strategies might benefit English learners in future courses. While some students felt that the strategies they used were appropriate for their understanding of complex texts, others did not report using a specific strategy other than highlighting or underlining new words, rereading, and checking the meaning of words in a dictionary.

In order to practice using reading comprehension strategies, the instructor adopted a collaborative approach. Based on the research of Kenneth Bruffee (1981; 1984; 1991), Snow & O'Connor (2016), and others, discussion and peer work can facilitate reading comprehension and aid in building writing skills among college-level students and English language learners. When using a collaborative approach to instruction, learners can share knowledge and information, consider various perspectives, practice meaning-making, and make intertextual connections. The use of collaboration can promote a learner-centered environment, which allows students to ask questions and exchange ideas without too much teacher intervention. This fosters deep understanding of a text and aids learners in developing autonomy. The use of collaboration can also mediate anxiety learners might feel about asking for clarification or speaking in front of the class. By practicing reading comprehension strategies in groups, students can help each other to use the strategies, activate schema, and find the main points of a text; thereby sharing or reinforcing knowledge and information.

Throughout the quarter, students enrolled in the English 112 class submitted daily journal responses and essays. Journals and essays written by students who volunteered to participate in this study were collected and analyzed, using a narrative inquiry approach. Six reading-related journals and participants' reflection essays were chosen for analysis. Based on the results of the analysis, the use of collaboration and direct instruction of reading comprehension strategies were viewed as beneficial to participants' understanding of complex texts. At the beginning of the quarter, few students named reading strategies they used when reading academic assignments. However, by the end of the quarter many of the participants reported using several strategies to break down difficult college-level readings assigned in English 112.

Students were not required to use all of the strategies introduced in English 112 when reading, but they were encouraged to try using one or more as they were introduced and practiced each one in groups. Throughout the quarter, participants mentioned at least two or more strategies that they had used and the effect on their reading comprehension (Table 5). Students who were absent due to illness or struggled to keep up with class work for other reasons made little mention of specific reading strategies they found useful in their journals. However, in their reflection essays they did express a desire to continue using the reading strategies they had learned in English 112 and wrote that discussion was useful. Several students reported feeling more confident in their reading abilities or more prepared for future college-level courses. Almost all of the participants (seven out of ten) mentioned specific strategies they would use or continue to improve upon when reading texts in future courses in their final journal responses. Discussion and

collaboration were mentioned in almost all of the participants' reflection essays (nine out of ten), along with the strategies they found to be most beneficial.

After analyzing 54 samples of student writing and data collected from student responses, I determined that the use of collaboration and direct instruction of reading strategies aided students in developing their reading skills. Using a collaborative approach boosted participants' confidence by offering a low-stakes environment in which to practice using the reading strategies and discussing college-level texts. The analysis also yielded information about participants' perspectives of reading. Many students had similar responses to questions regarding their feelings about academic reading. Students wrote that although reading at the college level could be challenging, they believed that it was important for their future success. Students also wrote that although academic reading was something they disliked in general, certain topics could be very interesting. As emotion and interest can significantly impact a student's desire to learn or willingness to communicate, students' complex feelings about academic reading could be of interest to future educators or researchers.

The results of this study demonstrate the importance of collaboration, and the need for a direct approach to guiding students through the process of breaking down complex texts. Through discussion and practice of reading comprehension strategies, students were introduced to several tools they could use in later courses. Each participant in this study developed a plan to continue improving their reading skills in the future. Collaboration was an essential component of the English 112 course, and many students reported that this approach was beneficial to their comprehension of academic texts. Through working with others, students developed their reading comprehension skills and



understanding of the use of reading strategies. Students also gained valuable knowledge and insight from their peers by sharing information and working together to read and write responses to college-level texts.

Although reading is often viewed as a self-contained activity, this study demonstrated the value of reading as a social activity. Using a collaborative approach facilitated language learning in groups and individually. Through self-evaluation, reflecting, planning for future study, and determining areas for improvement, students demonstrated increased meta-cognitive awareness and self-monitoring skills. By practicing reading comprehension strategies collaboratively, students increased their efficiency, shared knowledge and perspectives, improved critical thinking skills, made intertextual connections, and gained several tools for reading complex college-level texts.

### ***Implications***

Based on participants' responses, discussion, summarizing, and finding the main point were reported as the most valuable strategies used in the English 112 class. The implications of using peer and group discussion and collaboration are that they benefit the students more than teacher-centered approaches might, especially when deciphering complex texts. The value of discussion and collaboration has far-reaching implications for English language learners. Although some strategies were reported as challenging for some, almost all participants agreed that collaboration was an asset for learning academic vocabulary and finding the main points in an academic text.

Although Mokhatri & Sheorey (2002) removed discussion and summary writing from their Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS), citing lack of evidence that these could benefit learners, this study demonstrates that students perceive these practices as a major

aspect of their understanding of complex texts. Although these are not a major part of Mokhatri & Sheorey's (2002) SORS, student responses analyzed in this study imply that summary writing can be a valuable strategy for English learners. Participants wrote that summary writing aided them in finding or determining the main points and retaining information from an academic text. Other researchers and educators have found that summary writing can improve students' reading abilities, and aid in developing meta-cognitive awareness of reading and writing strategies (Kuo, Chu & Huang, 2014; Wichadee, 2014; Gao, 2013; Philippot & Graves, 2009). Along with the present study, this research implies that there is some need for summary writing in English language learning environments.

Discussion was also a commonly mentioned aspect of the English 112 course which participants believed was beneficial. In their analysis and assessment of "close reading", which has been used in elementary and secondary education as part of the Common Core Standards, Snow & O'Connor (2016) discuss the value of class discussion. They fear that "close reading" values primarily text-based evidence in reading over other sources of knowledge, and may be leaving English language learners behind (p. 5). English learners can benefit from the exchange of knowledge which occurs when students collaborate and share information. Snow and O'Connor (2016) argue that although the Common Core Standards do include discussion and argumentation, they may avoid discussion that deviates from the text but could provide evidence or add valuable forms of knowledge. The present study also finds that discussion can be a valuable component of reading comprehension, and participants' responses provide personal accounts of the benefits of using less guided forms of discussion in the classroom.

### *Limitations of the Study*

Due to the fact that several students were enrolled in more than one reading-writing intensive course, such as American History, it is difficult to determine whether instruction of reading strategies and collaboration in the English 112 course were the only variables that affected student learning. It was also difficult to determine whether the focus on reading strategies in 112 or other classes caused apprehension to build or lessen as time went on. Feelings of apprehension and anxiety seemed to improve after students learned several reading strategies that could help them to comprehend college-level texts – for example: skimming, scanning, summarizing, finding the main idea, using a KWL chart, and breaking down the text (chunking) or word (morphological approach).

Collaboration and promotion of a learner-centered community in the classroom might also have mitigated the feelings of anxiety or apprehension that students reported at the beginning of the quarter. Seven out of ten students reported that their reading abilities had improved through the direct instruction of comprehension strategies, and all students reported plans to continue building their reading and writing skills in the future. At least two students reported feeling unprepared or less than confident in their abilities in their reflection essays; however, three others reported increased confidence and wrote that they felt prepared for English 101 upon completion of the course.

Although nine students enrolled in the English 112 class and one graduate intern in the M.A. English/TESL program participated in this study, several did not submit responses to the six journals chosen for analysis. All students submitted a reflection essay as part of their final portfolio, a requirement for successful completion of the course, however lack of certain student voices or responses can be viewed as a limitation. Stricter requirements

may have aided in collecting full data sets, but many students were absent due to illness or severe weather conditions during the winter quarter. Those who were absent submitted their journals at a later time, or did not submit a journal for one or more of the six journals chosen for analysis. Their perspectives would have offered further insight as to the overall benefits or challenges students encountered when reading at the college level or using the strategies introduced in the English 112 course. A larger group of volunteers or a longer study would provide valuable information about students' experiences and perspectives, as well as additional data for comparison.

### ***Recommendations for Future Research***

After collecting and analyzing data from each participant, it was determined that the use of a collaborative approach to using reading comprehension strategies was beneficial to most of the participants in this study. More research into the use of collaborative activities to promote reading comprehension would provide more information as to how this approach may be useful across disciplines. Research into the use of specific reading strategies practiced over a longer period of time could also determine further benefits or challenges to using them. While one strategy may have been viewed as beneficial to one student, it could be challenging to another. Determining the reasons for participants' polarity regarding views of specific strategies could be insightful for educators and researchers.

Further studies into building confidence in English language learners and motivation to use language skills would also benefit educators seeking to reduce apprehension or anxiety. Discussion and collaboration can be valuable, but if tension in a group could lead to an increase in anxiety and decreased willingness to participate. In the English 112

class, students reported satisfaction with their group assignments and the ability to choose peer groups for daily activities. Any tension beyond the initial conflict between two students described in Chapter 5 was not reported, but that does not mean tension did not arise. Research into group dynamics would be beneficial to educators seeking to use a collaborative approach in their language classes, as would ways to deescalate tensions in groups should they arise.

Students reported that they enjoyed when the instructor or others read the course book, *Between Two Worlds: A Story about Pearl S. Buck*, and supplementary readings aloud. Each week, I read one or two paragraphs from the course book or reading packets aloud to the students, then asked for volunteers to read the next several paragraphs. While I was reading or while volunteers were reading, I would periodically stop to ask questions and check comprehension. Students wrote that they enjoyed this exercise because sometimes they could understand the text better if it were read aloud, especially if they knew a word but did not recognize it in written form. This exercise is called a *read aloud protocol*, and more research into this area could be beneficial for further developing learners' metacognitive awareness of reading strategies and self-monitoring. During a read aloud protocol, students read a text aloud and explain their understanding of the contents, while describing the strategies they are using to read. This can be done in person or electronically, as Canvas and other learning management systems can record students' voices. Instructors could listen, mark the text, and reflect on students' comprehension and repeat the recording as necessary. This would also provide an opportunity for apprehensive students to record themselves in a comfortable space, without fear of mispronouncing new terms in front of classmates.

Finally, as most participants in this study reported that academic texts could be boring or were uninteresting at times, surveying students early in the course about their reading habits and genres they enjoy reading about could lead to higher levels of engagement in the course readings. Many students reported that the course book and materials in the English 112 class were very interesting; however, surveying students early in the quarter and developing or sourcing materials based on genres or topics they enjoy may lead to increased interest in determining the main points of a text. The research provided through this study sheds light on the use of collaboration to facilitate reading, which is usually viewed as a solitary activity; however, through participants' responses the use of a collaborative approach proved to be helpful for increasing reading comprehension skills and promoting the use of reading comprehension strategies.

### ***Final Reflections***

Reflecting on the quarter, I realize that I was in an enviable position as the curriculum writer and instructor of record for the English 112 course. After designing the curriculum in the English 581 class, as part of the requirements of the M.A. English/TESL program, I had the opportunity to teach the curriculum and use the materials I created under the direction of Dr. LaVona Reeves, who was my advisor and the supervisor of the English 112 course. Starting with an idea for a research question and a short biography about Pearl S. Buck, I was able to create an 11-week curriculum that explored a variety of sociocultural issues - gender, disabilities, living between two cultures and others [Appendix C]. By working with learners who volunteered to share their writing and ideas with me over several weeks, I was able to investigate the effectiveness of reading comprehension strategies over time. Further, I was elated to learn that students enjoyed

reading about Pearl S. Buck and discussing social and historical issues. The fact that Pearl lived “between two worlds” and two cultures was a concept that students could relate to, and I believe this may have stimulated more interest in the topics we covered in the English 112 class.

I was also fortunate to have a small class size. Although input from many learners would be valuable, having fewer students enrolled in the class allowed me the opportunity to get to know the learners in my class on a personal level. As the primary investigator, instructor of record, and a participant-observer, I became familiar with students through their writing, class discussions, and meetings during office hours. Having a small class size may have also contributed to the sense of community among the writers in class, who were comfortable exchanging ideas and sharing experiences with each other by the end of the quarter. I appreciate the opportunity to work with the participants and students in English 112, and feel that I have learned a lot about the student experience from their writing.

Through writing daily journals and Friday essays, participating in activities, and completing assignments in the English 112 course, most students made noteworthy progress in building their language skills and writing abilities. At first, students were nervous about speaking up in class; however, by Week 10 very little instructor intervention or facilitation of whole class discussions was necessary. The final presentation week was particularly lively, as students presented on issues they had researched while others asked questions or discussed what they had learned. Students’ interest in discussion with peers and willingness to participate allowed for the creation of

epistemic space, which is crucial for learner development, as well as a turning over of power from the instructor to the students.

If given the opportunity in the future, I would use the curriculum I designed again with very few changes to content. I would survey students about their areas of interest earlier in the quarter and incorporate more of these areas into discussions and assignments.

Technology and music were two interests students wrote about in their journal responses and reflection essays, so I plan to incorporate these subjects into future classes. I would also use the course book again, but I would probably use shorter sections from each biography in the supplementary reading packets as students reported that these took a considerable amount of time to complete. However, reading several different accounts of Pearl's life did offer valuable practice critically analyzing sources of information and comparing authors' rhetorical strategies and choices. Although it would be ideal if an intermediate-level biography with less than 250 pages (Spurling, 2010; Conn, 1996) but more than 64 pages (Mitchell, 1988) were available, students were able to think critically about accounts of Pearl S. Buck's life through inclusion of sections from several biographies in the weekly reading packets. While reading the course book, students compared accounts written by three different authors and Pearl Buck herself. Reading several accounts allowed for interesting discussions and observations about authors' rhetorical strategies, as well as inclusions and exclusions of people and events in different texts; however, these issues might not have been as evident if only one course book was used.

Looking back, I appreciate the opportunity to use the curriculum and materials I developed, and the chance to work with English learners in the English 112 class.



Through the English 581 class, I learned how to put together a curriculum that touched on each aspect of comprehension: reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing.

Through two internships in the English 112 class, I developed a research question and learned about the importance of journaling. Studying and analyzing students' journal responses and other writing assignments enhanced my understanding of their experiences and their motivations for studying English. Without their verbal feedback and written responses, it would have been difficult to determine the effectiveness of the reading strategies I introduced in the course, as well as their thoughts and feelings.

I will be forever grateful to the students in the English 112 class for sharing their perspectives on reading and learning a second language. Through their work and words, I learned that there are many challenges students face both inside and outside of the classroom and that each learner has both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations which influence their drive to become better readers, writers, and speakers of English. Whether their goal was to find employment after school, work hard for their families, or work for the betterment of their countries or themselves, the students in the English 112 classes exhibited an admirable drive to continue learning. As teachers of English, we should consider the best methods or practices to serve our students and ensure that they have the tools they need to move forward in school and in life.

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## Appendix A

### Consent Form for Graduate Thesis Research

Teaching the Biography of Pearl S. Buck:  
Developing Collaborative Reading Strategies for Multilingual Writers

You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted by:

Principal Investigator & Instructor of Record	Responsible Project Investigator
Nichole La Torre Master of Arts in English/TESL Student English Department Hargreaves Hall 013 Cheney, WA 99004 Email: <a href="mailto:nlatorre@ewu.edu">nlatorre@ewu.edu</a> , <a href="mailto:nlatorre@eagles.ewu.edu">nlatorre@eagles.ewu.edu</a>	Dr. LaVona Reeves MA-TESL Program Director English Department Patterson Hall 211I Cheney, WA 99004 Phone: (509) 359-7060 Email: <a href="mailto:lreeves@ewu.edu">lreeves@ewu.edu</a>

**Purpose and Benefits:** The purpose of this study is to describe the challenges English language learners encounter when reading academic texts. Students enrolled in the English 112 course will read a biography about Pearl S. Buck as the basis for writing, reading, listening, speaking and viewing activities throughout the quarter. Journals, essays, and handouts will be collected and analyzed in order to assess student responses to collaborative reading strategies. This research will contribute to the field of existing knowledge in the use of collaborative strategies to facilitate English language learning at the college level.

**Procedures:** I am asking you to allow me to include in my master's thesis selections or quotations from your journals, essays, and handouts. These assignments are completed as part of the standard requirements for the English 112 course. Journals, essays, and handouts will be collected throughout the quarter, and an analysis of your writing and assessment of your reading skills will be completed as part of the thesis research. If you choose to participate in this study, your name will not appear in the thesis. You will be assigned a random number, letter, or name, and identifying information will be removed. This project fulfills requirements for the Master of Arts in English with an emphasis in Teaching English as a Second Language.

**Risk, Stress or Discomfort:** If you choose not to participate in this study, none of your writings will be included in the thesis. However, due to the course requirements, your writings will still be collected and graded as usual. Whether or not you participate in this research, allowing me to analyze and use your writings, or to quote you is totally voluntary. Therefore, your decision will not affect your grade in English 112 in any way. The risks of participating in this study are not expected to exceed those encountered in daily life. Your writing will appear in the master's thesis only with your written permission. Although you are required to submit the journals, essays, and handouts as part of the English 112 course, you are not required to participate in this study. If you choose not to participate this will not affect your grade in English 112.

**Other Information:** Participation is voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Only Ms. La Torre and Dr. Reeves will know your real name and they will not share it in any part of this study. Any writing collected for this study will be kept confidential and your name will not appear anywhere in the master's thesis. Participation in this study will not affect your grade in the English 112 course.

Nichole La Torre

Primary Investigator

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date



## Consent Form for Graduate Thesis Research

Please return this form only if you are participating:

Yes, I will participate.

The study described above has been explained to me, and I voluntarily consent to participate in graduate thesis research. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and understand the intended use of this research. I give permission to record selections or quotations from my journals, essays, and handouts as part of this research, however no identifying information including my name will be shared. I understand that by signing this form I am not waiving my legal rights. I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this form.

---

Student's printed name

Signature of Subject

Date

Yes, Nichole La Torre has my permission to reproduce selections of my written work including journals, essays, and handouts from the English 112 course in her thesis:

---

Student's printed name

Signature of Subject

Date

If you have any concerns about your rights as a participant in this research or any complaints you wish to make, you may contact Ruth Galm, Human Protection Administrator, at (509) 359-6567 or [rgalm@ewu.edu](mailto:rgalm@ewu.edu).

## Appendix B

### Collaborative reading process handout

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

In groups, follow the process and discuss the answers to these questions:

- 1) Read the title of the article. What do you already know about this topic?
- 2) Read the headings of the article. What do you think this article will be about?
- 3) Read the first few paragraphs to **find the 5 W's**: Who, what, when, where, why
- 4) Read the text and **underline or mark** areas for clarification.
- 5) **Discuss** the parts you underlined as a group
- 6) **Ask** your group members or instructor for further clarification and **reread** as necessary.
- 7) Look at the prompt and decide if you should use **skimming or scanning** to find the answer(s) to the prompt.
- 8) **Summarize and discuss** the text or parts of the text out loud to clarify the author's meaning or purpose before working on the prompt.
- 9) **Answer the questions** in the prompt individually
- 10) **Discuss** your answers as a group

## Appendix C

### Course Overview

Week	<b>Between Two Worlds</b> (main course book) Barbara Mitchell	<b>Pearl Buck in China</b> Hillary Spurling	Supplementary Readings	Themes
1	<b>Chapter 1</b>	Chp 1 p. 1,6-10 (Intro & family) (5)		<b>Storytellers &amp; Family</b>
2	<b>Chapter 1-2</b>	Chp 1 p. 22-23 (living conditions), 54-55 (reading habit) (4)	<b>Buck:</b> p. 20-22 (food), 33-36 (1900)	<b>Childhood memories &amp; Description</b>
3	<b>Chapter 2</b>	Chp 2 p. 50-52 (Kung warning), , 58-59 (Kuling) (5)	<b>Buck:</b> p. 50 (Teacher Kung), 52 (mental bifocals)	<b>Teachers &amp; Influence</b>
4	<b>Chapter 3</b>	Chp 3 p. 70-72 (Randolph Macon), 79-82 (1911, Carie's illness) (6)	<b>Buck:</b> p. 94-95 (experience at Randolph Macon) <b>Conn:</b> p. 53-54 (after graduation)	<b>“Mental bifocals” &amp; “Double consciousness” New beginnings</b>
5	<b>Chapter 3-4</b>	Chp 4 p. 92-93 (Lossing) 97-98 (surveying), 103-104 (married life) (6)	<b>Conn:</b> p. 61-62	<b>Marriage &amp; Gender roles</b>
6	<b>Chapter 4</b>	Chp 5 p. 126-127 (decides to write) 147-150 (Carol) 181-183 (Vineland school)(9)	<b>Buck:</b> 249-250 (bringing Carol to the US) Or <b>Conn:</b> 176	<b>Disabilities &amp; Pearl Buck's daughter, Carol</b>
7	<b>Chapter 5</b>	Chp 5p. 152-154 (Nanjing uprising) Chp 6 p. 162-163 (refugees), 178-179(tension), (8)	<b>Buck:</b> 206-208 (Nanjing uprising)	<b>Helping others &amp; Service to others</b>
8	<b>Chapter 5-6</b>	Chp 7 p. 193-196 (response to work)197-200 (raising funds for famine) 217-218 (criticism) (8)	<b>Conn:</b> 131 or 238-240	<b>Dreams &amp; Future plans – Pearl fulfills her dream of writing</b>
9	<b>Chapter 6</b>	Chp 7 219-222 (RW and Green Hills) 229-231 (1938-54) (6)	<b>Buck:</b> 347-349 (Nobel reception)	<b>Dealing with criticism &amp; Overcoming obstacles</b>
10		<b>Postscript</b> (Ss assigned sections of the last chapter- pages will be divided equally)		<b>Student Presentations: Pearl Buck's life 1935-1972</b>

**Appendix D****KWL Chart**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Pre-reading</b>	
What I already know:	What I need to know:
<b>Post-reading</b>	
What I learned:	What I would like to learn more about:

## Appendix E

### List of Daily Journals

#### Journal 1.1 – Week 1, Day 1

##### Introductions:

Follow this prompt for your journal response:

1. What is your name? Where are you from?
2. What should others know about you?
  - a. What is your major?
  - b. What are you interested in (specifically)?
3. How would you describe your hometown?
4. What makes you proud of your hometown or your country?
5. Is there something that your hometown is famous for?
6. What is something someone new to your town/country should know?

#### Journal 1.2 - Week 1, Day 2

**Prompt:** Who have been the major storytellers in your life? You can write about someone in your family, a friend, or someone else who has influenced you:

#### Journal 2.2 - Week 2, Day 2

**Prompt:** What do you know about the year 1900? In your country or in the U.S.?

#### Journal 2.3 - Week 2, Day 3

**Prompt:** Have you ever tried to “learn a memory secondhand”? Do you have any family traditions about food or cooking that are passed from elders to the younger generation? When does your family eat together? Do you ever eat separately?

#### Journal 2.4 - Week 2, Day 4

**Prompt:** What do you do when you are required to read a difficult or complex piece of writing? Do you use any reading strategies? Explain your process:

#### Journal 3.1 - Week 3, Day 1

**Prompt:** Write about something good that has happened to you lately (or something you are excited about that is coming up).

**Journal 3.2 - Week 3, Day 2**

**Prompt:** Draw a Venn diagram. Write about what you know about China and the U.S. in the 1900's. Compare/Contrast

**Journal 3.3 - Week 3, Day 3**

**Prompt:** What is "reading for academic purposes"? How do you feel about it?

**Journal 3.4 - Week 3, Day 4**

**Prompt:** Describe the teacher who influenced you. What did they look like? What about them will you always remember? Write a description and draw a picture.

**Journal 4.1 - Week 4, Day 1**

**Prompt:** What do you hope to accomplish by the end of the quarter? What do you hope to improve?

**Journal 4.2 - Week 4, Day 2**

**Prompt:** What were your thoughts and feelings when you first arrived in the U.S.?

**Journal 4.3 - Week 4, Day 3**

**Prompt:** What do you think about the quote by Jamaica Kincaid? How might this relate to topics we discussed this week? Explain or describe:

**Journal 4.4 - Week 4, Day 4**

**Prompt:** Do you feel like you are becoming "mentally bifocal"?

**Journal 5.1 - Week 5, Day 1**

**Prompt:** What is considered men's work or woman's work in your country? How does women's work change after marriage?

**Journal 5.2 - Week 5, Day 2**

**Prompt:** How did women's roles change in your country during the 20<sup>th</sup> century? Make a list of changes. Give examples. Use a cell phone, laptop, e-reader or other electronic device to research information about women in your country.

**Journal 5.3 - Week 5, Day 3**

**Prompt:** Make a prediction: What do you think will happen when Pearl returns to China?

**Journal 5.4 - Week 5, Day 4**

**Prompt:** When people get married in your home country, what do they do? What is a traditional wedding ceremony like? What is a modern wedding ceremony like? Describe:

**Journal 6.1 - Week 6, Day 1**

**Prompt:** What do you do in your home country when a child is born? Is there a party or event? Do you do anything special for the mother or the baby?

**Journal 6.2 - Week 6, Day 2**

**Prompt:** Write about a problem you have solved or an obstacle you have overcome.

**Journal 6.3 - Week 6, Day 3**

**Prompt:** How is your academic reading coming along? Do you have questions? What is positive/negative about your experience?

**Journal 6.4 - Week 6, Day 4**

**Prompt:** What words helped you through a difficult situation? What advice or encouragement have you heard from others? What advice would you give to others?

**Journal 7.1 - Week 7, Day 1**

**Prompt:** Was there a time when you needed help, or a time when you helped others (friends, family and strangers, or volunteer work)?

**Journal 7.2 - Week 7, Day 2**

**Prompt:** Respond to the quote by Barack Obama: Do you agree or disagree? Are we our “brother’s and sister’s keeper”?

**Journal 7.3 - Week 7, Day 3**

**Prompt:** Respond to the quote by Jeremy Collier. What does he mean? Do you agree or disagree?

**Journal 7.4 - Week 7, Day 4**

**Prompt:** Choose one or two lines of the poem “Risk” by William Arthur Ward. What interests you about these lines? Explain:

**Journal 8.1 - Week 8, Day 1**

**Prompt:** Respond to the poem by Sam Garland. Choose at least 2 lines and explain why you chose them:

**Journal 8.2 - Week 8, Day 2**

**Prompt:** What do you do when faced with criticism? Can criticism ever be a good thing (beneficial)?

**Journal 8.3 - Week 8, Day 3**

**Prompt:** What do you do when you feel down or depressed? How do you fill yourself or others with hope?

**Journal 8.4 - Week 8, Day 4**

**Prompt:** Describe what you think is happening in the photo “The Critic” by Weegee. Consider what we have learned about the Great Depression and the 1930’s and 1940’s in the United States.

**Journal 9.1 - Week 9, Day 1**

**Prompt:** What are the benefits and challenges to using the reading strategies we have discussed?

**Journal 9.2 - Week 9, Day 2**

“To know how to read is to light a lamp in the mind, to release the soul from prison, to open a gate to the universe.”

(Pearl Buck, *Pavilion of Women*, p. 292)

**Two-part journal prompt:**

1. How do you feel about reading? What do you think about the quote above?
2. Do you feel prepared for reading in English 101? What will you do to prepare?

**Journal 9.3 - Week 9, Day 3**

**Prompt:** What is your dream? How do you plan to achieve it?



**Journal 9.4 - Week 9, Day 4**

**Choose one** prompt to respond to (or both if there is enough time):

- a) What is your favorite genre/type of book you like to read?
- b) What type/genre of reading or writing will you use in your future career?

**Journal 10.1 - Week 10, Day 1**

**Prompt:** Now that we're almost finished with the quarter and presentations, what 3 questions do you have about the years of 1940-1975 or the rest of Pearl Buck's life?

**Journal 10.2 - Week 10, Day 2**

**Prompt:** Write your own "I am from poem". Use Mary Pipher's example and my example as a guide.

**Journal 10.3 - Week 10, Day 3**

**Prompt:** Choose one or two quotes by Pearl S. Buck and write about what they mean to you.

**Journal 10.4 - Week 10, Day 4**

**Write a two-part journal about the skills you would like to improve:**

- a) What skills would you like to improve as an English learner?
- b) What skills would you like to gain or improve in your lifetime?

## Appendix F

### Journals analyzed in the present study

#### *Journal 2.4 – Week 2, Day 4*

**Prompt:** *What do you do when you are required to read a difficult or complex piece of writing? Do you use any reading strategies? Explain your process:*

*Writers' responses:*

*Rachel:* When sometimes I required to read a difficult text; first I read the whole text underlining words that are difficult for me. I don't look for the definition of difficult words at each paragraph. I read twice or three times the text to see what I can understand without the explanation of difficult words. With that method, I often understand the meanings of difficult words without checking in the dictionary and then it's also more easy to retain them. What facilitate more the comprehension of a difficult text is to locate the main idea and to know the context of the text.

Word count: 102

*Chen:* When I am required to read a difficult text I'm often following some strategies below:

- 1) I would like to know about the background of the text, the autor, and overview
- 2) I'm willing to underline the vocabularies I don't know, then I will figure them out using dictionary when I finish one or two chapters.
- 3) Then I highlight some sentences and words that I like.
- 4) Finally, I can ask my friends or teachers if I still can't understand some context or sentences. And I'd like to share what I got with them.

Word count: 95

*Mustafa:* There are some of important ways to read any text.  
 First, we should figret out mine idea for book or article. Because if we know the mine idea, we will know what the articl about.  
 Second, skim is very important way to save your time and figret out some important details.  
 Finally scan is also important to find any date or name very fast.

Word count: 64

*Abdul:* As English is the second language to me, so some time I face difficity text. I like to read a newspaper. But it is very difficlte to me. When I see world that I don't know I try to guess the meaning, and it help me. I think the best idea if you face difficity reading text, is to guesse the world.

Word count: 62

*Ahmed:* Off course, some of international students have difficult to read a text. When I get this proplem while I am reading. First, I will read the hall of text without translate for the vocabulary. Even know, I haven't understand it. Next, I will go throw the text again, and I will make underline for those difficult vocabularies. Than, I must to translate them. The third time far reading will let me understand more than the first time. So I recomend for

all student whom have difficult for reading any kind of text. The student shald do these stef to let them understand clear.

Word count: 103

*Khalid:* Reading sometimes is difficult espically when you read something in academic formal language. For example, my native language is Arabic and my problem was defined the academic words. I could solve the problem by following some strategies, which is skipping the word or the sentence and write it down on a separate paper than I keep reading the whole chapter until I finish it. When I finish reading, I return back to the sentences or the words which I wrote it down and try to do search and find the meaning. I think this strategy is approprite for me.

Word count: 99

*Rashid:* If I read a difficult text I have some strategy to do. First I'll break up the text to make easy. Second, I will dictionary that help when I read.

Word count: 30

### ***Journal 3.3 - Week 3, Day 3***

***Prompt:*** What is "reading for academic purposes"? How do you feel about it?

*Writers' responses:*

*Rachel:* Reading for academic purposes as its name indicate is a reading class which purposes are to strengthen non-English native students skills in university reading and to help those students to be familiarize with more difficult words. It helps students to be at ease whenever they are in front of an university class reading. They are more confident. I'm so glad to have to take this class. I'm seeing it like a kind of facilitator of our transition, the transition from class in our native languages to class in English. I think that so far, it's very helpful and I'm happy that E.W.U. has instaured something like that.

Word count: 107

*Chen:* For me, reading for academic has two purposes - preview and review. If you are willing to be good at some of subjects, I think you love to prepare something before the class. For examples, you need to read for academic to figure out what you are going to learn, what the content is, what the main idea is and so on. On the other hand, sometimes teachers hardly tell you all the details about what you're leaning, then you should look up academic books to review and find answees that you were confused before. However, I feel that I'm getting used to the way I learn, and it helps me to study well.

Word count: 114

*Mustafa:* In my opinion, the most academic purposes made me interested is Psychology for many reason.

First, if we want to know how other people feel at us in the first impression, use should know the part of psychology. For example, if you meet someone in the first time, he or she will make how the relationship between you and them. So, if the first meet was good, the relationship will be successful. However, if it was negative, the relation will be unsuccessful.

Word count: 82

*Abdul:* Reading the best way to develop your knowledge as we know if we in university you have to read for academic purpose some time it is hard to read academic text, but you have to. I hate academic reading but I believe reading will raise my knowledge. So I have to read. Reading is important to every one in this life, because without it we can't do any things. If you want to study you have to read. Also, if you want to work with our problems and to get out of mistakes we have to read. In short I think life will be hard without reading, and if you want to make it easier just read.

Word count: 117

*Hamza:* I believe that reading for academic purpose it is completely different too other purpose, "fun in free time" academic purpose needs to be more specific and more in academic way. Also academic methods such as scanning or skimming are different.

What I feel about it is that can be exciting same time especially if it take about attract me.

Word count: 59

*Ahmed:* Well, There are many ways for reading. For example, reading for fun or sometime we have to read article that we take in Eastren. These articles are academic. The Second type is reading journal or reading for fun. Also, the reading has lots of amazing benefits and skills for the reader. In my opinion any one who can read, he or she can study, or get job. I think no one can have job without reading. I mean people can not get job if they can not read or write. We should let the children love reading from the beginning of their elementary school because reading can help the children to let them improve their skills.

Word count: 116

*Rashid:* Reading for academic purpose mean that you read about something that you want to know or most likely teacher assign by your teacher. Academic things seem to be hard because of words content or formal.

I feel good and happy because that it helps me to be educated to understand things. Even so it sometimes looks hard but it would great in the end.

Word count: 64

*Mohammad (intern):* Reading for academic purpose is when I read to get information to write answers or for school. Reading for academic can not be for fun because we need more focusing and analyzing. I think textbook authors want to write more hard to teach student to analyze. I hate to read text-books, but I love reading in the same time.

Word count: 59

### ***Journal 6.3 - Week 6, Day 3***

***Prompt:*** How is your academic reading coming along? Do you have questions? What is positive/negative about your experience?

*Writers' responses:*

*Rachel:* This quarter I don't have a lot of academic reading like the last quarter. My main academic reading for this quarter is the one of my English 112 class. So far, I think that I'm doing good but I don't know what my professor is thinking about my performance. The reading packages of the English 112 are average for me, they are not too easy neither too difficult. Also the professor helps us with many tips and the comprehension part is very helpful to fully master the reading. Personally I don't have any questions everything

is going pretty good and if a question come along I'll go talk with the professor about that. The positive thing about this experience is that I'm improving either my reading and writing skills; my vocabulary also is becoming better.

Word count: 135

*Chen:* My academic reading is quite useful and complicated, sometimes I have to read word by word if I need to figure out some concepts and phrases. I think one of the positive experience is I am able to know about many academic words and improve my ability that I can read long sentences and articles. The negative experience might be I have to spend a lots of time studying it. However, once I could get used to reading academic articles or textbooks, I was able to read quicker than before, and it was easier to understand the academic books and articles.

Word count: 101

*Mustafa:* If I want to talk about how is academic reading in the U.S., I should tell my story when I came to the U.S. First of all, I came to the U.S. since 2015, and I started studying English at SCC. In that time my teache was face for reading and writing. So, I was start with easier story, but after four weeks this reading became more diffecelt because the vocablarie were more academic. So, in the first time I wondered why we use academic vocabularies because we don't use them for speaking. I realized that we always use them when we want writing or inside college. So, academic vocablary is important to us because we can't write or understand what we read in college.

Word count: 125

*Abdul:* I have read a lot of academic reading and every time I read, I have difficulte reading time. I don't like to read, but some time I have to read. Also I have to improve my skills in reading and vocabulary. If I have questions I always ask google and it give me all the information that I need.

Word count: 59

*Hamza:* My academic reading has been increasing since I started English 112. Do I have questions? Yes, please. How can I improve my reading summary? One positive thing I have had experience with is that when I read about exac story or topic from different writer is extermily helpful because that help my understanding and my reading skills. I do not have negative experience until this moment!

Word count: 66

*Khalid:* Reading is important skill that student has to earn it. At the same time, reading help to succeed. Everything has been related to reading. For Example, most of professors ask student to read to be able to finish their homework. Reading also will affect in person's life. It helps the reader be knowledge. It helps the person to be aware of different subjects. It helps also to be a good writer because by reading a lot, you will earn a different writing strategies. Improved focus and concertation, vocabulary expansion, and memory improvement, these skills will the reader earn by reading a lot.

Word count: 102

*Rashid:* My reading is starting to get hard as we get close from final exam.

Word count: 14

*Mohammad (intern):* My reading enhanced because of three reasons. First, I learned from my teacher, who is Nichole La Torre, some strategies such as skim and scan strategy, and

read topic sentence and conclusion sentence for every paragraph. Second reason is practicing reading with my teacher, Nichole La Torre. She was reading to the class aloud, as we read silently follow her. In addition, Nichole La Torre taught us to use KWL chart to analysis the reading text. I learned from her how to facilitate the reading for ESL students. Nichole La Torre recommended us to read, and we should not stop if we don't understand the meaning of the word, and we should guess the meaning from the context.

Word count: 118

### ***Journal 9.1 - Week 9, Day 1***

***Prompt:*** *What are the benefits and challenges to using the reading strategies we have discussed?*

*Writers' responses:*

***Rachel:*** In English 112, we have talked about many strategies for an effective reading, some of them are breaking down long words, summarizing, find the main idea and discussing in groups. Those strategies had helped me a lot in my reading this quarter. The reading strategies helped me understand quickly what I am reading, my vocabulary had grown, and I am more confident to find the main idea and to understand something I'm reading. I don't think I have challenges again as the reading strategies learned are so helpful for me, however, some readings are so complex that I have to check the meaning of some very difficult words and access my own formal knowledges about the subject to understand the reading package.

Word count: 123

***Chen:*** I have some challenges to using the reading strategies, for example, when I read academic essay or book, I often have problems that is complex and long sentences. It's really difficult for me to understand, if I just scan or skim them, I have to read them word by word, and read them very carefully. Even though sometimes I could break down the words and sentences, it's still spending my time a lot. However, there are some benefits to writing strategies. I improve my reading skills and enrich my words. Also, I am able to summarize the main idea of articles. Sometimes maybe I can't understand the meaning of every words in the article, but I can catch the main idea and know what the article is talking about. This is a good experience.

Word count: 134

***Mustafa:*** The good strategies to using the reading for me is summarizing. Summary make me feel or understand any reading more than other strategies. Because, if I use summarizing I be save the important information. For example, I always use summarizing after I read any novels to remember what I read it about. Also, if I discuss with my group about something, I will be more strong information.

Word count: 67

***Abdul:*** I benefits from what we had studed about learning strategies a lot. If I do the reading strategies, the reading is becoming easier and I can find the main idea faster and understand it. Also, if see long word, I try to breake it down. That help me to understand long word. All students should learn there strategies and use them while they are reading. The strategies is three and they are: breaking down the long word, find the main idea and summarizing. I think the best on is to find the main idea because if you find it, you will know what the reading talke about.

Word count: 107

*Ahmed:* The dicssing in groups is one of the best benefits for reading strategies. For example, last dicssing was talking about reading packets. It was how to get the negativies and obsities things, so we were finding the sentenes me and my group so fast. In conclusion, I want to mension dicssing with group better than working by your self espicsally in reading strategies.

Word count: 63

*Rashid:* The benefits of the reading strategies is that I will understand all the reading with more than one strategy. In the beginning some of the strategies are hard but after awhile it will be easy.

Word count: 35

*Mohammad (intern):* I learned from Nichole La Torre in the class English 112 some of reading strategies, and I'm a graduate student. I have many homework in my program. For example, I have to read articles, textbooks, and looking for sources. I became knowing my goal after I learned the strategies, I do not take more time to find the main ideas, and I... [stopped writing to help a student].

Word count: 68

### ***Journal 9.2 - Week 9, Day 2***

*"To know how to read is to light a lamp in the mind, to release the soul from prison, to open a gate to the universe."*

*(Pearl Buck, Pavilion of Women, p. 292)*

#### ***Two-part journal prompt:***

- 1. How do you feel about reading? What do you think about the quote above?*
- 2. Do you feel prepared for reading in English 101? What will you do to prepare?*

#### ***Writers' responses:***

*Rachel:* I think that reading is very amazing, as you are an effective reader, you have a plus over those who don't read. Reading leads us to be more open-minded, we access more knowledges and we are more creative or imaginative which can help us in many situations. Peal Buck's quote about reading is so true because reading is be open to other views, be lose in imaginary and or wonderful worlds and being more wise than those who don't read or don't know how to read.

For the reading in English 101, I can say that I am prepared. I'm feeling prepared through all the reading strategies we had learned in this English 112 class. I think I just have to follow all the instructions about reading we had accessed this quarter in order to be more ready for the English 101.

Word count: 143

*Chen:* As for me, I always think reading can help people change their life, because you are able to know about other life you never experience, and you have chance to enter another life. Then, you will have different ideas and perspectives. As Pearl said, "reading is to light a lamp in the mind, to release the soul from prison, to open a gate to the universe". Because of reading, we can see the truth and inside of us.

I notice that we have to read a lot in English 101, and it will be sort of difficult than English 112. I will spend much time reading for English 101, and improving my skills.

Word count: 113

*Mustafa:* Bersonality, I have intersiting about reading if the topic is intrsiting. Also, I like write any quote about “Don’t give up” or about future because that make me heartiness and optimism. I thing, I’m prepared for English 101 because when I was study at SFCC, my teacher recommended that I’m ready to get English 101. But in EWU I didn’t get placement test. So, I’m getting now 112 with my good teacher La Torre. Also, I will do more practice for reading and writing.

Word count: 84

*Abdul:* I did not like reading, but unfortunately I have to. I’m agree with this quote because reading is important. Reading can open your mind an make you understand meny things around you. Also people how read a lot have good life. I will take English 101 nexst quarter, so I have to read to prepare for it. I had read a lot to prepared for it. I believe reading is my guide in this life. “book the best friend”.

Word count: 79

*Hamza:* (1) I feel reading is that the soul, everyone in the plants needs to do it. I think the quote above is true. Human should keep reading everytime in order to see something might not see it in normal universe. (2) Not reall keep reading academic handbook or textbook.

Word count: 49

*Mohammad (intern):* I agree with Pearl Buck that reading is a gate to the universe. We want to be educated to be human. By reading, we will do all what we want. The world is big and we can contact with all people ideas by reading. The reading is the food for brains, and we can nuturate our brains by reading as we nuturate our bodies by food.

Word count: 67

#### ***Journal 9.4 - Week 9, Day 4***

***Choose one prompt to respond to (or both if there is enough time):***

- a) *What is your favorite genre/type of book you like to read?*
- b) *What type/genre of reading or writing will you use in your future career?*

*Writers’ responses:*

*Rachel:* I used to read a lot but now I don’t read too much like before. My favorite type of book is mystery, however I like reading every type of books except romance one’s; I don’t know why but I quickly get bored of them whenever I tried to read one. Mystery books are my favorite because it involves the reader, as you have to guess what is coming next, who is the murderer or something like that; you have to be involved to see if you can resolve the mystery and that makes the reading very fun. Talking about my future career, I don’t really know what type of reading and writing I’ll be doing but considering my major I can guess that it will be legal documents.

Word count: 128

*Chen:* There is a genre of book will help me in my future career, which is very professional book – accounting book. Because of my major, I have to read more books about my major to improve my knowledge. Actually, these books are always complex and boring. I would like to read non-fiction, fiction, novel, and a few short articles which are meaningful and interesting. Comparing to the different types of books, the first one that I



have to read, another one is what I really like. For me, the professional book I always have to focus on my attention, but the novels I just relax myself and find the fun of books.

Word count: 111

*Mustafa:* The most interesting reading in my life is about a technology. Because we live in 21<sup>st</sup>, so we have many of technologies in our life. The clean energy the most important part in my favorite topic technology. I like to research about it because I want to create something unique in future such as, energy by sands because my country Saudi Arabia has deserts more than any countries. I wish I have chance to make it in future. Also, I want make clean energy by humidity because my weather in my city is very humidity!

Word count: 96

*Abdul:* In my future career I want to be a manager so that request a lot of reading and writing. To be a manager of a big company, I have to read a lot of file and I have to understand them. Also I have to read the news every day and read my mail. In addition, my position request a lot of writing time. I have to write to the employees what they should do. Writing and reading will be one things in my job. I like to read books but not the speech. I like to read about sports and something interesting that I enjoy while I'm reading it.

Word count: 110

*Ahmed:* I learned a lots of types in my life. For the best type of writing that I am going to do in my future career. I will do the organization for my writing career like the essay, introduction, bodies, and the conclusion at the end of my writing. Also, my favorite type of book is fiction. For example, I used to read book for tv show, after that I watched the tv show. The book is a Turkish language, but the writer translate the book and TV show to Arabic language.

Word count: 91

*Rashid:* I will read a lot of scientific research, report, and number because of my career which is ME [mechanical engineering]. I like to read fiction books and self-development.

Word count: 29

*Saleh:* The education very significant now. I know a lot of people did not complete the schooling because they have difficult life. I really like reading books about the education because there is very significant and amazing. I know we have a lot of people are not aware of the importance of the education about complete schooling.

Word count: 56

*Mohammad (intern):* I like to read to types of reading. First of all, I like to read newspaper and novels. I use some skills in reading newspaper such as skim and scan. I don't like to read all newspaper, I like only to read some news which related to me, or news which are helpful. However, in reading novels, I'm reading in details. I reading between lines. During the novels reading, I ask myself 5 W's, what, when, where, why and who to know what is the story. Some stories the writers answer, or they write clearly, but some writers, I need to figure out. In my academic life, I'm using what I learned about reading skills to doing my homework when I read textbook.

Word count: 124

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