

LANGUAGE, IDENTITY, AND WRITING: INVESTIGATING MARSHALLESE
ENGLISH THROUGH ACADEMIC WRITING

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my intercultural family and their support, love, humor, and grace throughout my life, giving me insight and courage to embrace my dreams.

ABSTRACT

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English has emerged as an international language. The hegemonic positioning of English is problematic for previously colonized places such as the Republic of the Marshall Islands. The remote coral atoll Pacific Island nation of the Republic of the Marshall Islands has a history of colonization. Critical Literacy supports reflective analysis of social constructs created and used in language to reveal power structures and be a source of change. Language is a significant piece of culture transmitting ideas, information, world view, and culture. Marshall Islanders, at home and abroad, interact in English. World Englishes establishes validity for variations of language, specifically English, within the context that it is used. There is a need to recognize and validate Marshallese English as a World English.

This mixed methods study examined the grammatical and lexical elements in a corpus of Marshallese authored academic English writing. The findings were then expanded upon by Marshallese culture member interviews, to correlate the findings with Marshallese language and culture.

The findings identified connections between Marshallese language and culture and Marshallese English. Grammatical differences between English and Marshallese, as well as differing epistemologies were evidenced in the data. Key findings include linguistic representation of politeness, social hierarchy, language, and funds of knowledge. Identifying Marshallese English elements in the corpus reinforced the value

of first language identity, as well as informed instruction in English and all content areas for bilingual Marshallese people.

This research project contributed to the body of knowledge on Marshallese, Marshallese English. This asset based approach to biliteracy strengthened Marshallese linguistic connections.

KEY WORDS: World Englishes, Marshallese, Marshallese English, Second language writing, Decolonization, Bilingual, Writing analysis, Second language writing analysis, Critical literacy

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To my friends and family, thank your support throughout the complex process of obtaining a doctorate. Allowing me to be absent when needed, making me engage when necessary, and keeping everything in perspective are appreciated beyond measure.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

This research project emerged from my experience with situated language in action. After serendipitously enrolling in an undergraduate elective course in Linguistics, I have been engaged in exploring languages and cultures around the world. Teaching in a wide range of cultures, from the Middle East through Oceania and North America my experiences have given me perspective and reflective practices. A common thread throughout these experiences has been the western centric lens through which cultural and linguistic phenomena are studied. Discordant situations have presented themselves in many contexts. I have heard teachers exclaim, "She doesn't even know how to spell her name." and "I don't know what you are used to, but this is how we do it here." All uttered while working in intercultural contexts, failing to consider a sound set difference making the use of /p/ and /b/ challenging, or that ways of knowing, learning, and teaching might be different. My experiences in rich and different contexts of communication with people from different ontological and epistemological stances were the foundation of this research (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005; Nabobo-Baba, 2012; Vygotsky, 1978 & Wertsch, 1991).

Multicultural interaction has increased in the 21st century with technology and mobility advances. English is used worldwide, often as a vehicle for economic and political mobility. Clark (2006) reported that 78 countries and 31 non-sovereign entities (e.g., Hong Kong) use English as an integral part of education, government, and commerce. Multilingual literacy has been the topic of extensive and varied research. World Englishes is a field of linguistics that describes varieties, or dialects, of English

that are reflective of their situated cultures and languages. Second language writing is an area of study that investigates non-native speakers writing with respect to proficiency and comprehensibility. Both have recognized first language influences on second language literacy and proficiency. Language dialect and variety, important cultural and identity factors, are research topics that add to the body of knowledge about multilingual literacy and writing.

This chapter begins with the statement of the problem, followed by the purpose of the study and research questions. I describe my interest and place as a researcher in the Marshall Islands, define terms and present a brief history of the Marshall Islands. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the conceptual and theoretical framework, the significance of this research and the study's organization.

Statement of the Problem

English has emerged as an international language, permitting new intercultural communications. The hegemonic positioning of English is problematic for previously colonized places (Nabobo-Baba, 2012). Critical Theory supports reflective analysis of culture and society to reveal power structures (Freire, 1970). To decolonize these spaces, a value of and appreciation for cultures needs to be embraced. Language is a significant piece of culture transmitting ideas, information, world view, and culture. From as basic as expression of individual responsibility, to as complex as power structures, language provides a common thread through a community and contributes to the community members identities (Wertsch, 1991).

The study of World Englishes (WE) has sought to describe the language varieties that emerged in a post-colonial world. There has been extensive study on situated uses of

English but there are many varieties yet to be described and documented. Buchstaller & Willson's (2018) determined that Marshallese English (ME) has yet to be well documented. The dearth of research on authentic academic writing of ME was noted by researchers who studied oral ME and its linguistic features (Bender, Capelle & Pagotto, 2016; Buchstaller & Willson, 2018; Buchstaller, 2020).

Language and culture are inextricably intertwined. Second language writing research and instruction focuses on a goal of reaching a native-like proficiency, reinforcing a hegemonic norm. Lillis & Curry (2010) discussed an example of the problem in academic writing to a 'native-like' norm impeding academic research publication, effectively limiting participation in the academy. The field of World Englishes seeks validation for World English varieties as they represent the culture and should be recognized as legitimate. Writing research has a variety of foci, such as writers' processes, teaching process, and writers' texts. This research project focused on writers' texts.

Complexity, accuracy, lexical and fluency (CALF) measures arose out of English language learners' writing research. Applying CALF measures to the writing of Marshallese students facilitates addressing the research questions. Often described in terms of writing errors, I use the term variation to indicate a variance from standard grammar. This stance supports the use of English, removes the 'standard' illusion, and allows all speakers to bring value to interactions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to identify and describe written Marshallese English (ME). The effort to understand how Marshallese language and culture influenced English writing of Marshallese students was researched, identifying variations that appeared standard in ME. Two interrelated purposes were served with this study. The first was to contribute to the body of knowledge on World Englishes and the second was to support language instruction through validation, connection, and description of ME. This research project sought to understand how variations in English academic writing manifest for native Marshallese speakers.

The study quantitatively described a corpus of written language documenting linguistic aspects that were evident in writing. CALF measures (complexity [syntactical], accuracy, lexical complexity, and fluency) were used to identify, classify, and codify language variation occurrences (Polio & Friedman, 2017). A critical literacy stance framed the qualitative phase by connecting the linguistic aspects and variations to reveal inter and intra language elements that were representative of Marshallese English. Contrary to a goal of ‘standard’ English, this study sought to contribute to the validation of a Marshallese English dialect as a rule governed language and contributed to the research body of knowledge regarding this population.

Research Questions

The research questions that guide this mixed methods study were:

1. What variations are found in the English academic writing of Marshallese college students? (Phase 1)

2. What lexical, syntactical, and cohesion elements and categories can be correlated to first language and culture influence? (Phase 2)

Researcher's Positionality

Intercultural experience, work, and language have been a major part of my life for over three decades. An undergraduate degree in applied linguistics transformed my perceptions of language, culture, identity, and communication. I was a bilingual elementary teacher in a Wisconsin classroom, and after that I lived and worked in the Marshall Islands, followed by a Saudi Arabian international STEM university, and a return to the US university system. All these experiences have highlighted the need for not only cultural acceptance, but investigation, understanding, and valuing of others.

My professional career took me to the RMI capital island of Majuro. Majuro, the capital city, is located on Majuro Island. During the three years I taught there, I developed and directed an English as a Second Language program for the school. I also worked with the College of the Marshall Islands Education Department as a cooperating teacher for student teachers, and as an English instructor. These diverse experiences permitted me to interact with many Marshallese people in various settings. There were many cultural adjustments to living and working on a small island atoll. I grew to have an ongoing appreciation for the Marshallese people and ways of life. I engage in this research project from this position of respect.

I have maintained contact with many Marshallese. Some have emigrated to the United States while others have remained on the islands. Through contact with professors and instructors at the College of the Marshall Islands, I understood that cultural identity and inclusion are priorities for the Marshallese. At the same time,

English proficiency and writing are identified as growth areas for the students (College of the Marshall Islands, 2019; Public School System, 2020).

My subsequent years have included professional and academic experience and research on intercultural interaction. Language is a significant part of cultural identity. Individual and community responsibilities are expressed through language interactions. I have developed an appreciation for cultural uniqueness and intercultural interactions. Supporting decolonization, recognizing culturally sustaining pedagogy, and facilitating intercultural communication are the values that this research project was based on.

Definitions and Terms

The following are terms that are used in this research project:

Table 1

Definitions

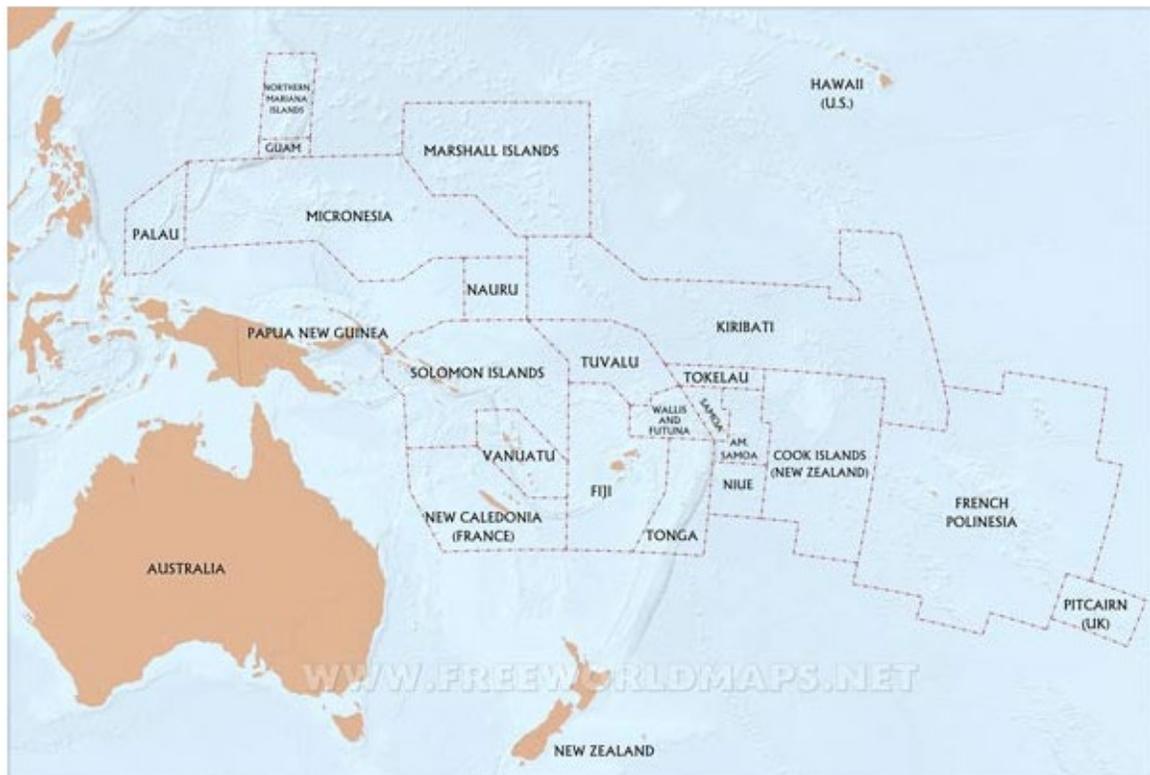
Term	Definition
Standard English Variation	American standard English an example of writing that differs standard American English such as word choice, word form, or word order; synonymous with 'error'
CALF measures	used to measure syntactic complexity, accuracy, lexical and fluency measures elements in language
C-unit	an independent clause and its modifiers, regardless of simplicity or complexity
Cohesion element	word or phrase that show relationship between ideas
Corpus	the writing samples as a collection of texts, representative of a language variety
Lexical feature	word form, part of speech classification and usage
Syntactic feature	sentence structure features
Token	element in writing, often equated with "word"

Situating the Research

The Republic of the Marshall Islands is a Pacific Island nation of 24 atoll islands. The islands are spread over 750,000 square miles of the Pacific Ocean with a total land mass of 71 square miles (CIA Factbook; United States Department of State). Located 7 degrees north of the equator, approximately 2,300 miles west-southwest from Honolulu and 3,300 miles northwest of Australia, RMI is remote country (Figures 1 & 2). The World Bank (2020) reported the country's population at 58,791 and 31,000 live on the capital atoll, Majuro.

Figure 1

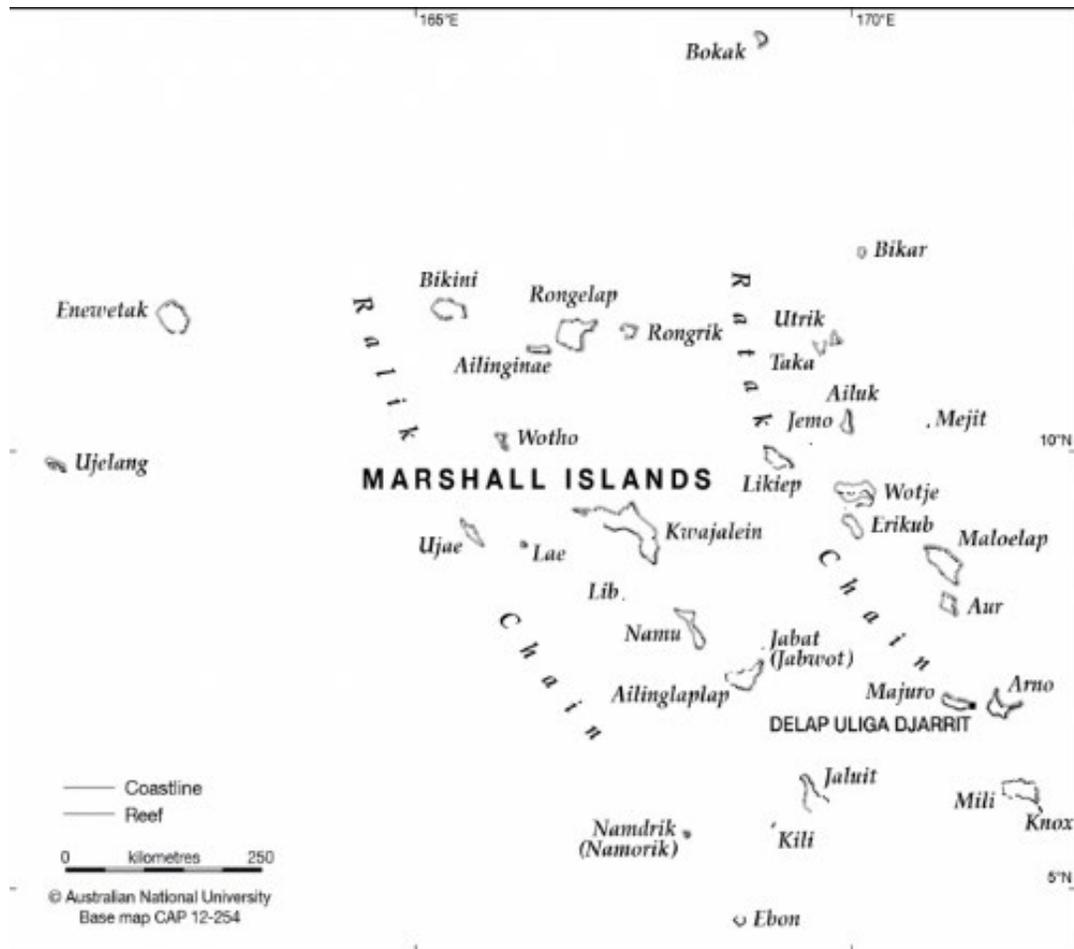
Oceania Map



Note. Map of Oceania. www.freeworldmaps.net/oceania

Figure 2

The Republic of the Marshall Islands



Note. Map of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

<https://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/maponline/base-maps/marshall-islands-base>

Brief History of the Republic of the Marshall Islands

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) became a strategic asset during the two World Wars. Minimal trade and foreign influences were replaced with German and Japanese occupation. At the conclusion of World War II, the UN established the Trust Territories in the Pacific (TTPI) in which the United States had majority control (United Nations). The RMI established independence in 1979, through constitution ratification

(RMI Parliament). The continuous relationship with the United States government is codified by the Compact of Free Association (COFA) established in 1986 (United States Department of the Interior). COFA established RMI as an independent nation and defined the economic, education, immigration, and defense relationships between the two countries. COFA remains in effect, linking the United States and RMI through education, health, military defense, and immigration concerns.

Language

Marshallese Language

Marshallese, belonging to the Austronesian language family, covers a large geographical area. Other than Indonesia and the Philippines, the number of countries in the language family is small, physically distant, and often isolated. Klamer (2018) stated that there are modern linguistic and anthropological features that connect the language family despite population dispersal and distances. He called for more detailed studies of the Austronesian local languages to increase the body of knowledge of the larger language family.

The phoneme set for Marshallese varies significantly from English with fewer consonants and more vowels (Bender, 1978). The first books in Marshallese were translations of the Bible. Written Marshallese has experienced challenges adapting to the Latin alphabet. In 2010, an official orthography was ratified (Marshallese Language Orthography Act) and the Instructional Services Center was established as the Marshallese printing authority.

Language Contact

English is the primary additional language in RMI. Jenkins (2003) described the worldwide spread of English in two dispersals. It is the second wave of English expansion that was of interest to this study. The second wave of expansion occurred with the colonization of Asia and Africa beginning in the 1800's. English spread and evolved into a language of international communication. Over the subsequent decades, during and after World War I and II, English dominated as the primary additional language of Asia. While other European countries were engaged in commerce, as a result of the British Empire, English predominated in Asia.

Decolonization Efforts and Language

In 2003, the RMI government codified their decolonization efforts with official language designations and language policy for schools (RMI government, 2013). The law established Marshallese and English as official languages. The Minister of Education, through the Public School System department, enacted a dual language policy in 2015. The new laws proscribed language of instruction allocation by grade level and subject area. The Marshallese government is committed to preserving the culture and Marshallese language.

Climate Issues, Migration, and Language

The 24 low lying coral atoll islands are vulnerable to rising sea levels. The atolls are experiencing increased flooding events that damage structure and contaminate fresh-water resources (Marshall Islands Journal). A significant number of citizens have emigrated, establishing communities in the United States, Guam, and Taiwan. If the causes of the rising sea levels go unchecked, it is estimated that most of the population

will be displaced by 2050. As of 2010, there were over 22,500 Marshallese living in the United States (EPPSO, 2011). With impending climate changes effecting the Marshall Islands, securing language identity and validity is imperative.

Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this study was to identify elements in academic writing present in a corpus of English writing from non-native speakers. My approach was informed by the foundations of Critical Theory. Critical Literacy provided the framework for analyzing the social constructs of language and Intercultural Rhetoric provided an area of analysis anchored in cultural interaction. Both contributed to the understanding and study of literacy and writing proficiency in the context of Marshallese English. This section describes the theoretical stances that are the foundation of this research.

Critical Theory

The research questions that guided this study have their foundation with Wertsch (1991), Vygotsky (1978) & Gee's (1991) views of language as a situated element of culture. Supporting this view, Widdowson (1994) wrote,

How English develops in the world is no business whatsoever of native speakers in England, the United States, or anywhere else. They have no say in the matter, no right to intervene or pass judgment. They are irrelevant. (p. 385)

Widdowson continued to discuss language ownership and hegemonic views of English as an international language. He concluded with these thoughts,

But the point is that it (English) is only international to the extent that it is not their (i.e. Americans) language. It is not a possession which they lease

out to others, while retaining the freehold. Other people actually own it.

(p. 385)

Nabobo-Baba (2012) centered these foundations in the Pacific Region within the context of decolonization, recognizing the importance of identity for all. Critical theories are used to focus on a situation in which language occurs and to what extent the language is representative of the situation (Friere, 1970; Gee, 1998; Pinker, 1995). The framework choices were motivated by the nature of the research purpose and goals. The research questions that guided this study support these views of language and culture.

Critical Literacy

Critical literacies seek to question language as it represents a social structure and hierarchy. Words have power and they must be attended to carefully. Their use codifies and reinforces social aspects of power and demands investigation. Critical literacies, therefore, can be a source of change.

Cultural knowledge is evidenced through language. Situated with users, critical literacy seeks to understand the epistemologies that are reflected. The concept of literacy has evolved to include competency in culture and situated interaction as well as proficiency in the sub-components of language. Grounded in Frierean social justice pedagogy, Gay (2002) and Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti (2005) extended the ideas to include power structures. While syntax, morphology, and phonology provide the bricks for human communication, semantics and pragmatics provide the mortar that holds a literacy event together. These are essential foundations to recognize a variety of English as valid, situated and representative of the context within which it occurs.

World Englishes. Culturally responsive and culturally sustainable pedagogies (Gay, 2000; Paris & Alim, 2017) required value added inclusion of culture and sub-culture groups in education. World Englishes (WE) has been a focus of study for linguists and educators for about 50 years (Kachru, 1986). WE connects with the work of critical theorists who established that language is a reflection of culture, situated and mediated by the participants. Grounded in critical theory, WE seeks to identify and describe English in situated cultures and sub-cultures, including aspects of language as they are reflected in English in use.

World Englishes defines 3 concentric circles: Inner Circle, Outer Circle, and Expanding Circle. Kachru (1985) stated that the circles describe “the type of spread, the patterns of acquisition, and the functional domains in which English is used across cultures and languages.” (p. 12). Inner Circle countries, such as the United States, Australia, and England represent the norm providing traditional bases for English. Outer Circle countries, such as the Philippines, Malaysia, and Kenya are places where English is not the native language but was used in institutional settings. The Republic of the Marshall Islands has an Outer Circle designation. Expanding Circle countries are places where English may be widely used but not in government or education institutions. Examples of Expanding Circle countries are South Korea, Egypt, the Netherlands, and Germany (Kachru, 1985). I used World Englishes for this study as it addresses colonization issues, seeks to validate dialects of English, and connects culture inextricably with language.

Intercultural Rhetoric

Aspects of culture can be visible in written discourse. Intercultural Rhetoric (IR) is an area of analysis that evolved from Kaplan's (1966) theory of Contrastive Rhetoric (CR). CR originally sought to describe the elements of written discourse through systematic analysis, connecting first language influence with elements in second language writing. Intercultural Rhetoric refined and focused the analysis to include consideration of first language rhetoric, through "the study of written discourse between and among individuals with different cultural backgrounds" (Connor, 2011). Two tenants of IR supported this research. IR held that texts must be examined in their social contexts, and that culture is not static and evolves (Connor, 2008; McIntosh, Conner & Gokpinar-Shelton, 2017). The rationale for adopting an IR lens for this study was that this study sought to identify variations from standard English in academic writing for non-native English speakers as a valid representation of Marshallese English.

Delimitations

The boundaries of this study were chosen to support the research method and questions. Writing and the writing process are complex in any language (Fogal & Vespoor, 2020; Vespoor, Lowie, Chan & Vahtrick, 2017). This study identified structural variations present in written English by Marshallese to address the research questions. Situating a study of academic English in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) with post-secondary Marshallese students positioned this study to contribute to the body of research in Marshallese ways of knowing, Marshallese English, and language assets. The terms *error* and *writing error* are frequently used to describe these occurrences, however, this researcher perceives the connotation of 'error' as inferior and compromising of

legitimacy. The term error represents the mindset of the colonizers. The term variation was used in this study to describe language elements that deviate from a standard.

The data consisted of a corpus of originally authored writing samples. Participants were living in the RMI, enrolled in education courses at the College of the Marshall Islands. The corpus, created over two writing sessions, was limited by the participants. The criterion-based study did not permit a random sampling. With two purposefully created writing samples, the corpus avoided genre-based complications for data analysis (Polio & Friedman, 2017). Demographic information, such as author's previous education experience and home island identity, were potential confounding variables. The corpus writers provided demographic information that could be used during data analysis. Further research could be conducted to answer research questions on what extent these variables influence writing.

Limitations

Limitations in this mixed method study were addressed. Access to a representative population was secured through my ongoing relationship with the Marshallese. Participant drop out was mitigated through a short data collection window. The quantitative analyses of normality and homogeneity of variance were not relevant to a unique language population. Variations across the corpus were analyzed not individual writer's contribution. This research was representative and not generalizable past the application of the method in other contexts. The mixed methods design minimized external validity effects.

A limitation of World Englishes is that it does not represent language and culture perfectly. Fuzzy contexts and overlaps occur (Kachru, 1985). Mobility and connectivity

have blurred the national identity lines. However, WE is effective for building upon and increasing language understanding of culture groups, regardless of their physical location. World Englishes is an effective model that represents language situations resulting from colonization and internationalization.

The tools for language analysis were chosen based on the research questions posed in this study. Complexity, accuracy, lexical, and fluency measures (CALF) were the tools used for describing language. Even though CALF measures arose out of ELL writing research, used to describe the writing of non-native English speaker, the tools were effective for identifying elements of ME. Intercultural Rhetoric is an area of analysis that supports the inclusion of culture in writing analysis. While this study did not focus on individual writer's rhetoric, IR was used to describe Marshallese English connections. I applied them for this research from a WE perspective.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the knowledge base of Marshallese English. Marshallese and Micronesian regional languages were understudied. This study, from a linguistic and culture asset based foundation, supported the decolonization efforts of the Marshallese people, and informed instructional practices for an Outer Circle dual language society. The findings contributed to the body of knowledge about the interactions between the languages of Marshallese, English, and Marshallese English.

Organization of the Study

This project framed integration and discussion of the findings in a QUANT-QUAL study design. In Phase 1, I collected and analyzed a corpus of English writing samples from adult Marshallese students. The corpus was analyzed the frequency of

common linguistic features. The findings informed Phase 2 which engaged 5 Marshallese culture members to describe identified common variations from the corpus, supporting Marshallese English. The findings from the qualitative Phase 2 were discussed. Finally, the two phases were integrated and discussed.

English is used internationally. To counter hegemonic positioning of language variety, World Englishes, Critical Theory, and critical literacies provided foundations for this study on an understudied language. The cultural and linguistic capital of the Marshallese were valued and preserved through describing ME. The research questions were situated with Marshallese, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands' education and decolonization efforts. Environmental realities, increased internet access, and travel ability have extended Marshallese people's opportunity to study, live, and work 'off island'.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

The fields of academic inquiry into language acquisition and language description have evolved over the century. Recognition of the contextualized and social interaction nature of communication, literacy, and language has emerged through various academic fields and frameworks. While all are genuinely interested in describing and giving value to languages and their users, two theories have explored language through different lenses. This research study focuses on written communication for multilingual people. Through an investigation of a corpus of purposefully authored texts, contributions to understanding of the interaction, definition, and literacy of multilingual individuals is sought.

This chapter begins with a discussion on the Marshallese context as it relates to my study, followed by sections on education and language in the Micronesian region, and the Marshall Islands specifically. These specific sections of the literature review contextualize the research within the understudied arena of written Marshallese English. The following sections describe literature in second language writing research and World Englishes related to my research questions. The final section provides context and foundation for my use of World Englishes and Second Language Writing.

The Marshallese Context

International Contact and Interaction

The Republic of the Marshall Islands is comprised of 29 atoll islands. The total global area, approximately square miles, belies the actual land mass of the country: an aggregate of 70 square miles. The remoteness and isolation of the nation's atolls has

presented unique challenges. Not located on the major whaling routes, the colonial history began in the early 1500's with Spain, continued to through World Wars I and II, ending in 1979 with nation status recognition. I explored several factors that have historically impacted the RMI and its people and connected them with the current situation of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

While archeological evidence indicated inhabitation for the last 2000 years (Buchstaller & Willson, 2018), colonial history and international interaction increased in the late 1800's with the copra trade (EPPSO, 2018). Missionaries arrived in the RMI, paving the way for Jesuit education, and the influences of Christianity to effect language and culture. The two World Wars affected colonization of the country. Japan, and by alliance proxy, Germany, had control centralized on the northern atoll, Jaluit. World War I saw After Japan declared war on Germany in World War I, their sole occupation of the RMI began. Japan maintained control until the Allied forces of World War II defeated the Axis forces. (EPPSO, 2018).

Post-WW II Colonization

After WWII, the Marshall Islands, along with other Micronesian countries, were administered by the United States through the UN Security Council and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI) in 1947 (EPPSO, 2018). The period between the TTPI and the realization of the Compact of Free Association with the United States had profound influence on the people and geography of the Marshall Islands. Kwajalein atoll was established as a strategically important US military base in the Pacific, providing support for the nuclear weapons testing program. International trade with Asia and the Americas increased with sea and air travel, extending the colonial contact. These

colonial factors positioned the Marshall Islands to face cultural and language challenges. The RMI continues its close association with the United States with an extension of COFA in 2003 for an additional 20 years. Relationships with other countries, such as Taiwan, China, and Japan continues to develop. While the complexities of post-WWII cultural interaction brought varied international contact, English and Marshallese are the official languages used in the Marshall Islands (Buchstaller & Alvanides, 2018; Buchstaller & Willson, 2018).

Current

Government. On May 1, 1979, the Constitution of the Republic of the Marshall Islands was ratified, creating a bicameral government with Ministry departments for governance and guidance (RMI constitution). In 1986, the Compact of Free Association established the country's autonomy, while maintaining important economic and military relationships. The Marshall Islands are protected militarily by the United States, use the US dollar, and the citizens have special immigration status allowing free movement, work, and education in the United States. The close ties between the two countries contribute to English as an official language of the RMI. The relationship with the United States has at times been contentious, as reparations for nuclear testing programs, and decolonization progress. These factors contribute to the complexities of identity and language for the Marshallese.

Language. The Marshallese have been active agents in language and culture matters. The use of the Latin alphabet to represent dialectal variation has been a matter of decades-long discussion. In 2010, an official alphabet was adopted by the national government with the Marshallese Language Orthography Act (RMI, 2010). A dual

language policy, adopted in 2013, establishes Marshallese and English as the two languages of education. The Customary Law and Language Commission is a part of the College of the Marshall Island and their published Mission Statement is:

CLLC mission statement is to protect and promote the Marshallese language and culture for present and future Marshallese generations both at home and also to those who have since moved out to all over the world.

The Act establishes Marshallese as the national language and English and Marshallese as the official languages of the RMI. The existence and mission of the CLLC highlight the people's desire to decolonize, and honor first language and cultural assets.

Education. The official dual language policy adopted in 2016, prescribes the amount of time for each language per grade level, subject area (CMI, 2019). In August of 2015, legislation was introduced by the Minister of Education, establishing both Marshallese and English as languages for all publications. This recent change to prominence of the Marshallese language supports the decolonizing process. The teacher education preparation programs are tasked with supporting teachers to actualize this policy in schools (CMI, 2019).

College of the Marshall Islands. Established in 1993, the College of the Marshall Islands is the local college. Having recently accredited a bachelor's program for elementary teachers, the college collaborates with the Ministry of Education and the Public School System department to achieve the goals of highly qualified teachers and the dual language program. Teacher education is a priority and recognized as an expedient means to improve student achievement. CMI is governed by a local board and

accredited by the Accrediting Commission of Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). According to the CMI Annual Report, published in 2020 for the academic year 2019, the total number of students for Fall 2018 was 1,123, 98% of who are Marshallese. All courses are in English except the Marshallese Studies Certificate program which integrates language and culture into the college context.

Regional Languages

Published research on Marshallese is extremely limited. I looked to regional Austronesian language research to inform this study. Scholars and researchers have published texts on similarities throughout the language family. This section reviews literature on regional language research and the documentation of Marshallese.

Micronesian Languages. The Micronesian languages group, a part of the Austronesian language family, consists of indigenous languages of the Mariana Islands, Marshall Islands, Palau, Yap, Chuuk (Truk), Kosrae and Pohnpei (Yunick, 2000). The large geographic area, small population sizes, and individual language identities have historically presented challenges to researchers. Written language was introduced to the region by traders and missionaries in the late 1800's. The people are creating an orthography that aligns with their respective phoneme sets and the Latin alphabet (Bender, 1978; Bender, Capelle, & Pagotto, 2016; Buchstaller & Willson, 2018; Klamer, 2018; Yunick, 2000).

Micronesian languages have received a small amount of recent research attention. After Katherine Au's (1980) foundational work in Hawai'i on culturally responsive literacy instruction, several researchers (Au, W., 2012; Au, Keehne, & Sarsona, 2018; Biewer, 2020; Odango, 2020; Yunick, 2000) explored the under-represented languages of

Micronesia. These research studies supported WE through attention to language in context and as a cultural representation. Odango (2020) conducted research into lexical items that connected nouns and the spiritual world for various Micronesian populations, finding that similar patterns exist throughout Austronesian languages. Samoan English was investigated in terms of phonology, lexicon, and grammar (Biewer, 2020) and reported cultural connections with Samoan English. The orthographic challenges that generate from vowel sound differences in the region has also been explored. Yunick (2000) investigated the extended vowel systems and phoneme sets of Micronesian languages. These works highlighted the complications of literacy and writing for these languages using a Latin alphabet. Published articles on literacy and education in the region (Hezel, 2014; Matapo, J, 2016; McArthur, 2004; Sanga, 2016; Stoicovy, 2004; Stoicovy, Fee & Fee, 2012) focused on culturally responsive instruction and pedagogy supporting the decolonization process and indigenous culture and language.

Studies in Marshallese. Marshallese linguistics is a nascent field for researchers. Linguists explored the structural features of Marshallese, describing them through a Latinate/Germanic language system lens (Pagotto, 1987; Willson, H., 2008 /2010a /2010b). These articles addressed structural linguistics such as determiners and parts of speech markers in spoken Marshallese. Elise Berman (2019) included some language research in her anthropological ethnography, *Talking Like Children*, researching how language is used to identify age in the Marshall Islands. Pagotto's 1987 dissertation used lexicase to investigate verb subcategorization in Marshallese, reporting connections between verbal case relationships with complement phrases. Klamer (2008 & 2018) noted that while phoneme differences can contribute to surface issues of variations in

writing, further investigation into written language is needed to build the understanding of the language. The published contributors on Marshallese are discussed in the following sections.

Language Texts. There are 2 seminal works regarding Marshallese language, both authored and coauthored by Byron Bender late of the University of Hawai'i. Documenting the spoken language first, Bender's *Spoken Marshallese* (1978) was the first comprehensive text designed to teach Marshallese. The text *Marshallese Reference Grammar* (Bender, Capelle, & Pagotto, 2016), extended the language description. The grammar reference book incorporated world view and ways of knowing as expressed through Marshallese syntax and word choice. Both texts are valuable resources for exploring Marshallese English and inform the discussion on Marshallese English.

The Marshallese Reference Grammar (Bender, Capelle & Pagotto, 2016) presented extensive concordance of Marshallese and English through direct item translation. The authors detailed sections of language functions such as noun classification, verbal phrases, parts of speech, clauses, and sentence structure. Cognizant of language as a cultural element, the authors provided an extensive description of classes of verbs and nouns, illustrating non-Western ways of knowing. A salient example is that of noun class in Marshallese. Marshallese nouns behave differently in the syntax if they are alienable or inalienable. The difference between the two is that of possession (p. 123). If something can be taken away, it is alienable, while an inalienable noun cannot. For example, *arm* and *my character* are inalienable while *bicycle* and *bird* are alienable. Another example of grammar differences is that of causation, which appears as a noun prefix in Marshallese (p. 166). Marshallese clause structure is flexible, allowing

movement for emphasis and verbless clauses (pp. 269-279). The authors acknowledge that, while the findings were well triangulated and member checked, this is only a start to complete language documentation and further investigation is necessary (p. xviii).

Marshallese English. Scholars have begun to investigate Marshallese English. In 2018, Buchstaller & Willson published “Marshallese English: A first sketch”. The researchers focused on features of oral ME that are pronunciation based, reporting on the phoneme differences and how these may contribute to lexical differences. In the article *Mapping the linguistic landscape of the Marshall Islands* (Buchstaller & Alvanides, 2017), the researchers documented environmental language choice in Majuro, mapping locations of visible Marshallese and English. *Linguistic Landscape* journal contributed to WE and ME by documenting language use in the Marshall Islands. A recent research project on the phenomena of /h/ insertion and deletion in English spoken in the Marshall Islands investigated context and constraints of /h/ in ME (Buchstaller, 2021). While this body of research contributed to an understanding of spoken Marshallese, an incomplete picture of Marshallese English remains. Noting in their discussion that lexical and syntactical aspects could be at the core of documented variations, the researchers recommend further research in written Marshallese English (Buchstaller & Alvanides, 2017; Buchstaller & Willson, 2018).

Critical Theory

Critical theorists have proposed and defended evolving theories describing the features and functions of language. These theories endeavor to not only describe language but also connect language as it represents society. Building on the foundations of Freire (1970), domains of critical analysis challenge the power structures in society

through language analysis. Integrating social and language structures in situated contexts, language is framed as representing culture and power (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). Critical analyses then not only describe the linguistic elements and social constructs, but present a foundation to be a catalyst for change.

Reformulating preconceived ideas regarding power, social position, and how the world works allows people to become more honestly connected with people and communities in the world. Gee (1991 & 2014) described figured worlds as the interaction between self and the real world, with local practices understood unreflectively. Language and the privileging it embodies deserves attention to support changing the patterns and must be examined in context (Wertsch, 1991). Language, a situated element of culture, reveals epistemological stances. These concepts allow researchers to understand language and communication in a culturally complete way. (Freire, 1970; Gee, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991).

Critical Literacies

Critical literacies include studies of language in use (Kachru, 2017; Pennycook, 1994; 2010; Widdowson, 2001). Describing the incorporation of historical social context and linguistic analysis, these scholars investigated the integration of social and language structures. By being open to different perspectives and realities, language questions can be answered with a responsive approach. Addressing such problematic concepts as native speaker and identity, they connected with critical theory concerns.

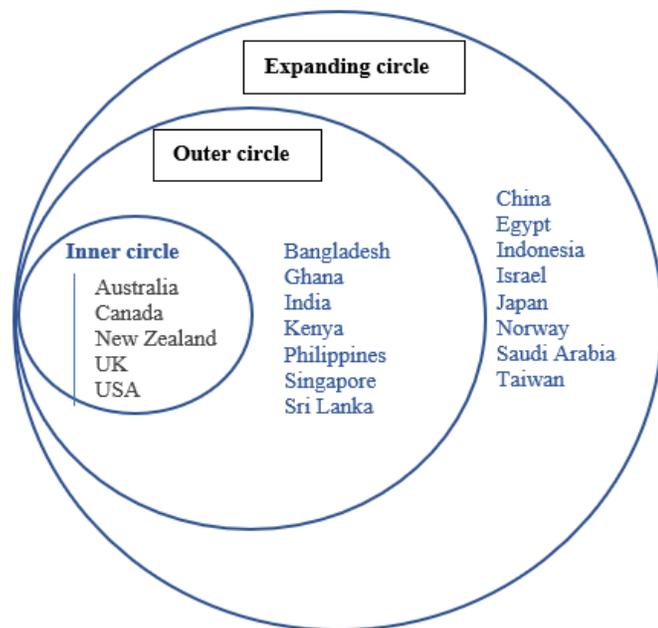
Critical literacy theorists also expand the conversation to include examination of language as a tool of power and source of change. Aligned with curriculum theories of social reform, critical literacies seek to question language as it represents the social

structure and hierarchy. Critical literacy is the lens through which research into culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000), culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017), and Pacific movement of social justice and equity (Nabobo-Baba, 2013).

Prescriptive grammars have been used to describe a language that leads to a value assignment of good or bad language. Moving away from a hegemonic position of a "better" language, this research study's foundation is motivated with a view of language as representative of the people using it. Critical theory and critical literacy as an appropriate agent of change, critical and situated literacies examine language in society and society in language (Freire, 1970; Gay, 2000; Kachru, 2017; Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim 2017; Pennycook, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991).

World Englishes

World Englishes (WE) was initially described by Braj Kachru in 1965, and expanded through two international conferences in 1978 (Kachru, 2008). With the phenomena of English in use throughout the world in varying contexts, WE seeks to establish legitimacy and frame research on varieties of English as they occur in the world. The Three Circles of English are used to describe the various conditions and situations in which English is used (figure 3). Pastoral language communities are immigrant communities living in a variety of locations. Inner Circle are communities that have English as a primary language, outer circle communities have English as an additional language that is necessary for economic and academic involvement. Expanding Circle communities are those communities that communicate in English, but it is not the required language of the academy, government, or business (Kachru, 1997, 2008).

Figure 3*World Englishes Circles*

Adapted from Kachru, 1997

Until recently WE focused on pastoral populations, those who have migrated to Inner Circle countries. Colonized countries as well as high English contact cultures embody the linguistic plurality of English in use (Kubota, 2018). The circle location has been designated by country for ease of understanding and has recently been questioned as “nationalizing” the concept, and therefore counter-productive to decolonization and establishing validity to varieties of English used in different contexts. It is expedient, however, to refer to countries or regions, as an audience may not relate to language family and geographical area location. English has emerged as a lingua franca, used in many situations, locations, and cultures. Questioning the goal of ‘native like’ proficiency, WE aims to remove the bias of monolingualism and the hegemonic stance that there is a gold standard of proficiency to achieve.

World Englishes is a specific area of linguistics with a narrow publication footprint. I searched for WE research conducted on Micronesian languages and previously colonized Asian languages. Two peer reviewed journals are devoted to World Englishes and available online: *English World-Wide* and *World Englishes*. Both journal websites offer current and historical issues information and access. The past 10 years' issues (2011-2020) were explored for each journal. *World Englishes* yielded 348 articles, of which 17 were relevant, including one article on Marshallese English and no other articles on Micronesian languages. *English World-Wide* published 113 articles with no articles on Pacific Island, Oceanic or Micronesian languages and eight articles that could be relevant to the wider region. Both journals were complete in their international exploration of World Englishes in Europe, Great Britain, Australia, and Asian regions. In the last ten years, both journals expanded their content to include some articles on African Englishes as well as Englishes from the Mid-East North Africa (MENA) region. The absence of articles regarding Micronesian and Oceanic languages reinforces the need for this research study. The one article regarding Marshallese English from 2018 indicated that this is a language and area of research whose time has come (Buchstaller & Willson, 2017).

Application of World Englishes

World Englishes is a rich field of research, applicable for a wide range of inquiries. WE has been used for language research for the previously colonized nations in the ASEAN region. A review of World Englishes specific literature over the last ten years for the Asian region follows. WE describes oral and written English situated in the region as valid varieties or dialects using both researcher collected data and archival

corpora data. Investigating linguistic elements, pragmatic usage, and colonial status WE research provides a further understanding of language and cultural representation through language.

Corpus Based Inquiries. Several research projects based their inquiries on two well established open access online corpora. Hosted by the University of Zurich, the ICE corpus database is continually updated with additional examples of World Englishes. The Global Web Based English (GloWbE) corpus is similar, consisting of digital and online examples.

Asia, Southeast Asia, and Pacific regional research using ICE and GloWbE corpora saw expansion beginning in 2013. The ICE corpus has been used to research linguistic features of previously colonized outer circle countries. Suarez-Gomez (2015) researched adverbial clauses for India, Hong Kong and Singapore Englishes. Parviainen (2016) researched tag questions for the same group plus Philippine English, finding that India English has the highest frequency of ‘isn’t it’ use. Calle-Martin & Romero-Barranco (2017) discovered a high level of variation of verb phrase accuracy in a study of the Maori in New Zealand, Indian, Singaporean and Hong Kong Englishes. Additional research projects using the ICE corpus have focused on regional verb collocations (Lange, 2016) and the semantic changes of ‘give’ and ‘make’ in Singapore and Hong Kong (Mehl, 2018). Merilainen (2017) researched first language influence on using progressive verbs for Expanding Circle locations, finding that progressive tense can be over-used. Suarez-Gomez (2017) reported on relative clause usage, reporting that nativized relative clauses occur frequently. Further connections with previously colonized nations and semi-modal use (i.e. *have/got to*, *want to*, *must*) in their respective

World Englishes were investigated using ICE for grammatical replacement patterns (Lucia, 2019). Seoane & Suarez-Gomez (2013) studied intra-varietal differences between WE varieties for perfect tense use and adverbial support, finding a higher frequency of present perfect tense in WE, compared with British English. Mazzon's research (2019) used the GloWbE corpus and analyzed the pragmatic functions of "I'm afraid" for Inner and Outer Circle regional varieties of English. These corpus-based studies contributed to the knowledge of WE. The corpora do not include any Micronesian language examples. My research could contribute to these data bases for further research.

Outer Circle and Expanding Circle Complexities. The designations of Expanding Circle and Outer Circle have become more complex in recent decades. Several researchers have addressed the Circle identification in their studies. Bolton (2012) discussed the need to redefine the Circles, as communities become more diverse in physical space and through electronic communication. Supporting research for reevaluating the Circle definitions, Martin (2014) used the Philippines as an exemplar of Inner, Outer and Expanding Circles' designations with national identity as problematic. Martin questioned the wisdom of instruction in Philippine English as counterproductive to building language proficiency. Hashim (2014) found that internal multilingual communication with Malaysian English contributed to tensions arising from English and Malay interaction. Speakers of English in Korea provided data for syntax structure (Leukert, Stephen & Rudiger, 2020). Spoken language was investigated by Tamaredo (2018) on Singaporean and Indian post-colonial patterns of pronoun use and by Edwards (2016) for phoneme deletion patterns, both revealed first language and contextual

influences. In addition to lexical elements, research examined the role of these developing World Englishes, calling for further research in these understudied contexts (Bolton, Graddol & Meierkord, 2011). Regardless of conclusions and recommendations, the research was rich in discussion on Circle identification and the effects of decolonization, mobility, and identity. Extending research and discussion to the underrepresented Micronesian region in general and the Marshall Islands, specifically, contributes to the body of knowledge for the region.

Second Language Writing

Answering Canarajah's 2002 call to develop more complex types of analysis within Contrastive Rhetoric, my research study incorporates Pacific Islander and Marshallese culture and language through an Intercultural Rhetoric (IR) lens. The pros and cons of IR were investigated within classroom practice (Belcher, 2014), concluding that IR can be productively used with both language construction and culturally responsive situations. Connor (2008, 2011) further describes IR as a dynamic view of culture and sociolinguistic connections, responding to situated language use, emphasizing the social situation of writing.

Measures of Proficiency

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Second Language Writing (SLW) research has broad application across languages. Polio & Freidman (2017) describe various measures that have been used to gauge and describe writing proficiency. A variety of combinations of CALF (complexity, accuracy, lexical and fluency) measures describe writing in terms of a standard “correctness”. The discussion of the definitions of the components of CALF measures follows.

Complexity measures address sentence level components. Structural syntactical complexity is measured by sentence length and an analysis of adherence to linguistic rules (Pallotti, 2015). A number of possible grammar structures are allowed in a language and their use increases as proficiency increases. Syntactical complexity has been defined as the average sentence length to a ratio of subordinated structures (Lan, Liu & Staples, 2019; Li, 2000). Defining a sentence can be problematic when considering fragments and run-on sentences. The issue of longer sentences as indicators for more complex writing is addressed using fine-grained measures such as length of phrase, number of phrases per clause, and number of clauses per C-unit (Polio & Shea, 2014). Using both large grained and fine-grained measures reveal clear information on what is happening within the text.

A discussion on syntactic complexity was found in Norris & Ortega (2009), offering a description of main syntactic complexity measures (Table 1, p. 559). These researchers advocated for inclusion of multidimensional measures as strength in reliability for writing research. They reported that subordination measures with a C-unit mean number can be a reliable proficiency measure. They also included measures for frequency of specified morphological forms with raw tallies.

CALF measures accuracy with several different elements. Subject verb agreement, verb form, word form and choice are examples of CALF accuracy measures. Li's (2000) description of grammatical error measurement, through ratios of type and number of grammatical errors to total number of sentences, corresponded with accuracy for ESL university students in the U.S. In addition, subject verb agreement, correct verb

forms and a ratio of number of variations per number of words in a text was used to describe accuracy for ELL students in Hong Kong. (Chan, 2010; Li, 2000).

Lexical complexity is measured for diversity by the number of different words per the total number of words. Lexical complexity measures are adaptable to include collocated phrases and account for repeated word occurrences. Lexical phrases such as collocations can be included in the analysis to better describe the data (Li, 2000). Pallotti (2015) discussed the issue of repeated tokens of any lexical item clouding the picture of lexical complexity and noted that a count of tokens will mispresent data. To address this, an index of morphological variation with a token count was used to describe a text more clearly. Lexical complexity was used to measure gains in writing proficiency, determine levels of proficiency, and identify language influences for university English for Academic Purpose students (Bulte & Housen, 2014; Mazgutova & Kormos, 2015). The findings of these studies indicated that as proficiency increases so does lexical complexity and that first language influence the details and trajectories of proficiency growth.

Fluency as a construct in writing is reflected as number of words per time period or product. Fluency as a ratio of words per text will reveal a measure, but it is problematic due to a writer's previous experience and familiarity with a topic. Raw fluency ratios do not account for accuracy but can measure words per text, clauses or sentences per text. Analyzing syllables per minute or dysfluencies can inform the proficiency during the stages of the writing process from draft through publication (Ellis & Yuan, 2004). Fluency analysis can address research questions on writing proficiency.

Designed to cover different types of research inquiries, a list of CALF measures is described and linked to situational research questions in the following section.

Application of CALF Measures. The purposes for CALF measures have been to inform instruction, connect first language influence, and address communicative competencies. In addition, discussions have formed around variation patterns and first language identities. Proficiency level, physical location, first language orientation, and tasks are examples of variables used for research inquiry. The following studies are examples of CALF measures in SLW research.

In British and US universities, students with a variety of language inventories have had writing evaluated with CALF measures (Bulte & Housen, 2014; Eckstein & Ferris, 2018; Jiang, Bi & Liu, 2019; Li & Schmitt, 2009; Lu, 2011; Mazgutova & Kromos, 2015; Shin, 2017; Vo, 2019). Shin (2017) used lexical complexity measures with Korean students at a Hawai'i university to examine lexical complexity measures, finding cultural reflections in the language use. In 2019, Jiang, Bi & Liu used syntactical complexity measures to describe writing by Chinese students using multi-dimensional constructs, delineating fine grained and large grained measures. Corpus studies that used CALF measures have revealed interesting language information. Lu (2011) used a corpus of learner English texts by native Chinese Speakers, correlating English proficiency levels and syntactic complexity (Lu, 2011). Over a thousand English Placement Tests at a large US university were used to answer research questions about lexical development across proficiency levels (Vo, 2019). Accuracy, lexical and syntactical complexity were compared between first and multinational non-native speakers in a first-year experience college course in the U.S. (Eckstein & Ferris, 2018).

In addition to large group studies, Li & Schmitt (2009) used lexical complexity to describe one Chinese student's progress through a doctoral program in the UK, documenting proficiency gains correlated with lexical complexity. The researchers began with the broad category definitions of CALF measures and refined and adapted them as they were relevant to each study's context.

CALF measures for SLW research is not exclusively applied to contexts within primary English-speaking countries. For English learners in Korea, lexical bundle analysis was used to examine student understanding of phrasal use (Shin, Cortes & Yoo, 2018). Additional research in Korea examined writing proficiency measures of complexity with lexical variety and density to report on correlation with proficiency levels. CALF measures were used to investigate genre differences for non-native and native English speakers. In 2015, Mazgutova & Kormos reported on a study that analyzed argument essays of Chinese students in an English for Academic Purposes course sections at a university in England. The target elements of lexical complexity under investigation were then available to analyze. In another genre-based study, researchers took on an eight year study of a bilingual student's writing development for argument essays (Kibler & Hardigree, 2017). Targeted CALF measures were used across 36 writing samples to identify proficiency changes over time and writing expertise development.

CALF measures are used for corpus studies in SLW. In a broad study of writers from seven countries, Berman & Nir-sagiv (2007) examined narrative and expository texts for lexical complexity, discussing findings that indicated genre effects lexical complexity. The nature of the study required the authors to define lexical complexity as

word length, justifying this measure with English morphological structures generating longer words that are more complex. Crossley & McNamara (2009) researched lexical differences for native Spanish speakers with the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE) and a matching corpus from English speakers at a southern US University. Focused on cohesion measures, the researchers reported empirical evidence of the differences between the two groups. A learner corpus investigation in SLW used CALF measures for German as the additional language (Vyatkina, 2012). Vyatkina researched a written German corpus by beginning and intermediate language students at a United States Midwest university for linguistic complexity based on language relationships. In an investigation into Dutch university students studying English, proficiency levels were correlated with lexical complexity measures. Verspoor, Lowie, Chan & Vahtric (2017) found that average word length and finite verb use were more prevalent in advanced language learners. Another study of Dutch learners sought to analyze errors for first language transfer through a correlation of 64 variables and the frequency of occurrence in the texts. These researchers identified the large- and fine-grained measures that were the most relevant for their participants. These studies informed this study with a basis to apply CALF measures to ME.

CALF measures have been extensively used in language research. Addressing a variety of research questions focused on elements in written language, CALF measures are used to support the discussion on language features. Independent of the language being investigated, CALF measures have the flexibility of allow a researcher to focus on data to address the research questions with a breadth of available measures.

Relevance of SLW Research. My study used several of the measures and processes for evaluation that SLW has embraced. SLW brings the ability to discuss *how* a language works at a structural level. SLW is used for all additional languages, not only English. The problematic name that includes “second” is counter intuitive in nature, as ‘second’ implies hierarchy between languages and their users. I approached the use of SLW research and CALF measures as a valid tool for describing Marshallese English. The research questions were approached with a goal of culture and language connections, not ‘error counting’ or deficit acknowledgement. Data that describes variation frequency can inform instruction and increase writer proficiency more efficiently with an asset-based stance.

World Englishes and Second Language Writing: An Integrated Approach

The special issue of World Englishes Journal (37-1, 2018) was devoted to World Englishes and Second Language Writing for research and practice, critically examining each in purpose and process. There are some problematic aspects of SLW that impede the quest for the answers to my research questions (Gass, 2018; Ortego, 2018; Sridhar, S. & Sridhar K, 2018). A problematic assumption in traditional SLW is that there is a goal of a native-like proficiency in the acquired language. SLW positions monolingualism as the normal state, referring to “errors” and language learners. Although SLW often investigates language without consideration of social and cultural aspects, interesting and useful tools to investigate language have been developed. World Englishes is not without its own challenges. Identifying a language speaker by nationality to place them in one of the Three Circles is problematic, especially in more recent times of fluid borders, migration for work, and digital technologies. Recent WE endeavors have involved less

studied languages and populations, as well as populations that have not migrated (Gass, 2018; Ortego, 2018; Sridhar, S. & Sridhar K, 2018).

Language learning is a complex adaptive system (Larsen-Freeman, 2018).

Supporting other avenues of inquiry it is noted that language acquisition and proficiency are "not a linear aggregation of linguistic units and success is not measure by conformity in competence." (Larsen-Freeman, p. 88). *World Englishes* delineates varieties of English as valid dialects, describing user communicative competency and situated communication. As a researcher in both SLA and SLW, Ortega (2018) suggested that researchers could focus on indigenized varieties of English, in addition to documenting less pastoral populations that remain in their culture groups to increase the knowledge base and broaden the evidence for World Englishes. Following the WE lead, Ortega continued, not only are immigrated multilingual people worth studying, but also multilingual people in 'home' environments can inform this quest to study, describe and document language. This approach has been embraced in Africa (Wandera, 2019), Singapore (Zhang & Ke, 2019), and Marshall Islands (Buchstaller & Willson, 2018). A call to further the field with research and practice that integrates WE and SLW was made (Kubota, 2018), recognizing that language is both dynamic and diverse. In addition to adding to the understanding of Marshallese English, the current research project adds to the bridge between SLW and WE.

CHAPTER III

Methods

This chapter describes the methods used for this research study. A general description of mixed methods, quantitative, and qualitative methods are included to contextualize the choice of mixed methods design. After situating the method in the research context and detailing the flow of the research design, I discuss the variables and participants for the study. The participants, data collection and analysis for Phases 1 and 2 are discussed individually and the chapter ends with sections covering advantages and limitations of the design and ethical concerns.

Research Design

Mixed Methods

This research study was designed using a mixed methods approach. Mixed method approaches are pragmatic and are used to build knowledge through integration of data sets (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A premise of mixed methods designs is that each part, or phase, supports the other. A QUANT-QUAL sequential design allows for the data from the first phase to be examined in depth in the second phase, developing an integrated discussion addressing the research questions. Beyond labeling and counting the variations, an extended description of elements with mixed methods research provides a deeper analysis of the data (Jiang, Bi & Liu, 2019).

Situating this Mixed Methods Design

Quantitative research seeks to answer research questions relying on numerical data (Duke & Mallette, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Polio & Friedman, 2017). A

systematic process of identifying variables and coding them was used to determine the frequency and magnitude of the variables in the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Applied qualitative research seeks to reveal information about a specific situation and seeks understanding with a holistic description including detailed views of informants in a natural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In an exploratory study, the case becomes the basis to inform the research questions. Merriam & Tisdell (2016) state that a corpus collected for specific research provides useful data for education research involving a bounded literacy system.

Using inductive and deductive reasoning provided the dialectical interaction needed to answer the research questions. Reasoning systems, both inductive and deductive, were used in this mixed methods research project. Pajo (2017, p 14) states, “Inductive reasoning begins with specific observations and moves to a broader understanding of a topic or problem.” Deductive reasoning, more commonly used for quantitative studies, starts with a broad theory and a specific idea to be tested, and was also required for this study.

Research Questions

The research questions that guide this study are:

1. What variations are found in the English academic writing of Marshallese college students? (Phase 1)
2. What lexical, complexity, cohesion, and syntactical items and categories can be correlated to first language and cultural influence? (Phase 2)

Sequential, Exploratory Mixed Methods Design

A sequential exploratory mixed methods design was used for this study. An oft used design in educational and second language writing research, this study's first phase used quantitative data to describe the lexical, syntactic and cohesion variations in the corpus (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This study was concerned with an additional qualitative analysis of the recurring categories and items of variations in the corpus. Polio & Freidman (2017) discussed the use of learner texts for second language writing research. Supported with Second Language Acquisition and second language writing methods, researchers have sought to investigate and describe students' writing proficiency and acquisition process with mixed methods research designs. Text material, relatively easy to collect and widely used, provided a corpus of data for this project (Pajo, 2018). The data was analyzed with descriptive statistics. The goal of the quantitative phase was to identify the lexical, syntactical and cohesion variations that occurred in the corpus of learner texts. Variation, in this context, deviates from a standard. In the second phase, linguistic insider participants engaged with the data, through semi structured interviews (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The data collected was used to describe the variations in the corpus and mapping them to Marshallese English. The quantitative data presented a general picture of the problem with lexical, syntactic, and cohesive variations, while the qualitative data connected the variations to first language and ME. The qualitative data and its analysis deepened the understanding and explain the statistical results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Pajo, 2018).

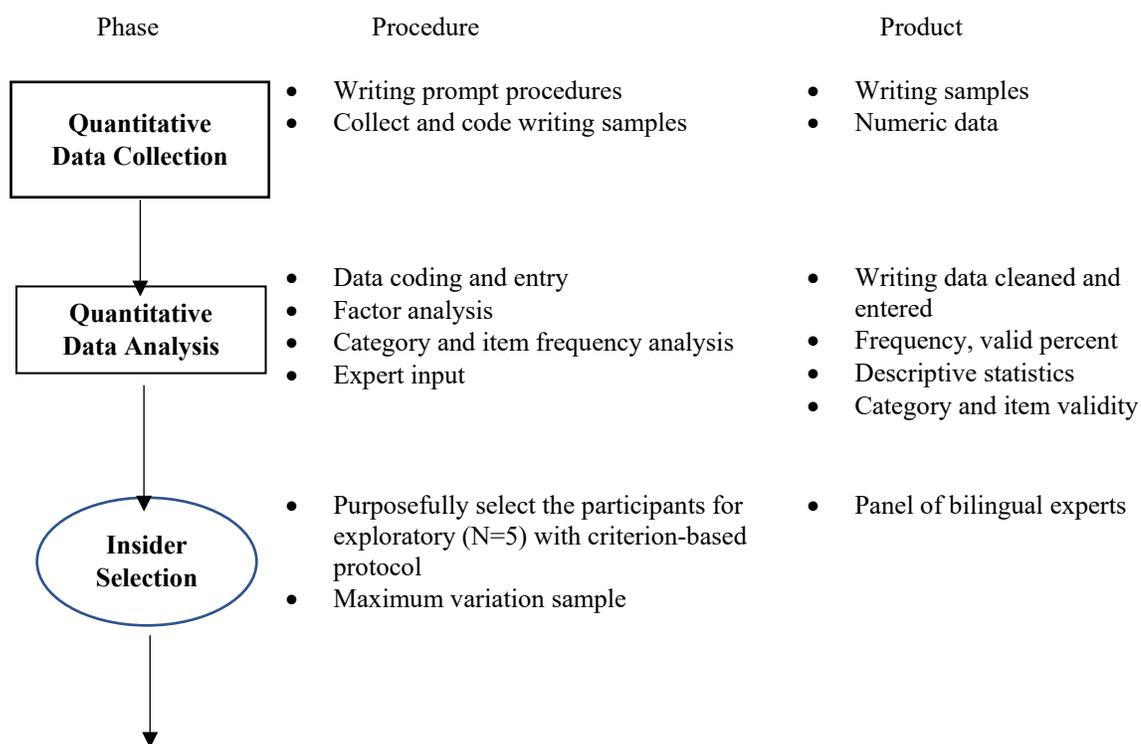
Issues for Mixed Methods Designs. Three issues for a mixed methods research design are priority, implementation, and integration (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

Both phases of this study contributed equally to addressing the research questions, with the quantitative phase preceding the qualitative part. Thus, a QUANT-QUAL sequential design was appropriate for this study, with sequential implementation. Integration occurred in the discussion of findings, connecting the data sets to support the findings (Chan, 2010). The issues for designing a sound mixed methods research project were addressed.

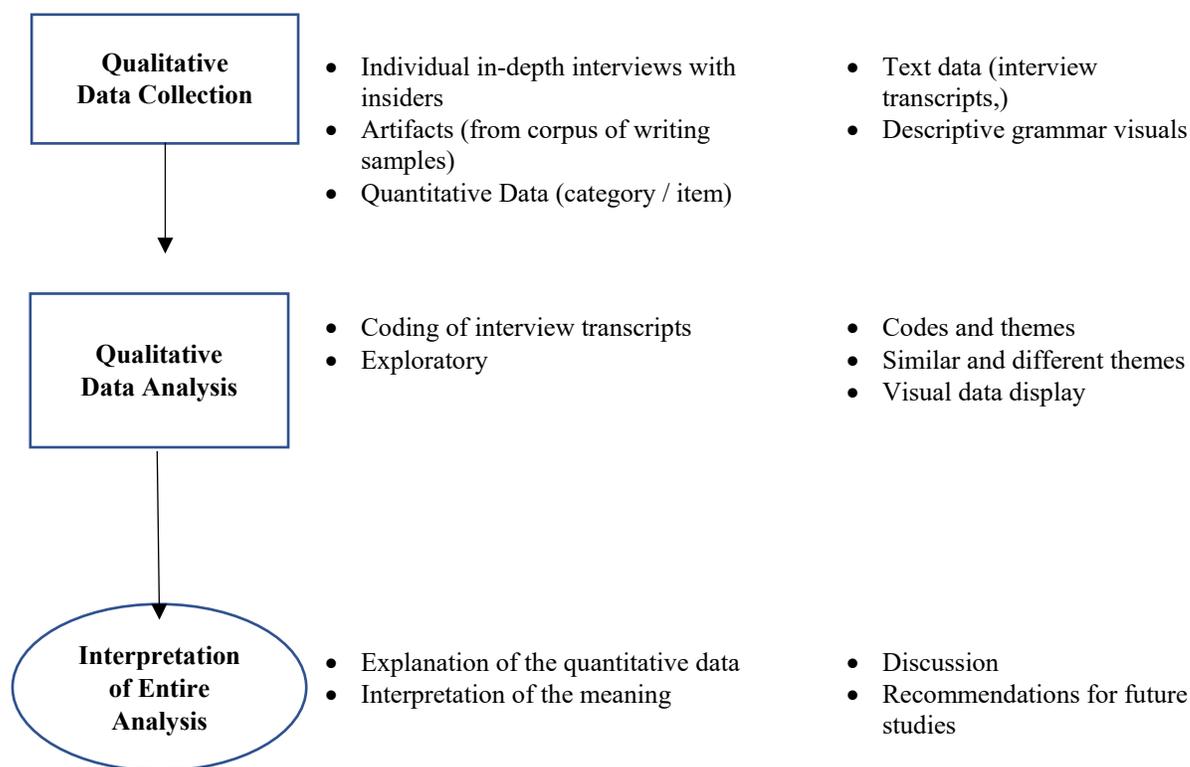
Figure 4 is a visual model of the sequential exploratory mixed methods design for this study. The quantitative phase's steps with processes and products were outlined followed by the transition to the qualitative phase. The qualitative phase's steps were similarly described followed by the concluding integration. In the discussion, the results of the two parts of this study were integrated, to describe the combined outcomes

Figure 4

Visual Model for Sequential Exploratory Mixed Method Procedures



(continued)



Note. Sequential Exploratory Research Design Model

Phase 1: Quantitative

Variables

The quantitative phase addressed the first research question, “How do variations in academic writing manifest for Marshallese when writing in English?” and determined the categories of variables for this study. CALF measures were used to describe and analyze student writing (Geisler, 2018; Norris & Ortega, 2009; Polio & Freeman, 2017; Polio & Shea, 2014). Lexical, syntactical and cohesion variations were analyzed for this study. Polio & Friedman (2017) proposed a table for categories for text-based measures and analysis (see figure 5).

This study focused on the categories of accuracy, syntactic complexity, lexical measures, and cohesion. The categories of paraphrasing, fluency, cohesion, and text

copying as well as revision process were not relevant to this study. They did not address the research questions because the participants will not be engaged in these writing process.

Figure 5

Categories of Text-Based Measures and Analyses.

Construct or focus	Specific measure or analysis
Accuracy	Percentage of error free clauses
	Percentage of correct verb forms (tense, aspect, modality, and subject verb agreement)
	Number of errors per words
Syntactic complexity	Sentence length (words per sentence)
	Clausal complexity (finite verbs per sentence)
	Coordination (coordinating conjunctions per 100 words)
	Subordination (subordinating conjunctions per 100 words)
	A variety of measures using the syntactic complexity analyzer
Lexical measures	Density
	Diversity (lemmatization)
	Diversity (<i>D</i>-value) (ratio unique lex items : total # of words)
	Sophistication (average word length)
	Sophistication (frequency of word use)
Formulaic sequences	Lexical phrases
	Lexical bundles
	Modifier-noun collocations
Cohesion	Variety of cohesive devices
	Measures using CAQDAS Coh-Metrix
Fluency	Words per text
	T-Units per text
	Clauses per text
	Syllables per minute
	Dysfluencies (number of words crossed out)
Paraphrasing and text copying	Number and types of quotations
	A four-way taxonomy of paraphrase types
	Indirect source use, number of source use T-units
Revision process	Change in response to grammar feedback code
	Word-level changes
	Sentence-level changes
	Discourse-level changes
	Successful vs. unsuccessful revision

Note. Categories of Text-Based Measures and Analyses, table 6.2 (Polio & Friedman, 2017)

Student Participants

The quantitative phase addressed the first research question. I used a purposeful, criterion-based sample (Duke & Mallette, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A corpus of writing samples (n=56) was the basis for the data analysis. The participant writers were intentionally selected Marshallese students in elementary education courses at the College of the Marshall Islands in Majuro, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI). They had completed the prerequisites for enrolling in the education degree programs. The male and female participants (n=35), aged 21-59, were in at least their junior year of college, and enrolled in education department methods courses. The participants provided a brief description of education background, job history, and interaction with family off island. In the group of participants, 43 percent were current teachers seeking additional teaching credentials and 57 percent were enrolled in college immediately after secondary education. The student participants generated the corpus to be analyzed.

Data Collection

Phase 1 of my research consisted of collecting and analyzing written artifacts produced by the student participants. Participant authored texts, or “learner texts”, are established as valid resources for a study investigating and measuring writing constructs (Chan, 2010; Norris & Ortega, 2009; Polio & Friedman, 2017). The corpus of writing samples (N=61), was provided by 35 writers. 28 participants provided writing samples for both prompts while 5 participants provided one or the other. Class size and enrollment as well as the level of agreement to participate and attendance determined the number of participants. A corpus of 18,427 words and 2,446 C-Units was collected. (Creswell &

Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2020; Polio & Friedman, 2017).

Written Corpus. The corpus for this research was created with writing samples collected during regularly scheduled class time in education courses. The two 30-minute writing sessions were administered by the instructor of record, collected, and delivered for analysis. A bilingual script was provided for the administrator, as well as bilingual informed consent information for student participants. Handwritten writing samples were used to mitigate computer-based writing aids as well as variable familiarity with and availability of computers and software. Each writing sample of the corpus was anonymized with a letter-number designation to protect participants. The administrator clearly stated what the writing sample was for, that the research was outside of the graded course work and would be used to better inform instruction and describe Marshallese English. The writing prompts scripts and Informed Consent forms were translated by an expert. The writing prompts were designed to produce a significant corpus with a variety of linguistic features (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Pajo, 2018; Polio & Friedman, 2017).

Writing Prompts. The writing prompts were purposefully designed. The first prompt elicited responses that contain general language, not based in a field of expertise or education specific that connected to personal experience. The second prompt connected their academic education courses with their personal experience. Topic familiarity was important to eliminate the need for specialized knowledge to produce a writing sample (Polio & Friedman, 2017). The prompts reflected a respect and value for

the Marshallese, Marshallese education, and ways of knowing, teaching, and learning.

The prompts for the writing tasks were:

1. “A view of schooling”: Compare your education experience with the education of Marshallese children today.
2. “RMI Dual Language Policy”: How do you think you will include dual language in your classroom? Consider education courses as well as other courses and factors.

Data Analysis

The corpus of writing samples were segmented into C-Units, transcribed in a word processing program, and entered in Excel. This process allows for the identified CALF measures to be represented more clearly. A synthesis of suggested categories was used for the investigation into Marshallese English. The researcher-developed code book of lexical, syntactical and cohesion elements is illustrated in Appendix A.

For each category and item, the full coding scheme included a basic definition, distinct cases to be counted in a category, examples of string of language exemplifying what was in a category and what was not (Appendix A). I maintained a coding journal to document the process (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Polio & Friedman, 2017).

A taxonomy of written variations in the writing samples was generated through content analysis. Frequency and descriptive statistics were used to identify and quantify the lexical, syntactic and cohesion elements. The relevance of the variations were reported in text and table form, with maximum and minimum values along with percentage of total errors for variation categories and items. The taxonomy was adjusted as needed to reflect the data in the corpus, expanding or contracting categories and items

as the data dictated. An aggregation of categories as well as individual items was reported, allowing for large and fine-grained CALF measures to be analyzed (Polio & Friedman, 2017). The research questions do not address individual writer variations, but the written language samples as a corpus of Marshallese English.

Reliability and Validity

Triangulation

Experts that are experienced in academic writing, additional language writers, linguistics, and grammar provided triangulation for the categories and items identified with the data analysis in Phase 1. Five random texts of analyzed writing samples were provided to the experts with the original writing. The goal was to confirm the identification and frequency of variations as representative of Marshallese English writing within their experience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Polio & Friedman, 2017). Notations on coding choices were recorded by the experts. These could be consulted when there was a disagreement. Discussions led to reaching a 90% agreement rate. After discussion with experts, three C-Units were excluded from this analysis as non-codable.

Other External Factors

Quantitative data collection can be affected by external factors and seeks generalizability with norms and distribution measures. Phase 1 of this study addressed ecological validity issues through controlling the writing conditions of corpus building (Polio & Friedman, 2017). Using standardized writing prompts to generate the corpus in different class and course groups increased generalizability. The corpus was generated in a controlled situation, in group settings, that minimized external influences on the conditions present during data collection.

Phase 2: Qualitative

Culture Member Participants

The qualitative phase of this study was an exploratory study that used purposeful sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Pajo, 2018). A representation of bilingual Marshallese/English participants were selected to address the second research question, “What lexical, syntactical, and cohesion elements and categories can be correlated to first language and culture influence?” The participants were identified through purposive quota sampling (Pajo, 2018), beginning with maintained communication with contacts in the community in Majuro followed by reference and introduction. The insiders had varied professional and familial identities. Situating the participants as Marshallese language and culture insiders deepened the understanding of Marshallese English (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

First language (L1) identity and literacy contribute to language and writing proficiency, as well as experience and instructional methods (Kang, 2009; Polio & Friedman, 2017; Wandera, 2019; Zhang & Ke, 2019). The boundaries of this exploratory study were defined by the insider participant lives, professional and community identities (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Pajo, 2018; Polio & Friedman, 2017). The participants included five adults interested in the research study, representative of various roles and professions in the RMI. Businesspeople, educators, health care providers and family leaders were recruited for the qualitative phase (Duke & Mallette, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Data Collection

Phase 2 of this study used data collected from video conferencing interviews. The interview questions were based on the data collected and analyzed in Phase 1. A two-step process was used to complete this phase. First the analyzed Phase 1 data was presented to the participant, organized and reported by category and item, including full context of retrieved segments to contextualize the variations. Representations for each category were presented to the participants for review, description, and discussion. After individual's interview responses were collected, commonalities were identified through content analysis of field notes.

The 45-60-minute interviews began with an introduction to the project. Each participant was provided with a description of the research project, definitions with examples of each linguistic category from the code book, and time to review the data. The informed consent forms and clarification regarding anonymity, data collection, reporting and the member check process were reviewed with the participants. The participants then engaged in a discussion about variations in the written corpus. The constructivist interview protocol (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) consisted of five to ten open ended questions and five directed questions. Carefully crafted interview questions designed to elicit grammar judgement, translation, explanation of interpretation were used. Questions such as "How is this said in Marshallese?" assisted the participants in framing the variations in Marshallese English. The interview protocol allowed for clarifying questions by both the participants and researcher. Follow up interviews were held as needed.

The interview questions were designed to explore participants' language experience with the results from Phase 1. The interview questions were as follows:

1. What do you notice about the data reported? (Initial global impressions).
2. What do you notice about the clusters of lexical variations? (Repeat for categories and item clusters.)
3. The data presents _____ variations with ___% of the corpus containing at least 1 example. How do you express _____ in Marshallese? (For example, progressive tense.)
4. The data presents interesting information on noun use. English word forms can make nouns from other parts of speech with suffixes. How does Marshallese use an action word as a noun? (Examples to clarify: recite-verb, recitation-noun; email-noun, emailed-verb.)
5. The data presents word order variations. Please look at the clusters of examples and discuss how the phrase with the variation might be said in Marshallese.
6. Language is an element of culture. Looking at the clusters of examples, do you find variations that reflect Marshallese culture?
7. Sometimes variations can indicate pronunciation differences between languages. Does the writing corpus contains variations related to pronunciation (example of voiced / voiceless final consonant differences, vowel identification and usage.) Please look at the clusters of examples and discuss pronunciation and sound set issues.
8. Please discuss any surprising data examples or clusters you noticed in the data.

Data Analysis

Field notes of the interviews were transcribed by the researcher. Inductive and deductive reasoning were used to identify commonalities during the content analysis coding process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The exploratory analysis of commonalities across interviews used content analysis for descriptions of items of interest. A wholistic analysis of the interview data revealed commonalities, as well as complimentary observations. An elemental coding scheme with a focus on structural coding was used, as the corpus under discussion focuses on linguistic aspects. Exploratory coding schemes were added as appropriate during the second and third cycles to richly describe the data (Saldana, 2016). A coding journal was maintained to provide an audit trail of the data analysis.

Establishing Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research is achieved through a variety of procedures (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Polio & Friedman, 2017). The cultural insiders represented bilingual / biliterate culture members for increased credibility as resources of Marshallese funds of knowledge, language, and figured worlds (Gee, 1991; Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005). The criteria for panel participants were clearly described to establish a foundation for triangulation. Diverse professions, genders and ages allowed for multiple perspectives on Marshallese English and achieve maximum variation for the exploratory Phase 2 data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Pajo, 2018). Maximum variation of participants also addressed generalizability issues from the corpus to Marshallese English (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As an additional measure, I reflected on the results between steps to mitigate bias,

assessing if the results were supported by the data and making documented adjustments as required. Rich descriptions of the interview events informed my data collection and analysis.

I reviewed the completed interview transcripts with each participant to confirm the content. This member check increased the credibility of the data. In the case of participant disagreement, additional representations and contexts of the categories or items in question were reviewed with the participants. When agreement cannot be achieved, the disparity was discussed in the findings.

Advantages and Limitations: Sequential Exploratory Method Design

Mixed methods research supports a recursive inductive and deductive approach in the integration process, with a full causal network developing toward the end of the data collection (Polio & Friedman, 2017). Pragmatism as the mixed methods research paradigm was a practical foundation to address my research questions, with the qualitative research further informing the quantitative inquiry. Carefully crafted research questions, along with clear phase designs, maintained the integrity of each phase and supported the culminating integration.

Integration is a key feature of sequential exploratory mixed methods design. (Polio & Friedman, 2017). This study was integrated at the level of the research questions with RQ2 expanding the findings in RQ1. The parallel participant criteria sampling for both phases used comparable participant groups, enhancing inference quality and legitimation. Even though the second data set was not exclusively triangulating the data from the first phase, but also exploring it further, a parallel design was appropriate for this study. The sequential two data set collection design, with the

first informing the second, supported the QUANT-QUAL premise as each phase contributed equally. Interpretive rigor was maintained through second language writing research methods, World Englishes, expert consultation, and insider input for reliability.

Research Permission and Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues were addressed within each phase of the study. Following IRB procedures, the research study design, informed consent forms, information on subjects and researcher were submitted. The project was classified as exempt (Title 45, Part 46 of the code of federal regulations), as the collected writing samples were coded and analyzed as a corpus with individual contributors identities protected, participants signed bilingual informed consent forms, and the participants were not at risk. IRB approvals from both the College of the Marshall Islands and Sam Houston State University institutions were secured (Appendix B).

The anonymity of Phase 1 participants was protected by using an alpha/numeric code system to identify writing contributing to the corpus. Participation in the study was voluntary and did not jeopardize student status nor effect course grades. The risk for Phase 2 participants was minimal as cultural and linguistic insiders. Interviews were anonymized to protect identity, there was no monetary or social consideration for participating, and participants reviewed transcripts for accuracy. Electronic transfer of data and forms utilized encrypted email. Data were securely managed with the use of electronic files, and original writing samples were scanned and uploaded to a password protected file. Interview transcripts were similarly stored. The data was secured and held for up to 3 years.

Role of the Researcher

The relationship of the researcher to a project presents potential issues with insider/outsider issues, position issues and reflection by the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As a non-culture member researcher, it was imperative that I consulted and engaged expert insiders. I had experience living and working in Majuro, RMI and maintained contact relationships with teachers, college professors, students, and parents. During the quantitative phase, I was removed from direct data collection by using participants' professors to administer the writing prompts. Coding and analyzing the corpus was conducted by me but triangulated with culture and language experts. Emphasizing that this was an inquiry designed to reveal what assets exist in ME and not on what is missing or wrong reinforced the asset-based approach to this investigation. These steps strengthened the reflective role I had as the researcher.

Conclusion

This chapter described the methods of this study. After justifying and situating the mixed methods design, the details of the sequential exploratory design were described. Issues for mixed methods designs as they pertain to this study were discussed. The visual model for this research study's methods was followed by descriptions of Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the study. Each phase was discussed separately, detailing variables, participants, data collection and analysis. Reliability, validity, and external factors were discussed for the study. Integration, the final step of this design, will be in the Discussion and Implications chapter. The chapter closes with advantages and limitations of this research design followed by ethical considerations for this study.

CHAPTER IV

Results

This mixed methods study sought to identify linguistic variations from the standard in written Marshallese English and investigate correlations for these variations to Marshallese language and culture. Phase 1 consisted of collecting and analyzing variations in the written corpus, followed by Phase 2 with culture member interviews used to clarify and further inform the results from Phase 1. This chapter presents the results from the two phases as they address the research questions:

1. What variations are found in the English academic writing of Marshallese college students?
2. What lexical, complexity, cohesion, and syntactical elements and categories can be correlated to first language and cultural influence?

Quantitative Phase

Complexity, accuracy, lexical, and fluency (CALF) measures were used to describe the written corpus of Marshallese English. Several measures described variations from the standard while others described language in use. The authentic English written corpus from college students in the Marshall Islands was collected and analyzed. After the corpus was collected and transcribed into C-Units, variations were identified and quantified. Descriptive statistics were presented to reveal the categories and frequencies of variations and tokens in the corpus. *Token* is defined here as an element in writing, often equated with word and a C-Unit is an independent clause with modifiers. This section describes both variations from a standard and lexical elements present in the corpus with brief discussions of each.

Corpus Data

Writing samples were transcribed into C-Units and coded for variations (Saldana, 2016). C-Units are appropriate for this study since they reflect the complexity of a corpus. A four cycle analysis process was involved for the 18,462 word corpus by C-Unit (n=2,246), beginning with transcribing the handwritten texts. Expert scholars were used to verify transcriptions and coding. The experts are known to the researcher and were teachers, former teachers, researchers in bilingual education, and literacy scholars. Coding the variations was done by the researcher with experts in grammar and language verifying the codes and coding. Four C-Units were identified as not codable by the researcher and the experts agreed with the determination. The C-Units were transferred to Excel for category code entry. The list of C-Units (n = 2,241) was then analyzed into salient groups of variations. The total number of variations (n=1,453) were categorized by variation type.

Each coding cycle revealed important information in the data. The first cycle, transcribing handwritten writing samples, revealed a frequent use of conditional tenses. During the validation and C-Unit identification cycle, unique features such as capitalization were noted. A lack of spelling variations beyond past tense markers in addition to the frequency of word form variations informed the subsequent cycles. The third and fourth cycles of analysis further described the data and informed Phase 2.

Variations in the Corpus

The amended typology based on Polio & Friedman Taxonomy (2018) represents the categories and types of variations that were present in the data and salient to the research study (figure 6). The corpus consisted of handwritten responses to given

prompts and since the writing sessions were limited to 30 minutes, fluency, number of errors per words, lexical density were not examined. Events such as word omission, substitution of *there* for *their*, and spelling letter inversion could have resulted from the time constraint and unedited nature of the corpus. Lexical measures focused on word form, diversity, and usage. 44% of the C-Units (n=1,063) were identified, containing one or more variation per clause. The data in the corpus provided the categories, and elements of variations are further described here.

Figure 6

Amended Typology

Construct or focus	Specific measure or analysis
accuracy	percentage of: variation free clauses, verb forms (tense, aspect, modality and subject verb agreement)
syntactic complexity	sentence length; clausal complexity (finite verbs per sentence)
lexical measures	density, diversity (word forms)
cohesion	cohesive devices

Accuracy Measures. Accuracy is an extensive category of text-based measures for analysis. The accuracy category consists of grammatical element variations that are in the corpus. Through coding cycles, variations were revealed. Verbs were analyzed for agreement and tense, each coded separately to increase the depth of the analysis. Subject/verb agreement variations (n=100) and tense (n=256) accounted for 24.68% of the variations in the corpus. An insignificant number of C-Units (n=3) contained both types of variations, while 8 contained 2 variations of either verb code (2%), indicating that verb variations were prevalent.

Noun phrase variations were identified and coded (n=633). This category was separated into singular/plural, capitalization, and article variations. The results of the

further analysis revealed the frequency of articles (n=121), capitalization (n=225) and singular/plural noun (n=258) variations in the data. Representing 44% of the total variations, these accuracy category results are notable in their frequency.

Table 2

Marshallese English Variation Tokens Table

Category	Variation token code	Frequency of code (n)	Percentage	Cumulative frequency
Nominals				
	articles	121	8.33	121
	sing/plural	258	17.80	379
	collective noun	29	2.18	408
	initial capital	225	15.50	633
Verb phrase				
	subject verb agreement	100	6.99	733
	verb tense	256	17.69	989
Morphology				
	word form or word choice	252	17.34	1241
	word order	27	2.07	1268
	missing			
	word/preposition	127	8.70	1395
	spelling	58	3.40	453

Lexical Measures. The lexical category is concerned with the word level, identifying variations in word form, clause length, and omissions. The lexical measures of density and diversity variations were examined. C-Unit length varied from three to 18 words in length, with an average of 9.3 words. Preposition and missing word variations were relatively insignificant (n=127, 8.7%). Variations in the lexical category were measured through word form variation (n=252). This broad category was analyzed

further to reveal that variations for part of speech (n=86) represents 34% of the larger word form category.

Components in the Corpus

Moving from analysis of grammatically problematic items, analysis then focused on elements that are present in the corpus to further describe the written corpus.

Syntactic complexity was used to describe complex conditional tenses in the data.

Clausal complexity was reflected in the descriptive statistics regarding word count (n=18,462), C-Unit count (n=2,242), and number of variation free C-Units (n=1,379).

56% of the C-Units were variation free. Cohesive devices and modality indicative of hedging were also identified. Analysis of these tokens, such as *if*, *however*, *which*, and *that*, informed this writing analysis and research by describing what language tools were being used.

Table 3

Marshallese English Cohesive Device Tokens Table

Cohesive device	Frequency (n)	Percentage
and	509	82.22
but	75	12.12
however	16	2.58
rather than	5	0.82
although	4	0.65
yet	4	0.65
furthermore	3	0.48
in addition	2	0.32
whether	1	0.16
Percent of total C-Units	619	25.43

Cohesion. Cohesive devices are words and phrases that show links between ideas, paragraphs, and text, such as *however*, *whether*, *furthermore*, and *although*. Tokens of cohesion were present in the corpus with common cohesive devices *and* (n=509) and *but* (n=75) appearing most often. Other cohesive devices, such as *however* (n=16) and *in addition* (n=2) made significantly lower appearance in the corpus (Table 3). Of the 2,442 C-Units in the corpus, 619 (25.34 %) contained some level of cohesive device.

Syntactical Complexity. Syntactical complexity can be measured with sentence length, clausal complexity with finite verbs, and with coordinating and subordinating conjunctions. Complex syntactical structures examined in the corpus were conditional tenses, modal verb phrases and relative clauses.

In the corpus C-Unit data (n=2,442), regardless of variation inclusion, relative clause use made significant appearance in the data (n=614). Clause indicators, such as *that*, *when*, *which*, *who*, and *because* were used to analyze for relative clause frequency. The elements of syntactical complexity were analyzed for the corpus based on C-Units (Table 4).

Complex verb tenses were also analyzed since the appearance in the data was interesting. During the coding cycles, it was noted that conditional tenses were frequently used. The simple verb tenses were expected, however complex verb phrases were not. Conditional verb constructions were in evidence and have been identified through the signal words *would*, *can*, *could*, *will be*, and *if* (n= 363). While representative a relatively low percentage of the C-Units in the corpus (14.86%), complex conditional tense use in the corpus is notable. Verb phrases with modality were analyzed

for frequency (n=176) with tokens of *can*, *should*, *may*, *might* and *must* identified.

Complex verb tenses (n=363) tokens were present in 15% of the C-Units in the corpus.

The complex verb tense C-Units were not analyzed further to determine usage, even though some markers are possible for either conditional constructions or modality.

Table 4

Marshallese English Syntactic Complexity

Category	Syntactic complexity markers	Frequency (n)	Relative frequency (fi)
Relative clause markers			
	because	126	20.52
	that	289	47.07
	when	112	18.24
	which	32	5.21
	who	55	8.96
C-Unit percentage		614	25.14
Conditional tense and modality markers			
	if	62	17.08
	can	107	29.48
	could	11	3.03
	may	4	1.10
	might	13	3.58
	must	23	6.34
	will be	21	5.78
	should	29	7.99
	would	93	25.62
C-Unit percentage		363	14.86

Hedging in academic writing allows the writer to suggest, propose, and be indirect with claims and facts. Linguistic devices, words, and phrases, are used to convey opinion positions and express politeness, deferring authority away from the author. Hedging

accomplishes many effects, including exercising prudent caution with claims, defending against opposing claims, establishing indirect statements, and positioning of the author. Hedging can be expressed with passive voice in English, indicated with signal words or introductory phrases. Hedging was explored in this study through analysis of key words, alone or in phrases. Hedge markers such as *possible* (n=2), *usually* (n=4), *seems* (n=4), and *believe* (n=6) were infrequent in this corpus. Table 4 describes the markers for hedging with modals, conditional tenses, and relative clauses.

The results from Phase 1 informed the qualitative inquiry of Phase 2. By identifying which variations were consistently present, which were not in high evidence, and those elements that were distinctive, the Phase 2 interviews could focus on identifying Marshallese English more clearly. The connections are further explored in the discussion chapter.

Qualitative Phase

Interview Data

The qualitative phase of this study involved virtual interviews with five Marshallese culture members. The interviews took place over a span of 6 weeks via zoom with participants in the Marshall Islands and Arkansas. Ranging in age from 25 to 50, the 4 men and 1 woman are Marshallese, fluent in two or more languages, and actively involved with their community. Interviews ranged from 50 - 90 minutes. Interview questions #5 and #6 were paraphrased to seek participant input on specific examples from the data and inquire about connections to Marshallese culture. Interview Question #8 asked the participants to reflect on data examples or clusters in the data that surprised them. This question was extended to include challenges of translation, as two of

the participants have worked extensively in Marshallese / English translation. This extension further informed the connections between Marshallese and Marshallese English, supporting and validating the hypothesis of Marshallese English. Participants are referred to by letters A-E in this section. Each participant was careful to communicate that answers were not absolute, but in an "as I know" frame. Several category themes emerged.

Graphophonemic Issues. Marshallese has a significantly different phoneme set than English (Bender, Capelle, & Pagotto, 2017). All 5 participants mentioned issues at the graphophonemic level and two main themes emerged. The first issue is the differences in phonemes between English and Marshallese. Participant C noted that English has "fewer vowel sounds and more consonants than Marshallese", while Participant E added that the English alphabet is what they accustomed to seeing and the "marked vowels (in Marshallese orthography) are confusing". Participant A reflected that the writers may be "following how they say it" to explain some of the spelling variations present in the corpus. These graphophonemic differences could account for other variations identified in the corpus. This was supported in the corpus with the example "if they missed pronounce the English words" (line 2059). The second issue is that writing in Marshallese has been a process fraught with challenges. Participant D shared that there is still uncertainty with "who established the alphabet" and that it is inconsistently used. This, Participant D continued, could contribute to the challenges of English for Marshallese. The influences of these factors are further explored in the discussion chapter.

Morphology. Variations at the word level were explored by the participants. At the word level, the participants had differing views and interpretations. Interview Question #3 asked the participants to reflect on how elements are expressed in Marshallese, seeking to identify elements of Marshallese that could be influencing Marshallese English. Question #4 focused on parts of speech and word forms. Participants A, B, and E noted that parts of speech are sometimes expressed differently in Marshallese. A word can be inserted in a sentence after the base, or that a noun form (education) in English does not have a verb form (educate) in Marshallese. These ideas can be expressed in Marshallese, however the meaning bearing bases are different from English (Bender, Capelli, Pagotto, 2016; Carbine, 2021). For example, the prefix *ri-* can indicate a person who as in *ri-jerbal* (worker) or indicate a person who is/has a quality as in *ri-kadu* (short person). Participant C expressed concern with the effect of loan words from English, complicating the answer to the question about parts of speech. Participant C mentioned that some dialect and accent differences had been attributed to morphological markers in published works. Participant E admitted that word for word translations, or “attempting word for word translations, can complicate this issue”, as we examined happy, happily, and happiness in a comparative context.

Verb Usage. Verbs and verb phrases carry a significant amount of information in English. The participants were asked to reflect on the rate of subject verb agreement variations in the corpus. Participant C noted that most often time is established "at the beginning of a sentence" and the word forms do not have to change after that. Similarly, Participant E, practiced in translations of English and Marshallese, indicated that the continuous tenses were "challenging to translate word for word", as the Marshallese verb

did not reflect the ideas of ongoing action. Participant A reflected that in their experience, most familiar register conversations in Marshallese are framed in the past tense, indicating that this could be a contributing factor for verb tense variations in writing. Other variations in the verb phrases in the corpus included conditional tenses as well as modal usage. For example, C-Unit line 1,210 was, "if they are being taught in their first and second language" and C-Unit line 2,232 was "the student might understand". Participant A also thought that "more polite" verb forms would be used often. Participant E added that in order to avoid directness, Marshallese would utilize conditional tense. Participant E also noted that this is very important in Marshallese culture and therefore would expect the construction to be well learned. Participant D supported these perceptions, noting that, "stating 'I would teach' is going to be preferred over 'I teach.'" in order to avoid directness. Participant A further supported this element, noting that hedging is used to "not appear uncaring." The impact of verb usage in Marshallese English is explored further in the discussion chapter.

Nouns. Noun and noun phrase variations were explored with interview Questions #3 and Question #4. Articles, plurality, and capitalization variations in the corpus were discussed with the participants. While participant D expressed having words for definite and indefinite articles, participant B related that they are not often used and it would be quite normal for them to be omitted in Marshallese. Plurality is not acknowledged with a suffix in Marshallese (participant B), and different words are used for people and things (participant B) to indicate plurality.

Marshallese recognizes differences in alienable and inalienable nouns through grammar constructs. An inalienable noun is defined as one that is permanently and

necessarily possessed, such as kinship or body parts while an alienable noun is not. Different grammatical rules are used in Marshallese, dependent on this designation and use. The status of a noun as alienable or inalienable was not clear with the participants, and therefore could not be addressed directly. Capitalization variations were explained by "not knowing the rules" (participant C); however, the connection with English and proper names of persons, places, or things and capitalization does exist in Marshallese (participant B).

General Reflections. To further describe their perceptions, the participants added extended insights on several issues, providing additional thoughts regarding Marshallese English and the variations in the corpus. The act of writing, regardless of language, was brought up as a factor. Participant A indicated that a writer may desire to have their written record be 'error free' and correct, unlike speech, which is more flexible, and could be attributed to "memorizing the English words". On the other hand, Participant C acknowledged that some "write like we talk" starting almost all things with the Marshallese equivalent of "You know what" to start a conversation. Two participants, B and D, mentioned word order in English as a challenging element, stating, that unlike in Marshallese, "the adjective goes before noun (in English)" (participant B) and "word order is challenging in English" (participant D). Participant D continued with their thoughts about the topic, noticing that Marshallese will use the same word for a noun / adjective variation (i.e. construct the house vs. the constructed house) and suggested that there may be a connection between this and the variations present in the corpus used for this study. Finally, Participant C noticed that Marshallese might be becoming "English-ized" and in the process of losing Marshallese terms and grammatical

structures. This line of discussion was also supported by participant D, who has noticed that Marshallese writing gets "pushed to the side" since English is the medium of instruction and that some of the youth do not consider Marshallese important, viewing English as the language of power. They have observed that for some youths communicating in English was easier. While not all of these reflections specifically address the research questions of this study, they do contribute to an extended discussion of Marshallese English.

Summary

The analysis of the academic writing corpus revealed distinctive elements and variations in Marshallese English. The low incidence of relatively common second language writing variations, combined with a prominent use of complex verb phrases, indicates that the variations present are reflective of Marshallese English and representative of intercultural influences. The culture member reflections extend the understanding of the quantitative findings, allowing for a deeper understanding of the language in context. The integration of Phase 1 and Phase 2 will be addressed in the Discussion Chapter.

CHAPTER V

Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize this research study and discuss the findings, implications, limitations, and recommendations for further research. Following a brief summary of the study, the findings of the quantitative and qualitative phases are discussed, including limitations. Integration of the phases is discussed, along with instructional implications and recommendations for further research.

Mixed Methods Research Study Summary

This study drew from Second Language Writing research and World Englishes, framed within Critical Theory and Critical Literacy. World Englishes refers to variations, identifying Inner Circle Englishes as the standard to which others are compared. World Englishes seeks to change the narrative from that of an error to one of a variation from a standard. Marshallese English is an Outer Circle language and the variations are representative of a World English that reflects the language and culture of the Marshallese. The variations are not simply errors in language proficiency. Within the body of differences, aspects of language and culture exist. The SLW tool of CALF measures was used in this study not to reinforce the concept of 'error' but to describe the elements within Marshallese English. On a surface level, the writing seemed fraught with errors. This research study revealed that while variations were indeed present, many can be associated with Marshallese English.

This research was designed to answer the research questions focusing on describing Marshallese English, and investigating connections between the ME variations and Marshallese. A corpus of English academic writing by Marshallese college students

needed to be collected. Phase 1 consisted of identifying participants, designing writing prompt questions and administration to increase reliability of the corpus, designing a system of anonymity for participants, administering, and transmitting the writing samples from Majuro, transcription of the handwritten writing samples and variation identification. Descriptive statistics were used to report the frequency of categories and types of variations. In Phase 2, culture member interviews were conducted to investigate the findings from Phase 1. Content analysis was used to identify significant statements from field notes taken during Phase 2. Participants from both phases are bilingual Marshallese / English, currently or recently residing in the RMI, and interested in the study. Integration of the phases is a discussed throughout this chapter.

Integration

The quantitative phase addressed Research Question #1: What variations are found in the English academic writing of Marshallese college students? The qualitative phase addressed Research Question #2: What lexical, syntactical, and cohesion elements and categories can be correlated to first language and culture influence? In this section, expected and surprising variations are discussed by category and function.

A refinement to Phase 1 was the delineation of the kinds of variations in the taxonomy. A key component of World Englishes is acknowledging that variations from the standard are defining factors for a World English. Beyond variations, investigation of elements in the corpus is necessary. Therefore, the research data from Phase 1 reported on lexical and syntactical items that were present in the data, as well as the variations from the standard. Phase 2 began the investigation of connecting elements of ME to Marshallese language and culture.

Variations

Bilingual non-native English speakers contributed to the written corpus. The appearance of subject / verb agreements, singular plural agreement variations, article usage variations, and collective noun usage was anticipated. These were frequent variations for non-native English speakers in academic writing. I anticipated more frequent spelling variations as the phoneme set differences between Marshallese and English is significant. The phoneme differences are a potential contributing factor for the frequency and details of variations. For example, it is possible that verb agreement issues could have been actually sound system driven variations, as final /t/ and /d/ are often reduced in speech in many languages.

The data revealed a seemingly random decision to capitalize or not capitalize a noun (n=225). An analysis of where this phenomena occurs indicated that common nouns were sometimes capitalized in addition to proper noun capitalization variations. This was noticed with the word *children* in the corpus. The following are a few examples of this variation:

when the Children are in school (line 972);

Today Children can speak english (line 221);

They always speak in Marshallese to their Children (970).

Additional examples of capitalization are *to help the Student develop Speaking the natural language* (line 187), and *If I become an Instructor* (line 156). Further evidence is found in line 729, "supposed to teach in the First language" and "helpful for marshallese students" (line 749), and similar examples where math is capitalized but English is not.

Efforts to identify a pattern with capitalization variations in this corpus was not conclusive. Capitalization of language designation, days of the week, and course names can be opaque to many writers, regardless of bilingual status. While it is common for words like English (as a language), Math class (as a college course), to vary greatly with regards to capitalization, often one way or the other is normally chosen by an individual within a specific language. Several informative examples were contained within individual participant writing samples that did not reflect this. 2 C-Units provided by the same participant capitalize high school when it was the writer's high school, and do not capitalize high school when it was their sibling's. "When I was in High School" (line 1547) and "Both my siblings that were in high school" (line 1572) highlight where at least some of the capitalization variations occurred. Another example of a similar capitalization variation from a different participant was illustrated with the words Marshallese and English. The words were capitalized when writing about our classroom, "Our classroom rule should be written in both Marshallese and English." (line 678). A few C-Units previously, the words were not capitalized in reference to a school subject, "every student needed to be taught in both english and marshallese" (line 669).

The linguistic phenomena of alienable and inalienable nouns in Marshallese (Bender, Capelle & Pagotto, 2016 pp. 123-142) suggest direction for further research into these variations. The status of a noun in Marshallese as inalienable, something that is permanently possessed, could be deeply reflected in Marshallese English. The documentation of the grammatical differences between inalienable and alienable nouns in Marshallese discussed the different grammatical details when an alienable noun is used, such as possession, change in part of speech, or functionality. English capitalizes proper

nouns as does Marshallese. The data in this study reflected that ME presents capitalization variations, such as *high school* and *High School*, depending on the writer's relationship with it. The relatively small corpus used for this study, generated from two specific writing prompts, indicated this could be an influence for ME. The specific nature of the writing prompts limited participant's vocabulary and context to accurately respond to them. Further investigation would inform this aspect of ME.

To more clearly understand the issue of alienable and inalienable nouns in Marshallese, an interview with a Marshallese language expert, and instructor for non-native Marshallese speakers, was held (Carbine, 2021). The issue of alienable and inalienable nouns and how they are handled grammatically in Marshallese revealed corroboration with my phase 2 participants and the Marshallese Reference Grammar (Bender, Capelle, & Pagotto, 2016). My hypothesis that at least some of the capitalization issues, such as *high school* when referring to a sibling's and *High School* when referring to one's own, had to do with alienable and inalienable status was supported.

In addition, through Marshallese language teaching materials, it was revealed that tense-mood-aspect markers occur before a verb, which are consequently not marked. Similar to other Micronesian languages, the tense-mood-aspect markers follow a marker for 'subject'. For example, "The children are happy." is expressed in Marshallese as "happy" before "children" (Carbine, 2021).

Marshallese uses what is referred to as causative prefixes to indicate adjective - verb meaning relationships. In English *be strong* indicates a state of being while *to strengthen* indicates to make strong(er). The Marshallese equivalents of *dipen* (be

strong) and kadipen (strengthen) illustrate this. A similar example is seen with weak (banban) and to weaken (kobanban). The index in the Marshallese Reference Grammar hints at the differences between Marshallese and English grammar with the subsections in the "verbs" entry (p. 337). The index lists the following topics in the verb subsection: antonymal verbs, back-and-forth verbs, distributive verbs, plural verbs of dimension, and possessed verbs. The last verb classes in this section of the index are verbs of empowerment, hunting and gathering, providing, tractability, wearing or using, indicating that there are different grammatical systems for each. This is important to this research study, not in an effort to fully describe Marshallese grammar, but to highlight Marshallese grammar topics and identify linguistic differences between English and Marshallese. ME as a situated language in use, reflects these and other linguistic differences, representative of the user's language and culture.

Lexical and Syntactical Elements

The relatively high use of relative clause markers in the corpus was distinctive, with complex, compound, and complex compound sentence structures occurring with high frequency. Examples of this from the corpus are *which is based mostly on the teachers and little on the students* (line 455) and *Some of which I would not believe* (line 2204). Non-native English speakers reach fluency with these grammar constructs later rather than earlier in the acquisition process. Marshallese syntax varies beyond word order difference with English, allowing for verbless sentences as well as copula deletion (Bender, Capelle, & Pagotto, 2016. pp. 269-277; Buchstaller & Willson, 2018). Verbless sentences are possible in Marshallese. Different grammatical tools, such as cleft sentences and sentence initial tense markers, are used to focus the meaning for verbless

sentences. The effective use of relative clauses in ME might be reflective of these differences.

Conditional tense use throughout the corpus was noted during the first coding cycles. Appropriate and grammatically correct usage of conditional tenses is an advanced language proficiency skill, often not mastered by non-native English speakers. Modality in the English verb phrase can be used to indicate a hedge. A hedge is an event in writing that qualifies the writer's statement to express politeness, opinions, or caution. The presence of these elements in the corpus might indicate a connection with Marshallese culture and language. The Phase 2 participants indicated these elements in the corpus as expected, reflecting Marshallese politeness strategies and communicative competency. Phase 2 participants engaged in hedging language within their interviews. Marshallese language and culture politeness strategies include processes for not asserting dominance, conveying caring, avoiding bragging or self-promotion. The antithesis of an individualistic culture, Marshallese value community, family, and an inner connected social network, often avoiding contradiction, direct answers, and participation in discussions. These understandings were explored by other scholars of Marshallese language and culture (see Barber, 2009; Berman, 2019; Nimmer, 2017). More concerned with the benefit of the group, individual accomplishments and assertions are avoided. English provides two language tools to successfully represent these values with hedging and conditional tense use.

Connections to Theoretical Framework

Integration of the quantitative and qualitative phases of this research study have important theoretical implications. With guiding frameworks of Critical Theory and Critical Literacy, the integral step of integration was supported.

The criticisms of Contrastive Rhetoric as a critical analysis tool (Connor, 2008; Connor, 2011, Kubota, 2018) highlight the hegemonic positioning of a better version of English. Intercultural Rhetoric (IR) expands that position to include contextualization of language in use (Connor, 2008 & 2011) and is supported by Critical Theory. This research study supports the position of IR through recognition of variations from a standard English that are representative of Marshallese English as a World English. Examining the corpus within the Marshallese context, the study extended the systematic analysis of Phase 1 with dynamic cultural facets, supportive of the tenets of Intercultural Rhetoric.

Critical Literacy has been utilized to help understand the relationship between power and language through analyzing and evaluating texts (Gee, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991; Widdowson, 1994). Critical literacy seeks to understand social constructs as they are evident in language and World Englishes describes situated language as reflective of the people who use it. Highlighting different points of view and connecting language with funds of knowledge, critical literacy practices help make sense of the systems. Both phases of this study are connected to Critical Literacy (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2006). The regularity of the category and element of the variations in Phase 1 indicated a strong connection with ME. Spelling issues, wrong word choices, and incomprehensible C-Units were rare in the data, and the word form and subject verb

variations appeared to be consistent. Finding that there were 1,379 of 2,442 C-Units (56.47 %) without a variation of any category, indicated a strong command of the written language as it was being used in context. Phase 2 further examined the language and culture connection, critically analyzing not only the variations from standard English, but evaluated linguistic elements present in the corpus. This research responded to scholars who have recently encouraged the integration and cooperation between Second Language Writing research and World Englishes research, discussing and investigating potential areas of common ground (see World Englishes, Special Volume 37).

Implications

Language, Identity, and Writing

Culturally responsive and sustaining education is a vital to inclusive pedagogy (Gay, 2000; Paris & Alim, 2017). Situating relevant epistemologies and ontologies within the Pacific Context concentrates these efforts (Naba-bobo, 2012). Decolonization is supported through understanding and valuing of indigenous ontologies and epistemologies. The study addressed several of the Phase 2 participants concerns that Marshallese takes a second position to English through recognizing the validity of Marshallese linguistic and cultural influences while embracing the variety. Descriptions of Micronesian Englishes are emerging. Regional connections with other Micronesian nations can support intercultural communication and relationships. This study adds to the body of knowledge and describes possible links between Marshallese and other Micronesian Englishes.

The description of ME supports the dual language and biliteracy conditions with an appreciation for and valuing of Marshallese in the Marshall Islands. Through

recognition of the Marshallese language and cultural elements that are present in ME, understanding and appreciation for these are deepened. Marshallese culture is, at least in part, reflected in Marshallese English.

Teachers, students, and communities can benefit from information on cultural and linguistic elements in Marshallese English. Schools and colleges that have Marshallese students will be better positioned to facilitate student success when they are aware of these connections. Through familiarity with the linguistic and cultural connections for Marshallese students, teachers, specialists, and schools can provide an asset based learning environment, fostering appreciation for their Marshallese students. Parental and familial involvement can be increased with inclusion of language, culture, and funds of knowledge assets, leading to stronger community ties and student success. The education community not only benefits from the understanding, but also promotes equity and inclusion for all.

Biliteracy Supporting Instruction

A stated goal of the Ministry of Education in the RMI is to increase biliteracy. This study supports student success in several ways. Instead of striving for a ‘native like proficiency’ the Marshallese style and variations can be embraced as positive reflections of the users. Focus of instruction can then be moved away from “Awful writing!” and “Do you even know what a sentence is?” feedback to targeted, relatable issues to facilitate academic communication.

Describing Marshallese English can also suggest areas of English grammar and communicative competency that are challenging. The phoneme set differences are significant, and can influence the literacy transfer from oral to written language. Specific

attention to English morphology can enhance a Marshallese student's understanding of the system, especially when paired with language correlations. Connections between languages and cultures fosters a deeper understanding and a recognition of value for all stakeholders.

The implications for immigrated populations are significant. Informing non-Marshallese teachers, administrators, and students of the cultural and linguistic connections with first and additional languages not only fosters appreciation for other funds of knowledge, but opens the door to exploring their own language and cultural representations therein. Literacy and writing instruction can be more productive for all students. Being able to discuss writing and its components, provide constructive and connected feedback, and acknowledging challenge areas creates a positive learning environment.

Limitations

Corpus Research

This was a unique study, with a corpus created with purposeful writing prompts. While 18,427 words and 2,442 C-Units were sufficient for this study, the corpus of written ME needs to be expanded. Replicating this study in different contexts could deepen the understanding of ME and the connections with Marshallese culture and language. This study did not focus on individual participants English writing proficiency; however, similar future studies could be used with that goal.

Experiential and environmental exposure to language contributes to and shapes language in use (Gee, 1991). Educational background, including secondary environments and tertiary experience also will influence language acquisition. The

participants were asked to share some of this information and 34 of the 35 participants completed the demographics form. Connecting the data, such as age, gender, home island, HS and graduation year could compromise participant identity. These elements are briefly discussed here, as information for future research studies as well as acknowledging potential limitations.

Phase 1 participants were almost evenly distributed by gender (female, n=15; male, n=19) and Majuro native (yes, n=15; no=19). The age range of the participants was 21-59, which indicates a wide variety of exposure time to English and perhaps disparate secondary and tertiary educational experiences. 86% of Phase 1 participants indicated that they had participated in Developmental Education courses in math, English or both (n=31), without specificity for which. The questions regarding English contact through family and friends living outside of the RMI, 11.5% (n=4) indicated they had no contact, another 11.5 % (n=4) indicated rare or infrequent contact, and the remainder 76% (n=26) had contact at least weekly and as frequently as daily. Language and language acquisition is a multi-dimensional process with a complex and adaptive system (Larson-Freeman, 2018). The effects of these experiences are highly individualized, but should not be ignored. An important influencing limitation could be language hierarchy and importance perceptions.

Culture Member Perceptions

While every effort was made to recruit a heterogenous group of participants for Phase 2, the group (n=5) was small. Conditions mandated virtual interviews for this phase, limiting time, interaction, and follow up. Each participant was careful to position their responses as reflective of their own understanding and experience, non-desirous to

speak as an authority. As noted by Nimmer (2017) and Berman (2019), a strong cultural influence of learning and teaching dynamics and positionality in society contributed to style and willingness to participate in this research. The purpose of Phase 2 was not to speak for the Marshallese and simply report ME but to suggest the connections between them exist and deserve further attention and discussion. Through identity and appreciation for the uniqueness of ME, bilingual and bicultural assets can be embraced.

Future Research

Expanding the Corpus

Additional linguistic aspects of Marshallese English are available in the corpus for study. With a larger corpus and an increased number of participants writing in various situations, the variations of Marshallese English could be further explained. There are other variables that could be considered. The effect of environmental language could be incorporated, or researched and connected, with a focus on one or more of the significant variations revealed in this study. Environmental language, such as videos, signage, television, and radio, could have an impact on Marshallese English. Research projects considering these factors would contribute to the body of knowledge for Marshallese English.

Other corpuses could be studied. Similar ME corpuses can be collected, perhaps from Marshallese college students attending off island institutions, or various age groups of emigrated Marshallese students residing in the United States. Additional research studies can investigate the correlations of the varieties of English for the languages in the Micronesian language group as well. Passive voice is another linguistic tool in English that removes agency from the subject and would be an informative investigation.

Project Design

An interesting revelation throughout the process of this research study phases, interviews, and research, was that a Latin grammar may be an inadequate tool with which to analyze and describe Marshallese. Latin grammar is familiar to western scholars, as it is widely used for non-Latin based (English) and Latin based language grammars (Carbine, 2021). However, like other Asian languages, Marshallese appears to have aspects of Austronesian language features and may be better served with a different or concurrent approach. Connections to the wider Asian language family tree are possible, as migration and contact over the centuries has been documented. The description of ME is impacted by this insofar as comparative analysis and translation are not sufficient.

Incorporating culture members throughout the research study was a cornerstone of this research study. From conferring with the College of the Marshall Islands IRB members, to college instructors and students, and with language experts for Phase 2, they brought the real world connections to this research study. Valuing and acknowledging the importance of representation in research, additional research and articles should include Marshallese scholars. Voice in the process, along with epistemological wisdom, are vital to contribute to the body of knowledge of Marshallese English.

Conclusion

The results of this mixed method study revealed potential connections of Marshallese English with Marshallese culture and language. The corpus data on variations that were present in the writing along with culture member interviews helped describe the results beyond the frequency analysis of the variations. This broad, unique attempt at analyzing a Marshallese English corpus contributed to the body of knowledge

of World Englishes, Marshallese English, and corpus analysis research. Grounding language research in relevant sociocultural contexts values all identities, languages, and cultures. A deeper appreciation for the Marshallese language was illustrated as the connections with Marshallese English continue to be investigated. Marshallese English is a situated language in use, defined by the people who use it, giving it life, credence, and validation, valuing the people who use it.

I invite Marshallese educators and scholars to contribute to the study of Marshallese English, offering their own explanations that will perhaps clarify and extend this initial study. I reported the findings of this study and do not have the ultimate answers for Marshallese English and connections with Marshallese language and culture. This research study revealed elements in a written corpus that further the discussion to include these connections. The evidence for Marshallese English was present in the data and supported the assertion that Marshallese English is a valid World English, worthy of further investigation.

This research study sought to understand the variations of Marshallese English, and identify the variations for ME as a World English. Marshallese English is used internationally, with Marshallese immigrants worldwide, as well as in the Republic of the Marshall Islands. World Englishes Outer Circle designations, where English is used in education and government, applies to the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Marshallese English is a valid World English, reflective of the people who use it.

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APPENDIX A

Code Book and Code Book Examples * **

articles: a, an, the use variation through addition or omission: *it depend on the reading and writing comprehension (addition, data line 1423), In classroom I can include (omission, data line 1445)*

sing/plural: plural noun variation, through overuse or underuse *so it was always about getting textook (data line 1539); collective noun use variation Childrens today (data line 1589)*

initial capital: word level variation with addition or omission of initial capital *All of My teacher (data line 404)*

missing word/wrong prep: word and preposition use variation through omission or substitution *you are in a complete different planet (data line 1133), They can ask questions anytime with blaming for disrespect (data line 531)*

subject/verb agreement: *like education back in the nineties were awesome (data line 559), when there are time (data line 709)*

verb tense: variations of time and modality *Obviously, it because I has schooling in the outer island (1727)*

word form/wrong word: variations in word choice or part of speech *understand the important of their mother tongue (data line 1427), and it sometimes makes me embarass (data line 1664)*

word order: variations of word order *They after tell me to translate them (data line 1949)*

spelling: variations of spelling *They have lot of meterials to use today (data line 206),*
because teachers are starding to the QPF (data line 449)

* exemplar line may contain additional variations

** data line number references C-Unit Data Set

APPENDIX B

IRB letters of approval SHSU and College of the Marshall Islands

Sam Houston State University IRB-2020-247 - Initial: Exempt from IRB Review - COVID-19
orsp@irb.shsu.edu

Thu 10/15/2020 4:28 PM

To: Pagels, Jill; Petron, Mary;
Cc: Miles, Sharla;

TO: Jill Pagels Mary Petron
 FROM: SHSU IRB
 PROJECT TITLE: Language, Identity, and Writing: Investigating Marshallese English Through Academic Writing
 PROTOCOL #: IRB-2020-247
 SUBMISSION TYPE: Initial
 ACTION: Exempt
 DECISION DATE: 2020-10-15

EXEMPT REVIEW CATEGORY: Category 3.(i)(A). Research involving benign behavioral interventions in conjunction with the collection of information from an adult subject through verbal or written responses (including data entry) or audiovisual recording if the subject prospectively agrees to the intervention and information collection.

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Category 3.(i)(B). Research involving benign behavioral interventions in conjunction with the collection of information from an adult subject through verbal or written responses (including data entry) or audiovisual recording if the subject prospectively agrees to the intervention and information collection.

Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation.

Greetings,

Thank you for your submission of Initial Review materials for this project. The Sam Houston State University (SHSU) IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

Since **Cayuse** IRB does not currently possess the ability to provide a "stamp of approval" on any recruitment or consent documentation, it is the strong recommendation of this office to please include the following approval language in the footer of those recruitment and consent documents: IRB-2020-247/2020-10-15.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

*** What should investigators do when considering changes to an exempt study that could make it nonexempt?**

It is the PI's responsibility to consult with the IRB whenever questions arise about whether planned changes to an exempt study might make that study nonexempt human subjects research.

In this case, please make available sufficient information to the IRB so it can make a correct determination.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 936-294-4875 or irb@shsu.edu. Please include

your project title and protocol number in all correspondence with this committee.

Sincerely,

Chase Young, Ph.D.
Chair, IRB
Hannah R. Gerber, Ph.D.
Co-Chair, IRB

College of the Marshall Islands IRB

Cheryl Vila <cvila@cmi.edu>
Wed 11/18/2020 6:01 PM
Cc:

IRB <cmi.irb@cmi.edu>

Dear Miss Pagels,

Today, November 19, after successfully addressing the revisions asked and through the expedited review conducted, CMI IRB has approved your application for the project "Language, identity, and writing: investigating marshallese english through academic writing", with IRB Research Project ID Number CMI IRB 2020-004. This approval expires on November 19, 2021.

Dr. Heather Zimmerman will continuously be monitoring your project for the safety of the research subjects. The privacy and anonymity of subjects must be maintained where possible and appropriate. Appropriate safeguards must be in place to avoid the accidental or incidental revelation of a subject's identity.

In case of adverse events, a report must be filled immediately (within 7 days) with the CMI IRB Chair using the adverse events reporting form. Changes in protocol shall be reported to the CMI IRB Chair either within seven days in the case of a change in study protocol to eliminate an immediate hazard, or prior to making the change in any other case. These forms are available on the CMI IRB webpage - <http://www.cmi.edu/about-cmi/institutional-research/institutional-review-board/>

A review, which shall include evidence of informed consent and any results, will be conducted. by CMI IRB six months from the date of approval or as needed by the CMI IRB.

At the conclusion of the research project, a report of findings, documentation of informed consent if not provided in an earlier periodic review, and publications should be shared with the CMI IRB via the Chair.

If you have any questions, please get in touch with me.

Congratulations and we wish you the best in your research!

Kind regards,
Cheryl Vila
Director
Institutional Research and Assessment
College of the Marshall Islands

VITA

Jill S. Pagels

GRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOW

6/19 – 8/20 Sam Houston State University Huntsville, TX

4+1 TEACH grant, The School of Teaching and Learning; Support the 4+1 TEACH alternative teacher certification program through course instruction, student mentoring, data collection and analysis.

Responsible for intern student teacher ongoing instruction, support, supervision and evaluation.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

1/16-present Sam Houston State University Huntsville, TX

School of Teaching and Learning (previously Languages Literacy and Special Populations)

Undergraduate Instructor

-Deliver all instruction for undergraduate Education students in Bilingual / ESL and Teaching ESL courses, READ Literacy Block for Middle Grades, READ content area literacy EC-6..

- Supervise field experience for teacher candidates, monitor progress, provide feedback
- Online, blended, and traditional course format delivery

6/16-8/18 Lone Star College System University Park Campus

Instructor, English for Speakers of Other Languages Department Spring, TX

- Design and deliver ESOL instruction in academic writing and grammar courses
- Reading and oral communication courses

6/14-01/16 KAUST International University, Thuwal, Saudi Arabia

Graduate STEM Student English for Academic Purposes Instructor

- Design and instruct academic writing for PhD students
- Design courses and instruct international ESL students
- Design and instruct Summer Bridge Academic Language Program for recent undergraduates to matriculate at KAUST.

6/10-6/14 KAUST-The KAUST School, IB International School, Thuwal, Saudi Arabia

S T E M – ESL Specialist (grades 6-12)

- International Baccalaureate: Diploma Program ESL interdisciplinary coordinator
- International Baccalaureate: Middle Years Program ESL math and science ESL co-teaching and direct instruction
- Teacher Education re: collaborative models and Second Language Instruction

2007-2010 College of the Marshall Islands

Majuro, Republic of the Marshall Islands

Adjunct Instructor

- ESL instructor, Developmental Education Division
- Summer Bridge Program-Language module develop and deliver

2006-2010 Majuro Co-Operative School

Majuro, Republic of the Marshall Islands

ESL Program Coordinator, Classroom teacher

- Deliver all instruction for grades 2 and 3
- Research and design an ESL program specific to Marshallese speakers
- Implement program, in-service and teacher mentoring

EDUCATION

Edd, Literacy; 2019-2021; Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX

MA: International Literacy and Applied Linguistics; 2011-2013 Sam Houston State University Huntsville, TX

- Outstanding Graduate Student Recognition Award (from Reading Department)

Inservice programs for teachers on various topics for teaching diverse student populations, linguistics, second language acquisition, and adapting curriculum and instruction for unique and specific need groups. (2006-2019)

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS:

Adult ESL students and academic language proficiency. Co-presenter, Madhu Tandon. ESOL Symposium, March 20, 2017. Lone Star Community College System.

International Education: Experience and Lessons. Panel discussion for educators in cross cultural experiences. Fostering appreciation, methods of communication and building capacity. Universality Global Education Conference: February 19-20, 2019. Sam Houston State University.

Contextualize! Giving it meaning; Recognizing value; Adding strength. Closing plenary for Segundo Congreso, Enseñanza de Ingles en Escuelas Normales, (Monterrey Mexico) Nov. 28-29, 2019. Emphasizing the importance of contextualizing theory, method and teaching.

Decolonizing Teacher Education Preparation Programs: A case for the Marshall Islands. Universality Global Education Conference: February 20-21, 2020. Sam Houston State University

Trauma Effects Our Students: Using Trauma Informed Instruction. Texas Association for Literacy Education (TALE) Conference: February 27-28, 2020.

Designing an Interculturally Sensitive Mixed Methods Study. TESOL International, Intercultural Communication Doctoral Lightning Talks. February, 2021.

Social Constructs are not Universal Truths: Learning to Safely and Non-Judgmentally Integrate New Ways of Knowing and New Found Awareness. Diversity Leadership Conference, Sam Houston State University. February 26, 2021.

Marshallese English: Preliminary Findings in Academic Writing. Universality Global Education Conference: March 5, 2021.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENTS

February 15, 2021. Present faculty and administration key cultural and linguistic concepts to enhance education of Marshallese students at all levels of K-12 education. Keene, Texas Independent School District, Keene, TX (via zoom)

April 19, 2021. Present professional development for junior high faculty to facilitate and increase academic success for Marshallese students.

INTERESTS

Rhetoric analysis, grammar inter-lingual interaction, and international travel

References are available on request.