Using Collaborative Discussions in College Classrooms

Komako Suzuki

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USING COLLABORATIVE DISCUSSIONS IN COLLEGE CLASSROOMS

A Dissertation
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By
Komako Suzuki

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USING COLLABORATIVE DISCUSSIONS IN COLLEGE CLASSROOMS

Date Recommended March 15, 2017

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This work is dedicated to my son Kouta. No matter what challenges I am facing, Kouta’s smile always encourages me. I am very lucky to be his mother. As my son has grown, I have grown as well. Taking care of him has made me a better person. He has been with me during every day of my academic life at WKU. Thank you and I love you, Kouta.
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USING COLLABORATIVE DISCUSSIONS IN COLLEGE CLASSROOMS

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Directed by: Cecile Garmon, Randy Capps, Jie Zhang, and Alex Poole

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The purpose of the current study is to investigate whether an open-format, small-group discussion approach, Collaborative Reasoning (CR), positively affects the English-language development of college English as Second Language (ESL) students.

According to Zhang and Dougherty Stahl (2011), CR is an approach to discussion that makes use of small groups and is designed to encourage students to become more intellectually and personally engaged.

In order to measure the effectiveness of the CR approach in English classes with ESL students, data were collected from the six classrooms at an international English-language institute at a university in the southeastern United States. Three levels of students (41 total) participated in eight CR discussion sessions during a four-week period as an experimental group, while three other classes containing 44 students took regular ESL class activities. Students’ speaking and writing skills are assessed before and after the investigation.

Previous research with elementary school students has suggested that the CR approach not only helps to improve students’ meaningful communication and to advance their language development, but also affects students’ thinking, learning, and social skills. Students who train using CR speak more and the quality of their discussion is higher than those students who have not been trained using CR.
An additional component of this research regards leadership. Individual interviews were conducted with three ESL instructors. Interview results were analyzed to determine the leadership role that teachers played in the ESL classroom. Additionally, teachers were asked to discuss how adoption of the CR method changed their roles as leaders in the classroom.

The results of this research indicate that CR helps low- and middle-proficiency students; however, its effects on students with higher levels of English-language proficiency are mixed. Teachers report no difficulty in implementing CR and indicate that students are empowered to communicate more fluently and creatively by the CR method.
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

As society and education become increasingly globalized, the importance of effective international communications has grown. Simply stated, if people cannot understand what their international peers are saying, they are less likely to be able to do business and more likely to have needless conflict with them. The considerable increase in the size of the international student population in the United States is a part of this larger trend of internationalization. Students come to the United States to study American science, technology, business, and language, the last of which is critical to success in all of the other areas.

Yet, schools in America are not entirely prepared to handle this great increase in students with different home cultures and languages. Guiding foreign students from start to successful completion of their degrees requires both an understanding of language and how to teach it, as well as an understanding of leadership. Educators must do more than lead their students; they must teach them how to lead themselves and their peers so they will be able to succeed in a world of choices without needing the constant supervision of a teacher, administrator, or parent. Teachers and administrators cannot serve as substitutes for student self-leadership because they lack the time and resources to monitor students every step of the way. Likewise, parents, who oftentimes are separated from their children by great cultural, practical, and geographical distances, are too far apart from students and their lives to serve as highly capable guides.

Can these two elements of education—language and leadership—be taught together effectively? This is the question at the heart of this research. Before these questions can be
answered, a certain amount of information on the population being studied—international students in the United States—should be considered and reviewed.

**International Students in the United States**

As one of the top destinations for international students, the United States provides opportunities at every level of education—from dedicated language training, secondary schooling, undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral education—for learners from around the world. Students choose it as their educational provider for any number of reasons, including the sheer number of high-level, high-prestige institutions, a global network of professionals and graduates, and advanced research and innovation opportunities (Ruiz, 2014). According to Ruiz (2014), the United States accepted 819,644 foreign students—a record number—during the 2012-2013 academic year, which was a seven percent increase from the previous academic year.

Among Ruiz’s (2014) research findings, some of the most relevant to this discussion are:

1. The number of foreign students on F-1 visas in U.S. colleges and universities grew dramatically from 110,000 in 2001 to 542,000 in 2012.
2. Foreign students are concentrated in U.S. metropolitan areas.
3. Most foreign students come from large, fast-growing cities in emerging markets.
4. Foreign students disproportionately study STEM and business fields.
5. Forty-five (45) percent of foreign student graduates extend their visas to work in the same metropolitan area as their college and university. (p. 1)

Ruiz found that the language training is the area with the most significant growth among the international students. The number of international students who studied language training
in 2001 was less than 2,000, but it grew to nearly 165,000 by 2012. He attributed this growth in language training in the United States to, among other things, increases in minimum Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores required to gain admission to U.S. universities.

Mastery of any foreign language, especially for adults, is not easy. While the reasons for this have not been definitively established, the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) offers a possible explanation. According to CPH, the brain is not equally well suited to language acquisition throughout all periods of development. Younger learners are neurologically different from their older peers; for this reason, older language learners are less likely to achieve native-like fluency in their second language (Bialystok & Hakuta, 1999). English is a barrier that can be penetrated by many students with only considerable effort. Unfortunately, this is not the only barrier standing between foreign students and success. Dao, Lee, and Chang (2007) listed difficulties with academic performance, racial/ethnic discrimination, alienation, and homesickness, among other problems, as interfering with student success.

As noted by Dao et al. (2007), the language barrier is a major factor in many of these psychological and emotional problems. Students more fluent in English are better able to understand American culture. Conversely, international students not fluent in English encounter unique difficulties not faced by native speakers and fluent non-native speakers.

Many Birds, One Stone

The cultural, linguistic, and leadership struggles faced by international students have the potential to negatively affect their academic performance as well as their overall ability to thrive as residents (rather than just as students) in the United States. While there exists no
perfect solution to all problems, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), specifically the sub-domain of Collaborative Reasoning (CR), may be the closest thing to such a solution.

**Communicative Language Teaching and CR**

If the purpose of language learning is to produce individuals capable of communicating in a language (rather than producing those who are simply capable of studying the language and passing standardized assessments of their target language), CLT appears to be one of the best techniques available. It was developed to improve the learner’s *pragmatic* understanding of language, more than their *academic* understanding, and the primary emphasis in CLT is on building a fluent speaker (Hedgcock, 2002).

According to Richards and Rogers (2001), CLT developed from the idea of language as primarily a way to communicate. The goal of teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) is to increase a student’s communicative competence. In a culturally and linguistically diverse setting, English frequently serves as the common mode of communication. CLT is one of many methods of language instruction; however, without it or similar methods, learning to speak and think in a second language has the potential to be tremendously challenging. Most ESL teachers, especially English learners in Southeast Asia, rely on instructional materials (e.g., texts and worksheets, rather than focusing their efforts on promoting real practice with English language); i.e., the current teaching methods are teacher-centered, book-centered, and grammar/translation-focused, with an emphasis on rote memorization, which is the preferred mode of instruction in Southeast Asia (Zhenhui, 2001).

CR, an educational method aimed at the improvement of discussion in school, functions as “a peer-led, small-group discussion approach that aims to promote intellectual
and personal engagement” (Zhang & Dougherty Stahl, 2011, p. 257). Similar to CLT, it emphasizes communication skills over purely academic or theoretical language skills; however, CR is narrower in scope and application. According to Zhang, Anderson, Nguyen-Jahiel (2013), the CR approach helps to improve students’ meaningful communication and to advance their language development. Additionally, Zhang et al. found that students experienced with CR talk more and the quality of their discussion rises above that of those students who have not been taught using CR. Students’ writing skills also improve more with CR instruction than with other methods. Clark et al. (2003) found that CR stimulates students’ critical thinking, intellectuality, and problem-solving abilities and that “collaborative reasoning discussions are intended to create a forum for children to listen to one another to think out loud” (p. 183). While that research focused on students who were younger than those studied in the course of this study, the CR method need not undergo significant modification for different age groups. Moreover, CR, a personally engaging approach that promotes development of students’ abilities and encourages them to engage in reasoned argumentation by “inculcating the values and habits of mind to use reasoned discourse as a means for choosing among competing ideas” (Nguyen-Jahiel, Anderson, Waggoner, & Rowell, 2007, p. 189), adapts easily to different age groups and teaching environments. The Clark et al. findings support the argument that the CR approach “provides children with a context in which to begin to develop intellectual capabilities, improve discussion skills and self-expression, and learn to work together” (p. 198). The lifelong process of learning English entails considerable struggle, frustration, and potential embarrassment for students until they acquire a certain degree of fluency in English. In a study by Zhang et al. (2013), that was conducted in the United States, the researchers
supported the idea that the application of the CR approach can change the traditional ESL class and accelerate the development of English acquisition.

Young (2010) implemented the CR approach in a university in Japan. Her interests overlap with the purpose of this research; she focused on enhancing the use of real-world English and changing English-language education to facilitate the development of better English-language communications skills in Japanese students. Young argued that the reform of English-language education in Japan is challenging, but globalization demands this reform. She found that implementation of this program was difficult for the teacher whose classroom she observed (as expected); however, students responded positively to the opportunity to communicate with their peers that this method provided them. This suggests that the CR method may have the potential to be effective in Japan, but its implementation will not be without difficulties.

The numerous ways by which the CR approach stands to improve English-language instruction for adult learners invites consideration. First, CR materials encourage student engagement in the classroom learning process, particularly if the facilitator demonstrates a willingness and ability to adjust course content to the interests of students. Second, CR materials usually end with a question for classroom discussion; this provides ample material for free-form talk because no single correct answer exists. If the question presented in a CR learning session regards a dilemma that college students may face during their time in America, it may both engage students in the discussion and help them see America through the unique cultural lenses of different native language groups. Discussing this topic and the experiences of students related to it stands to help learners think more critically about their own and others’ perspectives.
Much as the case with young English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, adult English learners at the beginning level tend to rely on instructional materials to the exclusion of practice. Therefore, the most commonly used teaching methods produce students who have low levels of performance on speaking and writing tasks but high levels of knowledge of English-language grammar and construction, despite that they study English for as many hours as they study math. Students, regardless of age, taught using teacher-centered, book-centered, and grammar translation methods develop effective test-taking skills and poor oral communication in English. A great many students in Southeast Asia (regardless of level of formal education) and beginning-level students throughout the rest of the world have acquired a large base of academic knowledge with little practical communicative ability during their studies of the English language (“The Mute Leading the Mute”, 2015). In the People’s Republic of China, this has been categorized as *mute English*—the ability to understand English without the ability to speak it (Qiang & Wolff, 2011).

In order to develop robust skills in their target language, students need to be involved in interactive tasks, such as listening and speaking—being exposed to comprehensible input and generating comprehensible output. In EFL classrooms, teachers may have difficulty implementing the CLT approach (Koosha & Yakhabi, 2013). CLT is a challenging approach for EFL teachers, especially in Asia; teachers are accustomed to teaching English for the purpose of preparing students for school entrance exams, not for communication with foreigners (Zhenhui, 2001).
Teacher Leadership

Building student leaders and communicators is an important part of CLT. Although the ultimate goal is to create an environment in which students lead, teachers must take the first steps to helping students grow. Student leadership begins with teacher leadership; thus, it is important to CLT and CR. Teachers do not work alone; usually they are parts of larger systems such as schools and training centers. Danielson (2007) discussed the systematized organization of schools, one in which administrators, most of who do not deal with students on a daily basis, make important decisions and teachers receive and comply with these decisions. In this environment, teachers function as the agents of the decision makers who may know little about the realities of the classroom. This does not diminish the practical importance of teachers and their ability to gauge and to determine the well-being of students. Teachers’ decision-making abilities remain critical to effective classroom operation, and they require sufficient professional development opportunities to cultivate these abilities. In order to improve the teaching and learning environments, school leaders should allow teachers to realize their potential as leaders (Danielson, 2007). Teachers also need to understand the differences between students who have learned EFL and those who have learned ESL.

Differences Between EFL and ESL Students

In terms of teaching approaches, EFL and ESL teachers vary in many ways. The difficulties associated with ESL and EFL learning differ in significant ways as well. Diaz-Rico (2008) defined ESL learners as those “whose primary language is not English, yet who live in places where English has some sort of special status or public availability” (p. 6). They defined EFL learners as those “who live in places where English is, by and large, an
academic subject, functioning narrowly in that culture as a tool for communicating with outsiders” (p. 6). ESL learners exist in countries where English is an official language in education and government, whereas, EFL learners exist in countries where English is not an official language but plays a role in the school curriculum.

Many of the language acquisition difficulties faced by EFL learners are a result of the lack of opportunities to develop their language skills. They may have limited exposure to native pronunciation, few chances to communicate with native English speakers, and very little information regarding cultural differences between their native culture and English-speaking cultures. They also may have little need to communicate in English without the opportunity to default to their native tongue (“The Mute Leading the Mute,” 2015). ESL students in the US oftentimes come from environments in which these problems are more common. Due to limitations in their language skills, these students struggle with understanding native English speakers and expressing their thoughts and opinions. Most international students assume they will have some issues and difficulties with English, and the desire to improve their English-language skills motivates them to study in America where they will have both the opportunity and the imperative to improve. However, these struggles sometimes overwhelm students and many other unexpected troubles, such as homesickness, potentially compound their problems (Dao et al., 2007).

Nevertheless, ESL students need to overcome both English-language acquisition and emotional challenges, while learning and adapting to the various expectations and requirements for students in U.S. institutions of higher learning. American universities and colleges focus more on students participation than on teachers’ lectures, at least compared to their Japanese counterparts. Educators expect and seek students’ opinions and beliefs in
their classes. Students in the U.S. develop critical-thinking skills over time due to this practice. Therefore, American students develop a sense of ease when expressing their thoughts and sharing them in their classes. Spontaneous speaking in class is accepted, and it plays a normal role in the US. In American universities, students who are unable to clearly express their opinions and judgments stand at a disadvantage to those comfortable in doing so. This difference in educational style may impact some international students who often are used to sitting and passively listening in their classes.

Teaching style is an important aspect of ESL education. Flexibility is critical to effective ESL instruction. Students from certain countries, such as China, are accustomed to being taught using the teacher-centered teaching approach, whereas other students, such as those from Mexico and South Africa, are more acclimated to being taught with the student-centered approach (Gibbons & Stiles, 2004). In ESL classes in America, the student-centered teaching style has long been dominant; however, such may not always be the best method to promote language fluency. Particularly when teaching students from Asia, the American ESL teacher may find it wise to adapt to the norms and expectations of their students who expect that the teacher will largely lead the class (Zhenhui, 2001).

Clear distinctions exist between these approaches, and the advantages and disadvantages to each invite investigation. Understanding the differences between the teacher-centered and the student-centered teaching approaches helps ESL instructors. ESL classrooms are unique because they have an unusually large amount of diversity compared to most other learning environments. Without ESL students’ active participation in these classes, they learn only English grammar rather than genuine communications skills. Learning grammar may make these students feel that they have learned a lot, but practice
does not give them much in the way of speaking skills. The ultimate goal of language learning is for students to be able to communicate using their learned second language. Walsh (2002) argued that a critical part of improving the effectiveness of ESL classroom instruction is the reduction of teacher talking time, which stands to encourage students’ participation in EFL (and ESL) classrooms. The student-centered teaching approach definitely encourages students to talk more in the classroom.

International ESL college students need sufficient help and time to adjust to these different study habits and environments. In order for international students to use their limited time in the US effectively, efficient intercultural communication between native and non-native speakers of English in American educational institutions must be promoted. This is at least partially the responsibility of ESL programs, although other members of the educational community, such as professors and administrators, should play a role.

There is no doubt that all international ESL students in the US must learn English before they begin intensively studying their major academic interests. Educators need to find ways to utilize their academic knowledge and their understanding of the challenges and expectations facing international students to help them become more proficient users of English. Although applying CLT may produce some complications and causes students some difficulties from a cultural standpoint, schools should encourage students to pursue this type of learning because it helps ESL students better prepare for American university expectations.

**Statement of the Problem**

The problem that is the focus of this research is as follows: Many English-language learners are not learning to communicate in English effectively, despite sometimes
considerable amounts of instruction. CLT should be the solution. All four essential
language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) relate to one another in the
process of foreign language acquisition (FLA), with no one skill reigning supreme. Because
of globalization, students have seen the need for international communication, which
involves a high level of language fluency. For these reasons, English-language learners in
the US need both generative and receptive abilities. Moreover, ESL students desire to
complete their American college educations successfully, and this cannot be accomplished
without a certain level of language proficiency.

The *lingua franca* of the modern world, English transcends the boundaries of nations,
cultures, and native tongues, and the need for English grows ever more due to globalization.
The ability to speak English fluently potentially affects one’s financial status and well-being,
both inside and outside the English-speaking countries. However, many obstacles remain to
developing English fluency. Why do ESL students struggle to communicate in English?
Does teaching approach matter? Does culture play a major role in determining success in
language acquisition, or do other factors play greater roles? If one (very reasonably)
assumes that students study English in order to use it to communicate, CLT stands to be one
of the best educational options. However, other methods such as memorization and
grammar practice may require less time and labor to teach, although the outcomes may be
inferior.

**Purpose of the Study**

This research investigates whether an open-format small group discussion approach,
CR, affects the English-language acquisition performance of adult ESL learners. In the
course of this investigation, an analysis of the progress in two different language-learning
groups (a control group that will receive only conventional instruction and an experimental
group that will participate in CR discussion in addition to their regular courses) serves as a
starting point for a thorough review of the benefits and drawbacks of each method. The
impact and influence of the CR approach among students and instructors remain the central
focus of this research, with increased fluency (as measured by a standardized assessment)
being the desired outcome. This research investigates the relationship between group
discussions with CR materials and student speaking and writing performance and how
instructors’ perceive this approach. Data collected from an intensive language training
program at a university in the American Southeast (referred to as the Intensive English-
language Institute [IELI] throughout this research), ground this investigation empirically.
Three levels of IELI classes with a total of approximately 40 students, will participate in
eight CR discussion sessions during a four-week period as an experimental group, while
three other classes, also with a total of approximately 40 students will participate in regular
classes and coursework and serve as a control.

In addition to the analysis of the effectiveness of the CR approach, observing any
possible changes in students’ communication patterns during the implementation of CR also
interests this researcher. Furthermore, individual interviews conducted with the three
instructors who facilitate the CR discussions serve as additional data sources, with particular
attention paid to the reported difficulties in shifting from teacher-centered to student-
centered teaching styles.
Research Questions

Central Research Question

The focus of this study is speaking and writing skills, and the central research question is: Does CR, an open-format small-group discussion approach, affect the English-language development of college ESL students?

Empirical Research Questions

1. To what extent does the CR approach improve students’ English-language speaking proficiency?

2. To what extent does the CR approach improve students’ English-language listening comprehension proficiency?

3. To what extent does the CR approach improve students’ English-language complexity of conversation?

4. To what extent does the CR approach improve students’ English-language communications skills, as measured by the BEST Plus?

5. To what extent does the CR approach improve students’ English-language writing proficiency?

6. When using the CR approach, is there a correlation between demographic factors and students’ proficiency in speaking and writing English?

7. How do teachers perceive their leadership roles as changing in an ESL classroom (specifically related to level of difficulty) as they transition from a teacher-centered to a student-centered teaching style?
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This literature review explores four research fields: international students in the United States; educational leadership; teacher-centered and student-centered learning; and an example methodology of the student-centered approach—CR. The term *educational leadership* describes a broad range of actions, including the conduct of administrators and school leaders, teaching and classroom management techniques, and student peer and self-guidance.

The first part of the literature review covers facts about international students. It also covers educational leadership and addresses the concept of teacher leadership as it concerns to assisting schools and achieving student success. This relates closely to the development of the school; a school’s capacity to grow and to improve can be cultivated through teachers’ efforts and effective leadership at the teacher and administrative levels (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; MacTavish & Kolb, 2006b; York-Barr & Duke, 2004;). The second part of this literature review discusses teacher-centered and student-centered learning. More specifically, it reviews the way in which teacher-centered and student-centered learning differ and the impact of changing from a teacher-centered to a student-centered approach. The majority of this literature review provides an overview of previous studies of the CR approach. A determination of the impact of CR on English-language acquisition is the ultimate goal of this review.

**International Students in the United States**

The United States is one of the most attractive counties for international students to pursue their academic goals. According to Ruiz (2014), the number of international students in the United States reached 524,000 in 2012. Among these students, those from
China and Saudi Arabia showed the sharpest increase. Eighty-five percent of international students in the United States are attending schools located in one of 118 metropolitan areas.

In terms of the economic contribution of international students, research by Ruiz (2014) showed that their tuition contribution was approximately $21.8 billion and their living expense contribution was $12.8 billion in the 2008-2012 timespan. The top hometowns for F-1 international students during this timeframe were Seoul (South Korea), Beijing (China), Shanghai (China), Hyderabad (India), and Riyadh (Saudi Arabia). Seoul, the top origin city for international students in the United States, sent 56,000 students over the five-year period from the beginning of 2008 to the end of 2012. Those Korean students spent a total of $2,119,192,671; the tuition contribution was $1,337,474,314, and their living expenses were $781,718,357. Destination schools and cities benefitted greatly from the considerable amount of money these students contribute from their economies.

About two thirds of international students in the United States who pursue a bachelor’s or higher degree choose to major in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), whereas 48% of American students choose those majors. Purdue University in Lafayette, Indiana, is the most popular university among Chinese students (total number of Chinese students: 5,600) due to its low tuition and the strong reputation of its engineering program. During the period 2008-2012, approximately 63% of the 11,400 international students attending Purdue University pursued STEM degrees.

After international students graduate from colleges or universities in the United States, the Optional Practical Training (OPT) program offers them a way to extend their visas for up to 29 months. From 2008 to 2012, 375,000 OPT visas (about 75,000 per year)
were issued for international students. This means that about one out of three students were
issued OPT after graduation.

**International Students’ Linguistic, Personal, and Psychological Struggles**

Dao et al. (2007) revealed that less fluent students are more likely to be depressed. Psychological disturbance may be experienced by international students compared with students from the United States (Hechanova-Alampay, et al., 2002; Leong & Chou, 1994; Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992; Mori, 2000). International students often struggle with obstacles in the domains of language (written and spoken communications); academic performance, expectations and standards; race and interracial communications; social isolation and lack of social support; depression; and homesickness (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002; Leong & Chou, 1994; Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992; Mori, 2000). Each of these obstacles has the potential to place considerable stress upon international students (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002). In addition, these relocation adjustment issues may affect their academic performance, mental and physical well-being, satisfaction with intercultural experiences, and perceptions of the host country (Wan, Chapman, & Biggs, 1992).

One of the biggest common stressors that international students experience upon their arrival is the language barrier (Dao et al., 2007). Many find that their language skills are not as developed as they thought prior to moving to their host country. A study by Wong found that difficulties in communication may cause misunderstanding, isolation, and loneliness (as cited in Dao et al., 2007). Another study by Hechanova-Alampay et al. (2002) indicated that international students are more likely to face complications during the
adjustment/settling period of school than their local peers who face fewer obstacles when adjusting to college culture.

After beginning to overcome the language barrier, cultural differences are an issue international students may encounter, although the degree of culture difference may vary due to any number of factors. According to Hechanova-Alampay et al. (2002), American teachers expect greater student independence than teachers in many other countries. Students in the United States often spontaneously express their opinions. College and university students in the United States often are asked their opinions, and they are permitted to talk almost anytime they want without raising their hands during class. This seemingly natural mode of interaction may be disorienting to international students, particularly those who have been strongly influenced by Asian traditions in education (ATE). These students may need time and effort to adapt to the Western style of education, or their Western teachers may need to adapt to the Eastern style of learning. In some Asian cultures, an outright No may be considered impolite; however, in the United States a straightforward negative response (no) is normal and is not typically considered offensive. This directness may confuse international students who may be uncertain as to their degree of directness when they reject an offer or disagree and where the lines of proper etiquette are drawn.

Zaninelli (2005), a cultural researcher based in Germany, introduced the Peach and Coconut metaphor to describe differences in how people in Germany and America communicate. She explained the metaphor as follows: Americans are like peaches in that they are sweet (friendly, approachable, seemingly open) on the outside; but the core of the American remains relatively hard, meaning that building a strong, durable relationship with an American may be relatively difficult. Germans are like coconuts in that their protective
shell presents something comparatively hard to the outside world. This makes a certain amount of small talk and superficial interaction challenging; however, once this shell has been broken, getting to the meat of the person may not be terribly difficult and the resulting relationships may last for a long time. This metaphor can be used to describe other cultures as well. ATE students are more like coconuts. This cultural incompatibility may isolate ATE students in the United States, particularly those students who are not uniquely adaptable. The question of how a peach and a coconut can communicate well is not easily answered; however, openness to alternative ways of thinking, a willingness to learn, and a dedication to not taking offense easily when misunderstandings occur can increase the probability of effective communication across cultural boundaries.

**Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**

According to Richards and Rogers (2001), the concept of CLT in language teaching comes from the idea of language as communication. This corresponds nicely with the purpose of language teaching—increasing communicative competence—as defined by Power (2003) and Richards and Rogers. Koosha and Yakhabi (2013) stated that CLT was developed due to the recognized limitations and the disappointing results of the audio-lingual pattern drill teaching methods. The principles of the CLT have been defined as:

- Learners learn[ing] a language through using it to communicate. Authentic and meaningful communication should be the goal of classroom activities. Fluency is an important dimension of communication. Communication involves the integration of different language skills. Learning is a process of creative construction and involves trial and error. (Richards & Rogers, 2001, p. 172)
Learning a second language—language acquisition—can be accomplished without CLT; however, this researcher believes that being able to speak and think in a second language cannot be done without something such as the CLT; a considerable amount of research has supported this belief.

Koosha and Yakhabi (2013) noted that CLT has problems, and many overseas (non-U.S.-based) teachers have found using the CLT method to be difficult in classrooms strongly influenced by non-Western cultures. CLT is not a one-size-fits-all method. Using CLT in classrooms in which English is taught purely as an academic subject is likely to cause resistance and failure. This results in a conflict between teaching style and learning style, as well as conflicts of culture. Many Asian educational systems have been influenced by a strongly hierarchical culture that is not readily compatible with CLT. According to research by Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov (2010) and a study by Phoung-Mai, Terlouw, and Pilot (2005), cultures can be categorized by their characteristics along five dimensions. First, in terms of power distance, ATE creates a high power distance pattern due to the custom of deference to and respect for the teacher. Second, as for individualism versus collectivism, ATE falls into the category of collectivism, and maintaining harmony within the group is valued. Third, regarding perceptions of masculinity versus femininity, especially in Japan, the score of masculinity is high due to the tradition that men should concentrate on success while women should concentrate on their quality of life. Fourth, in terms of uncertainty avoidance, ATE encourages avoidance of teaching methods that lack clear objectives due to the belief that one is most likely to achieve success through well directed efforts and the development of skills with utilitarian value. Fifth, as for long-term versus short-term orientation, those influenced by ATE are more likely to be concerned with the long term because persistence is respected and multi-generational goals are valued.
ATE, properly followed, cause “a classroom to be the teacher’s kingdom of sanctity” (Phoung-Mai et al., 2005, p. 407). In ATE environments, the degree of respect afforded to teachers and elderly people is different from that given in Western cultures. Another important component of the cultures in which ATE came into being is filial piety—the respect for one’s parents and forebears. Within these cultures, it is important to meet parents’ expectations, and it is the children’s duty to make their parents proud. Failures, including those in education, may tarnish the reputation of an entire family in cultures in which ATE is predominant. The position of parents, teachers, and elderly in ATE nations is much higher than in Western cultures. These values make teacher-centered instruction a more natural fit than student-centered instruction with ATE.

In China, South Korea, and Japan, “most students see knowledge as something to be transmitted by the teacher rather than discovered by the learners. They, therefore, find it normal to engage in modes of learning which are teacher-centered and in which they receive knowledge rather than interpret it” (Zhenhui, 2001, p. 2). Most students are very quiet in English class in Japan. According to Swan and Smith (2001), students tend not to express their opinions and emotions in public. Teachers who attempt to solicit the opinion of students may receive little more than uncomfortable silences. Moreover, because of a high uncertainty avoidance tendency, Japanese dislike having multiple correct answers. In the CLT, mainly during conversation, the teachers do not correct small grammatical errors and instead allow students to explore multiple possible answers in the conversation. This may be uncomfortable for some teachers and students in East Asia, who prefer accuracy and rigor instead of choices and openness.

Swan and Smith (2001) mentioned that spontaneous speaking is rare in China. They stated that rote memorization plays an integral role in Chinese education. This may be
largely due to Chinese students having to learn thousands of Chinese characters in order to achieve even average levels of literacy. This pattern of rote learning may play a role in English acquisition in addition to non-language specific ATE factors.

Students in ATE cultures are much more comfortable with relying on materials (e.g., reading texts and handout worksheets) rather than depending upon independent/spontaneous thought; i.e., teacher-centered, book-centered, grammar-translation methods of language learning with an emphasis on rote memorization are preferred in East Asian cultures (Zhenhui, 2001). While this approach may be effective in academic knowledge development, particularly the type of knowledge measured by standardized tests, oftentimes it may fail to lead to language fluency and sophisticated communicative abilities. Aside from test preparation, much of this effort offers a modest return on investment, which is unfortunate. Ideally, education should provide students with something other than the ability to achieve a high test score, in this case language fluency. Zhenhui (2001) suggested that teachers be able to identify students’ needs and learning styles and plan their lessons to match their preferred learning style to create a classroom in which students can learn language without fear. This approach—developing an understanding of the wants, needs, and abilities of students—appears to be necessary if students are to achieve fluency. It may be necessary to divide students into groups based on their needs. The number of hours spent learning English in East Asia is considerable, and reforms that allow these many hours to be used more effectively have the potential to save millions of hours of human labor.

Problems with English-language learning are not restricted to students in or from nations influenced by Asian traditions in education. Language-learning problems may arise
in any setting and in any culture. Koosha and Yakhahi (2013) identified seven major obstacles to English-language learning in Iran:

1. EFL learners have a low intrinsic motivation to communicate in foreign language.
2. [The] CLT teaching method is not compatible with [the Iranian] University Entrance Exam.
3. CLT lacks clear cut assessment procedures.
4. CLT not always compatible with EFL [Iranian] home culture and values.
5. There are not enough teacher training courses to promote awareness of [sic] teachers.
6. Creating the right kind of interaction is a major challenge for teachers.
7. CLT compared with other approaches places greater demands on the teacher.

(pp. 65-69)

There are advantages and disadvantages to be considered with any teaching technique. As mentioned earlier, CLT has some problems. To enhance teaching and learning, CR has the potential to be a great solution and may work in many different situations. Later sections of this literature review include information on the CR method.

Considering the reality of the importance of English education today, the selection and usage of approaches and materials in ESL and EFL classrooms should form a central focus for educators. In order to make the process of ESL and EFL learning more productive and successful, educators may find it necessary to study the tendencies of current students, their purposes for studying English, and their weaknesses and strengths. Each English learner has different reasons for studying English; however, gaining sufficient language
competency to enroll in an American college or university remains one of the primary goals of ESL students in the United States. CR is a teaching method with the potential to help students achieve this goal.

**Collaborative Reasoning Methods/Examples of Research.**

CR is an approach designed to improve discussion in school. It consists of “a peer-led, small-group discussion approach that aims to promote intellectual and personal engagement,” and with the purpose of “not to reach a consensus or win a debate; instead, the purpose is for students to cooperatively search for resolutions and develop thoughtful opinions about the topic” (Zhang & Stahl, 2011, p. 257). Therefore, the foundation of CR appears to promote students’ thinking skills. Clark et al. (2003) discussed the way in which CR can be a tool to improve discussion in schools. They mention that conversations using the CR approach provide an opportunity for students to listen to others carefully and to think out loud.

Zhang et al. (2013) explained the way CR works in practice: students in a CR class read a story that contains a dilemma “such as friendship, fairness, justice and equality, duty and obligation, honesty and integrity, winning and losing, ethnic/racial identity, and child-friendly policy issues,” (p. 45). Then they address a big question which makes students take a position. After everyone in a group understands and takes positions on the big question, a group discussion begins. Students have to manage the group discussion for about 20 minutes. The instructor assigns several tasks to students, such as exchanging their thoughts, listening to the opposing viewpoints, and expressing reasons by using evidence in order to justify one’s side. Due to the nature of CR materials, a student’s mindset can shift so he/she desires to talk or share thoughts rather than just only listening to others. CR discussion
structures an open participation for everyone in a group to give students the opportunity to speak spontaneously (Zhang et al., 2013). In CR, the teacher’s involvement is usually minimized; the teacher remains outside of the group and discussion. CR does not require teacher feedback and correction.

Moreover, the CR approach assists students in improving their meaningful communication and advancing their language development. Recent research has suggested that the CR approach affects students’ thinking, learning, and social skills (Clark et al., 2003; Nguyen-Jahiel et al., 2007; Zhang & Stahl, 2011; Zhang et al., 2013). Students trained with CR talk more, and higher quality discussion often results from CR than those students educated using conventional methods. Zhang, Anderson et al. (2013) mentioned that students talk almost twice as much during CR as during traditional classroom sessions, and they demonstrate better abilities to elaborate on the text, make predictions, use evidence, and express some alternative perspectives. Furthermore, students’ writing skills show differences as well. Students learn to write more effectively than those students who have not experienced the CR discussions. Therefore, the CR approach provides significant advancement in speaking and writing. CR stimulates students’ critical thinking, intellectuality, and problem-solving ability, which all test highly relative to groups educated using other methods (Clark et al., 2003). Clark et al. (2003) stated that “collaborative reasoning discussions are intended to create a forum for children to listen to one another think out loud” (p. 183); i.e., the CR approach enhances students’ talking and thinking.

In addition, CR provides a personally engaging approach that encourages development in students’ ability to engage in reasoned argumentation by “inculcating the values and habits of mind to use reasoned discourse as a means for choosing among
competing ideas” (Nguyen-Jahiel et al., 2007, p. 189). The Clark et al. (2003) findings support the assertion that the CR approach “provides children with a context in which to begin to develop intellectual capabilities, improve discussion skills and self-expression, and learn to work together” (p. 198). Learning English is a lifelong process, and English learners must struggle with frustration and embarrassment until they achieve a certain degree of fluency in English.

**Adult ESL Classrooms with CR**

Children have constituted the research subjects of most studies on the effectiveness of the CR method; however, this does not necessarily suggest that CR cannot work with adult students. Two recent studies about CR were conducted with adult learners: one by Young and another by Hsu, Zhang, and Anderson (2013). Young’s study took place in Japan; her purpose began with a question, “why can’t Japanese people speak English after studying it for more than six years?” (p. 1). She explored the issue of Japanese people’s inability to use the English they learned from the educational system. Young stated that teaching styles, curricula, and materials for English education in Japan, as well as cultural matters, prevent Japanese English learners from having exposure to communicative English. Her CR study with Japanese college students revealed not only evidence regarding the students’ progress in regard to English-speaking skills, but also informed the reader the extent to which a Japanese instructor who taught English from a teacher-centered standpoint found the application of the CR methodology.

The results of a CR study conducted in China by Hsu, Zhang et al. (2013) suggested that CR is more effective in the college environment than traditional approaches to improving fluency and helping students overcome emotional obstacles when learning a
second language. In this study, two groups of students received language training for a total of two weeks. One group received traditional classroom instruction—reading the normally recommended materials but not participating in any other activities—and the other participated in CR discussions. At the end of this two-week period, researchers interviewed students in each group for between 1.5 and 5 minutes. Trained assessors then transcribed and scored the interviews. The researchers found that the average score of the CR group was higher than that of the traditional study group. This study suggests that the CR approach may not reduce the complexity of communication tasks; however, it promotes the abilities of English learners to manage complexity. Frequent CR free-flowing discussion reduces the speaking anxiety of English learners and makes them more comfortable with mistakes. Hsu, Zhang, and Anderson (2013) conclude that CR holds much promise as an approach to create a comfortable learning environment for students.

The CR approach may provide meaningful discussion opportunities to adult English-language learners as well. The approach benefits English learning even for adult learners. First, the CR materials shift students’ behavior from sitting and listening to talking and thinking. Second, educators can adjust material to match college students’ interests, which gives them more excitement during their discussion. Third, the CR lesson material ends with a question that the students are asked to consider and to discuss. This focus provides for free-form talk because no single answer (and easy out) presents itself to students. If CR material and its big question relate to something that college students may face during their stay in the United States, they have an opportunity to learn about both English and cultural issues. Controversial issues and a lack of a single correct answer make English learners evaluate materials critically and think harder. Finally, depending on the topic of CR
materials, CR can promote cultural engagement within discussion groups. Previous CR studies have produced evidence related to the aforementioned four points. Furthermore, one must organize a teacher-centered class for some ESL classrooms. However, paying attention to or changing the discussion style can serve as a beneficial and effective way to advance college students’ English learning process.

The successful CR approach gives college students opportunities to use English effectively in class and to develop argumentation skills to survive in their real life. Walsh (2002) discussed an interesting point about the use of excessive teacher talking time in EFL classrooms. Walsh suggested reducing teachers’ talking time and increasing students’ talking time. He examined the way in which a teacher’s choice of language influences students’ participation in EFL classrooms. Young’s (2010) study in Japan confirmed that teachers found changing classroom dynamics to improve student participation and engagement a difficult task. According to her observation, the Japanese instructor did not perform CR discussions successfully; the teacher’s involvement remained excessively strong. Young argued that CR training for teachers needs close attention. Educators should create an environment in which students can improve themselves and advance their knowledge and skills. Reforming teaching style can be problematic and challenging; however, the CR approach offers many advantages over its competitors in both Asian and American English-language learning college classrooms. Some of these include improved levels of engagement, the growth of critical-thinking skills, and increased comfort among students when expressing their opinions.

Teachers tend to take the center of class and direct the flow of class. As Walsh (2002) discussed the importance of reducing the teacher talking time, Young’s (2010) study
confirmed the occurrence of some difficulties when shifting a teacher-centered method to a student-centered method. An experienced English professor in a Japanese university taught English with a traditional style, relying mostly on texts. Young had several meetings about the process of CR discussions with the instructor; however, she remained frustrated over the difficulty of convincing this instructor, who had limited exposure to CR methodology, to change his style. The instructor had problems allowing the students to lead discussions, even when attempting to implement CR. His experience as a teacher-centered educator made it difficult to relinquish control over the class.

Research by Nguyen-Jahiel et al. (2007) addressed the difficulty experienced by teachers in public schools when they attempt to adopt a new approach. They implemented a case study to examine the effects of the CR approach. The teacher who was the focus of the study, Mrs. Rogers, was a veteran teacher who developed her own teaching style over a period of 20 years and implemented a CR discussion approach with her 24 fourth-grade students. In this case study, 20 discussions of about 20 minutes each, taking place twice a week, occurred over a three-month period. She observed changes in the students. The evaluation of those discussions suggested that the students failed to spontaneously talk during the first few sessions, but their discussions shifted to a very student-centered structure due to the limited instructional involvement of Mrs. Rogers.

The ideal CR discussion environment includes an open participation structure, indicating that students can talk spontaneously, encourage one another, listen to each other’s opinions, explore reasons, and build arguments. By continuously repeating this process, students’ thinking style and skills improve, which leads to the main goal of CR: “to help students reason through complex issues as revealed by a piece of literature” (Nguyen-Jahiel
et al., 2007, p. 189). By implanting CR in the classroom, the teacher changes the dynamics of the learning environment. Discussions no longer center on the stories of the teacher, with students’ and their unique narratives taking a prominent place in the educational experience. While this may suggest that the teacher is surrendering control of the classroom, such is not the case. Educational leadership in this environment is particularly important; the teacher needs to prepare students to lead themselves.

**Educational Leadership**

Education gives people a chance to improve their lives. Among the current topics in education, leadership occupies one of the highest positions. Danielson (2007), York-Barr and Duke (2004), and MacTavish and Kolb (2006) stated that leadership by administrators and teachers remains critical to addressing the needs of students and schools, improving school climate, and enabling students to achieve individual goals. Educational leadership has many applications through various levels of administration. Principals, teachers, and researchers may seek to improve the effectiveness of their educational leadership. DaVita (2007) and Colvin (2007) observed that reforms in educational leadership promote school and student success. DaVita noted the importance of educational leadership by referring to it as “the ‘bridge’ that can bring together the many different reform efforts in ways that practically nothing else can” (p. 2). DaVita also argued that no effective teaching and learning reforms can occur unless effective leadership exists.

Leithwood et al. (2006) found that leadership behavior and practices influence today’s educational school reform and students’ social, behavioral, and academic performance, which makes understanding educational leadership all the more important. Precisely defining it challenges even the best of minds. Burlingame and Murphy defined
good educational leadership as the pragmatic and professional ability to identify and set relevant goals for an educational institution (as cited in Chen, Goldring, & Addi, 1994).

Without effective leadership, advancing the educational mission of an institution becomes more difficult. Leithwood et al. defined leadership as direction and influence. They also emphasized that it cannot exist without followers. The direction provided by school leaders and teachers and the manner in which they provide this direction remain critical to the improvement of the educational environment and the promotion of student learning.

**Teacher Leadership**

York-Barr and Duke (2004) defined teacher leadership as:

the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of the school community to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement. Such team leadership work involves three intentional development concentrations: individual development, collaboration or team development, and organizational development. (pp. 287-288)

This fundamentally transformative model of leadership places emphasis on building better schools through small, detail-oriented changes. Transformative teacher leadership was seen as preferable to instructional leadership in the early 1990s (Leithwood, 1992).

Burns introduced the idea of transforming leadership—a collaborative process involving both leaders and followers (as cited in Bass, 1999); i.e., leaders and followers support one another to improve, advance, and motivate themselves. Transforming leadership primarily focuses on making significant changes in organizational culture, whereas transactional leadership usually does not focus on directing the organization culture.
Bass (1999) extended Burns’ idea of transforming leadership. He changed the word from *transforming* to *transformational* in his research. One may define transformational leadership as “the leader moving the follower beyond immediate self-interests through idealized influence (charisma), inspiration, intellectual stimulation, or individualized consideration” (Bass, 1999, p. 11). It empowers followers and inspires them to meet their higher standards. The transformational leader is critical to an effective transformation by being both a change agent and a role model for those who must adapt to said change (Keengwe, 2015).

Blasé and Blasé (2000) described instructional leadership as leading learning communities, talking with teachers on a regular basis to enhance their work and to promote their growth, and taking responsibility for that which students learn. Whitaker (1997) identified four important skills for instructional leadership: providing resources, serving as instructional resources, good communicative abilities, and creating a visible presence. In addition, DuFour (2002) added three important components of education: curriculum, instruction, and assessment. He also explained that the instructional leader should possess up-to-date knowledge on those three areas of education in order to improve school learning environments. These areas constitute the foundation of the way students learn.

Leithwood (1992) studied and discussed the manner in which the preferred leadership style has shifted from instructional to transformational leadership and how the changing power dynamics in schools among teachers and administrators, parents and schools staffs, and students and teachers, have affected the complexity of school systems. Leithwood’s results suggested three fundamental goals that transformational school leaders practically pursue: “1) helping staff remember develop and maintain a collaborative,
professional school culture, 2) fostering teacher development, and 3) helping them solve problems together more effectively” (pp. 9-10).

Leithwood (1992) further proposed that school administrators make concerted efforts to use facilitative power when they initiate substantial changes in schools and that they rely on power “manifested through other people, not over other people” (p. 9). This less hierarchical approach to leadership preserves and promotes the creativity and autonomy of educators. Roberts (as cited in Leithwood, 1992) argued that “the collective action that transforming leadership generates empowers those who participate in the process. There is hope, there is optimism, and there is energy. In essence, transforming leadership is a leadership that facilitates the redefinition of a people’s mission and vision, a renewal of their commitment, and the restructuring of their systems for goal accomplishment” (p. 9).

While all of these arguments in favor of transformative and bottom-up leadership may appear convincing, instructional leadership and strict hierarchies continue to exist in schools. Furthermore, differing definitions complicate the process of determining the presence of teacher leadership. Donaldson (2007) noted that “teacher leadership means different things to different people. Team leaders, department chairs, and respected teachers live it every day: They experience the pushes and pulls of their complex roles, located somewhere between administrative leadership and almost invisible leadership” (p. 26). However, Donaldson argued that many educators do not fully understand the notion of teacher leadership, and this lack of understanding brings various difficulties, complications, and uncertainties in schools and in the classroom. The strong hierarchy in place to manage the schools may afford much responsibility and power to superintendents, curriculum
directors, and principals—those who are far removed from the daily realities of the classroom.

Danielson (2007) also noted that administrators make the most important decisions and pass them down to teachers; however, this model leads to an imperfect situation, and schools need leadership at every level to improve. Countering this top-down approach, Donaldson (2007) argued that teachers make many contributions to school effectiveness, including building relationships, maintaining a sense of purpose in students and other faculty, and improving instructional practice, all critical to improving schools. He suggested four ways to support teacher leaders:

1. Identify and support those clusters of teachers in which professional relationships and commitments are fostering instructional innovation.

2. Respect the judgment of these professional clusters and be willing to adjust their [administrators’, school boards’, and federal policymakers’] own strategies and initiatives to complement such teacher-led innovations.

3. Put resources behind the efforts of teacher leaders by supporting shared practice, planning, and professional learning focused on their purposeful improvement of practice.

4. Acknowledge that their own goals and initiatives can best be addressed by treating teacher leaders as vital and powerful partners. (p. 29)

Without the appropriate adjustments and arrangements to encourage teachers to be leaders, school improvement may not occur. As Donaldson (2007) indicates, a mix of leaders at every level of the school can facilitate its development. According to Leithwood (1992), teachers who set their own goals for professional growth demonstrate higher levels
of motivation and engagement than those not permitted to do so. Teachers with clear and strong career goals possess more enthusiasm, better classroom organizational skills, and greater levels of self-direction than teachers with fewer individually developed goals.

Many ways exist to lead a school and to encourage teacher leadership within it, and different schools may place various degrees of emphasis on teacher leadership. Danielson (2007) pointed out four conditions that help teachers to become leaders:

1. A safe environment for risk taking, which enables teachers to express their ideas without fear of attack
2. Administrators who encourage teacher leadership
3. Culture in which success does not draw unwanted attention and criticism
4. Opportunities to learn leadership skills, which entail providing resources, classes, and professional development opportunities to learn more about curriculum planning, instructional improvement, assessment design, collaboration, facilitation, and other relevant skills.

To maximize individual potential leadership ability and to allow teachers to succeed in their profession, schools need to create an environment in which teachers can “take initiative to improve schoolwide policies and programs, teaching and learning, and communication” (Danielson, 2007, p. 19). Additionally, Dozier (2007) noted that “teachers need opportunities to break out of their isolation and build professional networks of teachers who share a vision of education excellence” (p. 59).

Research on the perceptions of teachers at English-language learning centers in New Zealand has shown they believe their institutions prioritize students’ needs; however, the teachers’ opinions of managerial practice, employment conditions at the school, and
allocation of resources are lower. Walker (2007) argued for the necessity of managerial verification that the services and lessons provided are in line with both English-language learners’ expectations of knowledge and teachers’ expectations of autonomy. If managers are unaware of English learners, needs in their institutions, they are unable to build an environment in which teachers apply best educational practices. In private language schools, managers must consider two competing interests: keeping their institution profitable and ensuring students receive a quality education. This may pose a dilemma for managers (Walker, 2007).

Boyd et al. (2011) considered school factors and working conditions that cause teachers to leave. They discovered that school leadership and management style have the greatest impact of any factors studied on teacher retention. Ladd (2009) spoke about the relationship between the school leadership and management and working conditions and their influence on teachers’ decisions to remain or leave a school. She found that teachers are less likely to leave schools in which the leadership is competent and engaged. In addition, Water, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) found that school leadership influences students’ achievement, with more competent leadership correlating with higher achievement. Of course, without school management, a school cannot exist. As previously mentioned by Danielson (2007), teachers uncomfortable with taking risks in their school environment cannot become leaders. Boyd et al. (2011) reported that working conditions and the patience and understanding of administrators influence teachers’ choice of teaching techniques as well.

Viewable from either the perspective of teachers or that of students, educational leadership reaches across multiple dimensions. From the teachers’ perspective, educational
leadership provides guidance to students in the school. From the students’ perspective, leadership exists as a complex series of roles with different agents and important figures. Teachers, other students, and school officials can assume leadership roles, with each group influencing the function of the classroom in differing and complex ways. “The Leader in Me” program encourages leadership on the part of students, with the idea that the leadership skills they develop in the classroom stay with them throughout the course of their lives (Covey, 2014).

Educators and researchers may both agree on the importance of school leadership, but the paths they take toward the common destination of improved education for students may differ. Regardless of the road taken, educators and researchers have the opportunity to facilitate substantial improvements in student outcomes (DeVita, 2007). Individual educators’ efforts have the potential to improve the school learning environment, which may help students achieve their academic and social goals. Considering the importance of instructional and transformative leadership leads one to examine what happens in the classroom in more detail, which leads to an examination of teacher-centered and student-centered learning.

**Overview of Teacher-Centered and Student-Centered Learning**

Schools and teachers seek and implement different types of teaching methods and approaches in order to make their classrooms enjoyable, efficient, and beneficial for their students. In recent years, a major discussion has begun between advocates for student-centered learning approaches and authorities in teacher-centered colleges. Theorists and researchers in educational leadership regard this debate seriously. In addition, the debate over optimally effective teaching styles has raged in the halls of colleges of education for
many years. Some distinct advantages and disadvantages exist to each approach (Weinstein, Curran, & Tomlinson, 2003). Dupin-Bryant (2004) defined the student-centered learning style as “a style of instruction that is responsive, collaborative, problem-centered, and democratic in which both students and instructor decide how, what, and when learning occurs” (p. 42). In contrast, Dupin-Bryant defined teacher-centered learning as “a style of instruction that is formal, controlled, and autocratic, in which the instructor directs how, what, and when students learn,” (p. 42). No single right way exists to manage a classroom. Rather, the most effective method of classroom management depends upon the style and abilities of the individual teacher as well as the classroom being managed. Effective classroom management remains critical to student learning.

**Trends in Teacher-Centered and Student-Centered Teaching Styles**

McCombs and Whistler described the teacher-centered learning method as the traditional approach used in colleges and universities for most of their history. However, they argued that this traditional teacher-centered learning method has gradually grown less popular over time and student-centered learning has achieved greater popularity in recent years (as cited in Ahmed, 2013). Educators and school leaders are gradually reforming and adapting teacher-centered learning environments to incorporate student-centered learning. McCombs (2001) suggested that the “educational system is out of balance” (p. 182). At present, school reform focuses mainly on technical issues, which highlight accountability and disciplinary results for teachers, students, and administrators. This emphasis on behavioral and academic improvements within the student population guides a great many of the actions that occur within a modern school, and it has been somewhat effective. However, McCombs argued that this academic focus, while not harmful, does not entirely
suffice and cultivating a joy of learning deserves greater emphasis in the schools. One way to do this, according to McCombs, is to actively involve all parties in the educational process.

Curwin and Mendler, Deci and Ryan, and Wong and Wong (as cited as in Crawford, 2004) argued that the transition from teacher-centered to student-centered learning constitutes a major change in the culture and environment of schools; this new dynamic places far more emphasis on student relationships, connection to the institution, and a sense of accomplishment. McCombs (2001) and Crawford (2004) mentioned the necessity to adapt the educational models to provide a connection between students and teachers and to create a person-centered environment in which students face challenging resources.

Garrett also stated that students within the student-centered learning environment should expect “to strive to make sense of what they are learning by relating it to prior knowledge and by discussing it with others” (as cited in Brophy, 1999, p. 49). Therefore, he indicated that the class within this context serves as a learning community that creates and builds shared understanding. Another study by Barr and Tagg (1995) advocated for change within education from an instruction paradigm, a transfer of knowledge from teachers to students, to a learning paradigm, which entails the construction and development of knowledge by students who learn from one another. Essential to the production of positive learners, the abilities to adapt to student-centered learning and to create a learning community may define successful teachers in the future (Crawford, 2004; McCombs, 2001).
The Differences Between Teacher-Centered Learning (TCL) and Student-Centered Learning (SCL)

Contrary to the teacher-centered classroom, the classroom focused on student-centered instruction places an emphasis on the agency and mindset of students. Pedersen and Liu (2003) explained that student-centered learning is “more likely to promote student ownership over their process[es] and learning than do teacher-directed approaches” (p. 58). In student-centered learning, students must determine what they need to do and improve themselves. (Weimer (2002) also stated that student-centered learning emphasizes the way in which students learn and develop their knowledge, rather than how teachers teach.

Another clear difference between teacher-centered and student-centered learning includes the role of the teacher. Pedersen and Liu mentioned that, in teacher-centered learning teachers direct students step by step and correct every student mistake, whereas teachers offer a central question and then become facilitators in student-centered learning. Wohlfarth et al. (as cited in Ahmed, 2013) pointed out that teachers demonstrate “a more active, engaging, collaborative style of teaching” (p. 22) in student-centered learning. Essentially, teachers make the decisions in terms of curriculum, teaching methods, and selection of assessment; however, students become truly involved in the learning process and have greater interest in the way they learn it (Ahmed, 2013).

Recent Research on SCL

Duckworth (2009) investigated how students draw or describe that which they have learned in a specific educational context—one in which students studied 19th and 20th century American butter-making techniques. Duckworth discovered that students actually
learn less when teachers are overly involved in the research process than when they serve as facilitators. This result serves as an argument in favor of student-centered learning.

Another study discussed the reform of science education. Handelsman et al. (2004) remarked on dramatic differences between science major students taught biology, chemistry, math, and engineering in a traditional lecture and those taught in a student-centered learning environment. In Workshop Biology, a course the researchers investigated, students had higher levels of knowledge retention and satisfaction than in similar classes taught in a more traditional manner. The researchers stated that “there is mounting evidence supplementing or replacing lectures with active learning strategies and engaging students in discovery and the scientific process improve learning and knowledge retention” (p. 521).

McCombs (2004) also examined discrepancies in teachers’ and students’ perceptions of classroom practice. They collected data from 20,000 students and teachers from kindergarten to graduate school. The Assessment of Learner-Centered Practices (ALPC) surveys were administered for this large-scale research. The results of the study with the ALPC confirmed the following:

a) student perceptions of their teachers’ instructional practices are significantly related to their motivation, learning, and achievement; b) teacher perceptions of instructional practices are not significantly related to students motivation and achievement; c) student perceptions of a positive learning environment and interpersonal relationship with the teacher are the most important factors in enhancing student motivation and achievement. (p. 190)

Moreover, McCombs’ (2004) results indicate that student-centered teachers more effectively engage students in their classroom. Additionally, teacher job satisfaction in student-
centered learning environments outscores that in teacher-centered learning environments. Furthermore, these results may offer a greater opportunity for reflection for teachers who lead as to the “how” of transformation. Last, their finding “shows that learner-centered or person-centered system can improve learning and motivation by meeting students’ needs for belonging, control, and competence” (McCombs, 2001, p. 192).

**ESL and SCL vs. TCL**

The fields of ESL education and research have moved toward student-centered learning, similar to education and educational research for most subjects (Al-Zu’be, 2013; Bista, 2011; Kareema, 2014; Tawalbeth & AlAsmari, 2015). Tawalbeth and AlAsmari (2015) mentioned a noticeable shift from teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning in English-language education. Kareema (2014), in research as to the most effective manner to improve student participation in English-language learning classrooms, advocated that a student-centered approach is necessary. Bista (2011) listed several advantages to student-centered learning across domains developed by Alexander and Murphy (2000), who studied 14 learner-centered principles from the American Psychological Association report and shortened them to five to include:

1. The knowledge base – learners in this model participate in several learning activities. Each decision and activity would ask what students learn and how they learn. Learning is the mantra.

2. Strategic pressing and executive control – Learners as a part of the team became responsible and committed. The active involvement itself helps learners to work on personal strategic plans.
3. Motivation and affect – Learning-based programs and activities increase students’ motivation, commitment and responsibility, and help achieve the common goals.

4. Development and individual differences – Learners from diverse learning backgrounds, skills, experiences, and individual preference work in collaboration. Learning-based programs help them strengthen skills and hands-on experiences.

5. Situation or context – Learning process depends on various factors such as classroom environment, learning pedagogies, instructions, classroom materials and activities. Some learns actively participate in the interaction and learn fast whereas some take a longer time to produce the outcomes. (pp. 3-4)

Bista (2011) discussed the significant impact of classroom setting and teacher-created atmosphere on student learning. Especially in ESL learning, the diversity of the student group—one critical part of the classroom environment—affects students accustomed to studying only with other members of their ethnic, cultural, or linguistic group. In the United States, the ESL learner population is varied; students may be immigrants, refugees, or international students interested in enrolling in American colleges and universities.

Communication apprehension may well stem from this diversity, particularly if students are unaccustomed to diverse environments: “Students learn better when they are in brain-friendly classrooms [classrooms in which they are comfortable]” (p. 6). This idea relates to one of the hypotheses from Krashen’s Monitor Model, the affective filter hypothesis, which describes “the mental and emotional blocks that can prevent language acquirers from fully comprehending input. People acquire a second language only if their affective filters are low enough to allow them to receive adequate input” (Diaz-Rico, 2008, p. 42).
The affective filter describes an invisible barrier in the brain of second language learners. If this barrier is too high, ESL learners get nervous, their apprehension levels increase, and their self-esteem and motivation drop. Therefore, creating friendly and low-anxiety/apprehension classrooms, as can be accomplished through maintaining a sensible class size, remains important. Moreover, excessive correction offers another concern for ESL learners. The overcorrected student may feel such a lack of confidence in his or her language abilities that development of generative language skills becomes a frightening process.

The ESL classroom setting differs from the ordinary classroom due to the diverse backgrounds of its students. Tawalbeth and Al-Asmari (2015) stated that “people learn best when they are engaged in the topic and motivated to find new knowledge and skills to use in order to solve everyday problems” (p. 40). Norman and Sponhrer (as cited in Tawalbeth & Al-Asmari, 2015) argued that both active exploration and construction, rather than only sitting, listening, and reading a textbook, constitute the purpose of learning. Another study supported this educational philosophy. Hardin (2008) asserted that class-wide activities provide an opportunity for students to work together and to share common class goals; this active participation potentially leads to students becoming more active agents in the learning process. Engaging in an activity with classmates in an ESL classroom is critical to the learning of beginning-level English speakers; it gives students a chance to speak and get to know each other. How best to assess the impact of his method is considered in Chapter III.

Conclusion

The number of international students in the United States has grown tremendously over the last several years, and there is no compelling reason to believe this trend will
reverse. Students who are studying English are the single fastest growing subset of this population. Although educational researchers have been examining techniques to improve English-language teaching methods for many years, CLT and CR are relatively new teaching methods. Despite their popularity, research regarding the effectiveness of these methods is limited due to this newness. Additionally, CR and CLT may not be equally well suited to all cultures, which is another area in need of research. Both methods may have potential to be highly effective, but only in the right circumstances. The when, where, and why of CR and CLT need to be considered. When are CR or CLT appropriate? Where do they work best? Why do CR and CLT work (when they do), and why do they not work (when they do not)? All of these issues, as well as those comparing student-centered and teacher-centered learning and teaching are worthy of consideration. This research should contribute to the overall body of knowledge regarding them.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In order to examine the effectiveness of the student-centered teaching method, the researcher implemented the CR approach in classes with ESL students. This research sought to determine whether a significant difference exists between ESL students who participated in eight, 45-minute CR discussions in addition to their regular courses and those students who participated only in their regular classes. The key focus of this research explores whether the addition of the student-led, small-group discussion approach positively influences student English-language performance. In addition to addressing the quantitative research questions related to this topic, the researcher investigated ESL instructors’ perceptions of the challenges of implementing CR and student-led learning.

In order to determine the impact of CR discussion on ESL student language skills, participants took pretest and post-treatment tests for writing and speaking. Researchers collected student demographic variables by way of a survey and recorded ESL instructors’ opinions during interviews conducted at the end of the CR learning process. Finally, the researchers statistically analyzed data to determine the extent and specific properties of CR instruction.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does the CR approach improve students’ English-language speaking proficiency?

2. To what extent does the CR approach improve students’ English-language listening comprehension proficiency?
3. To what extent does the CR approach improve students’ English-language complexity of conversation?

4. To what extent does the CR approach improve students’ English-language communications skills, as measured by the BEST Plus?

5. To what extent does the CR approach improve students’ English-language writing proficiency?

6. When using the CR approach, do we find a correlation between demographic factors and students’ proficiency in speaking and writing English?

7. How do teachers perceive their leadership roles as changing in an ESL classroom (specifically as related to level of difficulty) as they transition from a teacher-centered teaching style to a student-centered teaching style?

**Procedures**

The Institutional Review Board of Western Kentucky University approved all materials and procedures used in this research. The relevant documentation (IRB approval and participant consent forms) can be found in the Appendix A.

**Participants**

In this study, this author (the principal researcher) recruited 85 IELI, including 22 from the lowest proficiency language group (Level 1), 27 from the intermediate proficiency language group (Level 2), and 36 from the advanced proficiency language group (Level 3). In Level 1, the researcher assigned 10 students to the CR group, with the remainder being assigned to the control group. In Level 2, 13 students were assigned to the CR group; and 18 in level 3 were assigned to the CR group. Saudi Arabians constituted the majority of participants (n = 49; ≈ 58%). Three IELI instructors, all native English speakers,
participated in the CR sessions. All had worked as ESL teachers for more than five years at IELI. None had previously taught using the CR method.

**Material and Training**

The founder and primary designer of the CR approach, Richard Anderson, introduced it to IELI instructors on March 21, 2013. A professor at the university affiliated with IELI and this researcher provided additional training in the CR method on June 21, 2013. Both training sessions were well received by several IELI instructors who indicated their willingness to attempt the CR approach with adult English learners. The researcher recruited three teachers to implement the CR approach in their classes. These ESL teachers and the researcher had two introductory discussions about CR materials and training in September 2013. Due to the IELI students’ diverse cultural backgrounds, the three participating instructors and the researcher discussed the selection of appropriate topics. In addition, the research team evaluated the CR stories’ levels of difficulty during the meeting. This researcher wrote CR stories based on the outcomes from three instructors; the topic appropriateness and the level of difficulties were considered and reflected in the eight CR stories.

Students attended eight CR discussion sessions over a four-week period with two sessions per week; all discussions were conducted during normal class hours. For the experimental group, the researcher selected eight appropriate stories (all involving college life) and related questions and prompts for the discussions. In typical CR material, an instructor presents a short story, after which the instructor asks students one or more big questions, each of which addresses a complex moral or societal dilemma such as the complexity of friendship, the use and misuse of honesty, unfaithfulness, or human rights.
issues. An example of a CR story summary and a big question follows. In this example, the instructor gave students a dilemma in which they considered two potentially conflicting positions: one in which they demonstrated loyalty to friends and allies versus one in which they demonstrated loyalty to the ethical principle of honesty. All eight stories are provided in Appendix B.

**Title:** Honesty? ... Becoming Amy?

**The story summary:** John and Catherine have been dating since high school, and both are graduating from college in six months. John was recently offered a good job, which he was able to obtain at least partially due to help he received from Catherine’s father. Catherine has a tough semester in front of her, and she is taking seven difficult classes. Amy is Catherine’s younger sister, and she is also a college student at the same school. She is taking several classes this semester, including English 100, which she has already failed twice. Unfortunately for Amy, university policy requires students who fail English 100 three times to take a longer (two-semester) remedial English class. Catherine asks John to take Amy’s online English 100 class so that she does not fail it yet again.

**Big question:** Should John take the online class for Amy?

The students began the discussion by taking initial positions on one of these big questions. They used the remainder of the session to elaborate and to provide reasons for their positions, listen to other group members’ opinions, and evaluate others’ reasoning. Students discussed these issues from multiple standpoints. For the control group, the researcher did not present any of these materials (stories or questions) and typical, non-collaborative instruction was used without the addition of any CR training.
Instruments

Several instruments were used to assess learner performance at IELI. Understanding the nature of these instruments is critical if one is to know what is being measured.

**Speaking and listening.** Two equivalent forms (Forms A and C) of the BEST Plus Oral English Proficiency Test, a measure of adult English proficiency produced by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), were used for the pretest and posttest evaluations of all CR and control group participants to measure their English listening and speaking performance. The test is an individually administered, face-to-face oral interview language assessment. The BEST Plus has several advantages over other language proficiency tests, including appropriateness for the assessment of adult learners, beginning at a low level and becoming progressively more difficult and being relatively quick, taking between 5 and 20 minutes to complete. The focus of the BEST Plus is to measure one’s interpersonal communication skills by simulating everyday conversations, such as one would have at home, at work, and in the community. The sample questions in Table 1, taken from the BEST Plus instrument, provide some idea of the complexity of the assessment.

Table 1

*Sample Questions from the BEST Plus Oral English Proficiency Test*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where are you from?</td>
<td>Locator (lowest level)</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you like shopping for clothes?</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about what you do to improve your English …</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me more.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think it is important for immigrants to the United States to become citizens? …Why?/Why not? … Tell me more.</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition, the scores of the BEST Plus have been aligned with the ESL Educational Functioning Levels of the National Reporting System (NRS) as well as the Student Performance Levels (SPLs) (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2016).

In order to ensure that the BEST Plus was administered appropriately and in accordance with the test administration guidelines, a CAL training team came to Western Kentucky University for the session before the pretest. Two graduate students attended the one-day training session to learn how to evaluate students’ oral language skills. The Best Plus was designed as a face-to-face, one-on-one interview style test. Students took both pretest and posttest during their regular class hours with their teacher’s permission in accordance with the provided testing schedule. The scoring rubric is provided in Appendix C. Students’ responses were scored in three categories: Listening Comprehension, Language Complexity, and Communication. The quality of the responses was determined with a range of scores in each category: Listening comprehension on a scale from 0-2, Language Complexity on a scale from 0-4, and Communication on a scale from 0-3.

The Best Plus provided a detailed explanation for each domain as follows:

**Listening Comprehension** refers to how well the examinee understands the setup and the question. To be able to participate in interpersonal communication, a person must understand what is said to him or her. In rating this category, you will need to consider two issues: Did the examinee need the questions to be repeated? [And] Do the reasons indicate total understanding, partial understanding, or lack of understanding? (Duzer, Stauffer, & Kenyon, 2007, Section III-2)

**Language Complexity** refers to how the examiner organizes and elaborates the response. Different types of question require different levels of linguistic complexity in the
responses. Sometimes a one-word answer is appropriate. Sometimes sentences, strings of sentences, or more complex language is needed to give an appropriate response. In rating this category, you will need to listen for several things. Is the response an appropriate word, phrase, sentence, or string of sentences? How complex is the grammar? Is the detail provided minimal or clearly beyond basic? Is the response organized and cohesive? (Duzer et al., 2007, Section III-4)

**Communication** refers to how clearly the examinee communicates meaning, that is, to what extent the response is comprehensible. Many aspects of language (such as pronunciation, intonation, and word choice) play a role in making what one says more or less understandable to others. Poor control over any of these areas can severely impede comprehensibility. In rating this category, consider the following questions: How much meaning does the listener have to fill in to understand the responses? (Duzer et al., 2007, Section III-7)

**Writing.** In order to assess participant progress in writing, students wrote one essay before they began the CR sessions and one after their final CR session. The researcher adapted the questions used in this assessment from sample content of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) by the Educational Testing Service (ETS). IELI instructors who did not participate in CR sessions evaluated both experiment and control group students’ essay results with a rubric adapted from Toulmin’s (1958) Argument Assignment Rubric.

The original version of this rubric is attached in Appendix D. It is based on the work of Toulmin (1958), which provided a considerably more detailed framework for assessing complex arguments by way of warrant, working and idealized logic, and epistemological
theory. Use of the adapted version of this rubric (Reazon Systems, 2016) enables graders to assess not only the grammatical correctness of an argument but also the strength of the underlying logic and the speaker’s ability to rationally connect argument and evidence. An independent assessor used this rubric to evaluate participants’ essays, assigning a score of 1 through 4 for each category listed in Table 2. These five scores were summed to create a composite score for each essay.

Table 2

Abbreviated Toulmin’s Argument Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Poor (1 Pt.)</th>
<th>Fair (2 Pt.)</th>
<th>Good (3 Pt.)</th>
<th>Excellent (4 Pt.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Claim (foundation of argument)</td>
<td>No claim</td>
<td>Unclear claim</td>
<td>Decent, needs clarification</td>
<td>Clear claims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason (why argument is made)</td>
<td>No reason</td>
<td>Unclear reason</td>
<td>Decent, needs clarification</td>
<td>Clear reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounds (basis of argument)</td>
<td>None/irrelevant</td>
<td>Murky</td>
<td>Decent, needs clarification</td>
<td>Clear grounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warrant (connects claim to argument)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Unclear/limited connection</td>
<td>Decent, needs clarification</td>
<td>Clear warrant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counter-argument (argument against claim)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Present, needs development</td>
<td>Decent, needs clarification</td>
<td>Clear counterargument</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Adapted from Reazon (sic) Systems, Inc., 2016

Data Analysis

Data Analysis of Research Question 1

RQ1: To what extent does the CR approach influence students’ English speaking proficiency? This question determined the effectiveness of the CR approach. Three-way
repeated ANOVA was used to measure changes in pre-post speaking scores for both CR and control groups at three levels of proficiency (fundamental, intermediate, and advanced). In this case, the dependent variable was the total pre-post score growth and the independent variable was the CR approach.

**Data Analysis of Research Question 2, 3, and 4**

Research Questions 2, 3, and 4 are the sub-scale of speaking (listening, complexity, and communication).

RQ2: To what extent does the CR approach improve students’ English-language listening comprehension proficiency?

RQ3: To what extent does the CR approach improve students’ English-language complexity of conversation?

RQ4: To what extent does the CR approach improve students’ English-language communications skills, as measured by the BEST Plus?

Again, a three way ANOVA was conducted to explore the pre-post growth in each of the three sub-scales of the speaking assessment—listening, complexity, and communication—all of which should be affected by the CR approach. This analysis compared the CR and non-CR groups at three levels of performance. The dependent variable was students’ total pre- and post-treatment listening, complexity, and communication scores; the independent variable was the application versus non-application of the CR approach.

**Data Analysis of Research Question 5**

RQ5: To what extent does the CR approach improve students’ English-language writing proficiency? This research question determined the effectiveness of the CR
Three-way repeated ANOVA was used to measure changes in pre-post speaking scores for both CR and control groups at three levels of proficiency (fundamental, intermediate, and advanced). For the writing section, only post-treatment scores of the CR and control groups were compared. In this case, the dependent variable was the total pre-post scores growth and the independent variable was the CR approach.

**Data Analysis of Research Question 6**

RQ 6: When using the CR approach, do we find a correlation between demographic factors and students’ proficiency in speaking and writing English? This research question tested the relationship between participants’ demographic information and their total post-score results. As a research method, multiple linear regressions were performed to determine the demographic factor that significantly predicts participants’ total pre-post growth. In this case, the dependent variable was the mean pre-post total oral proficiency (listening, complexity, and communication) score change; the independent variables were nationality, gender, number of years of English study, study abroad experience, and age of student. Using this information, the researcher determined the variables, if any, that had the greatest effect on score change and the demographic (external factors) that had the most influence on student performance.

**Data Analysis of Research Question 7**

RQ 7: How do teachers perceive their leadership roles as changing in an ESL classroom [specifically as related to level of difficulty] as they transition from a teacher-centered teaching style to a student-centered teaching style? This research question analyzed the content of three interviews with instructors who recently implemented the CR approach. A total of 11 questions were asked covering the interviewees’ experiences,
observations, perceptions, and critiques related to the CR method. The discourse analysis method, a qualitative research technique, was used. The researchers transcribed the output and thoroughly analyzed it.

The answers to all of these questions are provided in Chapter IV. Other relevant statistical findings are provided in addition to these answers, as needed.
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether CR has the potential to improve ESL students’ English speaking and writing ability. This study sought to address the following: RQ1 attempted to determine whether CR affects students’ speaking skills. RQ2 focused on listening skills. RQ3 focused on complexity of speaking, while RQ4 focused on communication skills. A secondary area of research interest was the correlation between demographic factors and students’ posttest scores. Last, to supplement the quantitative data, three instructors’ interview results are summarized in this chapter, with special emphasis on the relationship between CR and classroom leadership.

Participants

The principal researcher recruited 85 IELI students, including 22 from the foundational proficiency language group (Level 1), 27 from the intermediate proficiency language group (Level 2), and 36 from the university-level language group (Level 3). Ten students at Level 1 were assigned to the CR group, with the remainder being assigned to the control group. At Level 2, 13 students were assigned to the CR group. Finally, 18 students at Level 3 were assigned to the CR group. Students were assigned to these levels by IELI using an internally developed assessment. Foundational students were those found to have the lowest level of English-language communicative ability. Intermediate students were somewhat above that, but not at the level of being able to study without assistance in a university setting. Finally, university-level students were nearly ready to study at the university level without the assistance, with completion of the IELI program indicating that
they no longer needed any special language accommodations to complete their required university-level coursework.

Data collection occurred at the International English Language Institute (IELI is a pseudonym for an English-language training institute at a large regional American university). Eighty-five students were recruited by the researcher; however, only 81 answered the initial survey. Seventy-eight participated in both pretest and posttest measures of oral English proficiency, and 75 participated in the pretest and posttest measures of English-language writing proficiency. The majority of individuals (55.6%) were Saudi Arabian nationals. The second largest group was Chinese (19.8%), and the remaining participants (24.6%) came from countries around the world. The majority of participants (46) were male, and the remaining (35) were female. Secondary school was the highest level of education completed by nearly half (46.9%) of participants, and one third (33.3%) had completed bachelor’s degrees. The most common reasons for attending school in the United States were to complete a bachelor’s degree (54.3%) or to complete a master’s degree (33.3%). In the following sections, the research questions are listed and the results are examined.

**Research Questions**

1. To what extent does the CR approach improve students’ English-language speaking proficiency?

2. To what extent does the CR approach improve students’ English-language listening comprehension proficiency?

3. To what extent does the CR approach improve students’ English-language complexity of conversation?
4. To what extent does the CR approach improve students’ English-language communications skills, as measured by the BEST Plus?

5. To what extent does the CR approach improve students’ English-language writing proficiency?

6. When using the CR approach, do we find a correlation between demographic factors and students’ proficiency in speaking and writing English?

7. How do teachers perceive their leadership roles as changing in an ESL classroom (specifically as related to level of difficulty) as they transition from a teacher-centered teaching style to a student-centered teaching style?

**Summary of Data**

An analysis of the aforementioned quantitative data revealed several patterns. A three-way repeated ANOVA indicated that the total speaking proficiency test scores, complexity scores, communication scores, and writing test scores follow a pattern, which is that two CR groups (foundation and intermediate level) showed some positive treatment effect; however, one group (university level) showed a declining score. Only listening scores improved for all three groups. Correlation analysis revealed that the female students had higher total posttest scores and the posttest complexity scores. In addition, the number of years students studied English and the posttest listening score negatively correlated, which indicates that the longer students studied English prior to beginning their training at IELI, their posttest listening scores were lower. As for the analysis of the interview results, the researcher found that teachers have no significant problems implementing CR. Additionally, teachers stated that the skills they developed during CR training and implementation have the potential to be useful even in non-CR classrooms.
Analysis of Research Question 1

The first research question investigated whether the CR approach improves students’ overall speaking proficiency; i.e., to what extent does the CR approach improve students’ English-language speaking proficiency? In order to measure students’ overall speaking proficiency, both CR and control group students were assessed using two equivalent versions (Forms A and C) of the BEST Plus Oral English Proficiency Test, with Form A randomly assigned as a pretest to half the participants (with Form C serving as the posttest) and the other participants receiving the assessments in reverse order. The BEST Plus is a measure of adult English proficiency produced by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL).

As can be seen in Table 3, pretest scores of the CR group were higher than those of the control group at every level except intermediate. Additionally, only scores for students at the CR university level declined in their post total result, while all other groups’ posttest total scores improved. Total scores for both control and CR groups improved by several points; however, the control group improved slightly more than the CR group (control group total pre-posttest score change = 5.325, CR group total pre-posttest score change = 3.5). These results suggest that the passage of time—the five weeks between pretest and posttest—gave most students time to improve. The significance of these score changes is examined in Chapter V.
Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of Total Speaking (Listening, Complexity, and Communications)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Post Scores</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest Total Scores</td>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>169.78</td>
<td>41.78</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>209.71</td>
<td>24.52</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University</td>
<td>227.53</td>
<td>22.43</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>208.30</td>
<td>35.63</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest Total Scores</td>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>183.00</td>
<td>31.76</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>207.27</td>
<td>27.33</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University</td>
<td>283.56</td>
<td>27.04</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>237.66</td>
<td>52.74</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest Total Scores</td>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>223.89</td>
<td>30.32</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>216.55</td>
<td>17.04</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University</td>
<td>264.83</td>
<td>17.11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>241.16</td>
<td>30.61</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A three-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to determine the effect of the treatment (CR) on pretest and posttest overall scores of each of the three performance level groups (foundation, intermediate, and university). As can be seen in Table 4, the within-subject effect (pre-posttest) suggests that performance generally improves over time.

The three-way repeated measures ANOVA showed a significant main effect for the pre-posttest total score results, $F (1, 72) = 8.8, p < 0.05$, partial eta squared $= 0.109.$
Table 4

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects for Total Speaking Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-posttest total score results</td>
<td>2571.63</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2571.63</td>
<td>8.80</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-posttest total score results*Condition</td>
<td>149.68</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>149.68</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-posttest total score results*Level</td>
<td>7199.38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3599.69</td>
<td>12.32</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-posttest total score results<em>Condition</em>Level</td>
<td>3968.17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1984.09</td>
<td>6.79</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error (Total)</td>
<td>21040.67</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>292.23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An examination of the between-subject effects suggests that there was a significant performance difference between the CR and non-CR groups and significant differences between English levels. In the Table 5, the three-way repeated measures ANOVA showed a significant effect for condition ($F(1,72) = 19.98$, $p < 0.05$, partial eta squared = 0.22); and a significant main effect for English level ($F(1,72) = 48.36$, $p < 0.05$, partial eta squared = 0.57). Condition and level also revealed a significant interaction ($F(1,72) = 6.59$, $p < 0.05$, partial eta squared = 0.16).
Table 5

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Total Speaking Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>6838921.34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6838921.34</td>
<td>6411.18</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
<td>21313.07</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21313.07</td>
<td>19.98</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>103165.57</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>51582.79</td>
<td>48.36</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition* Level</td>
<td>14066.63</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7033.32</td>
<td>6.59</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>76803.70</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>1066.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the previously discussed data suggest that the CR method has an effect, the precise nature of that effect remains undefined. Figure 1 shows the pre-post rates of improvement for the CR and non-CR groups at the foundation level. While both groups made improvements over time, the rate of improvement for the CR group was noticeably greater than that of the non-CR group.
An examination of Figure 2 reveals similar results for the intermediate level of participant performance, with the greatest distinction indicating that the effect is even more noticeable: The CR group began at a lower level of performance than their non-CR group; however, despite this difference, they achieved higher levels of performance by the end of the treatment.

*Figure 1.* Speaking total scores plot by condition and pre-posttest for foundation level.
Figure 2. Speaking total scores plot by condition and pre-posttest for intermediate level.

While both Figures 1 and 2 suggest considerable growth for both groups, Figure 3 shows CR and non-CR performance at the university level, which suggests something different. Within this chart, the CR group appears to have declined in performance over time. Although this group performs at a higher level than the non-CR group, this downward trend suggests that CR is not helping their performance, and may even lower it. Other reasons may exist for this decrease in the average score at the university level that have little or nothing to do with the effects of CR, and an examination of different performance sub-scales may offer some understanding of these possible causes.
Figure 3. Speaking total scores plot by condition and pre-posttest for university level. The researcher found these results—the decline in CR university-level performance—to be contradictory to her personal observations. This result is discussed in Chapter V.

Analysis of Research Question 2

The second research question investigated the extent to which the CR approach improves students’ listening proficiency. As can be seen in Table 6, pretest scores for the listening control group were higher than those of the CR group at every level except intermediate. Additionally, all CR groups improved their posttest total score, while only the foundation control group improved. Total scores for both control and CR groups improved;
however, the CR group improved considerably more than the control group (CR group total pre-posttest score change = 8.12, control group total pre-posttest score change = 0.63).

Table 6

*Descriptive Statistics of Pretest and Posttest Listening Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Scores</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening Pretest</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>55.00</td>
<td>11.23</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>65.79</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University</td>
<td>69.29</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>64.85</td>
<td>8.49</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Pretest</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>58.44</td>
<td>6.21</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>63.64</td>
<td>6.20</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University</td>
<td>63.50</td>
<td>6.15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62.34</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Posttest</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>58.67</td>
<td>7.62</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>65.14</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University</td>
<td>69.29</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>65.45</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Posttest</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>64.56</td>
<td>6.84</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>66.00</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University</td>
<td>76.78</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70.76</td>
<td>7.28</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A three-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to determine the effect of the treatment (CR) on pretest and posttest listening scores of each of the three performance level groups (foundation, intermediate, and university). As can be seen in Table 7, the within-subject effects of pre-posttest listening suggests that students’ listening skills improve over time. The three-way repeated measures ANOVA showed a significant main effect for the pre-posttest listening results ($F (1, 72) = 37.89, p < 0.05$, partial eta squared =
0.35). However, the pre-posttest listening for condition had a significant effect \((F(1, 72) = 21.65, p < 0.05, \text{partial eta squared} = 0.23)\); and the pre-posttest listening for level had a significant effect \((F(1, 72) = 7.52, p < 0.05, \text{partial eta squared} = 0.17)\).

Table 7

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects for Total Listening Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Posttest Listening</td>
<td>615.17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>615.17</td>
<td>37.89</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Posttest Listening</td>
<td>351.51</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>351.51</td>
<td>21.65</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Condition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Posttest Listening</td>
<td>244.16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>122.08</td>
<td>7.52</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Posttest Listening</td>
<td>265.63</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>132.81</td>
<td>8.18</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Condition</em>Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error (Listening)</td>
<td></td>
<td>72</td>
<td>16.24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An examination of between-subject effects suggests an insignificant performance difference between the CR and non-CR groups. In Table 8, the three-way repeated measures ANOVA indicates no effect for condition \((F(1, 72) = 1.93, p > 0.05, \text{partial eta squared} = 0.03)\); however, level (foundation, intermediate, university) had a significant effect on results \((F(1, 72) = 27.26, p < 0.05, \text{partial eta squared} = 0.43)\). No interaction between condition and level was found. The results show that overall listening skills are improved by CR practice over time, no statistically significant difference exists between CR and control groups on listening.
Table 8

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Total Listening Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>603608.40</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>603608.40</td>
<td>12288.58</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
<td>94.89</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>94.89</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>2678.23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1339.12</td>
<td>27.26</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition*</td>
<td>152.22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>76.11</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>3536.60</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>49.12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data suggest that the CR method has no statistically significant effect on listening. The results may be explained by the substantial interactions between the pre-posttest listening and intervention condition, and between pre-posttest listening and students' English proficiency level. Figure 4 shows the pre-post rates of listening improvement for the CR and the control groups at the foundation level. Although the CR group had a higher score for their pretest, the rate of improvement for the CR group was greater than that of the control group.
An analysis of Figure 5 reveals that, for the intermediate level, the CR group experienced outstanding improvement in terms of listening skills. As Figure 5 shows, the CR group began at a lower level; however, more than five weeks of CR practice improved students’ listening skills. Conversely, the control group did poorly in terms of listening. The results indicate that their listening skills decreased. The CR group began at a lower level of performance than the control group; despite this difference, the CR group students exhibited much higher levels of performance by the end of the treatment.
Both Figures 4 and 5 suggest significant improvements were made by the CR groups. Figure 6 shows greater improvement by the CR group than the control group at the university level, which further supports this observation. In terms of listening skills, the CR group showed much greater growth over time. The CR group listening results significantly increased, whereas the control group remained the same for all three levels.

*Figure 5.* Listening total scores plot by condition and pre-posttest for intermediate level.
Analysis for Research Question 3

The third research question investigated the extent to which the CR approach improves students’ ability to generate more complex (better organized and more elaborate) responses to questions. As can be seen in Table 9, pretest scores for the control group were higher than those of the CR group at every level, and total scores for both control and CR groups improved. However, the CR group on average improved more than the control group (CR group total pre-posttest score change = 3.19, control group total pre-posttest score change = 2.33). Although total amount of improvement for the CR group score was
higher than the total amount for the control group, the CR university-level mean score declined (score change = -3.11).

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics of Pretest and Posttest Complexity Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Scores</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complexity:</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>14.94</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>43.64</td>
<td>9.476</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University</td>
<td>53.29</td>
<td>9.98</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>45.80</td>
<td>13.03</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>38.67</td>
<td>9.056</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>47.46</td>
<td>11.72</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University</td>
<td>71.72</td>
<td>10.86</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>56.87</td>
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<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity:</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>37.89</td>
<td>11.24</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>46.21</td>
<td>8.85</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University</td>
<td>55.12</td>
<td>10.26</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>48.13</td>
<td>11.92</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>56.00</td>
<td>13.63</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>49.36</td>
<td>7.71</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University</td>
<td>68.61</td>
<td>10.99</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>60.05</td>
<td>13.61</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A three-way repeated measure ANOVA was conducted to determine the effect of the treatment (CR) on pretest and posttest complexity scores of each of the three performance level groups (foundation, intermediate, and university). As can be seen in Table 10, the within-subject effect suggests that students’ complexity skills improve over time. The three-way repeated measure ANOVA showed a significant main effect for the pre-posttest total score results, ($F (1, 72) = 12.58$, $p < 0.05$, partial eta squared = 0.15)
Table 10

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects for Total Complexity Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Posttest Complexity</td>
<td>549.44</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>549.44</td>
<td>12.58</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Posttest Complexity*</td>
<td>78.44</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>78.44</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>0.184</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Posttest Complexity* Level</td>
<td>692.26</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>346.13</td>
<td>7.93</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Posttest Complexity* Condition*Level</td>
<td>569.10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>284.55</td>
<td>6.51</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error (Complexity)</td>
<td>3144.7</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>43.68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An examination of the between-subject effects suggests a significant performance difference between the CR and non-CR groups. In Table 11, the three-way repeated measures ANOVA showed a significant effect for condition ($F (1,72) = 19.99, p < 0.05$, partial eta squared = 0.217) and a significant main effect for English level ($F (1,72) = 33.31, p < 0.05$, partial eta squared = 0.48). Condition and level also had a significant interaction ($F (1,72) = 3.05, p < 0.05$, partial eta squared = 0.08).
Table 11

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Total Complexity Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>364353.21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>364353.21</td>
<td>1974.79</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
<td>3687.50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3687.50</td>
<td>19.99</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>12290.98</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6145.49</td>
<td>33.31</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
<td>1125.80</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>562.90</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>0.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>13284.18</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>184.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the discussion regarding the previous complexity-related tables, data suggest that the CR method has an effect on the rate of improvement for complexity skills. Figure 7 shows the pre-post rates of improvement for the CR and non-CR groups at the foundation level. Both groups made improvements over time; however, the foundation CR group showed much greater improvement compared to the control group. The foundation CR group total pre-posttest change was 17.33 points, while the control group total pre-posttest score change was only 2.89 points.
Figure 7. Complexity total score plot by condition and pre-posttest for foundation level.

The report summaries in Tables 9 through 11 suggest that the CR method has a statistically significant effect. Figure 8 shows the pre-post rates of complexity improvement for the CR and the control groups at the intermediate level. The rates of improvement for each group are nearly parallel. In terms of the growth rate, the control group showed slightly higher (2.57) than the CR groups. The CR group had a higher score for their pretest; the rate of improvement for the CR group was lower than that of the control group.
While both Figures 7 and 8 suggest considerable growth for both CR and control groups, Figure 9, which shows both CR and control groups’ performance at the university level, does not. Figure 9 suggests something unlike the first two levels. Within this chart, the CR group appears to have declined in performance over time. Although the CR group performs at a higher level than the control group, this downward trend suggests that CR does not positively influence complexity skills; and this result brings down the CR group’s overall complexity score skills. Unexpectedly, Figure 9 clearly shows a drop in university-level CR group scores.

*Figure 8.* Complexity total score plot by condition and pre-posttest for intermediate level.
Analysis of Research Question 4

The fourth research question investigated the extent to which the CR approach improves students’ communication proficiency. As can be seen in Table 12, pretest scores for the CR group were higher than those of the control group except at the intermediate level. In terms of growth, the CR foundation group showed the highest improvement, while the university CR group showed negative growth. The control group total pre-posttest score change was 2.4, which shows improvement; however, the CR group total pre-posttest score change was -8.11. Within the CR group, only university-level scores declined; however, this decline was sufficiently large (-28.89) to offset growth at the other CR levels.
Table 12

Descriptive Statistics of Pretest and Posttest Communication Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Scores</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>79.78</td>
<td>17.84</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>100.29</td>
<td>12.59</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>University</td>
<td>104.94</td>
<td>11.71</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>97.65</td>
<td>16.54</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>85.89</td>
<td>17.70</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>96.18</td>
<td>12.04</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>University</td>
<td>148.33</td>
<td>11.15</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>118.45</td>
<td>31.68</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>86.44</td>
<td>16.77</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>101.00</td>
<td>9.49</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>University</td>
<td>106.47</td>
<td>11.83</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.05</td>
<td>14.36</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>103.33</td>
<td>11.18</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>101.18</td>
<td>8.73</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>University</td>
<td>119.44</td>
<td>7.11</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>110.34</td>
<td>12.17</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A three-way repeated measure ANOVA was conducted to determine the effect of the treatment (CR) on pretest and posttest communication scores at each of the three performance level groups (foundation, intermediate, and university). As can be seen in Table 13, the within-subject effect suggests that students’ communication skills did not significantly improve over time. The three-way repeated measure ANOVA showed no significant main effect for the pre-posttest total score results ($F (1, 72) = 0.08, p > 0.05$, partial eta squared = 0.00) and a significant main effect for English level ($F (1, 72) = 27.70, p > 0.05$, partial eta squared = 0.44).
Table 13

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects for Total Communication Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Posttest Communication</td>
<td>6.09</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.09</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.784</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Posttest Communication * Condition</td>
<td>236.27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>236.27</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>0.090</td>
<td>0.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Posttest Communication * Level</td>
<td>4445.77</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2222.88</td>
<td>27.70</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Posttest Communication Total * Condition * Level</td>
<td>3422.18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1711.09</td>
<td>21.32</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error(Communication Total)</td>
<td>5777.55</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>80.24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An examination of the between-subject effect suggests a significant performance difference between the CR and control groups. In Table 14, the three-way repeated measure ANOVA shows a significant effect for condition 

\[ F (1, 72) = 26.72, \ p < 0.05, \ \text{partial eta squared} = 0.271. \]  Condition and level also had a significant interaction \( F (1, 72) = 15.67, \ p > 0.05; \ \text{partial eta squared} = 0.303. \)
Table 14

*Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Total Communication Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>1524222.28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1524222.28</td>
<td>7138.81</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
<td>5703.89</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5703.89</td>
<td>26.71</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>25860.73</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12930.36</td>
<td>60.56</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition * Level</td>
<td>6690.75</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3345.38</td>
<td>15.67</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>15372.87</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>213.51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10 shows the pre-post rates of improvement for the CR and control groups at the foundation level. Both groups made improvements over time; however, although the foundation CR group performed better on the pretest, they showed much greater improvement compared to the control group. The foundation CR group total pre-posttest change was 17.44 points, while the control group total pre-posttest score change was only 6.66 points.
Figure 10. Communication total score plot by condition and pre-posttest for foundation level.

Figure 11 shows the pre-post rates of improvement for the CR and control groups at the intermediate level. This figure shows that the CR group experienced significant growth in communication skills. The posttest CR score was higher than that of the control group, although the CR pretest score was 3.8 points lower. The pretest and posttest score change for the CR group was 5 points, while the control group score change was only 0.71.
Figure 11. Communication total score plot by condition and pre-posttest for intermediate level.

As can be seen in Figure 12, the total communication pre-posttest score for the CR group was much lower than that of the control group due to the university-level CR communication score dropping considerably. Conversely, the control group university-level pre-posttest score improved. The CR university group communication score dropped 28.89 points, while the control group slightly improved by 1.53 points.
**Figure 12.** Communication total score plot by condition and pre-posttest for university level.

**Analysis of Research Question 5**

The fifth research question investigated whether the CR approach improves students’ overall writing proficiency; i.e., to what extent does the CR approach improve students’ English-language writing proficiency? As can be seen in Table 15, pretest scores of the CR group were higher than those of the control group at every level. Additionally, both CR and control groups at the university level saw pre-posttest score drops. Total scores for the control groups slightly improved; however, the total scores for the CR group dropped (control group total pre-posttest score change = 1.10, CR group total pre-posttest score change = -0.64). All levels of CR group had higher pretest scores than those in the control
group; however, the foundation and intermediate control groups improved more than those in the CR group.

Table 15

*Descriptive Statistics of Pretest and Posttest Writing Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Scores</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing Pretest</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>10.17</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>6.33</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>University</td>
<td>12.19</td>
<td>7.24</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10.10</td>
<td>6.44</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>11.78</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>6.36</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>University</td>
<td>18.45</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12.96</td>
<td>7.26</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Posttest</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>16.33</td>
<td>6.41</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>9.07</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>University</td>
<td>9.94</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11.19</td>
<td>6.44</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>14.11</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>7.75</td>
<td>6.58</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>University</td>
<td>14.18</td>
<td>7.65</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12.32</td>
<td>7.01</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A three-way repeated measure ANOVA was conducted to determine the effect of the treatment (CR) on pretest and posttest writing scores of each of the three performance level groups (foundation, intermediate, and university). As can be seen in Table 16, the within-subject effect suggests no statistically significant effect on students’ writing performance. The three-way repeated measure ANOVA showed no significant main effect for the pre-
posttest total score results ($F (1, 53) = 1.63, p > 0.05, \text{partial eta squared} = 0.030$). However, level (foundation, intermediate, and university) significantly interacted with overall writing score over time ($F (1, 53) = 4.68, p < 0.05, \text{partial eta squared} = 0.150$).

Table 16

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects for Total Complexity Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Posttest Writing</td>
<td>33.08</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33.08</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.324</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Posttest Writing * Condition</td>
<td>54.43</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>54.43</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>0.207</td>
<td>0.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Posttest Writing * Level</td>
<td>312.69</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>156.35</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>0.150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Posttest Writing * Condition * Level</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.945</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error(Writing_Total)</td>
<td>1771.01</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>33.42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An examination of the between-subject effects suggests no significant performance difference between the CR and non-CR groups. In Table 17, the three-way repeated measure ANOVA showed no significant effect for condition ($F (1, 53) = 1.18, p > 0.05, \text{partial eta squared} = 0.022$).

Table 17

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Total Communication Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>14266.09</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14266.09</td>
<td>345.51</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
<td>48.76</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>48.76</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>0.282</td>
<td>0.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>802.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>401.00</td>
<td>9.71</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition * Level</td>
<td>248.47</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>124.24</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>0.102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>2188.34</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>41.29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 13 shows the pre-post rates of improvement for the CR and control groups at the foundation level. Both groups made improvements over time; however, the foundation control group showed much greater improvement compared to the CR group. The foundation control group total pre-posttest change was 6.17 points, while the CR group total pre-posttest score change was only 2.33 points.

\[ \text{English Level = Foundation} \]

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{Writing Total Scores} & \\
\text{Condition} & \text{CR} \\
\text{Pre_post} & \text{POSTTEST} \\
16.0 & 14.0 \\
12.0 & 10.0 \\
\end{align*} \]

Figure 13. Writing total score plot by condition and pre-posttest for foundation level.

Again, Figure 14 shows the pre-post rates of improvement for the CR and control groups at the intermediate level. This figure shows that the control group experienced significant growth in writing performance. The control group total posttest score was higher than that of the CR group, although their pretest score was 3.66 points lower.
Figure 14. Writing total score plot by condition and pre-posttest for intermediate level.

Figure 15 shows pre-posttest performance drops for both the control and CR groups at the university level. These results lowered the total writing scores for both groups. Although the CR group posttest score was still higher than the control group, their scores dropped severely. The CR group writing performance score dropped 4.27 points, whereas the control group’s score dropped 2.25 points.
Figure 15. Writing total score plot by condition and pre-posttest for university level.

Table 18

Estimated Average Sentence Length in Participants’ Writing Samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Average sentence length pretest</th>
<th>Average sentence length posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>15.66</td>
<td>18.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>11.66</td>
<td>14.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>14.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>18.33</td>
<td>13.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CR</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the three-way repeated measure ANOVA results, CR failed to show a significant effect on participants’ performances at any level (foundation, intermediate, or university). To further investigate this matter, estimated average sentence lengths for the pre- and post-conditions were calculated at each level. This was accomplished by randomly selecting three students from each group and calculating their average pretest and posttest essay sentence length; this process was conducted by randomly selecting 100 words from each essay and calculating the average sentence length within these selections. The length of students’ sentences was measured in order to determine whether any relationship exists between the results and the essay. Table 18 shows the students’ estimated average length of the sentences for each group. Several interesting relationships can be seen by examining Table 18, which contains all of this data, although no clear pre-/posttest essay length pattern emerged. Several groups, such as those at the foundational level (control and CR), saw slight increases in sentence length. At the intermediate level (control and CR) and university level (control), students wrote shorter posttest sentences. The most pronounced trend was at the university (CR) level, for which posttest sentence length was considerably longer than pretest sentence length. Apparently, students at this level wrote considerably longer posttest sentences (on average) than pretest sentences, yet their posttest score was lower than their pretest score.

Analysis of Research Question 6

The sixth question investigated the potential relationship between demographic factors and students’ speaking and writing posttest scores. Table 19 lists the Pearson correlations. First, a statistically significant correlation was seen between gender and the total posttest score. According to Table 19, the Pearson correlation for gender and total
posttest score was .347 (p > 0.05). As men were assigned a category of 1 and women, a category of 2, this indicates that women scored higher on this assessment. Additionally, Table 20 shows that women performed better than men on several posttests. The women’s mean total posttest score was 254.13, while the men’s mean total posttest score was 232.70, a difference of 21.44 points. Table 20 shows that the women’s mean complexity posttest score was 66.20, while men’s mean complexity posttest score was 56.04.

Aside from gender, correlation was noted of -0.353 (p < 0.05) between the number of years students studied English and listening posttest performance. This indicates that, the more students study, their communication performance lowers. Counterintuitively, the longer students had studied English, the poorer their listening performance appeared to be.

Table 19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gndr.</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years Study</th>
<th>Study Abroad Status</th>
<th>Nation</th>
<th>Asian Combine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Post</strong></td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td>.347*</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>-0.228</td>
<td>0.257</td>
<td>0.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-t.)</td>
<td>0.033</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.168</td>
<td>0.119</td>
<td>0.825</td>
<td>0.459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Listening Post</strong></td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td>0.259</td>
<td>0.144</td>
<td>-.353*</td>
<td>0.229</td>
<td>0.113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-t.)</td>
<td>0.116</td>
<td>0.395</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>0.166</td>
<td>0.499</td>
<td>0.504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
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<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Complex. Post</strong></td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td>.370*</td>
<td>-.174</td>
<td>-.124</td>
<td>0.283</td>
<td>-0.087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-t.)</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>0.302</td>
<td>0.457</td>
<td>0.085</td>
<td>0.604</td>
<td>0.591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
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<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comm. Post</strong></td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td>0.304</td>
<td>0.107</td>
<td>-0.224</td>
<td>0.192</td>
<td>0.122</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-t.)</td>
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<td>0.527</td>
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<td>0.248</td>
<td>0.464</td>
<td>0.388</td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 20

*Select Posttest Scores for Men and Women*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Post (Men)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>172.0</td>
<td>277.0</td>
<td>232.70</td>
<td>28.918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Post (Women)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>202.0</td>
<td>296.0</td>
<td>254.13</td>
<td>29.403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity Post Total (Men)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>84.0</td>
<td>56.04</td>
<td>12.051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity Post Total (Women)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>91.0</td>
<td>66.20</td>
<td>13.950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Analysis of Research Question 7**

The seventh research question investigated the manner in (and extent to) which the CR approach changed instructors’ leadership roles in their ESL classrooms. Unlike all previous questions, this was qualitative in nature. Three IELI instructors were interviewed and all reported being native English speakers with more than five years as ESL instructors. After eight CR sessions, they were individually interviewed regarding changes in class structure and their leadership roles, as well as the CR approach itself and eleven interview questions were asked. Among those questions, 1, 5, and 9 directly related to the seventh research question regarding how teachers perceived their leadership roles as changing in an ESL classroom (specifically related to level of difficulty) as they transitioned from a teacher-centered to a student-centered teaching style.

The first interview question asked them how they perceived their roles in CR discussions and whether they needed to change their leadership styles. All three teachers reported that CR was compatible with their pre-CR teaching methods, and all indicated they
relied heavily on student-centered teaching prior to being formally introduced to the CR method. Additionally, they were not required to make major adjustments to their teaching styles to implement the CR approach. One educator said that he tended to view himself “as a facilitator, making sure the students stay on track and encouraging them to explore every possible angle” and that he did not “think that this is greatly different from how I [the teacher] have come to see my role in a regular ESL class, mostly because my conception has changed as my experience has grown.”

This largely summarizes the thinking shared by all of the educators interviewed—that many of the techniques used in collaborative reasoning were already part of their teaching style and CR simply built upon what they already did, rather than being an entirely novel approach. Due to the length of time these educators had worked in ESL instruction, they had already become competent at integrating many different teaching techniques into their instructional approaches. Finally, CR was not entirely new to any of them, as they had participated in a professional development session on the CR approach prior to the commencement of this data collection. All of the instructors received CR training that was both extensive and intensive prior to the beginning of this project, which may have facilitated the process of implementing CR.

The fifth interview question attempted to determine how these educators prepared for CR discussions. One of them who taught at the foundational level indicated that she scaffolded the vocabulary. She thought the CR stories as given to her were too difficult for her students to understand. Therefore, she introduced some of the more difficult words in the CR stories prior to the discussion. Even after preparing them for the novel vocabulary within the CR stories, this teacher stated that her foundational students needed time to
understand the concepts within the story. In contrast, the instructor for the university-level students took a different approach. She did not make any particular efforts to prepare her students for new vocabulary within the story. As was done by all teachers, she broke her class into three small discussion groups. After each group had devised an acceptable solution, she invited the other groups to consider these different solutions. This activity encouraged them to see that there may be more than one possible solution to the problems presented in the CR discussions.

The ninth question asked teachers about their perceptions of student-led discussion, classroom participation, and engagement. One teacher indicated that CR “brought the class together a little bit better. . . . It created a bond and a freedom for everyone . . . to start to improve on their own, to start to take control of their language learning.” All three of the instructors indicated that students did not stop discussing the topic after the period ended. Even after the 30-minute CR discussion, students continued talking about their topics on their way to their next class and sometimes even during the next class. All three instructors agreed that students appeared to be engaged by the discussion topics chosen for this research. They also suggested that the selection of engaging discussion topics was a critical part of effective CR implementation.

A big question, or dilemma, which related to international student life in the United States, was a core component of each CR session. Several aspects of the CR method, including the material chosen, the small group size, and the student-led environment, facilitated the growth of strong in-group bonds. Three instructors said the CR discussion process led to increased levels of class participation and engagement. One of the teachers said that students who normally were active participants in class were motivated by CR to
be even more engaged; however, students who had previously demonstrated little or no motivation in regular classes did not generally become more engaged when trained using the CR method.

Stated differently, CR appeared to help those who were active in class to become even more so, but it did little to engage most of these students who were lacking in either the interest in or ability to participate in class. There were exceptions to this pattern; e.g., one of the instructors observed that a Vietnamese female student who rarely spoke in traditionally structured classes began to share her opinions during CR discussions. After several CR sessions, this student began to participate regularly in class. The instructor suggested that the CR method may provide additional opportunities for quiet students to speak and encourage them to become more confident due to having less fear of embarrassing themselves in front of their teachers who typically are far more active in classes using traditional methods. By stepping back from their dominant position in the classroom, teachers implementing the CR leadership and instructional method enabled students to lead themselves and to engage their classmates in meaningful discussion.

Teachers reported that the CR method generally encouraged them to act more as facilitators in the classroom, rather than teachers working within the traditional teacher-centered style. Most also reported that student-centered learning was not entirely novel to them and they had already integrated it into their teaching techniques to some extent. The relative ease with which many of these teachers adapted to the CR method was partially explained by the fact that they had previously received training in the form of two professional development seminars in CR and student-centered teaching—one on March 21, 2013, and another on June 21, 2013.
Summary

This research explored the way in which ESL students’ English speaking and writing are improved by the CR approach, as well as teachers’ perceptions of the approach. It also examined the relationship between student demographic factors and performance on measures of English fluency. Finally, the manner in which teachers’ leadership roles changed during the implementation of the CR method was considered. Using ANOVA, correlations, and interviews, the researcher investigated the effects of CR on students and teachers. In Chapter 5, the results presented in Chapter IV are discussed, including the potential limitations of CR and the research methods. Additionally, ways to implement CR more effectively are considered based on these findings.
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Introduction

Education includes more than academic knowledge, skills, and ability. Broadly defined education forms the foundation of every civilization and offers the members of society opportunities in personal, professional, and social domains while shaping the morals and priorities of each society. The direction and possibility of one’s future largely depends upon that what one has learned in youth, but education’s benefits accrue throughout the lifetime. The individual can improve by gaining education even through his or her later years. The essentialness of education for all children and adults to function as good citizens should not be ignored. Many educators and researchers have considered the impact of educational quality on every aspect of life; they have researched and developed methods to improve educational quality over time.

Within the study of English as a second language, many issues suggest themselves for pursuit in order to improve curriculum, teaching methods, and materials for learners. English, already the world’s lingua franca, will continue to grow. Noack and Gamio (2015) estimated that the number of speakers of English as a second language will exceed those of speakers of English as a first language in the near future. According to the British Council (2013), 1.75 billion people speak some useful level of English, and two billion may achieve this same level of fluency by 2020. These predictions and studies suggest a growing importance for English-language learning throughout the world.

CR, one approach to peer-led small group discussion, was investigated as a tool to improve college ESL students’ English-language skills in this research. The purpose of CR is to promote intellectual and personal engagement in classroom discussions and to allow
students to search for resolutions and to develop thoughtful opinions about an unresolved topic, rather than winning a debate. CR consists of “a peer-led, small-group discussion approach that aims to promote intellectual and personal engagement” with the purpose of “not to reach a consensus or win a debate; instead, the purpose is for students to cooperatively search for resolutions and develop thoughtful opinions about the topic” (Zhang & Stahl, 2011, p. 257).

**Findings**

This chapter contains an analysis of the findings of an investigation to determine both the effects of CR on college ESL students’ English-language skills and the manner in which CR changes the leadership role of the instructor in the classroom. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, the researcher established that CR has some positive effects on college ESL students’ English-language skills. The researcher also determined that the role of the instructor changes (to a certain extent) with the implementation of CR. Seven research questions were proposed in order to develop the foundation for this study.

**Findings for Research Questions 1, 3, 4, and 5**

Several of these research questions asked in this study were fundamentally similar in their pattern of outcomes. These questions were as follows:

1. To what extent does the CR approach improve students’ English-language speaking proficiency?

2. To what extent does the CR approach improve students’ English-language complexity of conversation?

3. To what extent does the CR approach improve students’ English-language communications skills, as measured by the BEST Plus?
4. To what extent does the CR approach improve students’ English-language writing proficiency?

The overall pattern for each response to these questions was that scores at the foundation and intermediate levels of the CR groups improved at a rate faster than that of their respective control groups. At the university level, this pattern did not hold. For university-level participants, the CR group scores actually declined. This unexpected result is discussed later in this chapter. The control groups at the university level changed very little. Tables 3, 9, 12, and 15 in the Results section show the pre-post scores for each level and indicate whether the score changes were significant.

As can be seen from the tables, most scores improved during the course of the treatment; however, those for one group did not. The university CR group saw declines in every measure of performance. One must ask the reason only one CR group (the university level) failed to improve. Several possible explanations for this exist:

1. Repeat Assessment Disengagement — The two equivalent versions (Forms A and C) of the BEST Plus Oral English Proficiency Test used in this research are highly similar and were given in relatively short sequence. At first glance, this suggests that scores for all groups should improve. Geving, Webb, and Davis (2005) found that real estate license candidates improve their licensure examination scores with multiple attempts. It should be noted, however, that the real estate licensure examination is at least moderately difficult. For lower-level students (foundation and intermediate), repeat testing may improve performance; however, for higher level students, repeat testing may lead to boredom. Finn (2015) found that boredom generally depressed test performance.
2. BEST Plus Oral English proficiency test limitations — The recommendations from the Center for Applied Linguistics state that “CAL recommends re-testing students at the end of their period of instruction, with 60 hours minimum (80-100 hours recommended) of instruction prior to re-testing” (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2016, p. 2). Unfortunately, the total treatment time for CR was only eight hours (two hours per week for a period of four weeks), meaning that the improvements made by students may have simply been too small to register on this assessment. However, this does not explain the reason some groups demonstrated declining scores.

3. Decrease in students’ motivation — Higher levels of proficiency may lead to greater responsiveness to incentives. The lack of incentives may explain why university-level CR students failed to improve.

4. Low levels of novelty for experienced students — Students at the lower performance levels (foundation and intermediate) may have found the opportunity to engage in prolonged English-language discussions to be interesting. Discussions, which are an important part of the CR method, would have been more familiar (and less novel) to students at the higher (university) level who already had a great many opportunities to practice English in their homelands. This stands to affect both the rate of improvement and the effort participants put into completing the BEST Plus assessment.

These four points may at least partially explain some of the discrepancies between anticipated and actual outcomes. They are examined at some greater length in the Limitations section of this chapter.
The data appear to suggest that the performance of students who studied English for a greater number of years (university-level students) decreased during the course of this research. This finding does not align with the researcher’s observations that students at the university level were able to understand the CR stories quite well and concentrate on the core points of the CR stories: the dilemma and the big question at the end of the story. In addition, these high-level students did not appear to want to stop talking after the 30-minute CR discussion periods. They were engaged by the discussions and the disagreements that arose during these sessions and continued conversations about the issues as they left the class. Overall, university-level CR students demonstrated high levels of class engagement, which is one of the principle purposes of CR. This result was not reflected in the BEST Plus scores.

Findings for Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked: To what extent does the CR approach improve students’ English-language listening comprehension proficiency? Although the data show no statistically significant relationship, all CR groups demonstrated a small improvement, statistically insignificant, in listening score increase. One potential source of difficulty in measuring the extent of improvement in listening skills is inherent in the BEST Plus instrument design. Rather than relying upon objective or highly standardized measures, e.g., multiple choice questions, the BEST Plus relies upon potentially subjective interview-based assessment. This procedure complicates the issue of consistently measuring listening proficiency from one assessor to the next.
Findings for Research Question 6

Research Question 6 asked: When using the CR approach, do we find a correlation between demographic factors and students’ proficiency in speaking and writing English? Three noteworthy findings were identified in the correlation analysis. One was that women did better than men on several posttests, the total score, and the complexity score. During the CR discussion, the researcher observed that male students talked more than females; however, the speaking test results showed the opposite. From this result, one may conclude that female students from Saudi Arabia and Asian countries are more comfortable talking within a small group and much more comfortable in one-to-one conversations than in group discussions, especially when speaking in their second language.

The second important finding was the identification of a negative correlation between the number of years participants reported studying English and their listening posttest scores. This was unexpected, and the reasons may not be easily determined. Within this analysis, the actual level of the students (foundation, intermediate, or university) was not included, thus it is difficult to determine whether higher-level (university) students scored more poorly or whether only those who studied for a greater number of years scored more poorly. If the first is the case, instrumentation or engagement issues may be partially to blame. If not, this may be explained by differing levels of ability. Some individuals may be able to learn English more quickly and effectively than others, and their additional years of training may be the result of intentional compensation for lower levels of innate ability. Moreover, if the critical period hypothesis is to be given any weight, age of first exposure to English has the potential to be more important than the total number of years spent studying the language.
A three-way repeated ANOVA showed that total scores, complexity scores, and communication scores of university-level students declined during the course of the training, indicating that posttest scores generally were lower than pretest scores. These results and several of the results from the correlational analysis may be products of limitations in the study design rather than limitations in CR itself. As previously mentioned, repeat assessment disengagement, problems inherent in the BEST Plus instrument, problems in the administration and assessment of the BEST Plus instrument, and the lack of performance incentive may have contributed to these unexpected findings.

The third important finding was that no statistically significant correlation exists between demographic factors and writing scores. Thus, gender, age, years of English study, study abroad status (whether someone has studied English abroad prior to coming to the United States), and nationality have no relationship to writing ability. Explaining the absence of a relationship may be even more difficult than explaining its presence. Writing appears to be something that should not be taught in an English-rich environment, as it can easily be studied almost anywhere (assuming one has access to appropriate educational materials). This also may be partially explained by the considerable emphasis put on writing (compared to speaking) in academic settings across the globe. Finally, Toulmin’s (1958) rubric was not developed specifically for the purposes with which it was used in this research, and assessors were given no training in its consistent application.

**Findings for Research Question 7**

Research Question 7 asked: How do teachers perceive their leadership roles as changing in an ESL classroom (specifically as related to level of difficulty) as they transition from a teacher-centered teaching style to a student-centered teaching style? An
assessment of the interview results leads to the conclusion that applying and adding CR methods to class discussions was not difficult for the three instructors who participated in this research. This may be due largely to all of the teachers having years of ESL teaching experience. It also may be because the teachers had two opportunities to attend CR professional development seminars before the data collection began. Their gained knowledge of the CR approach and their interest in this research made them well prepared for CR discussions. Additionally, their many years of ESL teaching experience may have made adopting this new approach quick and relatively easy for them, suggesting that the three instructors are sufficiently skilled to utilize many different instructional methods in the ESL classroom. Generally, the instructors seemed comfortable implementing the CR method and students appeared to respond positively to the method.

Instructors needed to change their teaching and leadership styles in order to implement CR discussion. A review of the interviews suggests that teachers applied several teaching techniques in new ways during their CR professional development sessions and as they were implementing CR in their classrooms. Teachers observed that the teacher behavior and the power of the teacher in the classroom influenced students’ behaviors, participation, and engagement in many ways. In comparing the first and last CR discussion sessions, teachers confirmed that students tried to advance themselves and to change their attitude toward learning English. The researcher summarized teachers’ comments on this matter in the previous chapter.

All three instructors mentioned that the CR approach had a significant impact on speaking and listening. However, two said that CR also was motivational to students in a more general way. One said, “They get to have conversations with their friends and
classmates, and when they are engaged and enthusiastic or interested in the topic, it increases their motivation to participate.” The other teacher commented that her female students began to ask her more questions. These students became more engaged in the learning process and willing to verify that they correctly understood the teacher. This teacher thought her students’ willingness to learn had been improved by CR discussion, which has the potential to increase language learning motivation.

One of the instructors indicated that “the focus of the class should be more on the students and less on the teacher” and that “CR gives the students a chance to take more control of their learning and practice their language skills in an environment that is more conducive to participation because some students see it as less threatening or less frightening than responding in front of the entire class.” A different instructor remarked that CR encouraged him to “step back [and] let the students take control sometimes.” Within an environment such as this, students are more likely to be engaged in the classroom and the language learning process. Another instructor stated, “A teacher needs to be more active in the classroom.” In the interview conversation, this instructor mentioned she considered her teaching style to be “classic,” meaning that it was, presumably, teacher-centered. In the course of her CR training, the instructor came to realize that a teacher does not need to dominate conversations in a language class. Her teaching style shift resulted in some students beginning to talk more than they did previously. This engaged language learning is one of the goals of the CR method.

**Limitations**

Only 85 IELI students participated in this study. This small sample size was a major limitation of this research. The uneven mix of nationalities (with far more students being
Saudi than any other group) makes it difficult to apply these findings broadly to learners of differing nationalities. Saudi Arabian culture has several characteristics that make it unique, such as culturally specific prohibition on women remaining in the same room with men to whom they are not related. For a Saudi Arabian single (unmarried) woman who recently arrived in the United States, speaking to a man who is not a family member may be particularly awkward. Several of the female Saudi students were given the BEST Plus assessment by a non-Saudi man, which had the potential to lower the scores of these students.

Additionally, several male Saudi students were administered their BEST Plus assessments by a non-Saudi woman. Given the relatively strict gender divisions that are the norm in Saudi Arabia, this had the potential to lower the performance of these male students as well. Whether this had a greater impact on students at the university level cannot be easily determined. Levels of acculturation and culture-specific taboos may not influence all students at all levels in the same manner, and the possibility exists that certain culture-specific norms related to gender relations may influence the thinking and behavior of better educated (and presumably more affluent) students more than they influence the minds of their less educated peers. This poses some interesting questions, which are addressed in the Suggestions section.

The BEST Plus was not a perfectly suitable assessment for this study. Although the BEST Plus is well designed and widely used to measure ESL students’ speaking and listening performance, it was not originally intended to be repeatedly administered in a short time span. The Center for Applied Linguistics (2016) recommends that the BEST Plus be given no more than once every 60 hours of instruction, whereas the CR group received only
eight hours of instruction between testing sessions (100 hours total language instruction, with eight of those being CR for the CR group). This was a known limitation of the test; however, the BEST Plus was found to be the most appropriate instrument for this research that was both commercially available and thoroughly validated. In addition, the researcher consulted with CAL (the developer of the BEST Plus) on the use of this instrument. A CAL trainer/representative confirmed that the BEST Plus interview test should be able to reveal results in this study. Keeping these limitations in mind, one may categorize the BEST Plus as a suitable measure of participants’ English-language abilities and improvement in those abilities, but not necessarily a great one.

Additionally, participant motivation may have been low due to a lack of financial incentive. As far as participants were concerned, all testing conducted during this research was low- or no-stakes. Additionally, the researcher was required to explain to students that the results of the BEST Plus interview assessment and writing assessment would not affect their grade. A study by Duckworth, Quinn, Lynam, Loeber, and Stouthamer-Loeber (2011) observed that “incentives increased IQ test scores by an average of 0.64 SD” (p. 19). Adding to the weight of these findings is research by Finn (2015), who found that incentives increase participant performance much of the time, but not necessarily all of the time.

Furthermore, the research was limited due to imperfections in the writing test score rubric, which was adapted from Toulmin’s (1958) Argument Assignment Rubric. While the rubric may be an appropriate tool to assess certain types of arguments, it is not well suited to the specific task of grading students’ writing samples. Finally, no training was conducted on the use of this rubric, making its consistent application in this context even more challenging.
Suggestions for Future Research

The duration of this research—four weeks—may not have been sufficient to establish the effects of CR. Future studies should be of longer duration and should, ideally, provide extended discussion sessions throughout this time. This would have the potential to more clearly establish what, if any, effect CR has. Even with a longer duration study, the total number of training hours may not meet the suggested 60 hours between testing/retesting sessions for the BEST Plus. Thus, a different instrument may be better suited to the task of assessing the effects of the CR method. Ideally, a more sensitive instrument more appropriate to measuring relatively small changes in language performance should be used.

Writing, which is not included in the BEST Plus assessment, was difficult to assess using Toulmin’s (1958) rubric. In future research, a rubric designed specifically for assessing the writing skills of English-language learners should be used. Assessors also should be trained in using this rubric properly. Future researchers should provide a performance motivation for participants, possibly in the form of a gift card or some other relatively small award for higher levels of performance. The size of the incentive (amount of money, etc.) may not matter, as long as there is some incentive. Even small rewards have the potential to improve overall levels of student performance (Duckworth et al., 2011; Finn, 2015).

Although beyond the scope of this research, culture-specific norms and student socioeconomic status (SES) may influence the effectiveness of the CR method. Future research should be conducted to account for these differences and their potentially complex impact.
Conclusion

This study generally confirms most of the previous CR research findings, with the exception of the lack of language improvement on students at the university level. Learning and mastering English is a lifelong process and is, as a matter of course, difficult; however, the process should be no more frustrating or complex than necessary. Effective teaching may lead to increased student motivation and willingness to learn. CR techniques have the potential to effectively promote the English-language learning development of college ESL students. CR generally appeared to be effective in this study; however, it had little impact on students at the university level. This may not be a result of the limitations in CR itself. Rather, it may be the effect of limitations in the study design and selection of instruments. Further research could provide more positive results.

The researcher intended for this study to contribute to the overall state of knowledge of CR and its use in the classroom. Additionally, the study examined the more general effects of student-centered teaching in the classroom. Significant and positive changes were observed by the researcher, and students who participated in this research, particularly those in the CR group, appeared to benefit from the teaching methods used in this study. The rate of student language improvement varied both based on individual abilities (individual English knowledge) and interests and the extent to which CR was implemented in the classroom (meaning how rigorously instructors implemented the student-centered approach). Further research has the potential to clarify the complex nature of the relationship between CR and personal motivation and classroom implementation, as well as to clarify the relevance of students’ home culture and native language on the effects of CR.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: IRB Approval Form

DATE: January 8, 2014
TO: Komako Suzuki
FROM: Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB
PROJECT TITLE: [519977-1] Using Collaborative Discussions in College ESL Classrooms
REFERENCE #: IRB 14-229
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project
ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: January 8, 2014
EXPIRATION DATE: November 30, 2014
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of November 30, 2014.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Paul Mooney at (270) 745-2129 or irb@wk.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.
This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB's records.
APPENDIX B: Collaborative Reasoning Stories

Discussion Story #1

Trying an American Experience or Keeping the Tradition

Maggie arrived in United States from China 3 months ago. She lives in a four bedroom apartment with three American roommates. Maggie and her roommates signed up for a two year contract with her landlord.

Maggie and all her roommates, Jessica, Mary, and Jacob, go to the University of Florida. Jessica is a freshman college student. She is from the local area so that she has many friends from her local high school. She is very active and friendly. Jessica and Maggie get along quickly and start their college life together. Mary is another one of Maggie’s roommates from Chicago. She is a freshman student who studies psychology. Maggie’s major is also psychology so Maggie and Mary are in the same class and have a lot in common in terms of assignments. Due to Maggie’s English proficiency, sometimes Maggie needs Mary’s help in order to complete her homework. The third roommate is a man, Jacob, who is from Texas. He is a big fan of the NBA, his favorite team is the Miami Heat. He loves inviting his friends over to their place to watch the NBA basketball games. It seems Jessica and Mary like to join Jacob’s parties.

Their first month was not too bad. It was mostly just getting to know each other. Maggie was able to concentrate while she studied. The second month, they were getting used to college life in their apartment and their classes, although Maggie started having difficulties keeping up with her school work and completing her homework. When the three American students got comfortable after three months, Maggie began to see subtle changes that made her life more difficult. The apartment always seemed loud with people coming.
and going, her other roommates didn’t do chores around the house regularly anymore, and she found it difficult to raise her concerns with them since the Americans would often defend one another during conflict.

Every weekend, their apartment gets very loud because there are so many people and the TV is turned up as well. Things are getting worse and worse. Maggie’s three American roommates invite their friends over constantly; therefore, Maggie has to go somewhere else to study these days.

Maggie originally wanted to live with native speakers so she could practice spoken English. She often gets the opportunity to practice speaking English in her current situation, and she has noticed a positive improvement in her abilities while living with the Americans. It has been helpful to her English skills even though it is difficult to study for all her other classes. She can move in with another Chinese student who she likes, but she will not get to practice English like she does now.

Should Maggie stay with the Americans or move into with her Chinese friend?
Discussion Story #2

Honestly? ..... Becoming Amy?

Students can take on-line classes. There are many on-line schools where he/she can pursue degrees and obtain educational certificates. Some schools offer on-line courses, which are their strength. Adult learners sometimes prefer to take classes online. John is a college student in a public university in the United States. John’s major is engineering and he is graduating in 6 months. John has a girlfriend, Catharine, who goes to the same university and is also graduating in 6 months. They have been together since they were high school students. Both are looking for a job and have several interviews lined up. John recently got good news from a company where he has hoped to get a job for a long time. He was so excited and happy about it, but he knows that without Catherine’s father he probably would not have been interviewed because Catharine’s father is friends with the president of the company. On the other hand, Catharine is having a hard time earning enough credits to graduate; she is even taking 7 classes in one semester. Catharine is extremely busy.

One day, Catherine called John to meet. She had a big favor to ask John. The favor was to take an on-line English class on behalf of her sister, Amy. She is a junior college student at the same school. Amy has taken English 100 two times already. In this school, there is a policy that if a student fails the same class more than three times, he/she can’t continue unless he/she takes an alternative course. The alternative courses are available for everyone but it will take an extra two semesters and you need to pay for the extra classes. This English 100 is Amy’s third attempt and if she fails she will have to go to the alternative classes. Amy’s third English 100 is an on-line class, and Catherine has asked him to write her papers and participate in on-line discussions on behalf of Amy to help her pass this class.
In addition, Catharine told him that their parents are not in a good financial condition currently due to their father being unemployed.

Nobody will notice if John takes this class. However, John is getting mixed feelings about taking an on-line class for Amy because if they get caught, John and Amy would be both expelled. Knowing that he is graduating in 6 months, he does not want to take a risk.

Should John take the online English class for Amy?
Discussion Story #3

**Risa Made a Best Friend From America, But …**

Risa is a freshman high school student in Nagoya, Japan. She has a younger sister, Asaka, who is a junior high school student. Risa likes writing poetry and helping her parents every day. She is quiet and a little shy compared to her sister. Her parents are both from Nagoya and have lived in Nagoya for their entire lives. They have never been abroad but they are very interested in exploring the world in their remaining days. One day, their children brought home a hand-out from their school. It stated that there is a summer exchange student program for high school students with all expenses being furnished by the city of Nagoya. The city of Nagoya will pay for the month long trip to America and is seeking ten students who are interested in spending their summer in Boston, MA and ten Japanese host families who can let American high school students stay for the summer. Her family has decided to accept a foreign exchange student for the summer in order for Risa and Asaka to have some international experiences and opportunity to practice their English.

Mary who is a seventeen year old high school student from Boston came to Risa’s house as soon as their summer break had started. Mary is a typical American girl. She is a very spontaneous and active girl. She showed her interests about Japanese culture and its tradition as soon as she arrived. She had many questions about how things are in Japan and she was accepting of how the Japanese lived. For example, living without shoes, sleeping on the floor, and taking a bath every night. Risa and her family have welcomed Mary and had many plans for Mary throughout the summer. During the first two weeks, Risa was keeping distance from Mary. She did not say much to her for a while. One day, Mary asked Risa to go McDonalds for lunch to hang out. Risa’s mother let Risa and Mary go there alone. They
went out just two of them. Risa needed to help Mary order at McDonalds. Risa was not able to depend on anyone while at McDonalds. After this lunch, Risa and Mary began getting closer and closer and talking more and more. Risa found out more about Mary, such as, Mary was raised by only her mother and had no siblings. They have started to go shopping since then. Mary was always looking for a special souvenir for her mother.

During the last weekend, Risa’s family had a plan to go the Tokyo Disney Land with Mary. Risa, Asaka, and Mary were having a good time there and they made a promise that they will see each other again over Christmas. However, at the gift shop, Risa saw that Mary stole a Mickey watch from the store. The watch costs ¥10,000.00 ($100.00). Risa wanted to tell her that it was not the right thing but at the same time she noticed that she stole a watch from the store because she wanted to get a nice souvenir for her mother. Mary left the store right after she stole the watch. Risa thought that they were best friends now and did not want to destroy the relationship at the end of Mary’s stay; however, she thinks that that is not right.

What should Risa do?
Discussion Story #4

**Damaging a Friend’s Car**

Raz is from Nepal and is studying Psychology at the University of California. He has been living in California for two years. Raz has a nice male American roommate. He has been living with his roommate for almost a year, but his American roommate will graduate in two months and move to New York to start working.

Raz got a call from his Nepalese friend, Rajdeep. He was told Raz that he was accepted at the University of California and asked if he could stay with him for a couple weeks. Raz told him about his situation, which is seeking a roommate. Both of them are very happy about this good timing. Raz’s roommate graduated from the University of California and left for New York. At the same time, Raz’s friend, Rajdeep, arrived in California. They started living together. Things were going well until Rajdeep borrowed Raz’s car.

One day, Rajdeep had an appointment for a group meeting at his school where he can walk. However, the meeting time and place had been changed to one of the group member’s apartment. Rajdeep was not paying attention to his emails and missed that information. He got a call from a member and needed to go there immediately. It was not in walking distance so Rajdeep asked Raz to take him to his friend’s house. However, Raz did not want to take him there, he was sleeping. He preferred to stay and sleep. Raz told Rajdeep to use his car. Rajdeep responded Raz that he was afraid to drive because he was not used to that neighborhood yet. Raz said to him, “You are fine! Take my car!” Rajdeep was not comfortable about driving, but there was no choice. Rajdeep decided to borrow Raz’s car for a few hours.
On the way to come back home, Rajdeep had a car wreck. The front left side of the car was crashed badly. Rajdeep told Raz that he had hit a truck, but the driver told him not to worry about his truck because the damage was not too bad. In addition, the good thing is that Rajdeep did not have any injures. Of course, Rajdeep apologized to Raz about this accident.

A few days later, Raz found out that the total repairing cost is approximate $1,000.00. Raz talked about this cost with Rajdeep; however, Rajdeep is not willing to pay for this expense because that car does not belong to him. Nonetheless, Raz does not want to leave his car unrepaired because Raz was told by a repair service man that the damage with the main engine part may cause some other damages and make it dangerous to drive. Rajdeep recommended using Raz’s insurance coverage. Raz knows that if he uses his insurance, his insurance payment will double next year. He thinks that this accident occurred due to Rajdeep’s lack of attention and Rajdeep should take the whole responsibility for the repair expenses.

Who should pay for the expensive car repairs?
Discussion Story #5

One Bad Apple Ruins the Bunch.

Group projects are an essential part of American college work. Group projects provide a chance for students to be more productive and creative. In addition, students can be motivated by other members. Exchanging members’ feedback on their performance and discussing and refining their results leads to the development of significant communication skills. Dividing up the complex tasks into steps and planning to complete the project as one piece is the process of group work; however, it is also a key to success in college. Most professors require one or two group projects in their course work in the United States. Students will learn many different aspects such as knowledge of a subject, communication, responsibility, trust, and motivation.

There is a group project in a communication class, COMM 110. Thirty students were divided into 5 groups. One of the groups had trouble getting along with each other. The group members consisted of three boys and three girls. Among the six members, Sara became the group leader. She is very interested in the study of communication and is an organized person. She has kept her grades all As in her past two semesters. However, other members take this course because it is part of the general education requirements.

Their group assignment was about communication styles. It requires three interviews from locally active organizations and has many different sections to complete this group project. The first group meeting was last Thursday. They have divided their tasks and promised to complete each of their tasks within a week. However, when they meet at the next Thursday, Jackson had not completed his part. Everyone was frustrated and asked why he did not do it. Jackson said, ”I did not feel like doing it.” Sara, their group leader, told him
to do his part. Before the third Thursday group meeting, Sara sent a reminder email to the group members about the weekly meeting. However, only three showed up. Sara was very disappointed that three group members did not show up and did not even reply to her email. Sara thought that Jackson’s behaviors influence other members.

The assignment’s due date was getting close; the whole group was able to meet one more time and was getting close to finish up this project. Sara was willing to put everything together. She received four members’ parts 3 days before the due date but did not received Jackson’s part until the night before the due date. In addition, she has noticed that Jackson has just copied some parts of the textbook. This is plagiarism. Sara needed to paraphrase his paragraphs and edit his parts a lot. In other words, how his work was below average. Sara was thinking about telling their teacher about Jackson’s lazy attitude (slacking off), not cooperate with other members, not doing his part on time, and how his work was plagiarized. Sara thinks that Jackson should not deserve the same grade as everyone else in the group. However, Sara is afraid that Jackson may be suspended due to his plagiarism behavior.

Should Sara as the leader of the group tell the professor about Jackson?
Discussion Story #6

The Cost of Friendship

Ji-woo and Elif have been very good friends since they started studying English in this college. Ji-woo is from Korea and Elif is from Turkey. Both of them are college students with an F-1 visa. They have been here almost four years and are about to graduate. However, Elif has started working at the local supermarket illegally. Obviously, the owner does not pay too much attention to the employees’ backgrounds. The paperwork was somehow passed and she is now getting her salary without a problem. Recently, she has been working more hours at the market which is affecting her studies.

One day, Ji-woo met John, the director of the International student office, by accident. They were talking about how her semester is going and her job opportunities after graduation. John also asked about Elif and says that he has heard the rumor she is working. He asked her if that was true or not but Ji-woo could not tell the truth at that time. She just said she did not know anything about it and wrapped up their conversation. She knew that Elif got a warning from him before. That’s why she did not say anything to John at that time and she did not want Elif to be in trouble. However, she cannot forget the last word from John, “Please take care of Elif! You guys are almost graduating!! Good Luck!”

Ji-woo told Elif about the rumor and tried to convince her to stop working. However, she did not listen to her at all, instead she showed her the brand new bag she had bought. Elif was working to buy brand name bags and shoes. She was becoming a shopaholic. She had a serious mental problem of spending everything she made on new clothes and accessories. She has a lot of stress from her class assignments because she has been working so much.
Ji-woo was becoming more worried about Elif’s grades and her ability to complete school work since Elif spends more time working than going to school. A second warning from John will delay Elif’s graduation, but John could help Elif with consulting and academic help. Ji-woo wants to help her friend; however, the best way to help her might be to tell John about Elif’s job.

Should Ji-woo let Elif continue living with her secret or tell John?
Discussion Story #7

Idea Rights

Ingrid is from Venezuela and studying Marketing in an American university. She has an important final project for her class and has been working on this project very hard to complete it. The assignment is worth 50% of the grade. The project is to write a solid plan restructuring a hotel that is in danger of going bankrupt.

One day, Ingrid met her classmate, Jennifer, at the cafeteria by accident. Jennifer told her that she has been busy and has not start working on the big project yet. Jennifer asked Ingrid about her project. Ingrid told her about her main Marketing plan to save the hotel and her thoughts. Talking to Jennifer was a great review for Ingrid to organize her opinions because her presentation is next week. Ingrid had confidence in her ideas and believes that she will receive an A on this project.

Jennifer’s presentation was scheduled on Tuesday. Ingrid’s presentation was scheduled on Thursday. During the Tuesday class, Ingrid was so shocked to see Jennifer’s presentation. The concept of saving the hotel was exactly same as Ingrid’s ideas. Jennifer has done her presentation successfully. It seems that their instructor likes the concept a lot. Jennifer stole Ingrid’s idea when they met at cafeteria the other day. Ingrid could not believe it; since, Jennifer presented her project first, Ingrid is not sure what to do next.

Jennifer needed to prepare something different in two days and did a poor presentation. Jennifer got an A and Ingrid a C as their grade. She felt that this is not right and not fair. However, she was afraid to tell her instructor that the concept was stolen because there is no evidence. The idea is not protectable; however, Ingrid thinks that
Jennifer should be punished for idea theft. The bottom line is Ingrid does not have any evidence to prove that the idea was stolen.

Should Ingrid tell her teacher about Jennifer without evidence?
Discussion Story #8

Overcoming Homesickness Little by Little

Homesickness is one of biggest problems for international students. Living away from your own family members and friends is a great trial sometimes. Becoming homesick is not only for first year international students, but junior, and sophomore students as well. Nevertheless, to say the first year is the worst is an understatement. Students learn how to adjust cultural norm differences whenever they feel different from their culture. This is a great experience overall but sometime is stressful.

Nikki is an 18 year-old from France. She came to the United States right after she graduated from her high school in France. As soon as she had started her campus life in North Dakota, she felt homesick.

She is living with an American roommate in a tiny dormitory room. Her roommate, Michelle, felt bad seeing her missing her parents a lot. Michelle always asks Nikki to hang out with other girls in the dormitory. However, Nikki’s English is not good enough to keep up with native English speaking college students. Nikki goes to the cafeteria with Michelle’s friends but she always feels like she is being left out.

Due to her suffering from her homesickness, she did not make friends. She kept contacting her family and friends in France. She has spent a lot of time chatting with them instead of making friends on campus. Nikki wants to go back to France but her parents told her that it is too early to make a decision about leaving the American University.

A few months have passed, and the Thanksgiving break is coming soon. Michelle asks Nikki to come to her parents’ house to join their Thanksgiving dinner and cheer up her up a little. Nikki is thankful to have a roommate like Michelle; however, she is afraid that
she will be a part of American family for the week and not understand the conversation there. She feels that she better stay at school. However, she heard that most students go home for Thanksgiving so the campus will be empty. This makes her very lonely too.

Should Nikki join her roommate’s thanksgiving dinner party?
## APPENDIX C: BEST PLUS Scoring Rubric

### BEST Plus Scoring Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Listening Comprehension</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How well did the examinee understand the setup and question?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Response indicates appropriate understanding of the setup and question without repetition (though examinee may have checked comprehension)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Setup and question need to be repeated before examinee responds appropriately, or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Response indicates partial understanding of setup and question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Response indicates complete misunderstanding of setup and question (even with cue repetition), or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No response, response incomprehensible, or response inappropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language Complexity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did the examinee organize and elaborate the response?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sustains a variety of structures; develops an idea in detail (using reasons, examples, explanations, descriptions, etc.); vocabulary more precise; response cohesive and often organized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Uses strings of several sentences to provide additive detail, often through phrases and clauses (e.g., prepositional phrases, adverbial clauses, subordination); elaboration clearly beyond minimum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Uses long strings of phrases or well-formed sentence(s) with emerging complexity (e.g., use of &quot;because,&quot; &quot;if,&quot; &quot;but&quot;) to provide some additional detail that is minimal but beyond basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Words, phrase(s), or simple sentence(s) (e.g., S-V-O) used to provide basic information with no elaboration; limited vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No response, response incomprehensible, or response inappropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How clearly did the examinee communicate meaning?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Response is comprehensible and easy to understand (Despite inaccuracies, the listener does not need to fill in to understand meaning.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Response is comprehensible but sporadically difficult to understand (From time to time the listener needs to fill in to understand meaning.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Response is comprehensible but generally difficult to understand (Much effort is required by the listener to fill in to understand meaning. Confusions may exist.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No response, response incomprehensible, or response inappropriate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Student Performance Level (SPL) Descriptors for Listening Comprehension and Oral Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Language Ability</th>
<th>Listening Comprehension</th>
<th>Oral Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 0</strong></td>
<td>No ability whatsoever</td>
<td>No ability whatever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 1</strong></td>
<td>Functions minimally, if at all, in English. Can handle only very routine entry-level jobs that do not require oral communication, and in which all tasks can be easily demonstrated. A native English speaker used to dealing with limited English speakers can rarely communicate with a person at this level except through gestures.</td>
<td>Understands only a few isolated words, and extremely simple learned phrases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 2</strong></td>
<td>Functions in a very limited way in situations related to immediate needs. Can handle only routine entry-level jobs that do not require oral communication, and in which all tasks can be easily demonstrated. A native English speaker used to dealing with limited English speakers will have great difficulty communicating with a person at this level.</td>
<td>Understands a limited number of very simple learned phrases, spoken slowly with frequent repetitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 3</strong></td>
<td>Functions with some difficulty in situations related to immediate needs. Can handle routine entry-level jobs that involve only the most basic oral communication, and in which all tasks can be demonstrated. A native English speaker used to dealing with limited English speakers will have great difficulty communicating with a person at this level.</td>
<td>Understands simple learned phrases, spoken slowly with frequent repetitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>General Language Ability</td>
<td>Listening Comprehension</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Can satisfy basic survival needs and a few very routine social demands. Can handle entry-level jobs that involve some simple oral communication, but in which tasks can be easily demonstrated. A native English speaker used to dealing with limited English speakers will have difficulty communicating with a person at this level.</td>
<td>Understands simple learned phrases easily, and some simple new phrases containing familiar vocabulary, spoken slowly with frequent repetitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Can satisfy basic survival needs and some limited social demands. Can handle jobs and job training that involve following simple oral instructions but in which most tasks can also be demonstrated. A native English speaker used to dealing with limited English speakers will have some difficulty communicating with a person at this level.</td>
<td>Understands learned phrases easily and short new phrases containing familiar vocabulary spoken slowly with repetition. Has limited ability to understand on the telephone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>General Language Ability</td>
<td>Listening Comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Can satisfy most survival needs and limited social demands. Can handle jobs and job training that involve following simple oral and written instructions and diagrams. A native English speaker not used to dealing with limited English speakers will be able to communicate with a person at this level on familiar topics, but with difficulty and some effort.</td>
<td>Understands conversations containing some unfamiliar vocabulary on many everyday subjects, with a need for repetition, rewording or slower speech. Has some ability to understand without face-to-face contact (e.g. on the telephone, TV).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Can satisfy survival needs and routine work and social demands. Can handle work that involves following oral and simple written instructions in familiar and some unfamiliar situations. A native English speaker not used to dealing with limited English speakers can generally communicate with a person at this level on familiar topics.</td>
<td>Understands conversations on most everyday subjects at normal speed when addressed directly, may need repetition, rewording, or slower speech. Understands routine work-related conversations. Increasing ability to understand without face-to-face contact (telephone, TV, radio). Has difficulty following conversation between native speakers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Student Performance Level (SPL) Descriptors for Listening Comprehension and Oral Communication (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Language Ability</th>
<th>Listening Comprehension</th>
<th>Oral Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 8</strong></td>
<td>Can participate effectively in social and familiar work situations. A native English speaker not used to dealing with limited English speakers can communicate with a person at this level on almost all topics.</td>
<td>Understands general conversation and conversation on technical subjects in own field. Understands without face-to-face contact (telephone, TV, radio), may have difficulty following rapid or colloquial speech. Understands most conversations between native speakers, may miss details if speech is very rapid or colloquial or if subject is unfamiliar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 9</strong></td>
<td>Can participate fluently and accurately in practical, social, and work situations. A native English speaker not used to dealing with limited English speakers can communicate easily with a person at this level.</td>
<td>Understands almost all speech in any context. Occasionally confused by highly colloquial or regional speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 10</strong></td>
<td>Ability equal to that of a native speaker of the same socioeconomic level.</td>
<td>Equal to that of a native speaker of the same socioeconomic level.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX D: Toulmin’s Rubric

**Toulmin's Argument Assignment Rubric**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Poor (1 Pt.)</th>
<th>Fair (2 Pt.)</th>
<th>Good (3 Pt.)</th>
<th>Excellent (4 Pt.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Claim</strong></td>
<td>The claim is undistinguishable or doesn’t exist.</td>
<td>The claim is not quite clear, and needs developing.</td>
<td>The claim is well written, but could use some clarifying.</td>
<td>The claim is easily distinguishable and is well written.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reason</strong></td>
<td>The reason is undistinguishable or does not exist.</td>
<td>The reason is not quite clear, and needs developing.</td>
<td>The reason is clearly identifiable, but could use some clarifying.</td>
<td>The reason supports the claim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grounds</strong></td>
<td>The grounds to your argument aren’t displayed or aren’t relevant.</td>
<td>The grounds to your argument are murky and need some development.</td>
<td>The grounds to your argument are easily identified, but need some clarifying.</td>
<td>The grounds to your argument are clear, concise, and easy to identify.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Warrant</strong></td>
<td>The warrant doesn’t connect your claims to your grounds or it isn’t easily identifiable.</td>
<td>The warrant is unclear, but there is something connecting your claims and grounds.</td>
<td>The warrant is clearly identifiable, but could use some clarifying.</td>
<td>The warrant is well written, easily identifiable, and connects the claims and grounds of your argument efficiently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Counterargument</strong></td>
<td>The counterargument is non existent or isn’t easily identifiable.</td>
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APPENDIX E: Interview Questions

Interview for research question #4

1. How do teachers perceive their leadership roles as changing in an ESL classroom (specifically as related to level of difficulty) as they transition from a teacher-centered teaching style to a student-centered teaching style? After implementing the CR approach,

2. How do you perceive your role in CR discussions? Does your role in CR discussions change from regular ESL lessons?
   a. Do you feel that student-led class (CR) is interfering with your teaching style?
      i. If yes, how did it conflict with your style?
      ii. If no, how did it complement your style?

3. How do you like the CR approach?

4. Could you describe any benefits and challenging aspects of CR approach from your point of view as an ESL instructor?
   a. What are the specific examples of benefits during the CR discussions?

5. What are the difficulties/challenges you had during the CR discussion? How are CR discussions different from your previous discussion experience with ESL students? (student-centered vs. teacher centered, try to hear about cultural crash and quiet students …)

6. What scaffolding moves did you use to facilitate CR discussions?

7. What type of ESL classrooms do you think are most likely to have productive CR discussions and get the most benefit from CR discussions? (Hint: level of English, grouping strategies etc.)
   a. Would you like to use as it is or do you want to add some adjustment to your class settings?
   b. Are there any classrooms where CR approach is not appropriate or need some modifications? (For example, cultural mixed class, advance class, beginner class?) IF any, what are your recommendations for modifications or adjustments?

8. Do you think that CR discussions have a positive impact on students’ language learning outcomes in ESL classrooms? And Why?

9. What aspects of student learning outcomes do you think the CR discussions have most significant impact (listening, speaking, reading and writing; thinking skills, language learning motivation)?

10. How do you feel that student-led discussions like CR discussions affect classroom participation and engagement?

11. Could you tell me something you learned from the CR approach? (open ended questions, use “tell me more”)

12. Any recommendations?
APPENDIX F: Transcribed Interview Results

INTERVIEW 1 (CARRIE: Interviewee) (KOMAKO: Interviewer): TRANSCRIPT

KOMAKO: Hi Carrie, so let’s start. How do you perceive your role in CR discussions? Does your role in CR discussions change from your role in regular ELSI lessons?

CARRIE: My role does change a little bit, typically. I'm not quite as much a facilitator—more the one who stands there and gives them the information. They tended, in most of my classes, they ended up using information and showing me they used the information outside of class, whereas with the CR they are the center, much more showing me in class what they can do. So, like I said, I'm more of a facilitator at that point.

KOMAKO: Instead of teacher, you mean?

CARRIE: Yes, give them the tools and then step back.

KOMAKO: So usually you are in the center of class teaching and giving them the material, but this time you are giving material and are involved in the conversation but from the facilitator standpoint.

CARRIE: Yes.

KOMAKO: Do you feel like the student lead CR is interfering with your teaching style?

CARRIE: No, I've done similar things before in my higher level classes. I wasn't entirely sure how this would work with lower level classes since these were foundation-level classes, but they did well. I think they did pretty good with it. It gave them a good chance to start working on their critical thinking skills, [in] upper level classes, we typically do it all the time; I give them an article, they have to figure out something with and discuss it amongst themselves, not so much on the lower level.

KOMAKO: But, do you think it worked at the lower level?

CARRIE: Yes, I wasn't sure about it, but it did, especially that group with Dia and Judy.

KOMAKO: Do they talk in class a lot as well?

CARRIE: Yeah, well, Dia talked a lot in class, Judy, not so much.

KOMAKO: But Judy was talking quite a lot.

CARRIE: Oh yes, she was and Elham. She got into it too in her group, but she did not talk very much in class.

KOMAKO: So, you think materials made them think and speak out more?
CARRIE: The environment, too, I think. Smaller group, instead of in front of everybody at once: I think that helped a lot with getting them to talk, and actually, Henry was not one to talk a lot in class.

KOMAKO: [Is Henry] from China?

CARRIE: Yes, I do remember a few times where he and it might have been Judy got pretty heated. So that was pretty interesting to watch.

KOMAKO: Yes. How do you like the CR approach? Overall?

CARRIE: Yeah, overall I do like it. I've used it before basically, not really with the name but when I was teaching freshman English and junior English for the university there, it was something I would do with my classes at that point I never really thought of applying it to ESL for some reason.

KOMAKO: Ok, could you describe any benefits or challenging aspects to the CR approach from your perspective as an instructor?

CARRIE: I would say with challenges, first one, really the only one I thought of, was classroom culture because so many countries with many students we have coming from those countries never us a student centered approach. Particularly, I'm think of our Vietnamese and our Chinese students, to a certain extend some of the Saudis have that too—that is a challenge in and of itself getting them used to our style where they do get to talk, [and] they are allowed to have a separate opinion from the professor.

KOMAKO: So you mean challenging was students from Asia were not used to the student-centered type of class, so you are not sure if the CR would work or not?

CARRIE: Yeah, I wasn't sure how well. It did work fairly well with Henry I remember. Josephine did pretty good—she was our Korean student. I think her name was Josephine. It's been so long.

KOMAKO: I think her name was Janet.

CARRIE: Ok, it’s been so long but I remember it was a J, our Korean girl.

KOMAKO: And then there was another Chinese or Korean guy who had some absence issues, so I'm not sure what happened with him and the CR. He just started not coming to anything, so he was having issues of other sorts I think. As far as the benefits . . .

KOMAKO: Yeah, what are the specific example of benefits during the CR discussion?

CARRIE: I would say students’ confidence level in themselves, like Judy, talking so much in there. I mean after she got used to it, she started talking more in class too. Learning the group dynamics, again I'd use her group again, they seemed to do the best with it learning
how to be one person maybe two trying to facilitate, getting everyone to talk. Not necessarily coming to a consensus but trying.

**KOMAKO:** I got confused, the second one, you said student confidence and what was the second one?

**CARRIE:** Learning group dynamics. Yeah, I was thinking of Judy's group with that one again, Judy and Dia. And, I also thought that, didn't see too much of it but, in the conversation with Henry and Judy, when they got fairly heated getting to see morals from another cultural viewpoint. I know he had a slightly different take on what that character in a story should do versus what Judy thought and I was wondering if that might be a personal view or if it might have been coming from their cultures for why he thought it should happen one way versus what she thought. I thought that was good for them.

**KOMAKO:** So you are saying that was a good discussion because they had different opinions?

**CARRIE:** Yeah, and those opinions might have been somewhat culturally based, and so it gave them the chance to see some of that too.

**KOMAKO:** So their opinion is from their culture, so it is like learning culture from each other?

**CARRIE:** Yeah, a lot of the students from that class, it was their first semester here in the US, so they hadn't had too much exposure yet to other views here. I think a lot of them were still coming from cultural moral views.

**KOMAKO:** So this was like a good cultural moral exchange by doing this?

**CARRIE:** Oh, yes.

**KOMAKO:** OK yeah, I agree, I see that. Is there any more?

**CARRIE:** Let me think. I think some of it, the benefits, do go with them working on their speaking and listening skill of course. In those conversations, they have to be able to put together a sentence fairly quick that makes sense in their head, so it’s good practice for that. They also have to learn to listen closely and listen to other accents a little more closely. It reminds me again with Henry there was a little more trouble for some of them to hear through his accent, but when they would stop and truly listen to him they finally understood what he was trying to say.

Yeah, they have to restate, because they say “what” and because of the accent and their level of English, they have to listen, so it is good practice of listening and then they have to quickly make a sentence and speak whatever they thought.
And of course the critical thinking skills too. That's always a good practice with that, something they may not have had emphasized as much back in their home culture and country, but does tend to be a fairly important thing in US university culture.

KOMAKO: Ok, thank you. What are the difficulties and challenges you had during the CR discussion? How are CR discussions different from your previous discussion experiences with ESL students?

CARRIE: Let’s see, some of the challenges I thought of. One of them, literally and figuratively, getting the students to stop looking to me. Looking to me to lead them or looking to me for approval of what they are saying. I know that was a bit if a problem for a little while there.

KOMAKO: Yes, during the first few sessions they were looking at you there. That means they are so used to depending on you to say something and they do whatever you say. So the first few session you think it was still half student centered and half teacher centered because they are asking and looking at you?

CARRIE: They are trying to get approval for what they are saying. “Are we doing this correctly Ms. Carrie?” Another challenge, which wasn't too bad, there were a few students it affected, was their reading comprehension levels. I cannot remember his name right now but there was one Saudi who's comprehension level was so low even if I was reading it aloud, I'm fairly certain he wasn't getting most of it. I can't remember his name at the moment, I want to say Sultan. He was in the second group, the one with Elham. I can stop and go get the seating seat.

KOMAKO: If you think it’s important I can wait, it’s not a problem.

CARRIE: Ok, we have Dia and Kalhid, Henry, Judy, and Justina, that’s the Korean girl, and Hassan, the one you were talking about the reading level right.

KOMAKO: Yes, and one more girl I don't know how to say here name Ebdihal.

CARRIE: Ebdihal?

KOMAKO: So you are talking about Hassan, who was not quite at the level for the material I gave him.

CARRIE: He was very low and he had difficulties in some of his other classes because of that too. And in other work for me as well.

KOMAKO: But only foundations class let you read because other intermediate and university level, the teacher did not read aloud, so I thought that reading aloud with you helped but still Hassan needed more time to understand or clarification.
CARRIE: Yeah his vocabulary level was still to limited. And that sort of leads into what I, something I was doing with the scaffolding, because I did try to introduce some of the more difficult words that were going to be in the story. I tried to talk about those words a little bit in class be forehand.

KOMAKO: Oh, you mentioned the words before the session.

CARRIE: Yeah, I put together a list of words I figured they would have questions about and we did some little lessons with those words in class. But still they needed time to figure out the story first, so reading level was too high for them. For him, the others I think did pretty good. If they had had a little more time, they could have done it without me having to read it. Let me see if I had anything else. Oh, another challenge was keeping myself from jumping in. There were a few times when I wanted to jump in when it was starting to slow down.

KOMAKO: So you tried yourself to not be involved?

CARRIE: Yeah, I wanted to make them do more talking—That's what I thought for challenges. Now, with the second part of that, the differences between the discussions. With the CR the students are trying to work out cultural differences themselves rather than relying on me trying to help them work it out. I think that was one of the things with Dia constantly looking at me, also besides looking for praise or confirmation of what he was doing, some of it was also trying to get me to work on the culture part of it I think. Particularly when whe had someone like Henry come in from a different viewpoint.

KOMAKO: Because he is from Asia?

CARRIE: The one thing with that group was trying to get it mixed enough so there would be students from other countries. Most of my class at that point was Saudi.

KOMAKO: But, Henry had a different viewpoint?
CARRIE: Yes, often Henry had a slightly different take on the situation.

KOMAKO: And he was always last to say something?

CARRIE: Yes, he was.

KOMAKO: At one point Judy and Dia was so heated up and discussing and Henry could not mention anything. I mean at the beginning you ask him, do you have anything to say and he says something, but towards the end of the discussion session he mentioned that he didn't have a chance to talk because the other two were talking.

CARRIE: Yeah, although I did notice that Dia started going around the table making sure everyone stated something.

KOMAKO: That shows he was kinda a leader there.
CARRIE: Yes, he assumed group leadership.

KOMAKO: So it is natural leadership there.

CARRIE: Yeah, I think in the other group Ebdihal assumed leadership. I think one other difference, when you don't have a strong leader who makes sure everyone talks it is easier in teacher centered to force students to speak than it is when you have more student centered, if you have a student who just doesn't want to talk they are not going to talk even in a group, like . . . well. Justine talked fairly well, fairly well, fairly often, but I was trying to think of his name the other student in her group Ebdihal, Justine, Hassan, and Mohammad, well he wasn't there very often but there was another one in that group who tended to skip.

KOMAKO: Feliqe. Lists both groups.

CARRIE: That was it yeah, just didn't seem to . . . He, even when he showed up didn't talk. I remember he was one that didn't show up too much even to regular class.

KOMAKO: Ok, so maybe his motivation level was not high as other students?

CARRIE: Yeah, I do believe so, either that or he was staying up way too late at night.

KOMAKO: Oh, ok, maybe he didn't make it, pass [the course].

CARRIE: Yeah, I think he ended up transferring to Navitas eventually. Because he did not pass.

KOMAKO: So maybe this student approach kind of thing coorelates to student motivation.

CARRIE: Oh yes, I think it does.

KOMAKO: If students are not motivated, their willingness to speak is different?

CARRIE: Yes, I agree. The group motivation . . . Well, you could see some students who might not have had much motivation to talk before really start talking in those groups. Like a Henry was not one to do too much talking in class, unless I called on him. He was ready to talk more in class after that, I think he did get some motivation to speak. I feel Judy also got some motivation to speak.

KOMAKO: Because of this training?

CARRIE: I think so yeah, because it was after we started doing this and they started talking in their groups that they started to talk more in class.

KOMAKO: That's good.
CARRIE: And Justine, too actually. Justine started to talk more in class.
KOMAKO: I mean, I have not finished the data entry for the last posttest but pretty soon I will finish. I will check these three scores and see if their scores have dramatically changed from the pretest to posttest.

CARRIE: That would be good.

KOMAKO: But, your observation is that Henry, Judy and Justine changed because of this?

CARRIE: Yes. They did start talking more.

KOMAKO: Ok, lets move on to the other one. What type of ESL classroom are most likely to have the most productive CR discussions and get the most benefit from CR discussions?

CARRIE: I think as far as our levels go at the ESLI, pretty much all but the prep would get some good benefit from that. Prep, there is such a large difference between the highest-level prep student and the lowest level prep student compared to foundations—there is not usually as big a difference and the other levels too. Prep, it would just be very difficult. But, I think all of our levels could really use that.

KOMAKO: Foundations, intermediate, and university?

CARRIE: Yeah, I know that by the time they get to pre-u they should be able to have group skills, have a designated leader and the people who motivate everybody else and have the skills for discussion like this, so they are ready for the university. If, we start it sooner with the discussion work, like the foundations level or if you have another very high prep level class and started with them they should have very good skills by the time they get to pre-u.

KOMAKO: You mean group skills and discussion skills?

CARRIE: Yes.

KOMAKO: All the skills you need in the university. Are there any classrooms where CR is not appropriate? We talked about that, the prep level.

CARRIE: That lowest level would be an issue and if you did not have a culturally mixed classroom. It might be very difficult. If I only had Saudis it might be fairly difficult to get conversation going of different ideas. If it was a group of Saudi men and Saudi women it might have been difficult to get the women to even talk. If they are especially the lower levels, they are still getting used to the idea that, yeah I need to be as active as the men in this class and yes I can talk to the guy that's sitting across from me.

KOMAKO: You are saying that at the lower levels, Saudi women are hesitant to talk because of their culture.

CARRIE: Yeah, from teaching. It wasn't as bad that semester I remember with the foundations students but the prep students I had also, I had a very hard time getting some of
the women in that prep class interacting with the men. First semester here, it’s not what they are used to being able to do at all, so. It's a little hard.

KOMAKO: Yeah, I had that same experience when I was doing an internship at ESLI, if I don't make a group they are always separated. Seems like they like that way but it is hard to survive in the US if they keep distance from male and female.

CARRIE: Yes, exactly, yes.

KOMAKO: Do you think the CR discussions have a positive impact on students in the ESL classroom?

CARRIE: Yes, I do. The speaking listen skills gives them, I guess with speaking they have to be quick on their feet to put together sentences and that does improve fluency and does improve listening skills they have to pay attention to their group mates and pay attention to what they are saying before making a response or they could hurt the feelings of or upset that group mate.

KOMAKO: So speaking seems quick and listening they need to pay attention, so it is good practice of speaking and listening?

CARRIE: Yes, and a good practice for thinking skills. That seemed to be a very good practice for them learning how to think of a different viewpoint rather than see it only one way. Oh, yeah there is another option, and, skipping ahead slightly, language learning motivation. I did see some with that too. Wanting to know, wanting to make sure they understand everything in the reading first. I know Dia a couple times kept going back over certain parts to make sure he understood before they had the discussion. Good motivation.

KOMAKO: And, I noticed that Dia is always stay after conversation and make sure he understands the story and also he picks the words and want you to make another sentence that he can use in his life and his willingness to learn, I thought he is very motivated because he wanted to be fluent.

CARRIE: Yes, he was.

KOMAKO: Yeah, I noticed that before the session and after the session he wanted to stay late and talk about it.
CARRIE: Yes, he was a highly motivated student.

KOMAKO: So yeah, I agree with you. I didn't know these words, but you say language-learning motivation increased?

CARRIE: I think with Judy too. She wasn't necessarily as . . . well before the discussions she never really asked questions, after and during we started with the discussions, during her group discussion and in class, she did actually start to ask me questions about stuff: “Teacher, I don't get this. Teacher, I don't understand.”
KOMAKO: I mean in other class.

CARRIE: Yeah, I think she, at least in my regular classes, she started to ask more questions.

KOMAKO: Ok, that's a good point. You observe them in other classes, something I cannot see. Thank you so much for sharing that, that's important. What aspect of student's learning outcome do you think CR discussions have the most impact on?

CARRIE: That would be the speaking and listening; I think it’s the most significant with those two, and probably the thinking skills too. Yeah, I would say that those are probably the most important ones that got affected. Reading, writing, no. Reading, there wasn't enough to help.

KOMAKO: How do you feel that student lead discussion like CR discussion effected student participation and engagement?

CARRIE: Well, for those who were not involved too much with regular class participation beforehand, again thinking of Judy, Henry, and Justine. They did start getting the motivation to talk in class. They did start participating. Now some did not, thinking back to the one who missed so much. He had no motivation beforehand, still had no motivation after, so it can help with the motivation.

KOMAKO: But it didn't work with him?

CARRIE: No, not with him. He was lacking motivation in everything I think. He is the outlier, I'll say. Dia, his character is already probative and he liked the CR discussion. Judy, Henry and Justine, you think they really changed because of the training. Yes, I think they did start to come out of their shells and talk a lot more after that.

KOMAKO: Hassan, how about Hassan?

CARRIE: Hassan, I didn't see much change.

KOMAKO: Mohammad?

CARRIE: Mohammad was very talkative to begin with, when he showed up for class.

KOMAKO: So he is talkative, if he shows up?

CARRIE: Yes, he had an attendance problem. Kahlid was pretty talkative to begin with too. Ebdihal did start talking a little bit more, of the Saudi girls she was the one who was more willing to volunteer to speak beforehand, so I guess some increase for her, but she was willing to speak more beforehand.

KOMAKO: So you can see, some were, some not. As to be expected.
CARRIE: I caught Hassan cheating once, so I kind of knew he wouldn't show much improvement.

KOMAKO: The last question is can you tell me something you learned from the CR approach?

CARRIE: Well, I was surprised with how well it worked with most of those foundations students. I was not sure of vocabulary levels, some of them I knew would talk, some I was afraid would never speak up, so I was surprised with that, good surprised.

KOMAKO: Yeah I was worried about this level, because they want to talk but cannot so the discussion ends in ten minutes or something but they used the whole 20 minutes and so.

CARRIE: Most of them did use the whole time.

KOMAKO: Is there any recommendation to improve this approach for the future?

CARRIE: The only thing is again making sure it is the right level for the students. I've actually tried to recommend using something like this with one of my teachers here with her students because she has had a little bit of trouble getting people to talk in class and it fit in well with what she is teaching so I recommended she might try something with this approach. Make them go into groups and make them start talking.

KOMAKO: So you use the CR approach?

CARRIE: Yeah, I have a teacher who has been trying it. I'm not sure. I have not heard how well it has worked. I have not heard whether or not she has actually done it, but I have recommended it to her.

KOMAKO: So you recommend to other teachers and we already talked about the reading level not fitting in with students.

CARRIE: Yeah, that is the one as per my other recommendation is just to make sure that it is the right level.

KOMAKO: And you told me that what you did was do vocabulary lessons before the discussion on vocabulary they might get confused.

CARRIE: And, it seemed to help. Sometimes they did ask me some of the words again or they had ones I didn't think they would have a problem with.

KOMAKO: Ok, thank you Carrie.
INTERVIEW 2 (VALARIE: Interviewer) (KOMAKO: Interviewer): TRANSCRIPT

KOMAKO: [My] question is how do teacher perceive their leadership role changes in ESLI classroom, specifically related to the level of difficulty in shifting from the teacher centered teaching style to the student centered teaching style? And the other one is what other challenges do they find in the making leadership changes?

VALARIE: In the ESLI classroom, of course, in the way that our school is structured, the students become very comfortable with the teacher because they see us 5 days a week. Sometimes multiple hours during the day, so the students are always looking to the teacher to not only teach them language, but culture and everything else. So doing an activity like this, where the teacher has to step away, can be a little confusing for students at first, as they are not used to it. The teacher too, because we're there we know we are there to teach and we always want to . . . So with my group, they were the upper levels, were graduate students too. It didn't take them long, it took them one or two sessions to eventually get the hang of it. I was there and you were just there to clarify, but still, there were a few times when they could not come to a conclusion and they felt that they needed to have one conclusion, they would turn to the teacher to make that decision for them, and I had to step off and say “I do not get to make this decision”. I don't know if that was because they felt uncomfortable to make the decision with their language skills or they are so used to the teacher being the ultimate decider, but they eventually learn that this was not affecting their grade, they were just improving their language skills, their ability to debate, and come to a conclusion and by the end, if I remember correctly, they completely forgot we were in the room. The discussions became heated, and how to come to a conclusion on their own and if they couldn't come to a conclusion, or come to a pass, to bridge their decision, so to accept difference, so, I can't speak much for Carrie, she has to speak for herself, but she had the lower level students. They of course, need a little more hand holding because they do not have the language skills. I will have to let Carrie speak for herself on that one.

KOMAKO: I was observing her class. I know most students were talking to her, for the first 2 sessions, 3 sessions.

VALARIE: Yeah, when we had our final discussion together, that was one of the things that we noticed, that, well, we thought maybe their level was too low for this, but I think maybe they got benefit out of it though. If it was not at that moment in time, at those few sessions, then eventually it would take hold and they would learn to debate and to compromise and to make critical decisions. They just needed the language to catch up to that point. I they could argue in their native languages, but we probably wouldn't be able to finish. And then what challenges do I find in making this leadership change? The hardest thing I had was, of course, just being used to being the teacher. Teachers are not just teachers from 9 to 5, they are teachers constantly. That's why they have the phrase “teachable moment.” That's why when I am at Wal-Mart and can make that a teachable moment, I don't know to teach them to pick the right yogurt or something, which is a special.... yes. So I had to make a conscious effort to not interrupt, to not feel that they needed a clarification, but to wait for them to ask for clarification. So yes, I had to be very conscious of it, and I eventually got the hang of it too. You know? I went along with the
students and eventually got to the point where I said I'm going to let them do this, and if something goes wrong I am not there to fix it, like a teacher is supposed to.

KOMAKO: Did you ever have to fix it?

VALARIE: Nothing ever went wrong, you know. I am talking about when you are working with so many different cultures, one of the things beyond the language that you have to worry about is being culturally sensitive. Which is why the readings you chose were nothing to lead to cultural insensitivity.

KOMAKO: Yes, so we talked about the material before we start this.

VALARIE: Yeah, but they are humans, there is always that human error factor. Somebody, you know, so that would be a moment beyond language that I would have to jump in and fix a... yeah, but that never happened, so the language I just let them take the language and run with it and if they needed a word they could ask, or if not they learned to find other words for it, like they are supposed to.

KOMAKO: So you let them learn?

VALARIE: Yes. It took a couple of sessions myself, but I did it eventually.

KOMAKO: How do you perceive your role in the CR discussions? Does your role in the CR discussions differ from your role in regular ESLI lessons?

VALARIE: I don't think. Ok, my role in the CR discussions, like I said, was to just be a facilitator, there to help if needed. The reason that it is a little bit different, especially in our classroom, is because a lot of our classrooms, like I said we go every day, so there does have to be times that the teacher has to be the center because they are introducing a new idea or topic, or learning objective, but and then after that they can take it and go. I don't think that it changed my style too much because I always like, especially in these kind of classes, to build a team quality, and at this level, because once they leave our program, you are not there for them anymore, but they could be in classes together at the university. They need each other more than they need us, and they get to rely on us quite a bit, so we try to do class activities that require group work or teamwork or something to slowly start to take myself out of the picture, plus when they get to American university, the professor is not so hands on, so they need to start learning that as well. So I don't think that it changed my style, I think it may have complemented a little bit. And like I said, I think me having trouble, the first couple of times, with wanting to intervene, and interject, and things, was the fact that I was so used to introducing the topic, like the activity, making sure it went well the first time, and then let go.

KOMAKO: Where you providing an example or something?

KOMAKO: Yes. This project didn't need me to do that as much so, so that's why I had to step back. And how do you like the CR approach?
VALARIE: I do like the CR approach, to be honest, I haven't done it since you and I did it together, because I wasn't comfortable doing it by myself. You did it so well. You did. Every time I would plan for class I was like “how can I work that in?” and I don't know if I can do it by myself.

KOMAKO: I heard Justin is using this approach in his class.

VALARIE: Yes, Justin has done it and, oh and I may have tried it a little bit, but I did not go full force, to be perfectly honest, but I really did enjoy it. I was actually thinking that, I guess I'm more classic, in the fact that I feel a teacher needs to be more active in the classroom, but after this, especially in a language class, you don't have to be so active, you know? Being there is still being there and helping. I don't have to be the one leading everything. So . . .

KOMAKO: So your approach or policy changed a little bit after this? About the classroom management?

VALARIE: Yeah, so I felt like I don't have to do as much for the language acquisition to occur. So I allow them that freedom.

KOMAKO: I understand. Teaching language, you feel like you have to do otherwise, because they are just waiting, right?

VALARIE: Yes. You don't want them to feel uncomfortable because they don't have the language skills, you are there to make sure that they are ok, and so, and not being so active you feel like you are not doing your job, but you really are. You have to allow them, just like a child, to walk across the room, fall over, and get themselves back up. Because they will eventually walk.

KOMAKO: So Number 3, could you describe any benefit or challenging aspects of the CR approach from your point of view as an ESL instructor? What is a specific example of a benefit from the CR discussions?

VALARIE: Like I said, the benefits, I did see them starting to be more open to speaking their mind, especially with some of the quieter students, or the students [for] whom it’s more culturally accepted to not be so vocal in class. They eventually completely change that, because in American university, there are many times that you go into a class and the teacher says “What’s your opinion?” and in many cultures no one has ever asked them that. They don't know what to do. Also, it worked on a lot of critical thinking skills, which I see a lot of students struggling with. I don't, I have not really researched this myself, I don't know if it’s because critical thinking is more of an American thing, you know? Or if it is because they don't have the language skills to do the same sort of critical thinking.

KOMAKO: You think it’s a cultural thing?

VALARIE: It might be. Yes, especially if the person is supposed to be the person that leads. You could probably walk into a classroom with some students and say that aliens have taken
over the planet and two or three of them will say the teacher said it, so it must be true. And some of them will say, no I don't think so. Teacher is wrong. And the ones that say the teacher said it must be true, are probably saying in their head that must not be right, but she is a teacher, she is older than me, exactly. So . . .

**KOMAKO:** I agree that Asian culture might have to step back and respect whatever the teacher said.

**VALARIE:** So CR removes the teacher aspect. The students didn't have that barrier... and whenever they would either unconsciously choose or someone would put themselves in the place of the leader in the group, that person was still their cohort. You know, still their classmate, still their equal. Even though they had this position of power, so that they learned to eventually be comfortable with retaliating that person and attempting to gain leadership themselves if needed.

**KOMAKO:** So CR creates a free talking environment?

**VALARIE:** It does. It’s something they really need and it’s not addressed a lot in classes because they are so focused on teaching grammar and reading, and everything else you know, that it is hard to integrate that skill in before they get to the university.

**KOMAKO:** Do you think they... you mentioned they don't have to worry about grammar mistakes, do you think they stop talking because they don't want to show their error, because it’s embarrassing, do you think they don't have that type of feeling?

**VALARIE:** I think that it eventually goes away. ‘Cause you are always going to have someone who is going to be quieter, I am one of those people, you put me in a group I am the quietest person there, but I listen and I gather and I think and I conclude and then I speak. That's just the way that I am. Yes, I know. I am a very vocal person, but you put me in a group and I won't speak. Well, if everyone else doesn't speak I will take lead until I get everyone else talking. I have noticed this about myself. I am always amazed with the people who can go into a group discussion and just start throwing things out. Because in my head I am like how did they have time to think about that, how did they know that was the right answer, so you know, so this, they are having the same aspect. Personality wise, tit might be that they are thinker and a collector before they speak but they have the whole other aspect of can I express without the vocabulary I need? Or do I have the vocabulary to express myself in English to everyone? If I say it grammatically wrong, will it sound stupid and I just completely ruin my point or I just made fun of myself, but I think after they watched everyone and you have those automatic speakers who just , whatever first thing comes to their head they speak out. They don't have the grammar or vocabulary either, but they are making good ideas. You know, so . . .

**KOMAKO:** If they see a talkative person making a mistake, they think it’s ok?
VALARIE: What’s the TSOL term, it lowers their effective filter. And the teacher is not there judging them either, so that removes that whole aspect as well, if the teacher is behind, so..

KOMAKO: So that’s why you think the Saudi and Vietnamese women begin talking in the groups?

VALARIE: They sit back and listen for a while, and say no, no, I need to speak up. You know, and then they did. You know a couple of them had a couple of issues. Like Thran, a nontraditional student...

KOMAKO: What do you mean a nontraditional student?

VALARIE: She is over age 25, she is married, she has children, about your son's age.

KOMAKO: That’s called nontraditional student?

VALARIE: Yes, nontraditional. Like 18, 19, 20 they are normal students. So she was much older, already had a family. So many times older women will be quieter when younger women are around, let them argue for a while, but then she started to assert herself. Like I said it came over into the classroom as well outside the CR sessions she eventually in class started to speak up, simple things, you know answer questions, talk to classmates, it’s not that she was standoffish, she was just quiet, so you could put her in a class group discussion she would speak up, or if she had a problem she would raise her hand.

KOMAKO: I think you mentioned before about student engagement and class got strong bond.

VALARIE: Yeah, I still think back to this class and how well they worked together, like I say, I tried to push team things, especially in these upper level classes, and even now, even though it’s been what, a year? It seems like it was yesterday. As far as I know these students probably still talk to each other, some of them are from the same culture. But . . .

KOMAKO: Number 4, what are the difficulties you have during transition to the CR discussion, how are CR discussions different from your previous discussion with ESLI students? Student-centered versus teacher-centered, cultural clash?

VALARIE: For some reason, I don't know why this worked better than when we put them in group discussions in the classroom. Maybe it was the setting or something or maybe it was the fact it was only the portion of the class because sometimes I notice that when we do group discussions in class some people will stop and listen to what the other groups are saying. So this one, we separated them and then we would even have fun because with so many of them we would have to do it on 2 days and tell them not to tell what the topic was. I know you will see them all day, but don't tell them what the discussion is about. Because next time we might have it and you won't.
KOMAKO: Sometimes the CR stories made them interested, the last big question made them think and decide basically.

VALARIE: I don't really think that the cultures classes very much. We made a point to mix them up by gender, culture, and everything and I was kind of worried a couple of times that some would dominate others, but they did a little bit at the beginning, but it eventually worked itself out if you look at the overall arching of it. We thought about the culture coming into their decision-making on the stories as well, the gender and the culture.

KOMAKO: Did we have Chinese student here?

VALARIE: Andy I think was [Chinese]. Hon and Duke, they did that at first as well. Group 1 had most of my dominate students and group 3 had a mix, and I did that purposefully. I wanted to see for myself, especially with the quiet group, who would take the lead, would it be the Middle Eastern students? But it wasn't really, he did a little bit at the beginning, but Thrin started speaking up and when Thrin started to speak up, Salma, the Saudi woman started to speak up. You know and then Whey she would interject every so often and Duke, he wasn't real quiet, but he wasn't real vocal either. But yeah, Kahalid, was the quietest of the UAE gentleman that I had and he just naturally, even where he positioned himself at the table as the head of the tables, but yeah, it eventually, they eventually got as vocal and strong as group 2 did as group 1 did. And then Group 3 did just fine too. So in Group 3 I was really interested, so I will point to you and not say it because I don't know if it needs to go in your thing..

KOMAKO: Ghallia.

VALARIE: Yeah, I had her at a lower level and she refused to work with men. And went to Dawn and complained about me because I made her work with men and all it was to read a paper. In the CR group she was yelling and arguing with them and expressing her opinion to, because she had a men heavy group. Yes, her and Salma both. I had them when they were... not even just read their papers in a writing class when I had them in foundations.

KOMAKO: In their country they cannot speak in front of men, that’s why they refuse it?

VALARIE: It's just the fact that they have never been in a class with men before. It was the culture shock when they were at that level. Saudi women only go to school with women and men go to school with only men.

KOMAKO: But they have relatives? Male, female?

VALARIE: Yes, relatives are fine, but men that are not relatives so, and Asian men are ok, but other Middle Eastern men they are not to interact with and they never have before. Even their houses they have a women's side and men's side. So when I had them in a lower level, because that is what we do as a part of our mission statement, we learn how to be in a north American university, one of the things that we have to do is to have to be in a classroom with men. So first a lot of times they will cower and sit in the back away from men, then
you have to slowly start pulling them out, and it can be hard. It's a shock for them. I had the three of them in foundations and we were doing a peer review and I said here read his paper and she said “no”. One of them started crying. She went to the bathroom. She went up to Dawn later and said that she cannot do this to us, you cannot allow it, and Dawn said “Yes, I can.” You are just reading your papers, she is not asking you to touch them or look at them. And then three semesters later, we have them in the CR group and they are retaliating and arguing against men, and Middle Eastern men with it as well. So a lot of times when I talk about this with other new Muslim women who come in I talk about these three ladies and how... and if they go back home and work in an American company they will have to deal men there. That's one reason why some people choose a program like ours, because we do work on the acculturation, but I just didn't say the names because I don't know if the names need to be in your paper...

KOMAKO: Number 5, what scaffolding moves did you use with your CR discussions?

VALARIE: I don't really know if I used any or not.

KOMAKO: Did you do a briefing time after the discussion?

VALARIE: Yeah, and in the classroom sometimes I just wanted their feedback on it away from the discussion and what they thought about it. You know, and especially after all the groups would go over the same story, we would try to have discussion of who came up with what conclusion and why and sometimes they would change either other's minds and say I never thought about that or sometimes I would listen to all 3 and find it interesting that you all came up with this point, this point, and this point. Which are things that Komako and I said I never thought about that. So yeah, that was just a little bit. I don't think that I did any pre-set up or anything like that.

KOMAKO: Yeah, we did not prepare anything, because if we prepare they start thinking. So, Number 6, what time of ESL classroom do you think will have the most productive CR discussion and get the most benefit from CR discussions?

VALARIE: The classes that I think, I do think that it needs to be the upper levels, intermediate or pre-university levels because, like I said, they just have more vocabulary, more language skill, more ability to express what we need from the CR. I am not saying that the lower levels are not smart enough, just that they don't have the skills, the language skills. I think that almost any of the subjects, I could see it in writing, where you are discussing how to argue a paper, or the validity of a piece of research. The I skills, of course, which is a catch all for everything. Reading, definitely, you know. Speaking and listening even, because you actually are using your speaking and listening and debating skills. Grammar, I am not sure cause grammar is more like the math of the language so I am not really sure if it would work for that, but . . .

KOMAKO: I don't think it could work.
VALARIE: No, I don't think it could work for a grammar class. I mean, the only thing I could think of is if CR was focused on if someone was, if you had a reading about someone talking about something, that happened in the past, but does it make logical sense if it is in the past or they change a verb tense and they change the entire story? But that would be a very advanced skill too... that would be the only way I could see applying it to a grammar class.

KOMAKO: So you mentioned for a reading class it's appropriate?

VALARIE: Yeah, because reading class the whole point is to read and critically think about the readings. So it's beyond just reading a story, you have to understand it.

KOMAKO: So CR practice makes them think more critically?

VALARIE: One of the last times that I taught pre-university reading, I moved to I skills at lower levels there for a long time, been there for a long time, but when I taught pre-university reading, we taught a whole section on obedience and we looked and the Milgram experiment and the Stanford prison experiment and we read *The Lottery* and we read *Hamlet* and many of the questions, especially that I would have about *Hamlet*, was “Is Hamlet crazy?” Or is he just being obedient to his position of price, or is he being obedient to his mother? You know, so we would read different sections and then come to that question again, so you know, and of course you could always stop a reading anywhere and see what conclusions you come up with, because one of the things we definitely teach in reading is inference... it's a very hard skill to teach because it does require a lot of critical thinking stuff and CR could be a place to help support that, teaching that skill of inference. I think the hardest thing about it is to learn when to cut the story off, am I giving too much of the story away to allow them to critically think? I would like to use it, but I didn't feel quite comfortable doing it by myself yet, and that’s one of the things is how could I integrate it, so . . .

KOMAKO: What classes wouldn't be good for CR? You said grammar class, you already mentioned grammar class.

VALARIE: Yeah, and then the beginner classes it would be a little hard because they don't have enough language skill yet.

KOMAKO: Number 7, do you think that CR discussion has a positive impact on student language learning outcome in the ESLI classroom?

VALARIE: Yeah, and why is because it got them to use the language that they have and to be more comfortable with it. So many times students don't speak because they feel they don't have enough vocabulary, even when I talk to students and say what do you think that your problem is with this class, doesn't matter what class, and almost always, they don't have enough vocabulary. They don't have enough vocabulary for writing class, don't have enough vocabulary to understand reading, speaking or grammar, so . . .
KOMAKO: That's true though, that international students, we have a limited vocabulary. From there, they want to have . . .

VALARIE: They have to use the limited abilities that they have, which is possible, especially with English, you can use 100 words to mean 1 word and mean the same thing, so they can use their limited vocabulary to eventually convince everyone else. Especially since one thing they are doing is using support from the reading. So they don't have to worry about no knowing the vocabulary they just have to be able to realize that, what support they are using, is supplementing for them. So yeah, I think it has a positive impact on their language learning.

KOMAKO: You mean in terms of, like, speaking out?

VALARIE: To speak out and practice, to accept and use what they have or use and accept it, if that’s how you want to say that.

KOMAKO: Number 8 what aspect of student learning outcome do you think the CR discussion have more significant impact?

VALARIE: Of the list that you got there, I would say thinking skills. One of the things that was really interesting was the critical thinking, because it’s the one that seems to be not addressed as much in the classroom, I mean it is, but not as much in itself. So and I think that’s a big important thing.

KOMAKO: Especially for the students who are trying to go to an American university.

VALARIE: Yep. They will have to critically think. I think it also, it's not that they might not know how to critically think, but they just might not know that is what they are doing in English, and doing an exercise like this, you know, and afterwards you go, wow you did some critical thinking and they go I did and I do that all the time back home. So . . .

KOMAKO: Number 9, how do you feel that student led discussion affects classroom participation and engagement?

VALARIE: I felt it brought the class together a little bit better, a little bit more, and they all started to participate a lot more outside of the activity and inside the classroom. It created a bond and a freedom, for everyone, not just the strong ones to speak out, to start to improve their own, to start to take control of their language learning. So..

KOMAKO: So you think it gave them confidence?

VALARIE Uh-huh.

KOMAKO: After doing so many discussion I think.

VALARIE: Yup.
KOMAKO: Could you tell me something you learned from the CR approach?

VALARIE: Um, personally I learned to step off. Yeah, step back let the students take control sometimes. That's one thing that I personally learned. But yes, one thing I did do was, you have open-ended questions on here, sometimes it’s hard to ask an open-ended question and not a leading question and it made me more conscious of which one I would be asking to the students. You know am I allowing them to answer my question or am I directing them and leading them to the answer I want. I mean they are both good approaches but it needs to be one or the other. You can mix them up. And you don't need to just constantly ask leading questions or constantly ask open-ended questions. So just to be more conscious of what type of questioning I would give.

KOMAKO: Were you worried before we do this CR approach, were you worried about how the discussions would go?

VALARIE: Well, you all did the training with us before, so I knew what was going on.

KOMAKO: I was worried that the students would not be interested in talking to each other.

VALARIE: Yeah that was my biggest one at first too.

KOMAKO: You know I thought one of the groups might finish the discussion in five minutes.

VALARIE: And that has been the problem a lot of the time in classrooms too, this kind of approach is a little bit different than the group discussion approach because there are many times that you have a whole class, and 50 minutes might seem like a lot but it’s not, until you have a group project and you say discuss this topic and that's not a very good open ended question and, yeah literally, they go and come to a conclusion and everybody goes OK we all agree, and you're like now I have 47 minutes of class to cover now. So you start asking, why do you agree, “because it’s good.” That's the thing is to learn the difference between how to do the open-ended and how to do the leading. So yeah, I was there with you, so that the students would be like, or it would just completely confuse them and they would seize up. You know, they would read the story and be like, OK. And it would be like no. The first one, if I remember correctly we had to be like, OK now discuss. Talk about it, find a conclusion, make a decision. So the first one was a little wonky, it took a little training, but yeah by the end they were starting before we could even hit play on the camera.

KOMAKO: And, they were still talking in the hallway.

VALARIE: But yeah, so it was really good.

KOMAKO: Any recommendations?
VALARIE: Just to keep doing this, so, we have a lot of new teachers and I think this would be a good thing to do to train teachers over each semester on how to do this because I think it was really beneficial, like I said, you all did the training and a gentleman did a presentation with American students, and I was like how is this going to work with international students? But it worked, it worked just as good, if not better.

KOMAKO: They really enjoyed the discussions.

VALARIE: Yeah, the discussions were great, so, and never did we have to step in and say why and we didn't have to model how to get someone to agree with it or support it. The thing I thought was really interesting because we put them in group discussions and you say OK you came to a conclusion but why, how do you support that. You have to ask them that question and I don't know if they really, I mean a lot of times someone would come up with a conclusion and then someone would say “Why do you think that?” It's modeled in the classroom and it would carry over there but they really got good at expressing their opinion and supporting it, which is something a lot of times we want them to do.

KOMAKO: Yeah, that's the whole point of the CR.

VALARIE: Yes, and then putting them in class, in group discussions that is something that we have to pull out of them. “But why, support that? What from your reading can you support it with?” You know and you’re sitting there and it is like pulling teeth, but for some reason with this it just came so naturally.

KOMAKO: Yeah, because when I did the story preparation I choose something that is close to their situation, so that the dilemma is something the might have someday, maybe that is why they are interested in it. Something close to their life right now.
INTERVIEW 3: (KOMAKO: Interviewer) (JUSTIN: Interviewee): VIA EMAIL

KOMAKO: How do teachers perceive their leadership role changes in an ESL classroom (specifically related to the level of difficulty) in shifting from a teacher-centered teaching style to a student-centered teaching style? What challenges do they find in making this leadership change?

JUSTIN: It is somewhat difficult at first because many teachers often feel a need to be actively involved in every aspect of the class. Many feel that if they are not talking, they are not doing their jobs properly. However, I think some (myself included) have come to realize that you have to relinquish the spotlight and allow the students to do the talking and construct some of their own learning. They need to be allowed greater autonomy.

KOMAKO: How do you perceive your role in CR discussions? Does your role in CR discussions change from regular ESL lessons?

JUSTIN: I tend to see myself as a facilitator, making sure the students stay on track and encouraging them to explore every possible angle. I want to encourage deeper, more critical thinking without giving them the answers. I don't think that this is greatly different from how I have come to see my role in a regular ESL class, mostly because my conception has changed as my experience has grown.

KOMAKO: Do you feel that student-led class (CR) is interfering with your teaching style? If yes, how did it conflict with your style? If no, how did it complement your style?

JUSTIN: The student-led class is actually complementary in my attempt to get students to assert greater autonomy over their learning and practice their English skills in a more authentic way.

KOMAKO: How do you like the CR approach?

JUSTIN: I like the CR approach. It encourages students to practice important critical skills and gives them a break from the traditional, routine course.

KOMAKO: Could you describe any benefits and challenging aspects of CR approach from your point of view as an ESL instructor?

JUSTIN: The most challenging part is breaking the class in to appropriate groups (getting a good balance) and finding solid discussion topics. It is problematic when students reach a consensus too quickly.

KOMAKO: What are the specific examples of benefits during the CR discussions?

JUSTIN: One of the best benefits I saw was students who are normally very quiet in class often rise to the occasion and get a chance to speak and participate in an environment that seems more comfortable to them than the regular classroom setting.
KOMAKO: What are the difficulties/challenges you had during the CR discussion? How are CR discussions different from your previous discussion experience with ESL students? (Student-centered vs. teacher-centered, try to hear about cultural crash and quiet students …)

JUSTIN: I was a bit unsure and uncomfortable at first because I wasn't sure what I was doing or how much to get involved, but that was not a problem long. I had no real difficulties during the CR discussions. The big difference I saw was that more students got involved, even if only slightly; the most talkative students did not always dominate the conversation as they do in a regular class.

KOMAKO: What scaffolding moves did you use to facilitate CR discussions?

JUSTIN DID NOT ANSWER THIS QUESTION

KOMAKO: What type of ESL classrooms do you think are most likely to have productive CR discussions and get the most benefit from CR discussions? (Hint: level of English, grouping strategies etc.)

JUSTIN: Advanced Speaking and Listening and I-Skills courses. Reading class could also potentially utilize this when discussing a text.

KOMAKO: Would you like to use as it is or do you want to add some adjustment to your class settings?

JUSTIN: I have used this a couple of times since the spring.

KOMAKO: Are there any classrooms where CR approach is not appropriate or need some modifications? (For example, cultural mixed class., advance class, beginner class?) IF any, what are your recommendations for modifications or adjustments?

JUSTIN: I think that the CR approach could be used at all levels, but it is more difficult for less proficient students. They would probably need simplified scenarios, but for intermediate and advanced, they work very well. Using them in mixed culture classes is good because they cannot communicate in their native language; they must use English.

KOMAKO: Do you think that CR discussions have a positive impact on students’ language learning outcomes in ESL classrooms? And why?

JUSTIN: I think it does have a positive impact because it forces them to use their language skills in a productive way in an authentic scenario. It encourages debate about things that are not simple Yes/No propositions.

KOMAKO: What aspects of student learning outcomes do you think the CR discussions have most significant impact (listening, speaking, reading and writing; thinking skills, language learning motivation)?
JUSTIN: Listening, speaking, and critical thinking have the most obvious impact; however, I also think that it is motivational because they get to have conversations with their friends and classmates, and when they are engaged and enthusiastic or interested in the topic, it increases their motivation to participate.

KOMAKO: How do you feel that student-led discussions like CR discussions affect classroom participation and engagement?

JUSTIN: From what I have seen, it increases both. Certain topics are more engaging than others, but I have definitely seen a lot of positive outcomes the last few semesters.

KOMAKO: Could you tell me something you learned from the CR approach? (Open-ended questions use “tell me more”)

JUSTIN: The CR approach has reinforced something that I realized only after I had been teaching a while--the focus of the classroom should be more on the students and less on the teacher. I have come to believe that is very important, and CR gives the students a chance to take more control of their learning and practice their language skills in an environment that is more conducive to participation because some students see it as less threatening or less frightening than responding in front of the entire class.

KOMAKO: Any recommendations (for CR)?

JUSTIN DID NOT ANSWER THIS QUESTION

--END--