



## Contextualized Workforce Skills and ESL Learner Identity

This article reports on an empirical case study centering on adult ESL learners' motivational patterns for learning English and its relevance to their career goals. It looks at past patterns of immigrant insertion within the socio-economic context of the US and explores current trends in adult ESL curriculum development focused on the task of "career readiness." Drawing on Norton-Peirce's (1995, 1997) concept of "investment" in second language learning, research for this study poses the question of curriculum relevance to student aspirations, implicating aspects of learner identity and various modes of belonging. The study contributes to the understanding of ESL learners' positioning vis-à-vis curriculum change while reflecting on the extent of learner autonomy in the face of structural limitations.

### Introduction

*"I know that it is difficult for immigrants to have better life in the U.S., but at the same time it is really important to have big dreams and studying hard. Speaking English is most important for me to get better life and job." (Lupe Alvarado, ESL student)*

*"English is a World language and is very important for success. My teacher gives me a lot of knowledge. I think this center is a temple and my teachers are god for me." (Vanita Singh, ESL student)*

Within the adult school system in California, which includes adult basic and secondary academics, career technical education, and other programs, English as a second language (ESL) represents the single largest division, providing instruction for

more than a third of a million adults served in the programs annually.<sup>1</sup> This sizable group of adult ESL enrollees mainly comprises immigrant learners in need of language instruction and learning experiences that will help them communicate with English speakers, learn about the cultures and customs of the US, and prepare for employment, citizenship, parenthood, and self-sufficiency. But the overrepresentation of ESL learners within the system is also linked to the history of the institution itself. As far removed as it may seem, the assimilation project of teaching English and civic education to newly arrived immigrants has its permanent roots in the century-old history of the Americanization movement since the early 1900s (Carlson, 1975; Kliebard, 2004). In fact, it was the establishment of Americanization centers that gave birth to the concept of “night schools” by offering English language classes in the evenings. Although the movement, or the crusade as some have called it (Curti, 1946; Higham, 1955), faded away by the early 1920s, scholars agree that its most lasting effect was felt through the establishment of the adult education system as its greatest legacy (Hartmann, 1948; Higham, 1955).

It is all the more relevant, therefore, that the curriculum for adult English learners continues to reflect this dominant discourse of assimilation to the American way of life. The framework views language attainment as a tool to fully integrate the immigrants into the fold of the host society and ease their transition into the new culture. But equally important, this Americanization-as-assimilation model of language learning continues to be as much geared to the task of socializing the immigrants to the US cultural norms as to help them adapt to its economic standards. The end of the 19th century marked the growth of industrialization and introduction of machinery that revolutionized production techniques (Edwards, 1979). It also marked the arrival of a labor pool: a massive influx of new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe who were being seen as “out of sync” with the mainstream society (Apple, 2012; Higham, 1955). Many of these “new” immigrants did not speak English, were forced to live in overcrowded, unsanitary, and de facto segregated neighborhoods, and were naturalized in smaller numbers than the “old” immigrants from northern and western Europe. Scholars view this stage of immigration as a watershed period for cultural constructions and a politics of identity that produced an enduring status differential between northern European immigrants and “others” (Hartmann, 1948; Higham, 1955; Kaufmann, 1999; Katz, 2001).<sup>2</sup> So, assimilating non-WASPs, or white Anglo-Saxon Protestants, into American culture was the ideological process that complemented their entrance into relations of production, or the material process (Leonardo & Vafai, 2016).

Historical accounts corroborate the notion that irrespective of the immigrant's personal aspirations and priorities, teaching the language was especially important for employers to the extent that it affected productivity (Carlson, 1975; Hartmann, 1948). Gerd Korman (1965), who distinguished between the two major players of the Americanization movement as the "YMCA workers" (before World War I) and the "militant Americanizers" (during the war), chronicled that even at the initial phase "the classes concerned themselves primarily with only one sphere of the immigrant's surrounding: factory life" (1965, p. 404). He reports that companies such as Ford, International Harvester, and United States Steel corporations instituted practices of English and civics instruction to teach, above all, discipline and work efficiency. Samples of a YMCA-sponsored lesson include the following:

I hear the whistle. I must hurry.  
I hear the five minute whistle.  
It is time to go into the shop.  
I take my check from the gate board and hang it on the department board.  
I change my clothes and get ready to go to work.  
The starting whistle blows.  
I eat my lunch.  
It is forbidden to eat lunch before then.  
The whistle blows at five minute starting time.  
I get ready to go to work.  
I work until the whistle blows to quit.  
I leave my place nice and clean.  
I put all my clothes in my locker.  
I go home. (Korman, 1965, p. 402)

As Korman goes on to show, this may have happened despite the teachers' best intentions:

Instructors recruited by the YMCA may often have entered English language classes with the noblest of ambitions and a general urge to teach the immigrant basic language skills. They were not interested in, if not outrightly hostile to, the content of an English language curriculum that an industrial organization wanted taught. To them the classes represented a device to help the immigrant cope with America. ... it required stubbornness and resourcefulness on the part of such a "Y" worker to overcome the pressure of companies. (1965, p. 404)

It is also reported that despite the potential for resistance on the part of teachers, they were required to follow company directives, for example, to file a form indicating by number which worker was absent; foremen would check personally on the work of the teacher and also attempted to orient the lessons of an instructor to actual operations in the company (Barrett, 1992; Korman, 1965).

In what follows, I first describe parallels and continuities between past and present trends—belonging to Fordist and post-Fordist economic periods—centering on the integration of workforce skills within the ESL curriculum. I will then proceed with the details of an empirical inquiry highlighting learner aspirations and identity dynamics in relation to the language-learning process and curriculum change. Without suggesting that boosting individuals' job proficiency has no value, this article tackles the question of students' motivational patterns, and whether or not an integrated approach to language education labeled as "contextualized workforce skills" is aligned with their aspirations and preestablished goals. Because the inquiry is part of a larger study, a summary of findings linked to constraining impact on learner career trajectories will conclude the article.

### **Defining Contextualized Workforce Skills/ Study Objectives and Significance**

A close look today at the revised curriculum and the set of newly standardized procedures at publicly funded adult education agencies reveals, similar to past patterns of ESL curriculum development, systematic efforts in the direction of workforce training with an emphasis on increased "work efficiency." Adult education sites are indeed "high-stakes" environments where quality is constantly quantified to comply with accountability measures and is reported through the means of standardized testing (Black, 2008). Moreover, the business model calls for strong partnerships between applied and academic programs and prospective employers (Ball, 2007; Barrera-Osorio, 2007; Savas, 2000). As the document *Employer Guide to Adult Education for Work Guide* (2009) summarizes the goals and purposes of the new policies,<sup>3</sup> the framework for such collaborations suggests that all programs within the system should work toward a transformed model of adult education: "This Guide is about enabling employers to access and, when necessary, to help transform our current Adult Education system in the United States into a system that meets employer needs for highly skilled workers" (p. 2). This statement attests to the vision of a strong partnership between the private sector and the publicly funded adult education system, a fact that could raise the question of private industries' influence on curriculum design.

A significant aspect of the new phase of reform for ESL instruction involves modifications to survival skills (prevocational) and basic literacy (including reading, writing, and computational skills) content to address language use in workplace settings. Proposed models are labeled as “integrated education and training” (IET). Such models include vocational ESL (VESL), wherein an ESL teacher and a career technical instructor teach together or alternate across hours or days of instruction, or contextualized workforce skills (henceforth, CWS), wherein a single ESL teacher embeds the language skills specific to certain fields of work in the existing curriculum content that targets English instruction for daily life. In theory, CWS is defined as instruction that connects to students’ lives and interests but prepares them for future employment through the cultivation of competencies that are “transferrable” to the workplace (Emerson, 2010).<sup>4</sup> However, it is notable that textbook content and resource materials are mostly geared to language competencies in certain categories of in-person service work, such as in health care, hospitality, and restaurant/food industries. Examples of occupations discussed in ESL course material include certified nursing assistants, in-home nursing aides, room service operators, and other hotel workers, jobs that are part of a postindustrial workforce pool within which immigrant workers are over-represented.

This article reports on findings linked to one aspect of a mixed-methods larger case study that honed in on CWS as an example of a differentiated curriculum targeting a racialized and minority-status immigrant student population (Vafai, 2015). Analyzing quantitative and qualitative data, the study was based on research conducted in 2012 at a Northern California adult education program and its experimentation with the IET model. The program used the framework of CWS as a pilot project for one of its mainstream courses and in preparation for the imminent implementation of the integrated model of language education and training. This “embedded” or “contextualized” approach to instruction was designed to maximize chances of creating linkages between ideas and concepts taught in the course of a mainstream lesson and competencies deemed relevant to jobs in the so-called “middle-skill” category and defined as “high demand and stable jobs” (Holzer & Lerman, 2009; Hughes & Mechur-Karp, 2006; Strawn, 2011). There was also particular emphasis on “soft skills,” namely critical thinking, collaborative problem solving, teamwork, and goal setting in the context of all ESL curriculum topic areas.

Research for the case study looked into the efficacy of the proposed curricular and pedagogical model and alignment with students’ occupational aspirations. Given the large number of immigrant learn-

ers in these kinds of programs nationwide, the questions around a differentiated form of curriculum are the same pressing questions raised by the critics of tracking. Carefully documented scholarship has shown how tracking—the system of grouping students for instruction on the basis of perceived ability—reflects the class and racial inequalities of American society and helps to perpetuate them (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Oakes, 2005). Therefore, when it comes to adult ESL learners, it is crucial to understand how they respond to instruction and make decisions related to projected occupations. To accomplish this task, one would need to identify students' motivational patterns and examine their uptake of CWS resources in line with those motivations.

Specifically, in the context of second language learning, which is, in this case, inseparable from learning the employability skills, one way of understanding the learners' motivational patterns is in relation to their identity-formation process. Bonny Norton-Peirce (1995, 1997), whose work expanded the scope of research on the relationship between language and identity, addressed this process by introducing the concept of “investment.” Rather than motivation, investment in second language learning is described as “the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language and their often ambivalent desire to learn and practice it” (1997, p. 411). Norton-Peirce defines identity as the way people relate to the world and understand their future possibilities. By speaking a second language, she explains, learners are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social and material world around them. Through the logic of this viewpoint, she:

1. Ties together the question of “who I am” to “what I can do”;
2. Links the task of language learning to the issues of individual and social agency; and
3. Characterizes identity as fluid and shifting in accordance with changing social and economic relations.

Current research on CWS and other forms of integrated education and training at the adult-education level is limited to a few pilot projects examining and celebrating outcome rates of postsecondary credit gain or workforce training for participants (Emerson, 2010; Jenkins, Zeidenberg, & Kienzl, 2009). Additionally, Bragg et al. (2007) reported results from a cross-case analysis of career pathways programs that links adult learners to the so-called “middle-skill careers.”<sup>5</sup> The authors discerned a clear commitment on the part of administrators and program managers to enrolling and serving low-skilled

adults. They noted that leadership support was evident at each site, with local leaders displaying a keen ability to leverage existing local strengths through internal relationships and external partnerships with employers and community-based organizations. The authors further observed that programs heeded employers' call for contextualized instruction and in some cases employed their help in determining specific content offered in the curriculum. While Bragg et al. (2007) conceded that a great deal of information on the effectiveness and benefits of such programs is still missing, the authors expressed confidence that "carefully constructed, articulated, and contextualized curricula; productive relationships with employers and partner organizations; and comprehensive support services show promise for meeting the needs of low-skilled, low-wage learners" (p. 11).

It is noteworthy that in the above study, teachers' point of view with respect to the effectiveness of such programs was mentioned in passing and only briefly alluded to:

Practitioners wondered about the purpose of these rules and whether ultimately students were helped or hindered by them, despite the programs' dedication to following the rules and their efforts to comply with guidelines in order to meet student needs. (2007, p. 11)

This lack of faith, along with the sense of ambivalence on the part of teachers, raises serious doubts about the feasibility of such instructional models at the practice stage. It corroborates findings in Vafai's (2014) study questioning the potential for implementation of such models for education based on the teachers' understanding of policies and also more broadly based on the grounding of an educational and epistemological analysis in the realization of an explicit economic ideal. The present study, however, fills a gap in the literature regarding students' understanding of new curricular developments in adult ESL and attends to the impact of CWS curriculum in shifting learner aspirations.

Given the nature of the inquiry in this article, my efforts are guided by the following questions:

1. What is the participants' initial understanding of aims and purposes of language instruction offered through adult ESL programs?
2. What are the students' motivations for learning ESL and its relevance to their future career paths?

## **Methodology**

The research site for this mixed-method case study was one of three adult centers that are part of a larger high school district in the area and draws from students living in the neighborhood. In 2011-2012, Latinos comprised 54.2% and Asians 44.9% of the total student body. District student demographics indicate an average age of 32.2 for adult ESL attendees with females making up more than 58% of the program's student population. Some statistics point to 11 years as the average highest year of education for students, completed, in most cases, in their country of origin. To answer the research questions, I draw on three data sources:

1. ESL programwide student goal surveys, used to obtain an overall sense of students' short- and long-term goals;
2. Semistructured interviews with focal students and a one-time interview with the teacher; and
3. Focus group discussions with focal students.

In assessing the qualitative data, I use a grounded theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), an analysis strategy that allows themes, indeed theory, to emerge from data. Included in the body of data are transcripts of interviews and focus group discussions. "Initial" coding (Charmaz, 2001) or "open" coding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) was done at first through a sorting and categorizing process of the body of data based on relevant interests, literature, and perspectives. Building on this phase, I employed a second phase labeled "focused coding" (Charmaz, 2006), which uses the most significant earlier codes and highlights thematic categories that make the most conceptual and analytical sense. Moving among the data, emerging codes, and themes helps build a story that connects the categories while producing a set of theoretical propositions.

### ***Data-Collection Instruments***

**Programwide Student Goal Surveys.** The first round of this survey was conducted in August 2012 to provide information about short- and long-term objectives of all ESL students. They were designed through multiple-choice and open-ended questions to elicit information on current employment status, future employment and academic aspirations, as well as categories of work learners may (or may not) be pursuing. Additionally, surveys helped with a basic understanding of the reasons behind learners' interest in attending ESL classes. Of a total of 1,320 forms distributed, a large proportion was completed and submitted ( $N=1,045$ ). Compiled data organized in an

electronic database established a baseline of student objectives linked to participation in ESL instruction and long-term goals to pursue future occupational or academic interests.

**Interviews/Focus Group/Participant Selection.** Interviews were semistructured, designed with an interpretivist perspective. Feinberg and Soltis (2009) explain that “for the interpretivist, meaning is not just something in someone’s head ... the interpretivist realizes that people engage in activities of social life with some *shared understanding* of the reasons for the activity” (pp. 88-89; italics in original). In other words, the object of the study is to find out what is going on in a specific social situation and to discover the meaning that it has for those who participate in it.

Interviews were conducted initially with focal students selected from the pool of participants in both the IET class and a mainstream class at the same level of instruction to provide variability. Because of the high attrition rate in the target program, I oversampled up to 18 students to gain a minimum sample of nine by the end of the spring semester. To maximize variability and to capture a range representing a balanced mix of student characteristics, I used results from student goal surveys to stratify based on learners’ academic and occupational objectives, age, race, gender, and educational backgrounds.

**Focus Groups.** In addition to interviews, I arranged for a focus group meeting of all focal students each semester. In forming focus groups and deciding on the logistics, I drew on Denzin (1978) to expand the notion of data triangulation that includes time and space. Specifically, the collective nature of a focus group provided a space for collaborative effort wherein, after the first round of interviews, analysis could be co-constructed between researcher and the participants as they provided feedback on thematic categories and contributed their own interpretations of the data. On the whole, the collection of data gathered at various levels, programwide, target classroom-wide, by instructional level, by individual focal student, and by the pool of focal students, was meant to inform an understanding of the extent to which CWS affects the adult ESL learners’ future life paths. The search for theory in this way grows out of context-embedded data from both qualitative and quantitative sources.

It is important to mention that the CWS pilot course was taught by an enthusiastic and experienced ESL instructor, Ms. Brody,<sup>6</sup> who had recently completed a training course called Integrated and Contextualized Workforce Skills in the ESL Classroom. The workshop, offered through a state-funded regional professional-development project, drew from a select group of adult ESL educators who had expressed interest and were nominated by their programs to take part

in the course. It is noteworthy that there was no requirement for Ms. Brody to attend the training. She was in fact assigned to the project before her participation in the training, a selection made by the administrator based on Ms. Brody's extensive experience with teaching ESL as well as her receptive attitude toward curricular change that set her apart from most other instructors in the program. According to the teacher, the workshop had made recommendations for devising activities for setting goals and pursuing timelines to achieve them, as well as classroom-management techniques to promote student persistence by attending regularly. Also available were suggestions for strategies and lesson plans to connect the knowledge that learners gain in the ESL classroom and their application to the workplace.

With this training and experience, the instructor used a multitude of approaches and resources geared to workplace preparedness in the target classroom. First, the standards-based ESL textbook, assigned as a core text in the program, was central to the curriculum in the pilot class as well. The text is especially designed within a "21st-century skills" framework that focuses on transitions to careers or academic training leading to careers. In the target classroom, supplementary resources further reinforced this approach by providing reading, writing, and communication skills in workplace settings. The set of course material incorporated workbooks specifically designed for entry-level restaurant employees or workers in the hospitality field. Titles for such resources include *Everyday English for Hospitality Professionals* and *English for Restaurant Workers*, geared to help future workers in these fields develop English vocabulary needed to interact with customers and colleagues. A software package called *Hospitality English* was also available for classroom use. Moreover, the instructor used a variety of alternative resources (including two class sets, *Ventures Transitions* and *English in the Workplace*) to address other fields of occupations such as health care, clerical and office work, child care, and jobs within the construction industry, primarily targeting the male student population.

### **Data Analysis**

Analysis for this research starts with a focus on learners' motivations and explicit expectations vis-à-vis the program and the opportunities it provides for them. How do immigrant learners understand the relationship between learning English and the opportunity dynamics of their host country? How do their identities as speakers of minority and low-status languages position them as racialized and classed minorities in relation to native English speakers? And given this positionality, how do they conceptualize future possibilities, ac-

cess to educational opportunities, and chances for upward social mobility through time? The evaluation of qualitative data hones in on these questions that are, at the core, questions of social identity and ways that participants engage in the processes of imagining themselves and their location in their immediate familial environment, their local community, and the US society at large.

### ***Student Motivations/Investments in ESL***

Sequential levels of the standardized ESL curriculum available in the target program for this study include beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels. Many students enroll in classes intending to complete a course of study after the initial placement at the appropriate level but some attend classes to “sample” English instruction because it is close to home as well as affordable.<sup>7</sup> Learners who complete the advanced level have the option to transition internally to the high school diploma or GED programs, or to enroll in neighboring community colleges to pursue other academic goals.

As open-access institutions, adult schools are expected to accommodate a wide variety of students with varied individual characteristics and thus varied goals. In this, they are not radically different from public K-12 schools. For instance, younger female ESL learners may wish to improve their verbal fluency and brush up on literacy skills while their children attend school. In addition to being self-enriching, improvement in these areas helps these mothers participate in parent-teacher conferences and to assist their children with homework. For some, this can be reason enough for expending efforts to attend classes but others may commit themselves to use the instruction as a means to advance their own academic goals. On the other hand, some younger learners may be primarily interested in enhancing their career prospects through the English language proficiency deemed integral to advancement on the job while older adults (many of them retired) tend to focus on the social aspects of the learning process, building on community relationships and forming friendships while practicing their language skills.

This is all to say that participants’ interests are diverse. However, one should consider that these interests and orientations are not necessarily static and one-dimensional, so that a desire to communicate effectively across various social situations may incorporate a need to improve fluency in the context of the workplace, or when a goal centered on earning a college degree almost always overlaps with the expectation of achieving a career objective. It is also possible that the intersection of preoccupations or passions takes on a somewhat competing form because of a learner’s commitment to language education

to fulfill conflictual roles as a parent, spouse, worker, student, and so forth. In fact, the notion of language learners' multiple desires or motives is in line with Norton-Peirce's (1995, 1997) idea around second language learner "investment" in multiple identities. In this regard, her discussion on identity and modes of positioning is useful. As noted earlier, Norton-Peirce defines identity as the way people relate to the world and understand their future possibilities. She introduces the concept of *investment*, in contrast to the more traditional construct of *motivation*, as "the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language" (1995, p. 17). More specifically she questions the notion of *instrumental motivation* (Gardner & Lambert, 1959) that references the students' desire to learn a second language for utilitarian purposes such as employment. Expanding on the distinction between the two, Norton-Peirce (1995) writes:

It is important to note that the notion of investment I am advocating is not equivalent to instrumental motivation. The conception of instrumental motivation generally presupposes a unitary, fixed, an ahistorical language learner who desires access to material resources that are the privilege of target language speakers. In this view motivation is the property of the language learner—a fixed personality trait. The notion of investment, on the other hand, attempts to capture the relationship of the language learner to the changing social world. It conceives of the language learner as having a complex social identity and multiple desires. (p. 17)

Within this formulation, the learner's multiple identities, or alternative subject positions, are closely linked to the way in which she understands her relationship to the complex social world, a relationship constructed and negotiated across time and space.

### ***Programwide Survey Results Analysis***

As part of the study, I used results from a programwide goal survey ( $N=1,045$ ) that aimed to collect information on students' employment status, their initial motivations for seeking ESL instruction, and the extent to which learners' short- and long-term goals were oriented to college and/or careers. It also inquired into the participants' interest in fields of occupation likely to be targeted by the student population. Framed in clear and simplified language and available in Vietnamese, Chinese, Spanish, and English, the survey was designed to help the program develop future classes to address the vocational needs of students. It was distributed among the cohort of students enrolled in the fall of 2012 (see the Appendix for a sample).

Results showed participants' employment status as follows (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Employment status among survey respondents across the program.

Clearly, a large percentage of learners in the overall pool are either employed or looking for employment. Given the median age of 32.2 for the student population programwide, this finding is hardly surprising.<sup>8</sup> High percentages of employment-related responses were also indicated in addressing the short-term goal inquiries (see Figure 2).

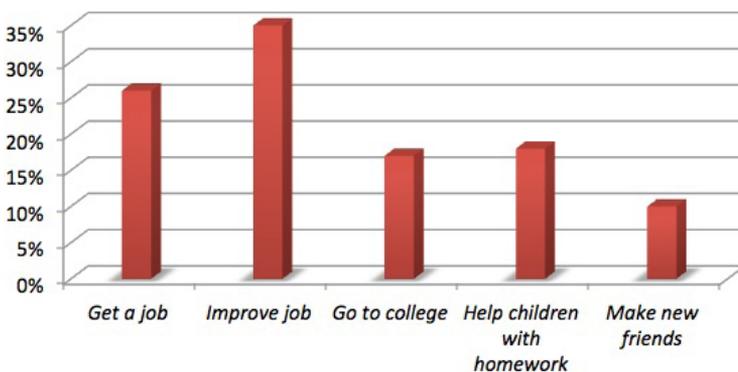


Figure 2. Motivations for enrollment in adult ESL classrooms among survey respondents.

When questioning the primary short-term objective in relation to enrollment in ESL classes, survey choices were simply worded as: *get a job*, *improve job*, *go to college*, *help children with homework*, and *make new friends*.<sup>9</sup> The idea was to distinguish between “work-related,” “ac-

ademic,” “literacy-centered,” and “self-enrichment” aspects of instruction that motivated learners. When asked to choose only one option, a sizable group identified (a) upgrading an existing job and (b) finding new employment as important reasons behind their decision to enroll. The chart in Figure 2 also shows that “going to college” ranked lower in the overall response pool. Figure 2 shows a compiled table of all participants’ responses to the question of why they pursued English language instruction offered through the program.

With job improvement earning the highest ranking, the chart shows that work-related incentives are indeed prioritized. Overall, high percentages for learners with “employed” and “employment-seeking” status (Figure 1), along with tabulated data on motivations for attending classes (Figure 2), signal the fact that acquiring a job and career advancement are positioned highly among learners’ priorities when pursuing English language education. These data also corroborate the finding that a significant number of respondents identified poor language skills as the main obstacle to meeting their career objectives. Listed below are sample direct quotations, which represent ideal-type statements that students provided in addressing the question of what, in their estimation, constitutes “problems/difficulties” standing in the way of reaching their long-term career goals:

- My English skills are poor, so it’s difficult to improve my job;
- Problems are speaking and writing English;
- My problem is I can’t speak English well, because the grammar is difficult for me;
- I like to do a job but I need to improve my English;
- My difficulty is improving my communication ability in English;
- I need to learn more English and go to college;
- Problems the language and experiences;
- If I don’t know English, I don’t know communicate.

Through these statements, learners underscore the significance of language mastery as a crucial first step and a foundational skill to build upon in future job-related endeavors.

Furthermore, these comments shed light on learners’ positions in terms of the type, or the “genre,” of language instruction they expect to receive by enrolling in the mainstream ESL classes offered through their local adult and community education program(s). Embedded in the broader assimilation project and the “survival” context that adult ESL instruction operates within, a focus on literacy defined by a foundational knowledge and command of basic reading, writing, and

numeracy tasks represents part of what the programs have traditionally provided and what the learners have come to expect. This also applies to practice in listening and speaking areas of second language development and the emphasis on grammatical concepts either by teaching the mechanics separately or by incorporating them within and across the standardized curriculum. Students' comments on their survey forms elucidate their expectations along these same lines and indirectly address the study's first research question.

Another fact worth considering is that despite the priority of employment-related incentives, a good number of survey respondents cited other reasons for pursuing English language instruction. While close to 60% are either employed but intend to improve their job prospects or are currently looking for work, many attend classes for reasons other than employment. These reasons vary from "helping children with homework" to "making friends" to personal edification after retirement.<sup>10</sup> Once again, this points to the unique challenge that ESL presents in shifting its focus from basic literacy and "life skills" to "employability," especially given students' diverse backgrounds in many areas, including educational attainment level in the country of origin, age, immigration status, length of stay in the US, and various intersecting contexts, all of which affect language instruction. Therefore, one cannot assume that most ESL learners actually seek or are in a position to seek the opportunities that CWS promises to facilitate.

Still, even among those adults interested in employment, because of diverse individual characteristics and life circumstances, it is unclear what proportion of students can benefit from CWS. Finally, and more important, one aspect of the survey results that confounds the motivation picture is a large proportion of younger learners' expressing interest in attending four-year college programs. It follows, then, that with students' motivations being as varied as they appear, any drastic change in curriculum design based on assumptions of employment priorities on the part of all learners may be at best misguided and at worst exclusionary for those needing language education for purposes other than employment.

On the other hand, and taking all these considerations into account, it is also conceivable that being exposed to work-oriented English can open up "desirable" new opportunities for students to explore. Federally and state-funded ESL instruction is often the first formal opportunity for new immigrants to gain basic literacy skills in English. But as a language-learning context, it also represents a fluid process whereby students are socialized into certain perspectives and norms (e.g., Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Ochs, 2002), ideologies (Fairclough, 1992; Pennycook, 2001), and identity discourses

(Kramsch, 2000; Norton-Peirce, 1995; Willet, 1995) that may influence their life paths and occupational choices. It is certainly true that insofar as instruction helps learners organize and possibly change a sense of who they are and what they can do, it has the potential to increase their sense of agency and self-determination. However, issues surrounding the cultivation of narrow concepts of knowledge and curricular control (Apple, 2012; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985; Au, 2007; English & Mayo, 2012) point to ceilings for said potentials if learners are led to align future goals with institutional agendas, in turn inscribed by sociopolitical and economic forces outside the school walls. In this sense, literacy and language studies must be situated within the ecology of a much larger context and understood as an integral part of the way people produce, generate, and struggle over social meaning (e.g., Freire, 2000; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Gee, 1991; Macedo, Dendrinos, & Gounari, 2006). These considerations further illustrate the importance of an interpretivist approach that takes account of individual rationales, motivations, and ultimately their voices.

### ***Qualitative Data Analysis on Student Expectations***

*“I think I’m ambitious lady, I want to do more.”* (Lupe, ESL student)

Learners’ expectations and priorities in favor of strengthening literacy skills and the central role they play in the participants’ decision to enroll in the ESL program are also evidenced by the analysis of qualitative data. This set of data illuminates nuances in students’ perspectives and helps explore the multiple, dynamic, and often complex ways in which students conceptualize the utility of these skills in job-related contexts. I will later elaborate on the specific aspects of English proficiency that have salience in learners’ views and are believed to maximize chances for career advancement. But broadly conceived, two conclusions can be drawn from participants’ views on the urgency of English language education for career pursuits.

### ***The “English First” Narrative***

*“Learning English is first and then I check to other plans.”* (Elias, ESL student)

To begin, regardless of minor variations, students’ assertions generally reflect their understanding of a set of basic language skills they need to acquire, enhance, or master *before* they can be expected to

perform effectively at work. I coded data consistently for a category I named “English first,” meaning that participants signaled their priority for studying the language almost independent of the context of employment, even as this context gave them the incentive to attend classes. “ESL is the start,” said Carla, an immigrant from Mexico and a study participant with college aspirations who wanted to be a preschool teacher. She noted that she had “no definite steps to take” and wished to start with ESL because it made her “feel confident to speak and read”:

MV: But if you didn't plan on going on to work, would you still be here [in school]?

Carla: No, I like to do a job. But I need to improve my English.

After further questioning, it came to light that Carla's decision to enroll was also informed by her assessment of a projected financial situation that her family might face. Because her husband was injured and out of work (perhaps permanently), she confronted the possibility of becoming the sole income provider for the family. Her current job at the day-care center was low paying, so she hoped for a preschool teacher position within a school district that offered secure employment and benefits. Carla knew that to achieve this position, she would need a college degree that required strong literacy skills, especially in reading and writing. Therefore, enrolling in the ESL program was a logical first move and an investment (Norton-Peirce, 1995) in relation to her multiple subject positions not only as an immigrant, but as a breadwinner, wife, future college student/teacher, and so forth. In this sense, Carla's language learner identity is contingent upon her other subject positions that demand access to certain symbolic and material resources (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Nonetheless, the task of learning English is prioritized in her mind as a first step toward reaching the end goal.

I am very proud of my school life. I remember first time when I came to America, I still needed my husband help to talk and say everything. Now he needs my help. I want to be a teacher with children education. Also if I can doing more, I will go to hospital to do community. I like to take care the child who is not have a family, play with them, teach them singing and reading story. If I speak English good, I am not afraid to saying wrong sentence and vocabulary. It make me feel stronger. If I can read and write English good, I can fill a form to application job, write a resume and do everything myself.

Although Carla's intrinsic motivation as a person passionate about children and interested in working and interacting with them (even on a volunteer basis) shines through in this excerpt, one can theorize that she leverages this area of personal interest to contribute to her sense of self-fulfillment at a future job or volunteer work. This trend fits within the larger context of her investment in English.

As a generally relevant point, it is important to mention that in their efforts to achieve English proficiency, Carla and her classmates particularly valued instructional venues that are deemed "formal" or "academic" in a traditional sense. Immigrant learners in the study made a distinction between the processes of communicative knowledge of English that take place within familial, social, and even professional contexts and such processes of knowing and learning through the conventional academic experiences. That is, while immersed in the language of their new land, they rely on the kind of explicit instruction provided in long-established schooling contexts that depend, for instance, upon receiving direction from a teacher, using textbooks, completing routine assignments, filling out practice worksheets, and so forth. Carla voiced a view about the importance of formal English language education that seemed to be emphatically shared by her classmates:

MV: But don't we pick up language as we go along doing daily chores, being here in the country ... listening and speaking to people, watching TV ... ?

Carla: Yes we live in America, we shop stores, go to doctor, dentist, go to community, talk everything in English. But we never come to school, we learn English outside. We need to learn the textbook and writing good English.

Put differently, in comparison to daily practice implicit in interactions with fluent speakers of English and full exposure to the American mass media, formal ESL instruction is far more desirable and deemed more effective in facilitating the type of competence and language mastery that learners strive for. It is significant that although Carla was already employed in a day-care center where she claimed to interact with staff regularly and was exposed to the parlance relevant to the profession, she still believed that ESL instruction was key to her improving the communicative and writing skills necessary for advancing toward her dream of becoming a preschool teacher. This characterized Carla's main drive behind enrolling in the ESL program.

Overall, taking Carla as an example, it is safe to claim that students' priorities for learning English were centered on achieving a de-

sired level of competence with the expectation and understanding that it enables them to take charge of their own learning in future job-related situations. This interpretation also explains a phenomenon noted in the compiled data related to the open-ended part of the survey forms, where participants were asked to note the type of desired work. It was noteworthy that a significant number of respondents entered more than one occupation or area of interest as the focus of their current or future job search. In some cases multiple fields of work, at times seemingly incompatible, were recorded. Again, it appears that learning English for work-related purposes is a priority (see Figure 2) regardless of projected requirements involved in future career choice(s). Elias, one of the students with a clear goal to “improve job,” formulated his priorities this way: “Learning English is first and then I check to other plans, I never think about the future. I would like to continue study and then decide ... I want to have my own business.” While conflicting impressions are evident in Elias’s statements, it is clear that the proficiency level that he targets is established as a point of departure in a trajectory toward career advancement. This is true even before the specifics of the end goal are sufficiently conceptualized. Other responses representing this attitude include Lupe’s insistence to work on her communication skills: “I don’t speak good English to go check what plan I have.” Here again we see a clear determination to master the language code, at some level, before considerations of conditions or preconditions in long-term occupational pursuits.

### ***Unpacking the “Perfectionist Attitude”***

*“Nobody is perfect! That’s why me and my ESL friends are here to study English.” (Martha, ESL student)*

Although Lupe’s larger narrative of short- and long-term objectives, as she elaborated later, also contained contradictory elements, her comment “I don’t speak good English to go check what plan I have” brings us to the second conclusion that can be reached through qualitative data analysis: With respect to the students’ sense of urgency in seeking ESL instruction, the communicative purpose of language learning presents a clear priority. Recall that the centrality of communication skills also became evident in students’ statements responding to the survey prompt on what they perceive as obstacles to reaching their long-term career goals. Likewise, in the course of the interviews and first focus group discussion, the eminence of “communicative competence” emerged as one of the most dominant themes. I use the phrase “communicative competence” in the sense that Hymes (1966)

coined it to refer to a language user's grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology, and phonology, as well as social knowledge about how and when to use utterances appropriately. It is different from "performance" (its open manifestation) in that competence denotes a synthesis of an underlying dynamic and context-bound system of knowledge and skill needed for communication, even as it is observed and evaluated through performance (Savignon, 1972). The notion of "competence," in other words, represents an in-depth knowledge of language structure that includes the rules of its use.

While Hymes's formulation was mainly developed in relation to first language acquisition, I found that its use is appropriate in the context of this project, considering the aspects of the functional knowledge and control of the usage of the language. As Hymes expanded on the concept in his later work:

[A normal child] acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner. In short, a child becomes able to accomplish a repertoire of speech acts, to take part in speech events, and to evaluate their accomplishment by others. (1972, p. 277)

Indeed, the knowledge of language at this "intuitive" level is often what sets a first and second language apart, but it is somewhat surprising that among the study's participants the commitment to improve communicative proficiency was associated very closely with what I coded as a "perfectionist attitude" to accomplish a native or "near-native" mastery of the skills they targeted. This notion of perfectionism was noticeably linked to feelings of "accomplishment" and "pride."

Once more, linked to this expression is the dominant theme relating to the feelings of assurance and self-sufficiency as learners overwhelmingly cited "confidence building" as a major drive behind their quest to learn English. This was the case for students attending for self-enrichment purposes as well as those with academic and career ambitions. For example, Celia, a Mexican immigrant of 10 years who exhibited a singular determination in obtaining her GED certificate, asserted her underlying reasons for attending classes in the following exchange:

Celia:           Because I want to improve my English. I want to feel ...  
                      uhm ... confident with myself when I speak English that  
                      if they ask me do you speak English? I say, Yes I know  
                      English.

MV:              So it's not only about GED ...

Celia: No, it is not only about GED. It's feeling satisfaction that I learn English and I learn it *well*. I can speak it, I can understand it and I can write it and I can read it *correctly*. (Emphasis her own)

While this sense of learning-the-language-for-language's-sake gave Celia a special feeling of pride in her abilities and a desire to "perform" flawlessly, her added emphasis underscores her resolve to establish a near-native knowledge base of the skills. Celia seems to be aiming at creating a "second language persona" akin to the concept of "front stage persona" in Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical analysis of the presentation of self in society. Goffman believed that all participants in social interactions are engaged in certain practices mainly to maintain face, that is, to avoid being embarrassed. Simply put, the "back stage persona" is the private self whom people in the close circle, such as family members, see, whereas the "front stage persona" is whom the audience sees and where the positive aspect of the ideas of the self and desired impressions are highlighted.<sup>11</sup> The juxtaposition of "front and back stage persona" and the idea of "maintaining face" align well with Celia's elaboration on her comfort level when interacting with native speakers:

Sometimes I practice English with my children at home. I feel comfortable because I can make mistakes ... no care ... with my children, they understand. My daughter is patient, she corrects my grammar. Sometimes she explains in Spanish. I write her sentences and practice. But when I go to outside, post office, the children school, shopping ... I embarrassed to make mistakes because they are not patient, they don't speak Spanish. Only English.

The feelings expressed here are representative of the sensitivity experienced by a great majority of study participants, especially considering their projected desires' being contingent upon a show of language mastery. For many students, this lack of proficiency in English, anxiety, and fear of failure frequently become intertwined. Reflecting on Goffman's (1959) central theme again with regard to the display of positive aspects of the sense of self, one could argue that while his rendition assigns a certain sense of agency to the "actor," it can potentially limit the autonomy of the self, based on both the circumstances and terms of "acting." For instance, a strong link to identity factors and to broader social structures can clearly be considered in Celia's statement when she explains further: "Because I am living here, I need to com-

municate. ... I want to be *somebody*.” The emphasis on “somebody” could denote a functionalist use of her “second language” or “front stage” persona in service of achieving other nonspecific objectives. Or it can be interpreted as a marker for the status accorded to the English-speaking others and specifically to the medium of language as the transmitter of that status. In either case, Celia’s sense of agency is clearly relative to the circumstances of her “acting” and to the terms that define English as dominant and indispensable to her full assimilation to the so-called “mainstream norms” of society.

Setting high personal standards to achieve communicative competence was hardly rare among other participants. The projected feeling of confidence by becoming a proficient English speaker in the future was often juxtaposed to the feelings of anxiety and even shame, regularly experienced by learners when making errors, such as when they “don’t say the correct word.” The terms *embarrassed*, *anxious*, and *nervous* had high rates of frequency (12, 15, and 14 times respectively) within the hourlong span of the first focus group and mostly in the context of describing the urgency for practicing language skills and especially “near-native” pronunciation. Students heard, repeated, and confirmed each other’s experiences of these emotions in a show of concerted understanding when linked to the necessity of mastering these skills.

It is important to acknowledge that as a foreign language, English is certainly not unique in invoking feelings of apprehension and concern in language learners. For many years, scholars have considered the anxiety-provoking potential of learning a foreign language and factors that contribute to a fear of negative evaluation, text anxiety, and communication apprehension (Horwitz, 1986, 2001; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). For students of foreign languages across the world, communicating in a nonnative language is often associated with such emotions. However, in the ESL classroom, fears of negative evaluation and less than-perfect communication with native speakers are present at a more intense level.<sup>12</sup> Arguably, such fears are further heightened under circumstances in which language learners are assumed to belong to “subordinate and lower-status” minority cultures (Macedo et al., 2006; Pennycook, 2001), setting in motion a process of “social mirroring” through which learners self-identify as such (Suarez-Orozco, 2000). As we saw in Celia’s case, learning English as a second language can become intimately intertwined with issues of identity and personhood. This perfectionist attitude highlights a major difference between a foreign language-learning situation and an ESL learning situation, wherein students are expected to assimilate into the established norms and standards set by and for native speakers. Under such conditions,

stakes can be extremely high for students from persistently marginalized racial backgrounds who feel the need to align themselves with the expectations of the host society.

Additionally, qualitative data analysis linked to the larger case study revealed a strong faith in the American dream ideology on the part of participants, a belief that created an obvious link between the availability of job opportunities and the discourse of individual agency and personal “power” to achieve the dream through hard work. To the extent that this is true, immigrant learners saw themselves in complete control of their destinies, with the corollary implication that the main obstacle standing in their way of reaching their goal is learning the language. As one learner declared:

This class is like a connection between me and U.S.A. When I came to here, I feel like a newborn because I don't know everything. How can I stay? How can I speak? How do I do everything? I tried to study hard, more and more to reach my dream come true. I will get to college and I will look for a good job in the future.

Clearly, the centrality of learning English to all future projects makes the task highly consequential for the immigrant students. In some ways, access to the discourse of power through the mastery of language code is similar to the concept of “investment” as discussed previously. In this sense, learning English signifies the pursuit of the American dream and participation in a system that is perceived to be inherently fair in the distribution of resources and opportunities. As a level playing field that encourages participation, English mastery allows learners to invest in the hopes and dreams of upward social mobility for themselves, their families, and for future generations. For the immigrant language learners, the pursuit of perfect communication skills is the pursuit of this status (a symbolic resource) in the hopes of gaining access to the material resources it provides. The participants clearly communicate a desire to invest in the kind of cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) that helps them achieve the American dream, and seeking ESL instruction is the first step in that direction. This formulation helps explain the “perfectionist” disposition of students toward language learning. In the end, learners are cognizant of the role of English as the language of power, money, and ultimately prestige, and their enthusiasm for learning it is inspired by their ability to access this lingua franca. They are also aware that failure to do so would have grave consequences for which they have only themselves to blame.

### *Downgraded Aspirations and Counternarratives*

Findings related to the larger study also revealed that depending on their histories and lived experiences, CWS participants were affected differently by this experimental intervention. Specifically, those with greater educational capital in their country of origin seemed to have higher aspirations but were more readily influenced by the prospect of gaining “middle-skill” (not to be confused with middle-class) jobs. For these learners, CWS succeeded in promoting minimal training and subsequent lower-grade employment options. This was especially true for learners who initially expressed interest in pursuing postsecondary education in a field that corresponded to fields featured by the CWS curriculum. Particularly, the foundational practice of “realistic goal setting,” along with material from assigned texts and group discussions, prompted two high-achieving participants to lean toward the lower ranks of professions in their desired field of nursing. Earlier, these learners had spoken of long-standing plans for getting secure jobs with salaries and benefits, but by the end of the semester, these plans were downgraded in favor of shorter-term and more immediate gains made by pursuing the Certified Nursing Assistant credential. Although this assessment is based only on the observed outcome in the short term, CWS appeared to constrain their aspirations.

Data also showed that undocumented status, which applied to a third of the respondents, made the practice of CWS almost irrelevant to this group of learners, as their residency issues prevented them from pursuing jobs in the “middle-skill” category. At the same time, some participants in the experimental group, with or without residency documentation, stayed committed to their original plans but selected aspects of the curriculum that were meaningful to them. Although entrepreneurship figured prominently among this group’s interests, particular features of their interests emerged and developed in the course of collective classroom activities. This took place when students claimed interactive space and connected group discussions to their own lived experiences and future expectations. By using aspects of instruction that had salience for them, including the use of technology and networking opportunities, and by tailoring the instruction to fit their specific needs, these learners positioned themselves as agentive individuals. They offered alternative interpretations and counternarratives to those presented by CWS—a finding that is significant in light of CWS’s decontextualized approach to teaching and learning that overlooks the existence of larger oppressive conditions such as undocumented status.

Last, through the acquisition of “soft skills,” including goal setting, time and stress management, prioritizing, and multitasking, partici-

pants were encouraged to adapt their personal and professional lives to the realities of their situations. CWS presented a new set of “survival skills” designed to attune learners to a fast-paced, fast-changing, and risk-laden lifestyle, predicated on the need of individuals to become immediately employable and more important, to *stay* employable. They were encouraged to continually assess and “update” their existing skills in order to stay competitive, vigilant, and prepared to avert future uncertainties (Lambeir, 2005; Olssen, 2006). In fact, CWS instruction was not geared, as it claimed, to attaining the language proficiency required for completion of specific work-related tasks. Although respondents described practicing sample utterances and language structures used in the workplace, such training remained general and mostly transferrable to similar circumstances with minor variations. But first and foremost, completing tasks such as filling out generic job-application forms, résumé writing, and preparing for interviews took the center stage.

The study analysis suggested that traditional values, workplace norms, and dispositions that once served the Fordist economic structure may no longer fulfill the post-Fordist demand for a new skill set capable of instilling a logic of discipline and self-control. The Fordist system required power to be exercised from above and generally by the employers who decided on the content of lessons for English learners (Carlson, 1970; Korman, 1965), but in contrast to this form of “control from above,” the new curricular models strive to achieve the ideal of “control from within,” that is, through placing the responsibility directly on the learners/future workers (Foucault, 1971/2005). This fact signals a transformation in the *mode* of control by making the individuals self-disciplined, responsible for expending effort, and accountable for the outcomes of their learning and labor.

### **Conclusion**

This article reported on adult ESL learners’ aspirations and their varied goals in the face of socioeconomic challenges and an English-language curriculum that reflects these pressures. The thrust of the CWS course offering was centered on presenting the fastest and most efficient turnaround time to employment, especially targeting a student population presumed to be low-skill and, more important, presumed to *remain* low skill. The study suggested that the new curricular prototypes are based on earlier social efficiency models that focused on educating the immigrant while limiting “waste” in education and labor (Bobbitt, 1918/2013; Lazerson & Grubb, 2004). Such developments are products of the new skills landscape, technological advances, and the post-Fordist economy. Nonetheless, they are reflective

of the reproductive powers of curriculum and ways that it continues to assimilate new immigrants to the so-called mainstream norms of American society (Apple, 2012).

As Merriam and Brockett (2007) observe, adult education centers on “figuring out the most effective way to prepare members of a society to accommodate change and to best realize the society’s stated values and goals” (p. 24). This can mean “fitting in” but can also mean learning to challenge a social structure that does not reflect desired goals. In other words, it is not a predetermined process but subject to the historical conditions that make it possible. The CWS classroom possessed its own emergent patterns. New routines emerged, along with new social/occupational groupings and the typical interactions that sustained them, new texts were introduced, and special wordings and phrasings were developed and used repeatedly. Data for the larger study demonstrated that throughout this process learners developed new identities and self-regulating dispositions, but their subjectivities were not constructed in a vacuum. Students had preconceived notions of personal choice and individual responsibility as well as ideas about the importance of learning “perfect” English as a prerequisite to achieving their goals and dreams. As a result, their English language education became inextricably tied to their sense of personhood and identity. It is this fluid sense of identity, in conjunction with multiple identities, that informed their investments in learning English.

Study findings and reflection on past practices suggest that first-generation immigrants continue to rely on adult education and language mastery to mediate their access to the American dream that promises them equal opportunity, social integration, employment, and material prosperity. At the same time, across the timescales of many years and decades and over a century, starting with the rise of Americanization centers in the early 19th century, attempts at integrating language education and workforce training is a recurrent theme that attempts to socialize the immigrants to US economic norms. Future studies are needed to explore both the student and teachers’ position vis-à-vis the vocational models of ESL instruction. Such studies should interrogate these positions and expand on the standpoint of actors with acute attention to the dynamics of identity and identity formation.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup><http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ae/po/cefadulted.asp>

<sup>2</sup>It is important to mention that race scholars have argued that while white ethnic immigrants, previously racialized as “other,” have been included in the white racial classification (Ignatiev, 2008; Roediger, 1991), immigrants of color have become the new target of prejudice as the result of a new, yet always changing, racial formation.

<sup>3</sup>This publication is a call to local employers to collaborate with adult education directors and administrators on strategy development. Its content is based on research conducted by Workforce Development Strategies Group (WDSG) and commissioned by NCEE (National Center on Education and the Economy). The guide is developed by a consultant firm with the financial aid of a grant by Walmart Foundation.

<sup>4</sup>Published in *CALPROGRESS*, journal of the California Adult Literacy Professional Development Project, Vol. IX.

<sup>5</sup>See Vafai (2016) for a detailed description of the pathways models and description of middle-skill jobs.

<sup>6</sup>To protect privacy, pseudonyms are used for all individuals, including student participants.

<sup>7</sup>Traditionally classes have been offered free of charge but after the budget crisis of the past few years, programs started to charge a minimal enrollment fee.

<sup>8</sup>Data on the gender-related numbers were not produced. However, given the fact of the program demographics of 58% women, it is safe to infer that a large number of women are among the 77% who are either employed or looking for jobs.

<sup>9</sup>Given the multidimensional nature of learners’ goals and to get a sense of the primary reason behind participating in English language instruction, survey participants were asked to mark only one answer.

<sup>10</sup>In light of this fact, survey results also challenge the prevailing stereotype that immigrant adults have no interest in learning English and that they are not doing their part in assimilating into American culture.

<sup>11</sup>In this case parallels can also be drawn between Goffman’s ideas around the critical role of performance as captured in his construct of “front stage persona” and Butler’s (1990) notion of competence essentially as “repeated performance.”

<sup>12</sup>Test anxieties are relevant but perhaps not to the degree that high-stakes tests are in K-12 and community college contexts. While test results are given out at adult schools and used for further placement purposes, students are not issued grades.

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**Appendix  
Goal Survey**

**Student Goal Profile**

**1. First Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **2. Last Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Student ID:** \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Employment Status:**    Employed            Looking for work  
                                         Not looking for work            Retired

**5. Short-Term Goal:** Goal for this semester: Please circle **only** one:

a. I am learning English to: Get a job   Improve job   Go to college  
                                         Help my children with homework   Make new friends

b. If you are employed, do you like to: Keep job   Improve job  
                                         Change job

c. If looking for a job, what kind of work do you like to do?

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**6. Long-Term Goal:** Think about 5...10 years from now.



a. Would your plans require a 4-year college degree?  
Yes, in what field? \_\_\_\_\_ No

b. What is the job you want to have? Choose from below.  
What are some problems/difficulties?

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- |                                                                 |                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Auto Body Work/Auto Mechanic</i>    | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Housekeeping, Hotel/Motel</i>   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Accounting/Bookkeeping/Finances</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Home Health Aide</i>            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Certified Nursing Assistant</i>     | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Information Technology</i>      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Child Development/Day Care</i>      | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Medical Record Keeping</i>      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Construction</i>                    | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Medical Assistant</i>           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Cosmetology</i>                     | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Retail/Cashier</i>              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Customer Service</i>                | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Secretarial/Office Clerk</i>    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Emergency Medical Technician</i>    | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Welding</i>                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Food Services</i>                   | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Other, Please Specify</i> _____ |

