EXPERIENCES OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN DEVELOPMENTAL

EDUCATION AT A TEXAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

_____

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership

Sam Houston State University

_____

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

_____

by

Ivory D. Jones

May, 2022

EXPERIENCES OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN DEVELOPMENTAL

EDUCATION AT A TEXAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

by

Ivory D. Jones

_____

APPROVED:

Peggy Holzweiss, PhD
Committee Director

Nara Martirosyan, EdD
Committee Member

Ricardo Montelongo, PhD
Committee Member

Stacey Edmonson, EdD
Dean, College of Education

DEDICATION

I dedicate all that I do to my children; Heaven, Kylan, and Alandre. The three of you make me proud to be a mom. I started this journey to show you all that hard work, dedication, and perseverance will help you reach your goals. The journey may be long and rough, but you will get there. I love y'all!

I dedicate this dissertation to those who I love but are no longer here. My grandfather J.C. Jones, my uncle William "Wild Bill" Jones, my cousin Tocarro Swanson-Sanders, and my son Alandre Mallard. Although not here physically, always with me in spirit.

ABSTRACT

Jones, Ivory D., *Experiences of international students in developmental education at a Texas community college*. Doctor of Education (Developmental Education Administration), May, 2022, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas.

Literature on international students discusses the creation of programs to assist with adjustment to U.S. education, explores negative experiences on campus and in the surrounding community, and discusses in-classroom experiences for ethnic groups within the international student population. Within the literature, developmental education articles discuss language acquisition and proficiency concerns at the university level. The developmental education literature does not discuss international student experiences in an English Second language (ESL) program through the student perspective at the community college level.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of international students in an English Second Language program at a Texas community college. This study utilized Schlossberg's Transition Model as a guide to explore factors that positively influence or hinder students' transition through developmental education. Research questions examined the lived experiences of international students. Purposeful sampling was used to identify eight international students on F-1 student visas. Data collection consisted of anonymous interviews. Moustakas (1994) transcendental phenomenological methods for qualitative inquiry were used to analyze data: bracketing, identifying themes, textural descriptions, structural descriptions, and synthesis of themes. Tentative codes were applied for the interview data to find commonalities in the participants' words. The codes were refined and collected into themes. The study revealed themes of (a) prior learning experiences, (b) reasons for learning English in the

U.S., (c) social interactions, and (d) progress with learning English. The findings from this study revealed positive and negative factors influenced international student experiences, affecting their satisfaction with their progression in English language learning. It was recommended community colleges employ cost-effective strategies to assist international students with transitioning to post ESL objectives. Suggestions for future research were discussed.

KEY WORDS: International students, English Second Language, Developmental education, Qualitative research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

work with professionals who support student and employee success at the community college.

I cannot thank my family and friends enough for supporting me throughout this journey. Thank you daddy, Daveleous Jones, for financial, spiritual, and emotional support, and always answering when I call (inside joke). Thank you mommy, Beverly Williams, for being a strong supporter. Thank you Anissa Smith for being a proof reader, a listener, and being there for me always. Thank you favorite Aunt Julie for putting me on a better trajectory than I was going. Thank you favorite Aunt Donna for laughter and being cool. Thank you Mr. and Mrs. Mallard Sr. and family for feeding me and welcoming me into your homes. Thank you big sister Crystal Thomas for years of friendship and support. Thank you brothers, cousins, and all for giving even the smallest contribution.

A big THANK YOU to Keith Mallard. You are my husband, my best friend, the love of my life, my world. You have been with me through it all and I can never thank you enough for giving me your best.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

Introduction

International students in American education dates back to the mid-1800's (Bevis & Lucas, 2007). The first international students, from China and India, arrived in America seeking new learning opportunities (Bevis & Lucas, 2007). By the 1900's, international student enrollment began to increase and more countries began sending students to America (Bevis & Lucas, 2007). International students bring a variety of cultural perspectives and traditions, and contribute to making America more diverse. Currently, the United States has the largest international student population with over one million students enrolled at higher education institutions (International Student, 2020).

International students face unique challenges as new students in American education (Yan & Pei, 2018). The path for Texas international students who desire to earn a degree begins with the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA). The TSIA is a test used by Texas institutions to determine if the student has academic skills necessary for college-level work. Students must score 351 on the reading section, 350 on the math section, and a minimum of 4 on the writing section (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [THECB], 2018). Students who do not successfully meet required minimum scores are required to enroll into developmental education (THECB, 2018). Some students may be required to show English proficiency by taking the Test of English as a Foreign language (TOEFL), or another English proficiency exam. Students who are more deficient in English may be required to enroll in an Intensive English developmental education program or an English Second Language (ESL) program that will help strengthen English communication skills (Houston Community College [HCC],

2018). Developmental education assists underprepared students by providing instruction in areas of math, reading, or writing. Developmental education courses do not contribute credit towards degree completion and require successful completion before enrollment in a college-level course (Hodara & Xu, 2018).

Previously, developmental education followed traditional sequences. Traditional courses were arranged in levels, where the most deficient students would start at the lowest level. This is also true of English Second Language (ESL) programs. After successful completion of one level (a grade of A, B, or C), the student would enroll in the next level and proceed on this path until the sequence was completed. The system of traditional sequences meant some students would remain in the sequence longer. Traditional sequences, like college-level courses, spanned the entire semester. To decrease the time needed for pre-college instruction, some institutions implemented accelerated courses (Johnson & Rose, 2015; Saxon, Martirosyan, & Vick, 2016). Accelerated courses require less in class time and provide a quicker pace to degree or certificate attainment (Johnson & Rose, 2015). Institutions can merge two (or more) courses into one course, shortening the amount of time a student is in developmental education courses. Institutions have different models to choose from and may implement one or more models to assist students. For example, some institutions implemented integrated reading and writing (IRW) courses. This accelerated model allowed institutions to combine a developmental reading course and a developmental writing course into one class. IRW is the integration of both a developmental reading course and a developmental writing course (HCCS, 2018). Administrators enroll students who need more academic preparation into the course with hopes that the course will strengthen

skills, decrease time in a developmental sequence, and increase persistence (Saxon et al., 2016). The popularity of IRW courses has increased and many community colleges have significantly decreased traditional reading and writing courses (Boylan, Calderwood, & Bonham, 2017). The accelerated model also extends to programs to assist students with progression through programs that may otherwise take several semesters to complete.

Another accelerated model is corequisite pairing. Corequisite means two or more courses are taken simultaneously. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board introduced House Bill 2223, requiring all Texas higher education institutions to create and implement corequisite courses for developmental education students (THECB, 2018). At one Texas community college, students enroll in an integrated reading and writing course, a companion course designed to help with IRW topics, and first-year English. The student must take all three courses in the same semester. As institutions aim to decrease the amount of time in developmental courses and quicken the pace to degree completion, students are more likely to be enrolled in corequisite courses than traditional courses. At the same institution, corequisite course also extends to ESL courses. Depending on the student's placement test scores, students can enroll in a corequisite intensive English course and first-year college English. Like IRW, the intensive English course was designed to assist English language learners with language building skills to support success in college level courses.

When higher education administrators discuss developmental education, the conversation focuses on developmental education in its entirety. Bailey, Jeong, and Cho (2010) state that the debate often cites developmental education as skills students should have acquired through K-12 education. International education may not emphasize the

same topics or have the same structure as the American education system. For example, in the developing country of Indonesia, equal access to quality education is not available for all and there is a lack of high school teachers (Sukarno & Haryati, 2015). In another example, Alcazeren and Rafanan (2017) found that some countries have different language learning policies. Some countries instruct students in native languages but others emphasize instruction in English. Students from different countries, cultural backgrounds, socioeconomic statuses, and educational experiences offer variability in educational foundations. Developmental education may not be part of some educational systems. Administrators at American institutions should not assume that every country adheres to the same standard of educational topics and structure as the American education system.

In the state of Texas, the THECB sets reading and writing standards (both subjects are identified together as English/Language Arts, or ELA). The standards consist of skills all students should have prior to entry for college. Reading standards include reading, listening, making inferences, speaking, comprehension of various texts, and research skills (THECB, 2018). For writing, students should be able to compose fluent, cohesive paragraphs, articulate ideas in writing, refine writing, and use appropriate American Standard English (THECB, 2018). The standards set by THECB can be challenging for domestic students. These same standards may be more challenging for international students due to unfamiliarity with American college life, language, and cultural barriers.

Developmental education is modeled after traditional college courses, lasting an entire semester. The semester long classes increase students' time in developmental

education before reaching college level courses (Bailey & Cho, 2010). The cost for a college course and a developmental course are the same, but developmental education courses do not count towards degree completion. The added cost of non-credit bearing developmental education courses may cause financial hardships, which can affect retention in both domestic and international students. For international students, institutions typically have higher tuition and fees. International student fees are usually not covered by financial aid (HCCS, 2020). Having to pay for more courses can have a long term financial impact for international students.

The need for developmental education is evident as community colleges face the challenge of providing instruction that increases student academic abilities (Bailey et al., 2010). According to the THECB (2019), 58% of first-year community college students were not prepared to take college-level courses in 2018. At one community college in Texas, 15% of the student population enrolled in at least one developmental education course (math, reading, and writing) for the fall 2018 term. Of the 15% of developmental education students, international students represented 11% (1,791 students). The percentages for international students in ESL programs are not reported like other developmental education courses. For example, one institution reports the ESL student count with other programs such as adult high school or adult education courses.

Language barriers may be one reason why international students are placed in developmental education. Kuo (2011) found that language barriers prevented students from effectively communicating with their peers and increased difficulty in understanding their professors, and made it difficult to express their needs to their advisor. International student language barriers could also affect their ability to seek out

services. For instance, many institutions offer nonacademic and academic support to domestic and international students. Students are familiar with academic support such as in-class discussions with the instructor or tutoring but may not fully be aware of the benefits of non-academic support. Nonacademic support consists of services such as financial support, student life programs, and other programs designed to move students toward their academic goals (Community College Research Center [CCRC], 2013). Institutions can implement many nonacademic supports and each support has varying effects. For example, student success courses were designed to teach time management strategies, study skills, and develop college ready behaviors (Center for Community College Student Engagement [CCSE], 2013; CCRC, 2013). Although student success courses appear to be academic courses, the courses introduce nonacademic support systems such as computer labs to enhance academic learning. The systems put in place help students progress through academic courses. The CCRC reports that the behaviors learned during success courses fade within two semesters (CCRC, 2013). Institutions should offer comprehensive services to assist students with completing college, and to create a sense of belonging and connection with international students (CCRC, 2013).

Problem Statement

International students arrive at colleges across the nation with different skills and experiences with the English language. The ability to read and write in English is essential for students who wish to progress in the American education system or job market. The desire to progress culturally, socially, and financially resides in successful transition through an English language program and many international students look to language programs at community colleges to meet their learning needs (Kurzet, 1997;

Becker, 2011). Community colleges are faced with the challenge of providing services that meet the needs of such a large and diverse population. Some challenges are curriculum, pace of course, absorption of content, how to prepare students for continued academic progress and preparation for a dynamic job market, and availability of resources. Other matters such as living arrangements, transportation, books, and meals may affect international students as they navigate an ESL program. According to Kurzet (1997) ESL programs are often organizationally separated from other programs. Social isolation from other students may deepen the social divide between international students and domestic students. Wang and BrckaLorenz's (2018) study revealed that international students rarely interacted or engaged with domestic students because their focus was on academic issues, interactions with faculty, and technology use in the classroom. A more in-depth exploration to determine if students' needs are being met could assist institutions with understanding the needs of such a diverse population.

It is not understood how international students feel about developmental education nor how their experiences affect their long-term academic performance. Developmental education is often stigmatized and students who are required to enroll in developmental education may feel ashamed or embarrassed. Conversely, developmental education may help international students adapt to American college life (Poyrazli & Isaiah, 2018). A combination of internal and external factors can ultimately affect persistence for international students (Mamiseishvili, 2012). Without a documented account of their experiences, it is difficult to assume how international students feel about and experience developmental education.

Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the experiences of international students in an English Second Language program at a Texas community college. Students not only manage their international status but now must contend with becoming more fluent in English in order to reach their academic and long-term goals. The reflections from their experiences will provide a deeper understanding of international students' attitudes toward English language learning, and may provide a more holistic view on the needs of international students. As more institutions and higher education officials predict a continued decline in international students (Usher, 2019), understanding their experiences and needs may help with recruiting new international students and retaining current international students.

As institutions aim to recruit and retain international students, examining their academic experiences is essential (Jennings, 2017). Additionally, institutions should explore both nonacademic and academic factors that influence college preparedness for international students. By exploring the combination of nonacademic and academic factors, administrators create a holistic view of the international student experience and may better understand how each factor influences international student success. It is important for institutions to consider how international students perceive and experience their education, even if the student is not in credit-bearing courses.

Significance

During the 2015-2016 academic year, the international student population at American institutions reached over one million students (Jennings, 2017; Poyrazli & Isaiah, 2018). The number of students choosing U.S. institutions began to decline in

2016 and by the 2017-2018 academic year, international student enrollment decreased by 6.6 percent (Usher, 2019). The decline was smaller for undergraduate institutions and at institutions that are not highly selective, about 2 percent or less (Usher, 2019). The decline in international students is most often linked to strict immigration guidelines implemented by the Trump administration. Other reasons for the decline in international students include hostile on-campus and off-campus environments (Yan & Pei, 2018), financial issues, and recruitment by less hostile countries (Usher, 2019). Another factor that has contributed to the decline of international students is the COVID-19 pandemic. According to an Open Doors report (2020), the pandemic has caused new international student enrollment to fall by 43%. As international students search for more options to pursue their education needs, U.S. institutions may continue to see a decline in students (Usher, 2019).

International students at higher education institutions directly influence local and national economies (NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2019). During the 2017-2018 academic year, international students contributed $39 billion dollars to the national economy and $2.2 billion dollars to the Texas economy (NAFSA, 2019). In some instances, international students remain in the local economy making lasting contributions (Yan & Pei, 2018; Usher, 2019). In the 2017 – 2018 academic year, international students in Texas stimulated job growth with 26,194 jobs created or added to the economy (NAFSA, 2019). According to the Association for International Educators, Texas international enrollment decreased from 84,348 students during the 2017-2018 academic year to 81,893 students during the 2018-2019 academic year (NAFSA, 2018; Institute of International Education, 2019). This decline is across all

academic programs. In addition to the economic benefits, international students also bring new traditions and cultural value to the institution and the surrounding community (Poyrazli & Isaiah, 2018). An exploration of international students experience from developmental education through graduation could identify opportunities to retain international students.

Research Question

The following research question will guide this study: What are the experiences of international students in an English Second Language program at a selected community college in Texas?

Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the experiences of international students in an ESL program at a Texas community college. Using Schlossberg's Transition Model (STM) as a guide, this dissertation will explore factors that positively influence or hinder retention for international students as they transition through developmental education. According to Schlossberg (2012), transitions affect an individual's social interaction, psychological well-being, and physical health (Schlossberg, 2012). Schlossberg identified four resources to manage transitions: situation, self, support, and strategies (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2012). The four resources, collectively 4 S, influence the individual's response and transition management. Individuals continuously cycle through the 4 S's as they transition across different points throughout their life. The 4 S model is often used in counseling adults and provides a framework to explore international student experiences and perceptions about developmental education.

Transition Types

Schlossberg identified three transition types. Unanticipated events are transition events the individual is unprepared to manage and the events can be indicative of a possible crisis (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2012). For international students, unanticipated events can include governmental changes affecting visa status, enrollment in developmental education courses, or being unprepared for cultural changes at an institution. An anticipated event is an event that is expected, and the individual may have prepared to manage the change (Anderson et al., 2012). An example of an anticipated event is enrolling in college. Nonevents are anticipated events that did not occur (Anderson et al., 2012). An example of a nonevent could be a student not being accepted into a program when the student assumed they would be accepted.

Understanding transition types may help developmental reading and writing administrators focus on improving academic and social experiences for international students. Transitions require change, and reactions to change vary from person to person. The same transition event may have a different meaning for those experiencing the event. For one student, moving to a new country could represent independence or starting new, but could mean sadness, isolation, or even loss of social status for another student. The 4 S's should be considered as resources that an individual has to balance the effects of change (Schlossberg, 2011). The following sections will discuss the 4 S's and explore how each is connected to international student experiences.

Situation

Situation requires understanding the start of the transition. Several factors influence the individual's situation (Anderson et al., 2012; Workman, 2015). The

individual becomes internally and externally aware of an event. This awareness

generates the onset of a transition (Anderson et al., 2012). Examples of internal

awareness may be motivation, stress, and fluctuations in health (Anderson et al., 2012;

McCoy, 2014). Examples of external awareness events are moving to a new country,

events affecting a loved one, starting a new career, or beginning educational pursuits

(Workman, 2015).

According to Anderson et al. (2012), a stressful situation often generates other

transitional moments or other stress situations. For example, an international student may

experience increased stress by having to take a placement exam (stressful situation), and

then be required to enroll in a developmental reading and writing course (transition)

because of a lack of pre-college preparation (stressful situation). This example of a

negative stressful situation is one example how international students may experience

feelings such as anger, embarrassment, jealousy, even confusion. As the student

transitions into needing the developmental courses, other situations such as managing a

prolonged educational career or a decreased desire to attend college may occur.

Conversely, an international student may see the situation as positive. The student may

welcome the opportunity to immerse himself or herself in higher education, improve

English skills, or learn more about American culture. Students who view the experience

positively may welcome the opportunity to improve their college experience.

Timing and Duration. The timing and duration of an event are critical in

determining if the transition is welcomed or unwelcomed (Anderson et al., 2012). As the

individual recognizes the existence of an event, timing becomes critical (Anderson et al.,

2012). The individual questions their time availability to manage a situation and if the

situation has arrived at a good or bad time. The length of time, or duration, helps the individual determine if the situation is manageable. Duration requires the individual to evaluate the time length for the situation (how long the situation will last), and the length of time influences how the individual will stabilize from the transition (Anderson et al., 2012). An international student may consider time in a developmental reading and writing course as a situation the student will move through quickly or see the course as a waste of time and resources.

      Control and Role Change. Transition management requires the individual to recognizing the amount of control he or she has over the situation (Anderson et al., 2012). According to Anderson et al., control may be internal or external, but the individual's response determines ability to control a situation. The degree to which an individual has control may result in a loss of a role or the addition of a role. For example, a loss of role would be no longer being a student because of failed courses. Conversely, an addition of role would be a student newly elected as president to a student organization. Any type of role change can increase stress levels (Anderson et al., 2012) causing the individual to further weigh the negative and positive factors in a situation.

      Assessment, Previous Experiences, and Situation Review. During assessment, the individual evaluates responsibility for the situation; whether the situation was caused by their actions or by the actions of others (Anderson et al., 2012). International students may assess if their intellectual abilities or if the institution's actions are the reason they are in developmental courses. Prior experience influences situation management. Successful management of a previous, similar experience makes it more likely an individual will persevere in the current situation (Anderson et al., 2012). Data describing

international students and course repeating patterns is not available, nor is it known if this data is collected at any institution. Assessment and previous experiences are two components that individuals use to progress toward successful situation management. Successful management is contingent on timing and current factors for the individual (Anderson et al., 2012). The individual will continue to review the situation and its impact on their life.

Self

The individual's thoughts and self-view underlie transition management (Anderson et al., 2012). Socioeconomic status, gender, age, mental and physical health, and outlook on life are just a few of the characteristics that influence transition management (Anderson et al., 2012; McCoy, 2014). A confident individual will more likely see the situation as temporary and can make internal and external adjustments to cope with a situation. A less confident individual may struggle and may lose control over the situation.

Support

Having a support system is critical in transitions (Anderson et al., 2012). With support, the individual has more resources for transition management. Support may come from family, friends, institutions, or community entities (Anderson et al., 2012; McCoy, 2014; Workman, 2015). At higher education institutions, institutional support for international students can include resources such as supplemental instructors, tutors, financial support, peer support, or emotional support. Most colleges make these support systems readily available to all students. Further expanding institutional support to include interpreters who may be able to explain assignments to students in different

languages or tutors who have access to interpreting software, are added support systems that could help international students in developmental reading and writing courses. Furthermore, a lack of comprehensive institutional support can lead to a decline in available resources for international students and effect transition management for the individual.

Strategies

Transition management requires utilizing or acquiring coping strategies (Anderson et al., 2012). Anderson et al. view coping strategies as the actions the individual takes to decrease stress. The individual must decide what strategies are useful in identifying meaning in the transition and utilizing more than one strategy can aid in successful transition. Successful actions may lessen the negative effects of transitions. The individual may employ strategies such as joining a support group, asking for assistance, or find new coping strategies. Some cultural norms may prevent students from seeking needed help. Liu, Keeley, and Buskist (2015) revealed that Chinese students preferred traditional teacher-student roles and would be less likely to interact with support services such as tutoring. A teacher may want to employ more proactive techniques where the teacher reaches out to the student. In this instance, the teacher may also introduce more strategies such as discussing the benefits of tutoring and other support services offered by the institution.

Definition of Terms

Some terms are used throughout this dissertation and are defined in this section for clarity: developmental education and international student.

Developmental Education

Developmental education is defined by the National Center for Developmental Education (2019) as the academic and personal growth of underprepared college students through instruction, counseling, advising, and tutoring. In recent years, the term developmental education is often used interchangeably with the term college readiness. For this study, developmental education also includes the English Second Language (ESL) program as the students in this program are not prepared to take college level English. The ESL program is managed by the selected institution's college readiness division.

International Student

International students will be defined as individuals who have transitioned from one country to another to pursue academic goals (Mori, 2000). For this dissertation, an international student is any student who has applied for admissions and enrolled with the institution's International Student Office.

Delimitation

The delimitation for this study is participant selection. This study will explore the experiences of international students enrolled in an ESL program at a selected community college in Texas. The ESL program also provides instruction to domestic students who are English language learners. Focusing on one context will allow me to explore resources and experiences of international students in the selected program.

Limitation

The limitation for this study is transferability. This study is specific to international students at a Texas community college. Participant experiences may be typical to the selected state and community college but not typical to other states, colleges, universities, or other higher education institutions. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest using thick descriptions. Thick descriptions allow the researcher to provide elaborate descriptions detailing the setting, participant movements, participant expressions, and themes emerging from participant experiences to determine transferability to other settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Thick description is shared in this study, but caution should be used when applying results in other contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Assumptions

Two assumptions underlie this study. First, it is assumed that all participants have experienced the developmental education phenomenon. Second, it is assumed the participants will answer truthfully regarding their experience. To decrease the likelihood a participant will fear punishment for their answer, participants will remain anonymous and be assigned a pseudonym. Additionally, participants volunteer to be interviewed and may leave the study at any time without penalty.

Bracketing

Bracketing, or setting aside experiences to have a fresh perspective about the phenomenon, allows the researcher to describe their experiences and views with the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Describing experiences allows the researcher to acknowledge and set aside their biases about the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I

have experienced developmental reading and writing at the selected community college. During my time at the community college, traditional sequences were still used. I, like many other students, did not believe that I belonged in developmental education. Being forced to complete sequences and not allowed to re-take the test that placed me into the course, deepened my confusion and anger. I am aware that my negative experiences could skew my perceptions. As I work with international students, I am sympathetic to challenges international students endure. I have encountered students who expressed problems such as poor advising, financial issues, and stressful interactions with teachers and students. Throughout the data collection process, I will bracket out my experiences by using a reflexive journal. I am confident that I will remain neutral and allow the participants to tell their story.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation contains five chapters. Chapter I introduces the study, the problem statement, significance of the study, statement of purpose, research questions, theoretical framework, definition of terms, delimitations and limitations, assumptions, and discusses the researcher's experience with developmental education and international students. Chapter II is a literature review describing available literature on international students, international students' interactions with faculty, peers, and others, the interaction of nonacademic and academic support for international students, developmental education for international students, and concludes with a summary of the chapter. Chapter III describes the research questions, context of the study, research design, participant selection, data collection, instrumentation, data analysis, role of the researcher, trustworthiness, and concludes with a summary of the chapter. Chapter IV

will describe the interviews with participants, themes emerging from the interviews, synthesis of theme meanings, and concludes with a summary of the findings. Chapter V discusses the findings for each research question, offers recommendations for best practices, and concludes with recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the experiences of international students in an English Second Language program at a Texas community college. A literature review was conducted using Sam Houston State University's Engine Orange search engine. Another search was conducted exploring international students and college. The search yielded an abundance of literature discussing the creation of programs to assist international students with adjustment to American education, negative experiences for international students on campus and in the surrounding community, and in-classroom experiences for ethnic groups within the international student population. This search also produced developmental education articles about international students. The developmental education articles discussed language acquisition and proficiency concerns. The developmental education literature does not discuss experiences in an English Second language program through the student perspective at the community college level.

This dissertation aims to fill in the gap in literature on experiences for international students. The majority of the literature surrounding international students focuses on experiences at the university level. Studies exploring the international student experience at the community college level is sparse. Developmental education policy makers and institutional leaders tend to focus on quantitative data, treating developmental education students as a monolith for decision making. Minimal attention focuses on the experiences of populations within developmental education. An exploration from the student perspective provides a comprehensive view of the international student

experience. Institution administrators will gain insight on how changes in developmental education programs influence success for international students. For example, understanding how the pace of English learning course effects learning, how course content should be aligned for future college level courses, what credentialing for instructors is necessary, and the availability of support services can help make adjustments to developmental education programs. Those adjustments could also be used to develop retention strategies for international students. Without an account of the student experience, opportunities to retain international students may be overlooked.

The first section of this literature review discusses retention for international students. Retention strategies include engagement opportunities, interactions with peers, and interactions with faculty. The second section explores literature that discusses the interaction between nonacademic support services and academic support services, and how to connect international students with available services. The final section will focus on international students in developmental education. This section includes the placement of international students into developmental education, English language learning, and ESL programs.

Retention of International Students

There are many theories that explore retention for college students but none that explicitly describe retaining international students. Tinto's Theory of Departure has been the framework for many studies and has laid the groundwork for many retention programs. Institutions have used Tinto's theory to build programs that focus on keeping students at the institution by utilizing nonacademic and academic support services. Institutions can employ different strategies such as implementing new academic

programs, offer service-learning opportunities, redesigning courses, and other support services. Strategically designed retention strategies can assist institutions with retaining students (Tinto, 1987).

Tinto's Theory of Student Departure

Tinto described six foundations that underscore successful retention strategies. First, institutions should ensure that students enter with or can acquire the skills needed for academic success (Tinto, 1987). This action can be seen with the creation of developmental education programs, tutoring support initiatives, and other academic support services. When an institution implements redesigned courses, such as converting developmental education courses to a corequisite model, there should be opportunities for exploring if students are acquiring the skills needed for success.

Second, institutions should reach out to make personal contact with students beyond the formal domains of academic life (Tinto, 1987). The possible action for this foundation is service-learning opportunities. Service learning provides opportunities for students to get connected with the community by solving real-world problems and interacting with the community. As students become connected with the institution and the community, students are more likely to be retained (Lucy-Bouler & Lucy-Bouler, 2012). Other examples are campus social meeting events and employment. The idea is to create connections outside a formal classroom (Tinto, 1987).

The third foundation requires that the institution's retention strategy be systemic (Tinto, 1987). This means that institutions should deliver educational services in a consistent and organized manner. For example, as the academic community continues to debate what is the best strategy for assisting and retaining developmental education

students, frequent changes in strategies could influence success rates for students. Excessive changes could have a negative impact but can be beneficial if the current strategy is not improving student outcomes.

The fourth foundation requires institutions to start retention strategies as early as possible (Tinto, 1987). Tinto suggested the most critical period for student departure is during the first semester and competing interests such as childcare, finances, or other factors contribute to students leaving the institution before obtaining their educational goals (Tinto, 1987). Developmental education students are at a great risk because the courses the students are enrolled in do not earn college credit (Hodara & Xu, 2018). Early detection of struggle can help decrease the chances a student will leave the institution and may help with retention measures. For example, some colleges have implemented early alert systems to alert advisors when students are in danger of not passing a course. Another example is requiring students to enroll in success courses. The success course may help the student learn topics essential to managing college life. Implementing strategic retention strategies not only assists students but help the institution as well.

The fifth foundation is solidifying institutional commitment to students and all institutional action should benefit students (Tinto, 1987). Beneficial actions can include but is not limited to providing educational software, safe buildings, location of events, and residential services. One example of institutional commitment is providing students with access to technology-based software that is tailored to course content. Some institutions add a lab component to developmental reading and writing classes. The lab component can enhance skills learned in class, allow the student to learn independently,

and enhance technology skills. Institutional commitment requires providing technology that is current, computers that are operable, and spaces where student can learn, such as a computer lab. Another example of institutional commitment is ensuring that students have access to comfortable learning environments such as safe buildings, safe campuses, and ample academic resources. Without institutional commitment, students may seek the commitment from another institution or give up on higher education.

Finally, education, not retention, should be the goal of institutional retention programs (Tinto, 1987). The sixth principle seems counterintuitive, suggesting the goal of retention should not focus on retention. Tinto clarifies that institutions should promote academic, intellectual, emotional, and social growth not just for the sake of keeping students but for community membership (p. 140). Once institutions correctly lay the foundations for successful student experiences, the focus can then shift to retention.

Tinto's Theory and International Students

International students come to American institutions with a variety of skills and educational experiences. Some students come from countries where the dominate language is not English. Other students may come from educational backgrounds that utilize community learning or small groups. Another challenge may be social identity. Students may also come from less diverse countries, where every student may be considered culturally similar. Despite the many differences in educational backgrounds, institutions apply an all-encompassing retention strategy to domestic students and international students alike. The needs of international students may vary slightly as they transition into the American education system (Tas, 2013).

Tinto's (1987) six foundations, although not initially applied to international students, offers insight on how institutions should approach retaining international students. To retain international students, some institutions have created academic programs to help students move through developmental education through English-building programs (Kandidatov, 2019). Such action is aligned with foundation one. Institutions, typically at the community college level, offer English learning courses to improve English proficiency. In addition to programs designed specifically for international student needs, international students also benefit from traditional programs such as student success courses.

Some institutions recognize the need to immerse international students in campus culture. Social events are just one of the many opportunities for the institution to move beyond the classroom to meet international student needs (foundation two) (Tinto, 1987). Some institutions create international cultural festivals, pair English speaking students with non-English speakers as a part of learning programs, or encourage students to attend campus spirit days to mingle with domestic students, and join campus organizations. These learning opportunities not only help international students while on campus but assist students who return to their home country as they bring back new experiences and ideas.

The third foundation (Tinto, 1987) is difficult to explore as institutions do not divulge strategies for retaining international students. Many institutions continue to welcome and recruit international students as a part of their retention strategy. According to Jennings (2017), retaining international students requires reviewing negative factors that prevent international students enrolling in and staying at community colleges and

explore ways to mitigate risks of losing students. Jennings discusses areas that institutions should review: (a) location, (b) transfer choices for students, (c) emphasize student involvement (as Tinto described in foundation two), (d) housing, (e) class availability and prerequisite courses, (f) campus and local climate, (g) safety, and (h) entertainment and life within the surrounding community.

The final three foundations (Tinto, 1987) should be a part of an institution's plan to retain international students. As with domestic students, any action institutions take to retain international students should be timely and systemic. Early interventions could assist international students with many concerns such as when the student begins to miss home or have difficulty learning because of English conversion issues. Each institution has different strategies based on region and courses that attract international students and domestic students. Without timely and systemic actions, international students (and domestic students) may leave the institution in search of more rewarding experiences (Jennings, 2017).

Despite stricter U.S. immigration laws, international students continue to apply for admissions to American institutions. The number of international students at community colleges continues to increase as community colleges represent an affordable education option (Jennings, 2017). As other countries continue to expand their economies and offer welcoming environments, American institutions must evaluate their retention strategies for international students (Tas, 2013; Jennings, 2017). Retaining international students helps more than the institution. Local and national economies benefit from student dollars as international students contribute millions of dollars in tuition and local spending and offer priceless cultural values (Bista, 2016; Jennings,

2018; Mamiseishvili, 2012; Martirosyan, Bustamante, & Saxon, 2019; Poyrazli & Isaiah, 2018; Tas, 2013; Wang & BrckaLorenz, 2018; Yan & Pei, 2018). Regardless of the strategy an institution chooses, retaining international students requires providing necessary learning opportunities to help students acquire skills, adjust to American education, and adjust to the institution and the community (Tinto's foundations one and two). Skill acquisition and adjustment can be achieved by international students engaging in a variety of institutional activities in the classroom as well as outside of the classroom. Engagement provides opportunities for students to develop academically and socially. The next section will explore literature that discusses how engagement influences international students.

Student Engagement: Interactions with Faculty, Peers, and Others

Much of the literature about international students focuses on gaining language proficiency and adjustment to the host institution (Hansen, Shneyderman, McNamara, & Grace, 2018). An essential component for international students to gain language proficiency and improve adjustment centers on student engagement in activities and interactions with faculty and peers. Engagement opportunities include but are not limited to social gatherings, service learning, employment, leadership programs, and internships. Such opportunities allow students to engage with faculty, staff, peers, and the surrounding community. For instance, according to the Community College Research Center (CCRC, 2013), interactions with faculty and peers create a sense of belonging for domestic and international students alike. The benefits of interacting with faculty and peers can lead to increased engagement and more positive experiences on campus (CCRC, 2013). For international students, such positive experiences can help with

acquiring language skills and adjusting to the American college system. Yet,

international students engage with faculty less than domestic students (Korobova &

Starobin, 2015) and tend to interact with other students less than domestic students

(Ammigan & Laws, 2018; Wang & BrckaLorenz, 2018).

The available research on international student engagement supports the idea that

students benefit academically and socially by engaging with faculty and peers (Aaron,

Cedeño, Gareis, Kumar, & Swaminathan, 2018; Glass, Gesing, Hales, & Cong, 2017;

Hansen et al., 2018; Su, 2018). Positive interactions can also lead to more positive

experiences in the classroom, increasing opportunities for international students to remain

at the institution (Glass et al., 2017). Once the student begins connecting with

individuals at the institution, this can allow the student to adjust to college life

academically and socially (Glass et al, 2017).

Interactions with Faculty

Studies that explore student interactions with faculty focus on the entire student

population and little attention is given to international students (Glass, Gesing, Hales, &

Cong, 2017). Glass et. al (2017) studied the influence that in-class and out-of-class

faculty interactions had on 2,252 first-generation and non-first-generation international

students. The study offered insight on the influence faculty had on international student

engagement and sense of community. Sense of community was defined as the extent a

student felt connected to the campus community and how their connection with the

campus community influenced their willingness to engage in activities (Glass et. al,

2017).

The findings revealed that international students (both first-generation and non-first-generation students) who had out-of-class interactions with faculty had higher sense of community and were more engaged in campus life (Glass et. al, 2017). Only first-generation international student results indicated a stronger relationship with faculty. Three findings emerged from in-class interactions: (a) in-class interactions did not influence sense of community for first-generation international students but contributed to student engagement, (b) both first-generation and non-first-generation international students were more likely to engage with faculty who acknowledged cultural differences, valued different perspectives, and encouraged engagement, and (c) in-class interactions with faculty who encouraged engagement increased the likelihood for more engagement in first-generation international students.

Like their domestic counterparts, first-generation international college students arrived underprepared for the college experience (Glass et. al, 2017). First-generation international students did not have financial support or a parent with higher education knowledge to guide their college experience (Glass et al., 2017). Without financial support or parental guidance, international students relied on administrators and peers, but predominately faculty to navigate college. Faculty members were viewed as sources for information as they offered guidance on class assignments, grades, and campus life. Examining the relationship between first-generation international students and faculty members could offer insight on how to retain international students even as the student matriculates in pre-college courses.

Glass et al.'s (2017) study provided insight into first-generation international students and the need for faculty interaction, but there were several limitations indicating

more research is needed on the international student experience. The study did not capture the student perspective, which could provide more detail about why the students were more likely to engage. A student's personality could influence engagement. For instance, a shy student may feel uncomfortable speaking with their instructor whereas a more outgoing personality would be more willing to ask questions. Additionally, a student may be enrolled in a course with more interaction opportunities. For example, a student enrolled in a course with 10 students may have more opportunities to interact with faculty than a student enrolled in a course with 50 students. Class size could impact the international student's ability to interact with faculty.

Glass et al. (2017) focused on undergraduate students at universities. The experiences of community college international students were not discussed. The university international student experience can be different from the community college international student experience. Fike and Fike (2008) stated that community college experiences differ from universities in that most community colleges have open admissions policies and are commuter institutions. For example, students at a university may live on campus and have more opportunities to interact with faculty whereas a student at a community college may not live on campus, decreasing opportunities to interact with faculty.

Finally, pre-college experiences of international students were not reported. The Glass et al. (2017) study did not provide any information on pre-college education (or equivalent education systems similar to the American K-12 education system) nor insight into regional differences in international students. Pre-college education can encompass a variety of experiences such as home-schooling, tribal education, or limited secondary

education. It is possible that students come from a country where engagement is not encouraged or utilized. For example, students from Asian countries are less likely to engage with faculty, other students, and campus activities compared to students from other countries (Ammigan & Laws, 2018; Bista, 2015; Su, 2018). As part of the Asian culture, to engage with faculty would be considered disrespectful (Su, 2018). As students come to American education, they bring previous cultural experiences that influence their academic success.

According to Fike and Fike (2008), community colleges tend to enroll more underprepared students. The open-admissions policies of community colleges makes the institution more likely to attract students with varying educational experiences (Fike & Fike, 2008). As international students continue to enroll at community colleges, more research on their experiences could provide more insight into international student success. First-generation international students are likely underprepared for college (Glass et al., 2017) and like first-generation domestic students, the international student may need developmental education courses to assist with preparation for college-level courses. Without an account of their experiences, it is difficult to know what students believe is essential to their success.

Quality of Interactions and Student Success

Although international students spend time with faculty in the classroom, this does not mean high-quality interactions have occurred. Simple interactions such as answering questions that require little discussion or simple greetings are examples of low-quality engagement opportunities. Examples of high-quality interactions are discussions about lessons, academic plans, career opportunities, and student engagement

opportunities (Wang & BrckaLorenz, 2018). As faculty interact with international students, they become the student's key source for information about college life (Glass, Gesing, Hales, and Cong, 2018). Faculty interactions with students should be high-quality as these interactions contribute to the retention of students (Wang & BrckaLorenz, 2018).

Wang and BrckaLorenz's (2018) study explored faculty and international student interactions and how faculty interactions influenced international student engagement at 14 universities. The study examined engagement from the faculty and student perspective and if faculty interactions influenced international students' effective learning strategies (use of time, concentration, effort, and comprehension of topic) and collaborative learning. Collaborative learning is when students connect with peers or other groups and work together to complete a learning task (Center for Teaching Innovation, 2020). Effective learning strategies help international students manage learning in developmental education. For instance, international students may have difficulty keeping up with lectures because the instructor speaks too quickly. Examples of effective learning strategies would be note-taking or summarizing the information (Wang & BrckaLorenz, 2018). Although effective learning strategies benefited all students, effective learning strategies had no effect on international student engagement (Wang & BrckaLorenz, 2018).

International students who had high quality interactions with faculty experienced more academic success than those who had little to no interaction with faculty, and low-quality or no interactions had no effect on student success (Wang & BrckaLorenz, 2018). Faculty who interacted with students beyond the formal domains of the classroom were

more likely to assist international students with understanding the benefits of engagement than faculty who did not interact with students outside the classroom (Wang & BrckaLorenz, 2018). The interactions between faculty and international students served as a strategy to assist international students with adjustment to the institution.

Wang and BrckaLorenz (2018) recommended faculty be proactive in reaching out to international students with opportunities that help connect international students with the institution and promote engagement, such as faculty student mentorships or faculty meet and greets. In the case of international developmental education students, such action could improve how international students adjust to the institution. This adjustment could also help students improve academically with language acquisition.

More exploration on international student engagement and its connection to student success is needed to improve learning outcomes for international students (Wang & BrckaLorenz, 2018). Most often, international students focus on academic challenges, decreasing interaction time with peers and faculty (Wang & BrckaLorenz, 2018). International students who are in developmental education may require even more time to study than domestic developmental education students due to language barriers. The strict focus on academics leaves no time for engagement outside of the classroom and can further isolate international students.

Wang and BrckaLorenz's (2018) study revealed that faculty interactions heavily influence academic success and international student engagement. The study did not focus on how faculty interactions with developmental education international students could improve success in developmental education. Interactions with faculty at the community college level could also be different than at a university. For instance, the

institution selected for this proposal is a large community college whose service region extends into other cities. Faculty may be required to commute to those locations. This means there is less time for the faculty member to engage with students outside of class or less time for faculty to engage in mentor programs. A study exploring the perceptions international students have about faculty in developmental education could reveal successes and challenges international students have when interacting with developmental education faculty.

College Readiness and Engagement Gaps Between International and Domestic Students

One study discussed how language, culture, and previous high school experiences influenced college readiness and engagement for international students (Lee, Kim, & Wu, 2018). Lee, Kim, and Wu's (2018) study explored college readiness and engagement gaps between 37 international students and 60 domestic students at a public university. A combination of academic preparedness, sociocultural interactions, high school engagement, and college engagement determined student preparedness or college readiness (Lee et al., 2018). For both domestic and international students, previous educational experiences influenced college readiness. English language skill proficiency and cultural adaptation was critical in college readiness for international students, and international students with previous English-speaking experiences reported more engagement and college readiness than international students with no previous English-speaking experiences. The study revealed that language, culture, and previous high school experiences influenced college readiness and engagement in international students (Lee et al., 2018).

Like domestic students, international students who engaged in activities in high school were more likely to engage in college activities than international students who did not engage in high school activities (Lee et al., 2018). Students from English-speaking countries or who had English-speaking experiences from an American high school transitioned easier into American education than those who had limited to no previous English-speaking experiences. International students were less confident than domestic students about academic readiness, even when both groups had similar high school engagement opportunities (Lee et al., 2018). International students also reported less confidence in subjects or areas that required English proficiency. The lack of confidence in subjects that require English suggests that language proficiency is a concern for international students and the lack of confidence may prevent them from engaging in academic and social activities (Lee et al., 2018).

Learning the complexities of the English language can require several years of extensive learning (Lee et al., 2018). As many institutions move to the accelerated corequisite IRW and English course model, international students are now moving through English language learning faster. Higher education institutions should examine if the pace of the course has any effect on language acquisition and how language acquisition could affect the student's ability to transition into credit-bearing courses. Understanding the influence previous experiences with English language has on international students could help explain why some students are placed into developmental education courses.

Institutions should create collaborative learning opportunities between domestic and international students which could improve engagement for both populations (Lee et

al., 2018). Collaborative learning opportunities should occur in and out of the classroom, allowing international students to engage with faculty and peers in different settings (Glass, Gesing, Hales, & Cong, 2017; Lee et al., 2018). Collaborative learning opportunities could assist international students with gaining language proficiency, quicker adjustment to the institution, and improvement of academic readiness (Lee et al., 2018). Although collaborative learning is beneficial to international students (Lee, Kim, & Wu, 2018), most international students do not view collaborative learning favorably and prefer interacting with faculty (Glass et al., 2017). Additionally, the lack of language proficiency influenced engagement. Due to language proficiency concerns, international students preferred to work with other students from their country or those who shared a similar background (Wang & BrckaLorenz, 2018). Increasing engagement opportunities for international students helped students academically and socially (Lee et al., 2018).

While the researchers shared helpful information about international students (Lee et al., 2018), the study neglected to examine community college students. The focus was on undergraduate international students at a public research university and students who were in college level courses. There was no discussion about the experiences of students in developmental education. An exploration of pre-college English speaking experiences could reveal if students from English speaking countries transition easier than students from countries where English is not the most commonly used language. Knowing about pre-college English experiences could offer insight into why some international students are able to gain language proficiency faster than others. Administrators could use the information to enhance the international student experience, such as creating peer programs to connect English speakers with international students who need more

assistance with English (Aaron et al., 2018). A more in-depth look at how English proficiency concerns impact international students at the pre-college level provides an opportunity to explore the needs of international students.

Interaction between Nonacademic and Academic Support

Engagement is one component of academic success for international students. In addition to engagement opportunities, institutions provide access to nonacademic and academic support systems that assist students with reaching academic goals. International students may not be familiar with institutional support systems (Poyrazli & Isaiah, 2018; Martirosyan, Bustamante, Saxon, 2019). As institutions seek to retain international students, comprehensive strategies should include nonacademic and academic support.

Nonacademic student supports are activities and programs created to encourage academic success and supplement academic content (Community College Research Center [CCRC], 2013). Nonacademic support offers short-term support and may not persist past the semester of use (CCRC, 2013). There are four components of non-academic support that are essential to student success: creating social relationships, clarifying aspirations and enhancing commitment, developing college know-how, and making college life feasible (CCRC, 2013). Social relationships create a sense of belonging for students and allows them to connect with resources through faculty, staff, and peers. By clarifying aspirations and enhancing commitment, students have opportunities to explore career options and decide on educational paths that will help them reach career goals. Developing college knowledge, or know-how, helps students learn about resources and how the resources can assist academic learning and student

success. The fourth component, making college life feasible, requires the institution to provide a variety of nonacademic support services to assist students with managing life obligations that may affect academic progress. This can include childcare, career services, or financial services.

Nonacademic support is available at many institutions but international students may not know if they are eligible for this support. Additionally, international students may not understand how nonacademic support influences academic success. Unfamiliarity with campus services decreases the likelihood international students will use available services (Martirosyan et al., 2019). Institutions should create opportunities for international students to utilize nonacademic support through orientations, social opportunities, and other services.

Communication and International Students

To make international students aware of available services, institutions should develop a strategic communication strategy (Ammigan & Laws, 2018). A strategic communication strategy should employ various communication methods such as traditional bulletin notices, institution email, and social networking sites. According to Ammigan and Laws (2018) institutions who rely solely on institution email or in-person communication limit the institution's ability to connect with international students. Ammigan and Laws (2018) surveyed 113 international degree-seeking students at a university on their preferred communication with the institution and inquired about what information was essential for the student to know from institutional communications. Strategically developed communication strategies should assist international students with adjustment, transition management, and offer opportunities for engagement with

domestic students and engagement in campus activities (Ammigan & Laws, 2018). The institution's international student office should be the driving force behind communication with international students (Ammigan & Laws, 2018). International student service offices serve as the central resource for international students and the office should connect with other departments such as communications, marketing, branding, as well as student service offices (Ammigan & Laws, 2018). By connecting with other departments international student service offices will be able to connect international students with more nonacademic resources.

International students indicated the highest need for communication from the institution was academic resources, immigration issues, health and wellness news, campus safety, and sociocultural events (Ammigan & Laws, 2018). The international student service office was the main source of information for international students and students frequently relied on communication from the office (Ammigan & Laws, 2018). Communication methods such as text messaging, social media, email, and in-person can assist administrators with reaching international students. Implementing multiple communication strategies can also help reach international students who may have language barriers. Access to technology software can help with translation (for example, Google Translate). These strategies can be helpful in reaching Chinese students, as they are often the most isolated from other students (Bista, 2015; Ammigan & Laws, 2018; Su, 2018).

Ammigan and Law's (2018) study explored communication with degree-seeking international students at a university. Although the study provided information at the university level, the study does not explore communication from the community college

student perspective. Community colleges may have access to the different communication strategies but may employ a strategy different from universities. An exploration of how international student connect with nonacademic resources could be helpful in understanding retention in international students. Additionally, the study explored the needs of degree-seeking students. An exploration of developmental education international students could reveal what services developmental education students feel are most needed and how international students connect with the international student service office for continued academic success.

Nonacademic and Academic Services for International Students

Both domestic and international students benefit from resources provided by the institution. International students may require extended services to support academic growth and adjustment to their educational environment (Tas, 2013). As institution administrators understand how the availability and satisfaction of services affect international students, administrators can evaluate current services to assist international students with adjustment to the American higher education system (Tas, 2013).

Tas (2013) explored international students' nonacademic and academic needs and how international students' needs varied from domestic students. After analyzing a survey of international students at a university, the study revealed some challenges for international students. The top challenges for international student adjustment to American institutions were language barriers, financial concerns, and adapting to the new environment (Tas, 2013). Unlike their domestic counterparts, international students must also adjust to new cultures (to the institution and American life) and overcome challenges with communication and language (Tas, 2013). These challenges are in addition to

maintaining academic progress. Tas suggests successful adjustment requires the student to understand their identity in a new country, manage self-esteem issues, understand role changes in the new society, manage having minimal social support, and overcome feelings of isolation.

The study revealed several themes that influenced retention for international students (Tas, 2013). The themes were: (a) befriending and connecting with domestic students, (b) availability of food that fits their cultural needs, (c) lack of support from the institution's international services office, (d) lack of academic assistance from advisors and staff, (e) inadequate cultural and social activities, (f) housing concerns, (g) inaccurate information during the recruitment and orientation process, (h) lack of flexibility with schedules and degree plans, and (i) lack of resources (Tas, 2013). International students viewed the institution's ability to accommodate their nonacademic and academic needs as vital to their academic success. Not meeting the student's needs can lead to academic decline (Tas, 2013).

Tas (2013) suggested that domestic students and international students benefit from a diverse curriculum. The curriculum across all studies, including developmental education, should reflect international and intercultural education themes (Tas, 2013). Additionally, Tas revealed that cultural diversity and cultural integration influence retention for international students. Having faculty and staff who can successfully interact with students from different backgrounds, different cultural identities, and different racial identities is critical to retain international students (Tas, 2013). Tas suggested administrators provide cultural diversity training to all faculty and staff, but international student retention should be coordinated by an international student services

office. The international student service office should coordinate orientations, offer referrals to academic and nonacademic support services, and assist the student with adjusting to the institution. Although Tas's (2013) study revealed that nonacademic and academic services for international students can assist with adjustment to the institution, the study did not focus on international students at a community college. In the case of developmental education students, international student service offices can further encourage students to utilize available resources.

Wu, Garza, and Guzman's (2015) study focused on nonacademic and academic challenges international students encountered as they transition from their home country into American education. As international students arrive in the country, they must learn American customs and adjust to the community of the college they will attend. International students will need to adapt through food choices, language, social experiences, and other local customs (Wu et al., 2015). A combination of nonacademic and academic support is needed to help international students adjust to college life (Wu et al., 2015). Without successfully adjusting to the local community and college life, international students will struggle academically (Wu et al., 2015). As international students face academic, social, and cultural struggles, understanding the type of nonacademic and academic support and resources needed for overcoming those struggles can assist international students with adjusting to college life (Wu et al., 2015).

International students experience challenges in the classroom, in the community, and intrapersonal challenges (Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015). Academic challenges were the most concerning issue for international students (Wu et al., 2015). Students indicated difficulty communicating with the teacher due to cultural differences and language

barriers. International students also expressed isolation from domestic students and increased stress when the student had difficulty expressing themselves in English. Although English language proficiency was a major concern for international students, most international students believed that domestic students could learn from them if there were more opportunities for interaction (Wu et al., 2015). International students should have interactions with faculty and peers in and outside of the classroom to enhance academic and social growth (Glass, Gesing, Hales, & Cong, 2017; Su, 2018; Lee, Kim, & Wu, 2018, Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015).

Wu, Garza, and Guzman (2015) studied international student challenges at a university in Texas. The study does not include community college students. International students at a community college may not have the same challenges as students at a university. For example, community college classes may be smaller in the number of students per class. This could mean an international student at the community college level may have more opportunities to speak with the instructor independently, thereby alleviating the language barrier. Community colleges may also be able to provide more English learning courses (credit and noncredit) as a community need, lending more opportunities to build English proficiency.

Martirosyan, Bustamante, and Saxon's (2019) exploratory study focused on support services at 20 international student serving universities. The top international student serving institutions implemented programs such as English conversation hour, English courses, target writing support courses, writing consults, tutoring, and writing centers (Martirosyan et al., 2019). Although the top international serving institutions focused on academic support, nonacademic support is needed for continued academic

success. Institutions can utilize nonacademic support to assist students with overcoming social barriers, thereby improving academic growth (CCRC, 2013).

International students who lack social support may have difficulty adjusting to American higher education (Martirosyan, Saxon, & Bustamante, 2019). International students are often isolated from domestic students, family, and friends, increasing the likelihood for stress, anxiety, and difficulty adjusting (Martirosyan et al., 2019). To facilitate social growth in international students, the top international student serving institutions implemented social support programs such as international education week, festivals, meet and greet opportunities, and professional development opportunities. English language support programs were the most common support services. Some universities created English Language programs where an international student is paired with a native English speaker in hopes of strengthening the international student's English language skills. The language program also served English speakers who learned from the international student. For example, an English speaker who needed to learn a language would be paired with an international student who spoke the needed language, creating a balanced relationship benefiting both students.

Finances also contributed to stress and academic decline for international students (Martirosyan et al., 2019). Critics of international support services often misreport the level of financial support provided to international students (Martirosyan et al., 2019). There is an underlying assumption that international students receive numerous scholarships from institutions (Su, 2018). Martirosyan et al. (2019) reported that international student funding typically derives from sources outside of the United States. These sources can include family, friends, and non-U.S government entities. As

international students' tuition and fees continue to provide a steady stream of income, institutions should consider offering financial support (Martirosyan et al, 2019).

Martirosyan et al. (2019) provided an in-depth review of support services offered by leading international student serving universities but did not explore the availability of services at the community college level, which may differ. For instance, community colleges may not have the resources to offer a program pairing international students with domestic students. Community colleges are seen as commuter institutions (Fike & Fike, 2008), decreasing the availability of domestic students who are on campus for extended periods of time. Like universities, community colleges offer developmental English language courses, but community colleges may not provide additional programs as the traditional developmental English course is viewed as sufficient. Without information that explores the needs of international students at the community college level, it is difficult to understand how community colleges can retain and assist developmental education international students.

Influence of Employment

Nonacademic support services such as scholarships or employment could help international students by increasing financial means to support themselves and their education, and decrease stress (Martirosyan, Saxon, & Bustamante, 2019; Su, 2018). International students rely on other sources for funding such as their home country's government sponsorship and family (Martirosyan et al., 2019; Su, 2018). The increased pressure to not disappoint financial supporters could negatively affect academic performance.

Employment could help international students financially as institutions tend to have higher tuition and fees for international students. For example, at one community college, the tuition for a full time (12 credit hours) international student is $2,634.00 whereas a domestic student living in the community college's zoning district is $924.00. The tuition for international students does not include other fees, mandatory insurance, and living expenses. If international students are required to attend developmental education courses before starting college-level courses, the financial strain could influence their ability to continue past development education courses. Employment could be one way to help international students manage costs which could improve their ability to succeed academically.

Employment could also help international students overcome academic challenges. International students reported language as a barrier (Hodara & Xu, 2018; Lee, Kim, & Wu, 2018; Su, 2018; Tas, 2013; Wang & BrckaLorenz, 2018; Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015). The language barrier can negatively impact academic progress. Employment could help international students learn more about English language and its uses as international students communicate with domestic English language users (Su, 2018), which could improve academic progress. Employment could help international students benefit socially through interactions and conversations with English speakers International students can also use the language skills obtained through employment to connect with their domestic peers for in-classroom discussions and collaborative activities. (Su, 2018). International students are often isolated from domestic students because of language barriers (Lee et al., 2018). The language skills learned from

employment could help international students move out of isolation and interact more with domestic students (Su, 2018).

Su (2018) studied the influence employment had on Chinese international students. Within the international student population, Asian students are the largest group (Bista, 2015) and the most isolated international student population (Bista, 2015; Bista, 2016; Ammigan & Laws, 2018; Su, 2018). Chinese students represent the largest population within the Asian student population (Su, 2018), so understanding their experiences can help the international student population as a whole (Bista, 2015). Using semi-structured interviews, Su (2018) explored undergraduate Chinese students' perceptions of on-campus employment. Opponents of international students working while undertaking studies believe employment deprives the student of valuable study time (Su, 2018). The students interviewed reported more positive outcomes than negative outcomes for on-campus employment.

Most of the students interviewed relied on financial support from family to assist with paying for education and living expenses (Su, 2018). Employment helped Chinese students gain financial independence as student were able to assist their families with paying for college and living expenses (Su, 2018). Another benefit of employment was work experience. Employed students were able to add on-campus employment to their resumes, aiding their career development (Su, 2018). Employment provided international students with financial help and work experience but improvement with language was the most important reason for undertaking employment (Su, 2018).

On-campus employment improved language proficiency because students engaged in informal conversations with domestic peers during work hours (Su, 2018).

Employment helped international Chinese students gain confidence in their English

reading, speaking, and writing skills. Engaging in formal instruction, such as English

language courses, allows students to learn the mechanics and usage of language.

Informal settings allowed international students to use English socially, which improved

language skills and connected international students with English speakers (Su, 2018).

Students who have a better command of informal language are more likely to interact

with domestic classmates (Su, 2018). International students tend to interact with similar

international students (Wang & BrckaLorenz, 2018). As students learned the practical

uses of language, their peers saw them as regular students, not international students (Su,

2018). The social connections gained through on-campus employment assisted Chinese

students with moving out of isolation and facilitated more interaction with domestic

students (Su, 2018). In the case of developmental education international students,

employment could be helpful as they develop English language skills in informal and

formal settings.

Su's (2018) study addressed how Chinese students can benefit from on-campus

employment but the study did not focus on the benefits to other international student

populations. Other international students could also benefit with language and cultural

adjustment. Exploring a broader group of international students could further the

argument that international students benefit from employment. Additionally, the study

did not include any information about the in-class benefits international students received

as a result of on-campus employment. For example, there was no indication of increased

discussions with other students nor the instructor in the classroom because of increased

confidence in speaking English due to employment. More exploration on international

students in developmental education could help understand how long term academic goals are affected when students must include developmental education as part of their academic progress, how employment could help alleviate some financial burden international students encounter, and how employment could help students succeed in the classroom.

Academic Support

In addition to nonacademic support, institutions provide academic support to students. Academic support is defined as instructional methods, resources that enhance academic learning, and educational services used by institutions to assist students with meeting academic goals (Great Schools Partnership, 2014). Academic support, often used by educational institutions to address underperforming students, can help students achieve on-level learning, catch up with their peers, or assist with academic enrichment (Great Schools Partnership, 2014). Institutions have a variety of academic support services that can assist students. Tutoring, supplemental learning, in-classroom strategies, and technology-based learning are examples of academic support services offered by institutions.

Some institutions have implemented academic support systems that target the needs of international students. In addition to speaking English, international students must also be able to write in English. Mohamad and Boyd (2010) described one university's creation of a writing studio and a redesigned English language learning curriculum to assist approximately 1,200 international students with improving writing in English. The university's largest international population was from India and most of the undergraduate population were first year students (Mohamad & Boyd, 2010). The

writing studio was available for use by all students attending the university. To further support academic writing for international students, the university implemented a writing initiative that focused writing support based on academic needs.

The first component of the writing initiative was to make one-on-one tutoring available to all students (Mohamad & Boyd, 2010). Next, the English as a Second Language (ESL) program curriculum was revised to focus on undergraduate students. Like many ESL programs in higher education, the university's ESL program consisted of multiple levels that would prolong students' time in developmental education. The prolonged sequences led to many international students becoming frustrated and increased attrition rates (Mohamad & Boyd, 2010). Under this initiative, undergraduate students in any level of the ESL program would receive targeted writing assistance from the writing studio.

Finally, from the redesigned ESL program, a new program was created. The English for a Specific Purpose program (ESP) helped both undergraduate and graduate international students with instruction for writing in English (Mohamad & Boyd, 2010). Under the ESP program, international students would take one writing course that aligned with their degree goals. For example, students in a business program would learn English writing tailored to the needs of the business industry. International students would still be able to take college-level courses in addition to receiving support under the writing initiative as well as have access to the writing studio as needed (Mohamad & Boyd, 2010).

Mohamad and Boyd (2010) credited the success of the university's writing initiative to investing funds properly and collaborating with various academic programs

at the university. Institution administrators may worry that creating academic programs could reduce available resources, may increase costs, or programs designed to help specific populations may seem unfair to other populations. Institutions can review and redesign existing services as a way to offer targeted support to students (Mohamad & Boyd, 2010). The university developed a strategy to assist international students by offering more opportunities for immersion in writing, which ultimately developed into a writing model to assist both international and domestic students. International students who participated under the new initiative began to complete course sequences more rapidly, reported more confidence in academic preparedness, and students who were not mandated to take any ESL courses began using the writing studio (Mohamad & Boyd, 2010). Overall, the initiative evolved into a sustainable model focusing on international student success as students improved writing in English (Mohamad and Boyd, 2010).

Mohamad and Boyd (2010) described how one university tailored academic resources to support international students but did not provide any information from the international student perspective. As program directors, their description describes the writing initiative as successful and to be used as a model for creating writing initiatives at other institutions. International students who utilized the writing center services and support may have a different perspective. Students may feel their writing improved in one area but did not improve in another. In the example of a business program student, the student may feel their business writing improved but did not improve enough in other areas such as creative writing. Additionally, the student perspective on other components such as tutor availability or access to additional resources from the writing studio would help evaluate the effectiveness of the writing initiative.

International Students and Developmental Education

Many students lack the skills necessary to begin college level courses. In response to the need to reinforce basic concepts, institutions offer developmental education courses. Developmental education is a strategy used in higher education to reinforce concepts that students should have acquired in basic education. There are allies who support developmental education. The idea that students are provided opportunities to catch-up on learning concepts missed in previous education and advance in career opportunities is the main benefit in developmental education (Koricich & Boylan, 2019). Opponents of developmental education describe it as more of a hindrance than help to students (CCRC, 2014; Koricich & Boylan, 2019; Stewart, Lim, & Kim, 2015). A major concern is that institutions misplace students into developmental education (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010; Bostian, 2017; CCRC, 2014; Koricich & Boylan, 2014). Misplacement can negatively impact students. For example, developmental education courses are not credited and do not count towards a degree or certificate (Hodara & Xu, 2018). This means students are spending more time at an institution. Students who are required to take multiple developmental education courses can spend several semesters completing developmental education before taking credit level courses (Bostian, 2017; Hodara & Xu, 2018). Additionally, misplacement into developmental education can negatively impact students' finances as developmental education courses cost the same as credit courses. Students are paying for and enrolling in courses that increase the total costs for their education but the courses do not count towards completing their degree or certificate. English language learners also face the same challenges as non- English language learners in developmental education. Students who are required to take English

language learner courses are also misplaced into ESL programs (Bostian, 2017). ESL program students must also manage financial challenges and lack or resources as they transition through the ESL program. Bostian (2017) states that there have been changes to the way higher education institution's place students into developmental education but there has been no movement to how English language learners are placed.

When educational policy makers and administrators focus on developmental education, the discussion focuses on developmental education as a whole. All populations are placed into one category. There is little discussion about how changes, could impact English language learners. Literature surrounding instructing international students tends to focus on negative experiences in the American education system (Poyrazli & Isaiah, 2018), particularly in language based courses that are English reading and writing intensive (Chen, 2018; Fass-Holmes & Vaughn, 2014; Fass-Holmes & Vaughn, 2015; James, Miller, & Wycoff, 2016). With international students coming from many countries, the lack of English language skills in reading and writing would place international students into developmental education.

Placement Testing

Some institutions use English proficiency tests to predict the likelihood a student will be successful in college. Bostian (2017) discussed how English proficiency tests can negatively impact international students. According to Bostian, the tests used to place international students (and English language learners) have not changed like other tests and placement methods. Tests such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Accuplacer ESL, and others are used to measure knowledge but do not predict student success (Bostian, 2017). Administrators prefer to use standardized tests because

the tests are viewed as equitable and fair (Bostian, 2017). Standardized test creators have encouraged using a variety of measures to place students (The College Board, 2018). Despite this recommendation, many institutions continue to use standardized tests as the sole method to place students in courses. Bostian (2017) suggested institutions consider high school grade point average, evaluate previous college experience (if any), and require pre-test preparation.

Current testing strategies reveal problems for both domestic and international students (Bostian, 2017). The most common problem is misplacement into developmental education courses. Students are placed in developmental education courses because the test scores do not reach the minimum cut score set by the institution. The inability to reach the minimum cut score, even by one point, often pushes students whose first language is not English into developmental education courses. At one community college, if test scores are extremely below the cut scores, students could be required to enroll in intensive English courses. Intensive English courses are foundational courses designed to assist with English language proficiency. This could mean more time in developmental education, decreasing the likelihood a student would progress to college level courses and remain at the institution. According to Bostian, if students are placed in developmental education, institutions should remove the prerequisite of full completion of developmental courses and offer corequisite learning. By reforming testing and placement strategies, institutions will see measurable improvements in international student success (Bostian, 2017). Reform of testing and placement strategies is necessary to help international students start college on a sustainable pace to college completion.

Bostian's (2017) discussion on placement into developmental education provides insight on how institutions can begin improving outcomes for English language learners. Exploring testing from the international student perspective could help improve international students' testing experience. For instance, institutions could use previous testing material as a strategy to prepare students with test questions or writing samples. Providing pretesting materials could allow students time to interpret the questions in their native language. Tests such as the Accuplacer ESL do provide pretest questions. A students' perspective could help reveal if the institution could offer more assistance to international students with preparation, such as directing students to some of the community-based English learning courses. Some community colleges offer free English language learning courses to the communities the institution serves. Students could enroll in the community-based learning course prior to attending college as a strategy to improve English skills and prepare for the placement test. Understanding how international students were placed into developmental education could help with improving English learning programs and improve success rates for students whose first language is not English (Bostian, 2017).

Combined Courses and English Language Learning

Without sufficient English language skills in reading and writing, international students may require developmental education. There are numerous articles that explore reading and writing strategies for English language learners (Abel, 2002; Chen, 2018; Hodara & Xu, 2018; Iwai, Filce, & Ramp, 2011; Lee, 2017; Mohamad & Boyd, 2010). Only one article discussed developmental education course design and its influence on retention for English language learners (Hodara & Xu, 2018).

Hodara and Xu's experimental study explored the effects of taking developmental reading and developmental writing simultaneously and compared both classes with taking a single developmental education writing course for English language learners at a large, public community college system. The purpose of the study was to explore whether or not taking reading and writing together was more effective in retaining English language learners as opposed to taking writing alone (Hodara & Xu, 2018).

Hodara and Xu (2018) reviewed data for 25,004 foreign language students and 20,471 native English-speaking students. They found that students who were required to take long developmental sequences had more opportunities to exit the institution, and that programming for English language learning could improve retaining English language learners (Hodara & Xu, 2018). There were no differences in success rates between non-native English speakers and native speakers who took a combined reading and writing course or a single writing course (Hodara & Xu, 2018). The findings revealed different effects for combining developmental reading and writing for English language learners. English language learners enrolled in the combined reading and writing course were less likely to drop out of the college system over three years than English language learners enrolled in the writing only course (Hodara & Xu, 2018). Furthermore, English language learners whose test scores were closer to the institution's reading cut-off scores and who were assigned to both developmental reading and writing ESL courses were less likely to drop out of developmental education and the institution than English language learners assigned to a writing only course. Finally, English language learners who completed the combined reading and writing course were more likely to retake and pass the college's proficiency exam than learners who only took the writing course (Hodara & Xu, 2018).

Hodara and Xu's (2018) study revealed that English language learners were less likely to drop out from the developmental course and the institution when reading and writing were taken together. The study did not capture the international student perspective. The study focused on English language learners, which could include students who are considered domestic but still English language learners. The experiences between the two English language learner groups could be different. For example, domestic English language learners may pay less in tuition and may have taken only the writing portion as a way to focus on writing skills. Conversely, international students pay more in fees and could have decided that taking both courses together was a better financial option. Other factors such having the same instructor for both subjects, interactions with advisors who guide students to developmental education, or the institution's developmental education design could influence the international student experience. Exploring the student perspective could help explain why taking both reading and writing together was beneficial for English language learners. The information obtained could be used to compliment data-driven models that reveal taking the courses together benefits the student more.

English Second Language Programs

Community college English language learning programs have become the entryway for adult learners who desire upward mobility in American society (Becker, 2011; Hodara, 2015; Kurzet, 1997). The majority of the literature focuses on quantitative measures to improve curriculum, improve instructional methods, or improve program design (Davaasambuu, 2019; Finn 2018; Kurzet, 1997; Rosette Stone, 2013). For instance, Davaasambuu (2019) focused on community college students but used

quantitative measures to determine satisfaction with the ESL program. In a separate study, Hodara (2015) used transcript data of all English language learner groups (immigrant and domestic students) and found that longer ESL sequences had vary effects of different English language learners. There are few qualitative studies. Finn's (2018) study used qualitative measures to explore English language learner challenges, student satisfaction, and course repetition at the community college level. This study did not focus on the resources needed to retain international students.

English language learning has become a core developmental needed for students entering the American education system. Becker's (2011) study focused on immigrants' transition from a noncredit bearing ESL program to degree earning programs through a western American community college. The study explored the social economic background, availability of resources, and factors influencing the student to transition to a degree earning program or postpone their educational goals. The participants were 17 immigrant students from multiple countries enrolled in an ESL program at the community college. Most of the participants were adults over the age of 23, and enrolled to learn English with the intent to secure a job or advance their career (Becker, 2011). Through interviews, the participants described their lived experiences and disclosed successes and challenges during their time in the ESL program.

The findings from the study revealed that students who had previous academic, social, and financial resources from their home country were able to use those resources and successfully transition to credit bearing programs (Becker, 2011). These students had established careers before enrolling in the program and were described as having high cultural capital (Becker, 2011). High cultural capital meant the student had more

available resources to draw from to help with completing the ESL program. Many of these students could devote more time to their studies as the student did not need to work or could curtail work hours to be in the program. Low cultural capital students experienced more difficulty in meeting their goal primarily because of financial needs. This meant working to support themselves was top priority and would require postponing completing the ESL program. Low cultural capital students also believed they were not as productive nor as smart as students from other countries, leading to a sense of marginalization (Becker, 2011). Becker concluded that "successful transition requires reflective and emancipatory curriculum, an integrated instructional and support program, and an inclusive dialogue with the community of practice" (p. 24).

Becker's study explores the needs of immigrants who are in an English Second Language program and offers a social justice perspective. Becker utilizes themes such cultural capital and marginalization to draw the focus to resources, or the lack thereof, the student had as needed for transitioning. Becker (2011) suggests changes in the curriculum, changes in the community college's ESL strategies, and even supplemental learning could assist transitioning ESL students. Becker's study does not provide an in-depth exploration of non-academic and academic resources needed for transition, nor does it explore students' ability to use those resources to meet their goals. Additionally, Becker's study focused on the needs of students at a western American community college. ESL learner's need at a southern community college could vary slightly due to different programs offered, different migration patterns of ESL learners and availability of resources due to the community college's size. Becker does suggest incorporating

more qualitative studies could provide a more balanced view on the needs of immigrant students at the community college level (Becker, 2011).

Summary

Many institutions recognize the need to offer developmental education as a way to strengthen foundational skills students may not have obtained prior to enrolling in college. In addition to those skills, English language learning programs serve as the foundation for international students who desire and education but lack the English speaking, reading, and writing skills needed to pursue their college education at American institutions. As institutions modify their developmental education programming, considerations must be given to how changes in developmental education could influence different populations. Although international students represent a smaller portion of students in developmental education than domestic students, changes in cost, availability of resources, course structure, or course pace could influence academic success for international students and effect the institution's ability to retain them.

Experiences such as lack of understanding the American education system, concerns about finance, and academic struggles contributed to international students' adjustment to college. Obtaining English language skills was the most concerning issue for international students. Without substantial English skills, international students were placed into developmental education. Activities such as interaction with peers and instructors, engagement in institutional activities, and on-campus employment served as ways to connect the student to the institution and created opportunities to immerse the student in English language learning.

This literature review discussed current research on international students. The available literature revealed how the lack of English language skills placed students into developmental education. Although standardized tests are used as a means to make testing more fair and balanced, the tests have changed little since institutions began using standardized English proficiency exams. The tests do not account for other measures such as high school grade point average or other measures. There is some literature that describe non-academic and academic resources but focus of available resources is at the university level. Research on ESL programs focus on curriculum, social issues, and program design but does not explore what international students believe is essential as they transition from English language learners to college level learners.

Community colleges continue to be the core provider of ESL programs, offer international students the opportunity to improve their English language skills and reach other goals. The international student experience at the community college is missing from the literature. This study aims to add to the literature regarding international students in English Second Language programs. Using a phenomenological approach, the proposed study will explore the international student experience in an ESL program at one community college. Through their experiences, this study will reveal international students' perceptions about their English language learning experience, how international students transition from developmental education students to college ready students, and explore international students' perceptions regarding the institution's ability to offer resources. Chapter III will discuss the research methodology for this phenomenological study.

CHAPTER III

Method

The purpose of Chapter III is to discuss the research design for this

phenomenological study. In a phenomenological study, the purpose is to describe the

experiences of multiple individuals who have experienced the same phenomenon

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study used Moustakas's transcendental phenomenological

approach. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), Moustakas's transcendental

phenomenology approach captures the essence of the phenomenon, using systematic

steps. The following sections in this chapter are: (a) research questions, (b) context of the

study, (c) research design, (d) participant selection, (e) data collection, (f) data analysis,

(g) role of the researcher, and (h) trustworthiness.

Research Question

The following research question guided this study: What are the experiences of

international students in an English Second Language program at a selected community

college in Texas?

Context of the Study

The setting for this study was an urban community college in Texas. The

institution is an open admissions, public institution and offers English language learning

programs, dual credit courses, adult high school and high school equivalency programs,

Associate in Arts degrees, Associate in Science degrees, workforce and vocation training

certificates, and courses for transfer to a four-year university. There are two course credit

designations; noncredit and credit hours. The student classification system for academic

programs is based on enrollment: below part-time is less than 6 credit hours, part-time

enrollment in six semester credit hours, three-quarters enrollment is enrollment between seven and 11 credit hours, full-time is enrollment in 12 credit hours, and enrollment over 12 credit hours is overtime. The institution offers courses in fall, spring, and summer semester formats, but have other formats based on program needs. A traditional semester is 16 weeks in length for the fall and spring semesters and 10 weeks for the summer semester. Prior to the fall 2018 semester, the institution offered developmental education courses in the traditional sequence format, which required the student to complete all developmental education courses in the learning sequence before enrolling in college level courses. For example, a student would need to successfully complete all of the English learning courses before enrolling in college level English or any courses requiring reading and writing.

There are admissions and educational requirements specific to international students and the institution has an office dedicated to international student needs. The international student service office provides potential and current international students with guidance on attending the institution. During the admissions process, international students must provide transcripts showing high school or high school equivalent completion and show proof of English proficiency. Per the institution's website, acceptable proofs of English proficiency are high school completion from an English speaking country or passing scores dated within two years prior to admission on a standardized test such as TOEFL, International English Language Testing System (IELTS), Pearson Test Exam (PTE Academic), ACCUPLACER (ESL) or an approved Texas Success Initiative (TSI) test, and meet institutional requirements for placement into college-level classes. If a student cannot provide proof of English proficiency, the

student is required to take a standardized exam. The student's scores on the exam determine the course level needed for enrollment. The institution offers an English language program that allows students to take English learning courses full-time or part-time. A student could enroll in the program full-time, or four classes for the semester or enroll part-time, taking two classes for the semester. Upon enrollment, all international students are required to participate in orientations and attend scheduled check-in meetings with an international student service advisor. The office has designated international student advisors to assist students with maintaining visa status. According to the institution's website, international students are encouraged to attend cultural events at the institution and with community partners, interact with peer ambassadors who are also international students, and engage in other enrichment events held by the institution.

Students wishing to attend the institution must pay a fee to Citizen and Immigration Services and register in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). SEVIS is a database used by the federal government to monitor visa status. International students come to the United States on different student visas, which determines the type of program the student may participate in, the number of hours the student is required to enroll in to remain a student in the country, and determines if the student can be employed while undertaking studies. An M-1 student visa is designated for individuals who wish to study in a vocational or nonacademic program other than an English language learning program, and may only be employed in a practicum related to their program after program completion (US Citizen & Immigration Services, 2020). An F-1 student visa allows individuals to participate in a language learning program and requires the individual to be accepted as a fulltime student in a program that culminates

in a degree, diploma, or certificate (US Citizen & Immigration Services, 2020). During the first year of enrollment, F-1 students are not allowed to be employed off-campus, but can apply for on-campus employment (US Citizen & Immigration Services, 2020).

For this study, the focus was on international students on F-1 visas. The most commonly selected student visa is the F-1 student visa (US Citizen & Immigration Services, 2020). At the selected institution, students on F-1 visas account for 73% of the international student population. The top countries for sending students on F-1 student visas to the institution are: (1) Vietnam, (2) Mexico, (3) Nigeria, (4) China, and (5) India. F-1 students were selected for this study because the student is required to attend an academic program and/or participate in English learning programs, which are embedded in the institution's developmental education program. The requirement to be in an academic program focuses on international students in courses that teach English learning skills, focus on the nuances of English language learning, and explore retaining English language learners by understanding their experiences.

On F-1 visas, students are required to pay application fees to the government, application fees to the institution, enroll in 12 semester credit hours, pay out of state tuition and fees, and pay for mandatory health insurance provided by the college each semester. Domestic students do not pay application fees, are not required to enroll in 12 semester hours nor have health insurance. For domestic students in the institution's tax district, one semester tuition and fees as a full-time student is a minimum of $814.00. By comparison, a similarly enrolled F-1 student with one semester of insurance coverage, the minimum is $2,900.00. The comparison between domestic student and international student costs does not include other fees such as lab fees, books and supplies, or other

living expenses. Financial aid is not available for the English Second Language program. Students on F-1 visas are allowed to be employed on campus during their first year at the institution. Since most students enroll in developmental education courses during their first year at institution, the researcher will be able to explore how finance and employment also influence international student retention.

Research Design

The research design for this study was phenomenological, using Moustakas's transcendental approach. Through systematic design, the researcher explores the reality of participants in the phenomenon and aims to understand their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). A phenomenological research design was selected because the design explores the reality of individuals through multiple lenses (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The first step was to identify the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The phenomenon in question for this study is English Second Language courses. Current research does not describe the international student experience from the student perspective. Given the changing landscape of developmental education, it is essential to understand how changes can influence international student outcomes. The outcome for this study was to understand experiences of international students as participants within the phenomenon at one community college.

Participant Selection

In phenomenological studies, it is important that all participants have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To ensure that all participants had experienced the phenomenon, this study utilized a purposeful sampling approach

(Creswell & Poth, 2018; Seidman, 2013). By employing a purposeful sampling approach, the researcher ensured the sample had experienced the phenomenon through direct selection of the site and by selecting participants who could add value and focus in understanding the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The direct site was an urban community college in Texas.

Criteria for Selecting Participants. Participants were selected using maximum variation sampling. The researcher selected participants based on specific criteria, increasing the opportunity for different perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Seidman, 2013). Since international students come from countries across the world, the differences in educational experiences and language background increased the likelihood of recruiting students with different characteristics within the phenomenon. The selected participants were international students on an F-1 student visa enrolled in the institution's English Second Language program.

Sample Size. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest the sample size for a phenomenological study range from 1 – 325 participants. Seidman (2013) suggests the sampling size should be enough participants to reflect the population, allowing outsiders to connect with the participants. The sampling size should be large enough that new information cannot be obtained (Seidman, 2013). The selected sample size for this study was eight participants.

Recruiting Participants. First, approval for the proposed study was obtained from the doctoral dissertation committee. Approval was achieved through proposal defense. After a successful proposal defense, an application to the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was submitted. Once approval was obtained from the

university, the researcher sought approval through the selected institution's IRB. After

receiving approval from the selected institution, the researcher contacted the institution's

international student services office and ESL program department. The international

student office was selected because all international students must apply for admissions

and registration through this office. Adding in the ESL program directors to assist with

recruiting increased the opportunity to reach more students who may have been

overlooked because the students were already in the program. The researcher asked the

international student director and ESL program director to assist with recruiting students

by distributing flyers, created by the researcher, to international students who met the

selection criteria. Once participants were identified, the researcher distributed a consent

to participate form for the participant to sign via electronic mail (email) provided by the

participant. Participants were asked to participate in one, 30-minute interview (Seidman,

2019). The interview times were scheduled with participants to ensure availability for

both the researcher and participants. The participant signed and returned the document to

the researcher via email.

Data Collection

Data was collected through individual interviews. One-on-one interviews allowed

for in-depth conversations with participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Seidman, 2013).

Prior to starting the interview, the researcher reviewed the consent form with the

participant to ensure understanding of the purpose of the study, discussed confidentiality

during the study, explained to the participant that there is no penalty for participating in

the study, and disclosed that the participant may exit the study at any time (Creswell &

Poth, 2018). After the researcher received the signed consent form, interviews began.

Interviews were conducted individually using video conferencing software, such as Google Duo, FaceTime, WebEx, or Zoom. During the time of scheduling, the researcher discussed with the participant the type of software that is easily accessible for the participant. In agreement with the selected community college, the participants were not required to use the video feature. The option to not use the video feature added a layer of comfort to participant, allowing the participant to speak with anonymity. The selected software's recording function was used to record sound-only during the interview. Recording the interviews allowed the researcher to return to the interview to explore content that may have been missed during the interview, and aid in transcribing the interview (Seidman, 2013). Seidman (2013) suggested that transcribing the participant's words allowed the researcher to understand the participant's awareness. During interviews, handwritten notes were taken to supplement audio data.

Seidman (2013) suggested using three-part interviews with phenomenological studies. During the first part of the interview, each participant discussed their previous experiences. Participants were asked to discuss their educational experiences in the context of family history and education in their home country. The first part of the interview allowed the researcher to develop an understanding of why those experiences may have led the participant to the phenomenon (Seidman, 2013). The second part of the interview allowed the researcher to explore the details of participants' experiences in the phenomenon (Seidman, 2013). Participants were asked to describe their experiences as students in the ESL program at the selected institution. The third part of the interview allowed participants to reflect on their experiences. Participants were asked to discuss

how the phenomenon has shaped their thoughts about their education and their future

goals (Seidman, 2013).

Interview Protocol

Interviews for this study were structured and used an interview protocol to guide

interview activities through previously prepared open-ended questions, and allowed the

researcher to document the participants' responses during the interview (Creswell &

Poth, 2018). Open-ended questions allowed for exploration of the phenomenon

(Seidman, 2013) and answered two essential questions: (a) What have you experienced in

terms of the phenomenon? and (b) What situations have influenced your experience with

the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018)? The participants were asked to answer

questions such as: (a) Tell me about your previous high school education and what lead

you to pursue an education at this community college; (b) Tell me about your interactions

with your instructor/s; and (c) Discuss how the ESL program has influenced your

education goals. The Interview Protocol is in Appendix A.

Data collected from each interview were reviewed prior to formal analysis

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to increase

anonymity. After interviews, the researcher listened to the interviews and transcribed

audio material and handwritten notes using Microsoft Word 2016. Interviews and

transcribed material were stored electronically using the researcher's password protected,

private cloud storage. The cloud storage included an electronic vault that is password

protected. This storage method required two password authentication and only the

researcher had access to the storage. Once transcribed, each participant had the

opportunity to review their transcribed interview and offer feedback. The participant

review took no more than 15 minutes. Once the participant agreed on the transcribed

content, their participation is complete. The audio material was destroyed after

participant completion and data analysis began.

Data Analysis

After conducting interviews with each of the participants, the data was reviewed

for processing using Moustakas's procedural steps (1994). The next step after identifying

the phenomenon was to bracket out previous experiences and perceptions with

developmental education. Transcendental phenomenology focuses on the participants'

lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018) so the researcher set aside interpretations and

experiences with the phenomenon in a process known as bracketing (Creswell & Poth,

2018; Moustakas, 1994). Bracketing allowed the researcher to describe experiences with

the phenomenon prior to exploring the participant's experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The challenge with bracketing is that it is difficult to eliminate prior experience or

knowledge with a phenomenon once you have experiences with or an understanding of

the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Acknowledging previous experiences allowed the

researcher to embrace the participants' experiences with the phenomenon and minimize

the researcher's interpretation of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The next step was to find unchanging meaning by breaking down the transcribed

interview in smaller units (Moustakas, 1994). Two-cycle coding was used for data

analysis (Saldaña, 2016). First, the transcribed interviews were coded manually using

descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2016) and organized in Microsoft Excel 2016. Descriptive

coding identified meaning from the participant's words (Saldaña, 2016). A codebook

with descriptions of the codes was kept separate from the coded data (Saldaña, 2016).

After the initial coding, the researcher categorized the codes based on similarities in codes and how frequently the codes occurred (Onwuegbuzie, Frels, & Hwang, 2016). Steps four and five of the data analysis process is when textual and structural descriptions were identified, and common themes emerged (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Textual descriptions identified the participants' experiences, and structural descriptions described how the participants experienced the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The final step in the process was to find common themes (Moustakas, 1994). During the second cycle of coding, the researcher reviewed the codes from the first cycle and began organizing the codes into themes using pattern coding (Onwuegbuzie, Frels, & Hwang, 2016). After identifying and categorizing themes, the researcher developed descriptions to find commonality in themes that describe the essence of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is the instrument for this qualitative study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) acknowledge that interviews can be difficult for first-time interviewers such as managing the amount of time it takes to conduct interviews. To minimize this affect, the interviews will be structured and completed within the 60-minute timeframe (Seidman, 2019). Questions addressed to the participant will be prepared prior to the interview, allowing the interview to remain structured and focused (Seidman, 2013).

Bracketing is essential for the researcher. Bracketing allows the researcher to explore biases with the phenomenon and helps the researcher avoid transferring their

experiences onto participants' experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As stated in Chapter I, my experience with this topic is that I once was a developmental education student in a traditional sequence. My experiences with developmental education were more negative than positive. Each course in the developmental sequence had to be completed before moving on the next course. This meant I spent more time in developmental education courses before finally enrolling in a college level course. Although the cost for courses were lower as I paid the lowest fees possible for courses, I spent more money to reach college level status. I also had negative interactions with instructors and with other staff at the community college I attended. Additionally, I have had many interactions with international students who had similar negative experiences. My previous experiences with developmental education and interactions with international students in developmental education could influence the findings and interpretation of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A reflexive journal was used throughout data collection and data analysis to document the researcher's experiences and biases on the phenomenon. A reflexive journal was kept to document my feelings and experiences prior to interviewing participants, document my experiences after each interview, during data analysis, and after data analysis is completed. Participants in the study did not have access to the journal. All documents were stored in a private, password protected, electronic storage that only the researcher could access.

Trustworthiness

Trust issues are a challenge in phenomenological study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative studies typically do not use instruments such as scales or other metrics to confirm the findings (Amankwaa, 2016). The findings from the study need to be

validated through trustworthiness measures (Amankwaa, 2016). Since the researcher is

the instrument in this qualitative study (Creswell & Poth, 2018), trustworthiness is critical

to determine if the findings from the study are confirmed for neutrality, credible in terms

of the findings, dependable, and transferable to other settings (Amankwaa, 2016).

Confirmability

Confirmability is the degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a

study are shaped by the participants and not the researcher's bias, motivation, or interests

(Amankwaa, 2016). An audit trail was used to document the researcher's steps taken

from the start of the research to the conclusion of the research project (Amankwaa, 2016).

Credibility

Credibility establishes the truth of the research findings (Amankwaa, 2016).

Credibility was established using independent member checking. Independent member

checking allows participants to offer feedback and ask questions after the interview is

transcribed to ensure the researcher accurately captured information from the interview

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). It may be possible that participants will withhold information

for fear of being exposed about their experiences. The best method to overcome trust

challenges is to develop a balanced relationship through collaborative interviewing

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). Collaborative interviewing requires the researcher to engage in

a process with the participant to explore content obtained and keep communication open

during the study. Seidman (2013) cautions on building long-lasting therapeutic

relationships. Advice and personal relationships were avoided during this study.

Dependability

Dependability in a qualitative study is how well the study can be replicated with similar findings by another researcher (Amankwaa, 2016). Dependability was established using an inquiry audit. An inquiry audit employs another researcher not directly involved with the research to review the findings, interpretations, and conclusion to ensure accuracy (Amankwaa, 2016). For this study, the Dissertation Chair performed the inquiry audit.

Transferability

Transferability describes how well the findings are applicable to other settings (Amankwaa, 2016). To determine transferability, thick description was used to describe details about the setting, the atmosphere, the mood, and other rich details to enhance the study and assist in determining if the results are transferable to other settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The best way to achieve this was to make note of the details in the researcher's notes.

Summary

Chapter three described the research method for this study. A phenomenological design was selected to explore international students' experiences in an English Second Language program at a selected community college. The selected institution's international student office and the ESL program directors assisted with recruiting students. Participants selected for this study were international students on an F-1 student visa. Bracketing was used to prior to interviews since the researcher has experienced the phenomenon of developmental education. Data collection for this study was obtained through an interview with each participant, using previously prepared questions and an

interview protocol as a guide. Data analysis was conducted using strategic steps. The interviews was transcribed and presented to each participant for review. After each participant reviewed their transcribed interview, data analysis began. Two-cycle coding was used for data analysis. Descriptive coding was used in the first-cycle to break down the data into smaller units. During second-cycle coding, pattern coding was used to refine the units to be placed into themes. Throughout data analysis, a reflexive journal was used to document the researcher's biases and experiences. To establish trustworthiness, the Dissertation Chair performed an audit inquiry to ensure the findings can be replicated and applied to other settings. An audit trail was used to document steps from the start of the research to the conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER IV

Analysis of Data

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of international students in an English Second Language (ESL) program. The exploration of experiences revealed some positive aspects that assist international students with successfully transitioning from an ESL learning program into college credit-bearing courses. The study revealed barriers that hinder the transitioning process. The research question that guided this study was:

What are the experiences of international students in an English Second Language program at a selected community college in Texas?

Chapter IV describes the data analysis process using Moustakas's (1994) approach to transcendental phenomenological research. The following sections in this chapter are: (a) methods in context, (b) bracket, (c) participants, (d) themes, and (e) summary.

Methods in Context

Once approval was granted, the recruitment process began. Recruitment began during August 2021, during the Covid-19 pandemic. The institution was closed during the pandemic, only allowing students to come on campus to register. This lengthened the recruitment time as students were not easy to access due to the closure. At the suggestion of the international student services director, a flyer was created detailing the reason for the study.

I requested the ESL director and the international student director to distribute the flyer several times to increase the likelihood of attracting a large pool of participants. The director for the ESL program distributed the flyer to all instructors for the program, and asked the instructors to distribute to all ESL students. The flyer was also distributed by international student ambassadors at the direction of the international student director. From this distribution, five students contacted me via email volunteering to participate. I emailed the ESL director requesting the flyer be distributed again. I was then contacted by two participants. I was granted approval to recruit on campus when students were allowed on campus but also left flyers in the common area, accessible to all students until on-campus interactions began. I was then contacted by three participants. In total, the flyer was distributed four times. I was contacted later by two students after I ceased flyer distribution during the last week of September 2021. In total, 12 students volunteered to participate. I emailed the informed consent to participants and requested a time to conduct the interview. Six students responded immediately and scheduled interviews. I emailed the remaining students requesting their participation. Only three answered and scheduled interviews. I decided to proceed with interviewing the nine who agreed to participate. One participant did not attend the scheduled interview. This left me with eight participants to interview for the study.

All participants were taking ESL courses online due to the college closure during the pandemic but were required to come back on the campus during a specified time during the semester. Given the difficulty in conducting interviews in person, all participants were interviewed using video conferencing software. Interviews began during the last week of September 2021 and concluded during the second week of

October 2021. The challenge for conducting the interviews was not having the ability to see the participant. In agreement with the community college's IRB, I was not permitted to ask students to turn on their camera. This made it difficult to know who I was interviewing. I had to rely on the participants' tone of voice, laughter, or hesitations to questions. For example, one of the participants seemed unenthusiastic about the interview and gave short answers to my questions. I was unable to determine if the participant's reactions were to the questions or some other factor.

An interview protocol was prepared in advance and served as a guide. Seventeen pre-prepared questions explored each participant's interactions with English. Before starting each interview, I obtained informed consent. Once the student confirmed they understood the purpose of the interview and the reason for informed consent, the interview began. The participants interviewed seemed nervous regarding their participation. Some participants worried if I would be able to understand their responses due to their accent. The interview protocol guided the interview but there were instances when I needed to elaborate. For example, when I asked one participant what qualities an instructor should have, she needed clarification on what was meant by qualities.

Bracket

Prior to conducting interviews, I bracketed out my personal experiences and perceptions in a reflexive journal. My reflexive journal allowed me to document my interaction with a developmental education administrator and reflect on my thoughts about international students. I noted that in a personal communication with an administrator for the ESL program, he did not see English learning courses as developmental. This statement is in direct contrast to the college's action to align ESL

courses under its college readiness division. I felt the administrator's perceptions about what is considered developmental education pointed to a negative mindset regarding developmental education. Developmental education carries the stigma that the student was negligent in receiving their foundational education. This mindset of negativity lends to the idea that developmental education is only for students who lack basic educational skills. Given that international students tend to isolate themselves from domestic students, negative perceptions from administrators can further isolate the student. The student may begin to question their abilities and if coming to the institution was a good choice. Although international students typically arrive at institutions well prepared for college, they need to develop English speaking, reading, and writing skills, which will enhance their abilities in educational courses (Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015).

I also reflected on the biased social idea that international students drain resources from domestic students. I am aware that there is the idea that international students are most often awarded scholarships and other financial awards, excluding domestic students. I had the idea that since international students must show financial capability before enrolling, international students come to the institution with substantial financial support. This means international students would not need financial support like domestic students. A few of the participants mentioned concerns about finances. During the interviews, the participants mentioned not wanting to place heavy financial burdens on their families and supporters.

I also reflected on the idea that international students are isolated from the college community. I felt being away from friends, family, and in a foreign country could be stressful and may cause negative experiences. I crafted questions for data collection that

explored social interactions with other students, faculty, and staff at the community college. During the interviews, each of the participants offered different experiences with social interactions but felt that social connections were important.

    I discussed my concerns with a colleague who once was classified as an international student. I was able to discuss my thoughts that international students have resources and may not need financial assistance whereas financial resources may be limited for domestic students. I was able to discuss the socialization of international students. My colleague offered his perceptions from when he was a student, and confirmed that financial concerns are issues as the student may have the resources at the start of their education, but can experience hardships as they progress through college. He confirmed that socializing within the college community is an issue for international students but offered possible reasons why international students do not engage with others.

    After speaking to my colleague, I was able to set aside the administrator's view and not allow his view to influence my thoughts about developmental education. I was able to keep my idea that developmental education is to aid students who need more assistance with a subject. I was able to keep a positive mindset that although developmental education is traditionally seen as negative, some students may view the experience as positive. Acknowledging that positive experiences are possible in developmental education allowed me to let the participants' words guide the study.

    I was also able to put aside my bias that international students do not need financial assistance. In researching for this study, I discovered international students have concerns about resources similar to domestic students. I did not focus enough on

types of resources available to international students during data collection. I did not consider the fluctuations in stability of resources and how their ability to attend college is affected should their resources become unavailable. I was mindful during analysis to explore financial concerns as a few of the participants mentioned this.

Finally, I kept the importance of social interactions in mind throughout data collection. My colleague's discussion on why international students may not engage with the college community helped me realize there are other reasons than simply not wanting to socialize with domestic students. I was surprised by how often the participants mentioned interacting with people. Although I am not an international student, I remain empathetic to the challenges of arriving in a new country and learning a new language. I was able to start each interview aware of my biases and allowed the participant to fully express their views regarding their experience.

Participants

Eight participants volunteered to be interviewed and were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity (Seidman, 2013). The participants were seven women and one man. Five of the participants were from Asian speaking countries and three were from Spanish speaking countries. Of the eight participants, only one was enrolled in an ESL-only course. The other seven participants were enrolled in an ESL course paired with first-year college English. Only one of the participants held a degree from their home country.

Ann

Ann is a Vietnamese student enrolled in an ESL course paired with first-year college English. Prior to attending the institution, she learned English in her home country while in high school. Ann is attending the college to improve her English reading, writing, and speaking skills as she plans to transfer to a university to major in accounting.

Tina

Tina is a Chinese student enrolled in an ESL course paired with first-year college English. Tina learned English in high school in China. Tina attended another college in the United States but withdrew from the college before completing a degree due to finances and personal concerns. Tina enrolled at the community college with plans to transfer to a university to major in computer science.

Marco

Marco is a Colombian student enrolled in an ESL course paired with first-year college English. Marco learned English while in high school in Colombia. After completing high school, he attended a university in Colombia and earned a degree in engineering. Marco is at the community college to improve his English language skills and earn another degree. Although he plans to transfer to a university, he has not decided on a degree plan.

Lucy

Lucy, who did not disclose her home country, is a student from a Spanish speaking country enrolled in an ESL course paired with first-year college English. Lucy learned English in high school but it was not required. She admits wanting to learn

English because she knew she wanted to come to America. Lucy is interested in continuing her studies in the medical field and hopes to get admitted into one of the community college's medical field programs.

Maria

Maria, who did not disclose her home country, is from a Spanish speaking country. Maria is the only participant enrolled in an ESL-only course. She began her studies in English in her home country by taking courses through a community learning center. Maria stopped taking the courses because she had obligations to care for her family. She does not have any plans to pursue a degree at a university. Maria's primary goal is to learn English and is interested in the community college's Human Resources program.

Lynn

Lynn is a Vietnamese student enrolled in an ESL course paired with first-year college English. She learned English in her home country while in high school. Lynn continued learning English at a college in Vietnam while pursuing studies in science. She clarified that learning English was secondary to her science studies while she was in college. Lynn plans to transfer to a university where she will pursue studies in technology.

Rebecca

Rebecca is a Vietnamese student enrolled in an ESL course paired with first-year college English.   She mentioned learning English in school but did not clarify if it was only during high school. Rebecca plans to transfer to a university to pursue a career that

involves math, however she is unsure of the career she wants. Rebecca acknowledged she needs to improve her English even if she pursues a career in math.

Jane

Jane is a Chinese student enrolled in an ESL course paired with first-year college English. She learned English in China while in school but did not indicate if learning occurred in high school or throughout her education. Jane indicated her parents knew some English but not well enough to teach her. Jane plans to transfer to a university and pursue studies in business.

Themes

After reviewing the transcripts and interview notes, I highlighted meaningful sentences from each participant. Then, I manually entered the data into an Excel spreadsheet. I began by applying tentative codes based on interpreting each participant's words and patterns (Onwuegbuzie, Frels, & Hwang, 2016). The tentative codes were reviewed to find commonalities and collected into themes (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Four themes emerged from the data: (a) prior learning experiences, (b) reasons for learning English in the U.S, (c) social interactions, and (d) progress with learning English. The findings provided insight into experiences among the participants.

Prior Learning Experiences

The participants were asked to describe their experiences speaking, reading, and writing in English prior to attending the institution.

In School

Most of the participants shared their experiences with English occurred in high school in their home country. Marco felt his experience in school only taught him the basics of English. Marco proclaimed, "Well, I learn basic English before I come from Colombia." He elaborated, "We learn somethings but I don't think it was enough."

A few of the participants described their school experience was simply repeating after the teacher. For instance, Tina stated, "Back in my country, I learned English. It was taught in school. So, we would repeat after the teacher. It's kind [of] like just remembering a bunch of words. I guess, like you would say, grammar lessons."

Rebecca's experience learning English occurred with a teacher who taught English in the U.S., she also mentioned repetition as part of the learning process. Rebecca elaborated, "We just repeated what the teacher tell us. There's some stuff to read, like books, but that's how we learned."

Lucy mentioned learning English was personally essential but not required in school. Lucy asserted, "I started learning English when I started secondary school. It was not required to learn but I learned some because I knew I wanted to come to America to finish my education." She further elaborated, "English is not something I had to learn. It's like here when you have an elective…"

Other Learning Experience

Only one of the participants did not mention learning English in school. Maria's experience with English occurred at a community center. Maria indicated, "I took classes at the community center. The people there spoke Spanish so it was easier. I felt better that I wasn't the only one."

Learning From a Non-native English Speaker

Two of the participants described their experience of learning English from a non-native

English speaker. For example, Lynn stated, "It's sort of hard learning English from a

Vietnamese teacher. I can get good at grammar but not speaking or something like that."

Ann described her experience learning English as "hard:"

> I learn English in my home country. The teacher just have us repeat after
>
> everything she says. I think she learned some English the same because she is
>
> Vietnamese. It was hard to learn to speak because all of my friends are
>
> Vietnamese. So you can see why I think it was hard for me. I didn't have an
>
> English speaker to help me.

Summary

Overall, the participants arrived at the community college with foundational

English language from their home country. Most of the participants' responses revealed

that previous experience with English was intertwined with learning at school in their

home country. High school appeared to be the main source of learning English. Only

one participant indicated learning at a community based center, but was also the only

participant enrolled in the less advanced ESL only course. Learning English from a non-

native English speaker was described as a challenge for some of the participants. Two

participants described their experience as "hard" or believed they will never "get good" at

using English. The participants' previous learning experiences are aligned with the idea

that international students are normally prepared for learning due previous learning

experiences they enter U.S. institutions (Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015).

Reasons for Learning English in the U.S.

The participants were asked to discuss their educational goals and why they chose to learn in America, which included further education, workforce preparation, and other personal goals.

Educational Goals

Several of the participants discussed transferring to a university as their reason for pursuing education in the U.S. Marco received an engineering degree in his home country prior to attending the institution. He acknowledged that English language learning is a priority for him as he pursues another educational path. Marco stated, "I wanted to learn English more so I can get another degree." When queried about his educational goals, he was unsure and had not decided.

A few of the participants mentioned STEM careers as their primary goal. Although STEM careers tend to use universal concepts like math, the participants acknowledged English speaking, reading, and writing skills were necessary for securing and maintaining STEM careers.   For instance, Lynn discussed her plans, "It's not like I only want to learn English. I also want to transfer to get a bachelor degree. I plan to work with a technology job so I need to know English to be successful."

Entering the Workforce

A few of the participants mentioned entering the workforce was their primary goal and did not mention transferring to a university. For instance, Maria did not discuss educational goals outside of finding a job. Her primary objective was to learn English, as she indicated that English is essential to getting a job and gaining economic stability. Maria stated, "I came here with my family because of opportunities. I want to get a good

job too. I think being here in America and knowing English means I will have a better chance to make something of myself." Similarly, Lucy wanted to pursue one of the college's nursing programs. She stated, "I am interested in being a nurse here. I want to get into that program but I know I need to get better at English since I know the program and the job I want will use English."

Other Reasons

In addition to transfer plans and entering the workforce, a few of the participants elaborated on other reasons for pursuing an education at the community college. These reasons primarily focused on more opportunities. For instance, Jane disclosed her reasons for studying in America are because of her country's economic climate and her parents. She further believed that her home country is pushing for all students to learn English. Jane asserted, "Because a lot of students want to go to other countries, we think it's better that we learn in other countries because we don't have a lot of opportunities in China." Jane also admitted that her parents thought learning in America was better for her.

Summary

Six of the participants indicated educational plans beyond learning English and two participants indicated learning English would help with immediate employment. Additionally, some of the participants identified family encouragement and conditions in their home country as influential. All the participants believed receiving an education in the U.S. would lead to more career opportunities, improved economic stability, and overall, a better life.

The participants' responses aligned with literature that discloses motivations on why students learn outside their home country. International students' desire to learn

outside their home country are guided by internal and external motivators (Haisley, Grandorff, Agbonlaho, Mendez, & Hansen, 2021; Holtbrügge & Engelhard 2016). Internal motivation could be personal enrichment or the need to explore other cultures. External motivation, or push factors, can include political climate in their home country, poor economic conditions in their home country, or influence from family and friends (Garcia, Garza, & Yeaton-Hromada, 2019; Haisley, Grandorff, Agbonlaho, Mendez, & Hansen, 2021; Nyaupane, Paris, & Teye, 2011). Learning English was just one critical but essential component towards achieving their goals.

Social Interactions

The participants were asked to describe their experiences enrolling into the ESL program and while in the program. Most of their interactions occurred online due to the pandemic but included staff, other students, and instructors.

Interactions With Staff

A few of the participants mentioned the COVID-19 pandemic did not prevent interaction with college staff. For instance, Lucy praised the institution's action to offer fully online services during the pandemic. Lucy proclaimed,

> Since we were in the pandemic, I didn't think I would be able to attend school. Thankfully, [community college] had everything online anyway. So, it wasn't too bad. It's just that there are a lot of things to do just to get into school.

Rebecca had positive feedback regarding her interaction with her assigned Designated School Official (DSO). Rebecca asserted, "The international student office tell you everything you need to get started. My DSO, he was good about staying on track. Then after that, everything seemed easier." Rebecca also disclosed her desire to

engage in a social opportunity she learned about, "I'm really interested in being an International Student Ambassador. My teacher didn't tell me about that, that's from the international student office."

Jane was the only participant who mentioned taking an English skills test during this time period. She stated, "I did okay on the test, but I did not pass by a few points. My advisor told me to enroll in the integrated class, my scores weren't that bad." Jane also mentioned her interaction with her DSO, "My DSO made sure I had all my paperwork ready. We attended New Student Orientation and I got a lot of information."

Tina also elaborated on her interactions with staff during this time and described it in positive terms:

> I attended another college. I transfer from that college. I will tell you, it is a lot of paperwork to get into school. I like that [community college] has a lot of help for international students on the website. They have a checklist that makes it easier for me. When I forget something, I just go back to the checklist. My DSO was helpful and made sure I had everything so I can start on time.

Tina also explained, "The only people who really tell us things is in the international student office. I think they tell us more than anybody else."

For some participants, interacting with staff posed challenges during the pandemic. For example, Marco indicated the process was frustrating. As an international student, Marco felt there were numerous requirements that had to be fulfilled before enrolling. However, he acknowledged the process was necessary and contended, "I feel a little stressed out about all the things I had to do just to get in school but I guess it is a part of going to school, right?" Ann expressed frustration and confusion with the process

of enrolling at the institution but realized the institution is guided by government rules that must be followed. She remained positive in her assessment of her experience and stated,

> My advisor was nice and I could talk to her. It is just a long process for me to get into school. You know, because we have to apply for the visa and wait until they approve. I think the school is just following the rules so they don't get in trouble. I like that a lot things can be done online. I don't know if it is because of Covid but we paid online and had an online orientation. I will say the international student office does good work for students like me who can get confused with all of this stuff.

Ann also mentioned that she was unsure if the pandemic played a factor in the institution's ability to offer online services. However, the online services made it easier for her to find assistance.

Interactions With Other Students

The pandemic limited social interactions for students. Two participants disclosed their desire to interact with other students. Lynn indicated, "It was difficult for me because of being online. But when [I heard] we start going into the classroom, I was happy… Plus, I also get to see other people more too." Lucy stated, "We do our work online because of Covid. I did make one friend in the classroom. We would talk with each other and text." Lucy also disclosed she would not attend any events alone, "I only have the one friend. If they couldn't go, then I wouldn't go. I didn't want to be by myself. Especially, I don't know anybody." Jane similarly expressed she would like to

attend events but only if she could attend the events with other students: "Some classmates would like to join a student organization, we are talking about it."

A few of the participants were concerned about their ability to interact with other students because of their English speaking abilities. Ann expressed apprehension about interacting with other students due to her language barrier and her personality. Ann proclaimed, "I think I am a shy person and I don't like to talk in front of other people because I think they will laugh."

Maria attended a Student Life event online and disclosed she enjoyed it. She acknowledged her language barrier made her hesitant to interact with other students. In addition, Maria was concerned about her age difference when interacting with other students: "Maybe being a little bit older than some of the other students, I get nervous working with some of these kids."

Interactions With Instructors

All the participants disclosed interacting with their instructor was important as instructors were seen as primary sources for English learning. Maria only had one instructor and stated, "So far, the teacher is good in taking it slow for me. So I guess a teacher who knows to take us slow is good for learning English." Jane noted surprise regarding her interactions with instructors, stating "My teachers are very patient. I was surprised. They want me to do better." She further elaborated, "I was so happy to come on campus, I missed seeing the teacher." One participant noted contrasting personalities between her instructors. For instance, Tina asserted,

> My ESL instructor was nice and patient. She understand how difficult it is to
>
> learn a new language. She would help us work through things that we learned in

English. My English instructor was little bit tougher. To me, she was a little

mean. I think she was just there to give us work. I think my English [teacher]

expected us to know things off the back.

Instructor interaction was also important when finding out about engagement activities,

Student Life activities, or guiding towards resources. For example, Ann mentioned her

instructor encouraged exploring opportunities to learn English. Reading magazines,

watching television shows, attending Student Life events, and using resources such as

tutoring were just a few opportunities to enhance English learning.

Missed Opportunities for Social Interactions

A few of the participants mentioned missing out on social opportunities such as

employment, engagement activities, or social activities because of family concerns, the

pandemic, or being unaware. Ann felt that being online contributed to her missed

opportunities for social interaction:

I haven't gone to anything because it's all online. I always get those emails from

the school that says the school is hosting a blood drive or something. Even when

we came back to campus, I don't remember seeing too much at the campus.

Marco acknowledged, "My teacher also told us about tutoring. But like I say, I go

to school all day and I need some time to do my own thing too." Other participants

mentioned study time as preventing social interaction. For instance, Tina declared,

I would say [studying] at least 3 hours a day, but it feels like more than that. I

really needed to take my time with reading and understanding so I could write a

good essay. It might be too much but I want to make sure I got it right.

Lynn also disclosed spending "a lot of time studying" and believed the amount of time she studied decreased her social interactions. She stated, "Studying a lot helps you get better and that's why I spend a lot of time by myself."

Maria mentioned attending one Student Life event. She admitted her instructor may have talked about the importance of attending events, but she felt family and studying were higher priorities. She asserted, "I am sure they have told us about how important it is to attend events but I have a family. So in addition to my studies, I barely have time for myself."

Summary

The pandemic limited social interaction for students. At the time of the interviews, the college was not open for on-campus enrollment services nor on-campus learning. All interactions occurred remotely. Overall, there were positive reactions, complimenting the college's ability to offer services online. The participants were pleased with the international student office's Designated School Officials, who were helpful in guiding visa requirements and disseminating resource information. Only two participants expressed the desire to socialize with other students, and a few other participants felt having a friend or attending events was important.

Finally, interactions with instructors was described as an important social interaction. Instructors were viewed as helpful in connecting students with engagement opportunities, on-campus resources, college events, and in-class interaction. Most of the participants indicated positive interaction with their instructor, but one participant described how one instructor was not pleasant. The pandemic may have prevented in-person interactions, but the need to have social interactions is necessary for adjusting to

college. The findings align with literature that social interactions are essential in international students' adjustment to college (Glass, Gesing, Hales, & Cong, 2017; Wekullo, 2019; Zerengok, Guzel, & Ozbey, 2018).

Progress With Learning English

The participants were asked questions that explored their progress with learning English. They highlighted positive and negative factors, instructor qualities they preferred, and feelings about English abilities before taking an ESL course and during the course.

Positive Factors

The participants described positive factors as including instructor characteristics, the courses they enrolled in, and the overall institutional environment for international students. For instance, all the participants mentioned their instructors contributed to success in the course. Jane declared, "I had great teachers who really understood the English rules. Classwork looked hard to me. I understood better after they explained. I couldn't pass the courses without them." Lucy said this about her instructor: "She tried to make things easy to understand. She told us that if we attended class every day and on-time, it would help us. So that is why I made sure I came to class. I want to get good grades."

In addition to their instructors, a few of the participants mentioned other factors. For instance, Tina mentioned the ability to take her ESL course and first-year college English together: "I think I like taking both the classes together. I think it would be hard trying to get through ESL fast enough so I can transfer to a university." Maria took a

broad perspective and praised the community college, asserting, "I think the school is good because they have a lot of ways to learn English."

And Marco elaborated on positive classroom experiences, stating,

I like that the class wasn't overwhelming. I mean, we did a lot of things but it wasn't so much that it made it too hard. I also like that the class wasn't too big. You watch the movies and see hundreds of people in the class but it wasn't like that.

Instructor Qualities

All the participants described qualities they believed an instructor must possess to allow for positive learning experiences. For example, Rebecca felt English should be taught by an instructor who "should also like working with international students. "Lynn described her ideal instructor:

A teacher must be compassionate. I think there is some who like to work with students because you can ask questions. I think nice is also good because we are not used to speaking English and we don't want people to get mad at us because we get it wrong sometime.

Marco shared similar views:

I don't like instructors who get annoyed when you ask them things. I thought that is why I am here in school. I also like teachers who don't give us too much work. It's already hard to learn all this stuff but to add too much work gets me frustrated. But I am willing to do it because I want to meet my goals.

Negative Factors

The participants also discussed factors they believed worked against their success. Some of the participants disclosed financial concerns. For example Jane acknowledged the high price of enrolling in college but still mentioned the importance of attending college. She stated, "School is expensive but it's worth it. It's necessary to learn English, for my degree and career." Lynn felt that as an international student the price to attend college was excessive. Like Jane, she maintained that the importance of earning a degree outweighed the costs of attending college: "Sometimes I feel like I am paying too much, but I understand how important learning English is if I want to get my degree." Lucy also talked about her financial concerns for her family and said, "My family is helping me so I didn't want to put too much on them. I know I have a long way until I finish school completely so I think (name of school redacted) was a good choice."

A few participants mentioned employment. Marco stated, "I really wish I could have found about employment. That would have been a big help." For Lucy, her missed employment opportunity was due to not having required documents:

I tried to find an on-campus job but it was very hard. My international advisor told me that I waited too late because I still needed to go apply for a social security card. So I kind of just put getting a job on hold until I can get everything.

Ann believed she could not obtain employment on campus due to her language barrier and said, "I hear about campus work but I don't think they will give it to me. I guess my English not as good as some other students."

A few of the participants mentioned learning remotely was a negative factor. For instance, Maria felt learning from a remote environment while with her family was

stressful. Tina believed learning online was a negative factor but also expressed

uncertainty for returning to the campus: "Since my classes were all online, I was

nervous. I think I am good but not the best with technology. Plus, I never had classes

online. But I am nervous about going back to the campus because of the pandemic."

Jane was the participant who expressed the most desire to return to campus for

social reasons. She felt learning online was "not good" because she was accustomed to

being in the classroom. She explained, "I also think learning online is not good because I

want to be with the teacher. I also want to make some more friends. Being online, you

can't do that."

Only one participant disclosed internal conflict as a negative factor. Marco stated,

"Sometime I think I am my own worst enemy. I always think I am going to mess

something up. I think that is my biggest problem."

Feelings about English Abilities Before Taking an ESL Class

All the participants disclosed a lack of confidence in their English speaking,

reading, and writing skills prior to enrolling in an ESL class. For instance, Ann disclosed

her lack of confidence by sharing:

I am not sure about my English when I talk with other people. I get nervous and

think they will laugh at me because I might mess up or they won't understand.

Since I am in school, I will try to read more because my English still needs work.

I read in my head better.

Tina admitted she does not read or write in English as much outside of her classwork.

She was concerned about her speaking abilities. She stated, "I think I speak English good

but I mostly worry will people be able to understand me. I hear stories about how a lot of Americans have trouble understanding Asian students."

Feelings About English Abilities While in Class

All the participants were optimistic about their English learning progress. Lucy admitted being "overwhelmed" at first. She then clarified,

> I think it [is] because I had so much to worry about. I was away from my home. I didn't know too many people. I add that with trying to learn, it made me feel like it was all too much. But now, I am okay and I think I got a handle on things.

Lynn admitted she felt wary about her skills but remained optimistic that she would improve:

> I think I still have long way because, you know, English is hard. I still need help with writing a lot of things. I feel better but I know I need to keep practicing. I think I am improving because I am getting high marks in my English class.

Participants felt they improved reading, writing, and speaking skills due to the ESL courses despite being online. Rebecca felt that being online was a challenge but believed learning online did not hinder progress: "Being online is different because I'm used to having my teacher in front of me. It's harder because…it's just harder online. But I'm still doing ok, I think."

Summary

There were a combination of positive and negative factors that the participants believed influenced their progress with learning English. Positive progression was mainly attributed to the instructor. The participants expressed that an instructor must be kind, patient, enjoy working with international students, and understand that language

skill building takes time. There was also mention of taking the ESL course and first-year college English together, allowing for faster progression with learning. Financial concerns, missed opportunities to be employed, and the effects of learning remotely because of the pandemic were negative factors the participants felt hindered their learning progress. One participant attributed a negative factor was due to internal conflict, believing they were their "own worst enemy". Overall, all participants expressed satisfaction with their English learning progress. The findings aligned with literature that overall satisfaction with the registration process, interactions with staff and faculty, and satisfaction with institutional processes can lead to positive language learning for international students (Davaasambuu, Cinelli, & Zagari, 2020; Kurzet, 1997).

Summary of Findings

To understand the experiences of international students in English Second Language (ESL) courses, eight participants volunteered for semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted using video conferencing software. Prior to the interviews, I bracketed out my ideas about developmental education, and explored my thoughts about financial concerns and social issues regarding international students. After conducting the interviews, transcripts were created and the participants were allowed to review the transcript and offer feedback. The transcripts were then manually entered into a spreadsheet and organized based on patterns (Onwuegbuzie, Frels, & Hwang, 2016). The codes were then collected into themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Onwuegbuzie, Frels, & Hwang, 2016). Four themes emerged from the data: prior learning experiences, reasons for learning English in the U.S, social interactions, and progress with learning English.

All the participants disclosed previous learning experiences with English. Several participants mentioned learning English in high school in their home country. One participant mentioned learning occurred at a community center in their home country. A few of the participants also disclosed that learning occurred from a non-native English speaker. Learning English from a non-native English speaker made the participants draw the conclusion they will never "get good" at speaking English. The responses from the participants aligned with literature that international student typically arrive at U.S higher education institutions with foundational English language skills from their home country.

Each of the participants believed learning in the U.S was the best opportunity to further their education or career goals. A few of the participants mentioned encouragement from family as the reason for learning in the U.S. Additional reasons were lack of opportunities in their home country and the desire to learn in in another country. Several of the participants disclosed transferring to a university to obtain a degree was their primary goal. Two of the participants did not discuss transferring to a university and stated immediate employment as their goal. The findings aligned with literature that internal and external motivators influence international students' reasons to learn in other countries.

The participants also revealed the importance of social interactions as a part of their experiences. The participants noted positive reactions to the college's ability to offer services online. Most of the participants acknowledged how important interacting with the community college was, citing Designated School Officials within the international student office as the most helpful in the enrollment process. The pandemic

limited social interaction for students. Only two participants expressed the desire to socialize with other students.

All the participants disclosed interactions with their instructor as the most important social interaction. The participants felt instructors were helpful in connecting them with engagement opportunities and encouraged attendance at social events. One participant described how one instructor was not as pleasant. The findings aligned with literature that social interactions are essential in international students' adjustment to college.

Finally, the participants disclosed a combination of positive and negative factors affecting their progress with learning English. Positive progression was mainly attributed to the instructor. The participants also believed instructors must be empathetic and understand that learning English takes time. One of the participants mentioned taking the ESL course and first-year college English together allowed for faster progression with learning. A few of the participants mentioned financial concerns and missed opportunities to be employed as negative experiences that hindered progression. Several participants cited learning remotely because of the pandemic may have also hindered progress. Notwithstanding the negative aspects, all participants expressed satisfaction with their English learning progress and remained optimistic that they would finish their ESL course successfully. The findings aligned with literature that overall satisfaction was necessary for learning progression.

Chapter V will explore the emergent themes as they relate to international students transitioning through developmental education. Findings in relation to the

research questions, literature and framework will be examined, and implications and

recommendations for future research will be addressed.

CHAPTER V

Discussion, Implication, and Recommendations

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of international students in an English Second Language (ESL) program at a Texas community college. This dissertation explored factors that influenced and hindered their progression as they transitioned through developmental education, possibly affecting retention. Eight participants enrolled in the community college's ESL program participated in this study.

I chose this study because of a classroom observation task I was assigned to during an internship experience. Before the pandemic, I was tasked with observing students in an English Second Language (ESL) course paired with first-year college English. The course was newly created in response to a Texas mandate that higher education administrators must offer a corequisite course as an alternative to traditional developmental learning sequences. Although some higher education administrators do not consider ESL courses as developmental, the mandate also included ESL courses. It was possible a domestic, non-native English speaker could be enrolled in the corequisite course. However, the majority of students were international students.

During my classroom observations, I talked to students about their experience in the corequisite courses. Their experiences varied. For instance, one Asian student had difficulty keeping up with the first-year college English course. Another student felt the corequisite courses were extremely helpful when taken together. Since corequisite course pairing was new, a few of the students did not understand why they were in the courses,

and only enrolled at the insistence of their advisor. Some advisors were unclear of which students were eligible for corequisite courses. The new corequisite course mandate created uncertainty for administrators and students alike. Despite uncertainty, the first year data for corequisite learning revealed ESL students were successfully progressing through the corequisite courses and enrolling in second-year college English. I became interested on how international students managed being away from their home country, how they adjusted to life in another country, and how these and other factors influenced their ability to reach their academic goals. I wanted to learn about the experiences of international students in the U.S. from their perspective. I selected Schlossberg's Transition Model (STM) as a framework. STM focuses on the stages adults transition through life experiences, and could be used as a guide to explore how international students transition through developmental education to college level courses or workforce programs. The STM framework provides a framework to explore factors that influence or hinder success for international students as they transition through developmental education.

The data collected from the participants revealed four themes, (a) prior learning experiences, (b) reasons for learning English in the U.S., (c) social interactions, and (d) progress with learning English. Chapter IV discussed the findings. Chapter V discusses the findings in relation to the research question, explores connections to the literature, connection to the framework, provides recommendations for practice, and concludes with implications for future research.

Discussion of the Findings in Relation to the Research Question

This study explored the experiences of international students as F-1 students enrolled in an ESL program in a Texas community college. The following research question guided this study: What are the experiences of international students in an English Second Language program at a selected community college in Texas?

Research Question

Concerning the experiences of international students, the participants arrived in the U.S. with foundational English language skills from their home country. Most often, the participants learned English in high school, taught by a non-native English speaker. The participants acknowledged the English learning process was repetitive, helpful, yet not extensive.

Citing encouragement from family, lack of opportunities in their home country, or the desire to learn in another country, the participants arrived at the community college with structured educational goals. The participants' reasons for learning in the U.S. were to transfer to a university or learn English to obtain immediate employment. To reach their goals, the participants acknowledged refining their English speaking, reading, and writing skills was essential. All of the participants felt learning English in the U.S was best to further their education or career.

In the midst of social distancing due to a pandemic, the participants revealed social interactions were essential to their experience. The community college's ability to offer services online was critical given the campus closure. The ability to interact with the international student office and access the community college's resources online enhanced their experience. A developed rapport with their Designated School Official

(DSO) helped the participants through the enrollment process and allowed the participants to learn about opportunities such as becoming a student ambassador or obtaining on-campus employment.

The pandemic also affected the ability to interact with other students. Learning occurred mostly online, limiting social interactions with classmates. The participants felt online interactions were not enriching, citing isolation as a negative experience. However, the anticipation of returning to campus lessened the negative affect of being only online.

The most important social interaction experience was with the instructor or instructors. Given the restriction to online learning, instructors were key agents for obtaining information to enhance the participants' learning experience. The instructors guided the participants towards resources such as computer lab or tutoring. Instructors also supplemented information garnered from the international student office. Instructors encouraged attending Student Life events and immersion in English language learning by utilizing everyday life events, such as reading magazines or watching television shows in English. These were just a few instances when instructor influence was essential. Moreover, social interactions with the instructor were critical because of the limitation for in-person interaction. The participants expressed rapport with the instructor was essential to their experience and desired positive interactions with instructor(s). The isolating effect of the pandemic did not discourage interactions with the instructor; it increased the desire to interact with the instructor. The participants desired to return to on-campus learning to be with their instructor.

Finally, positive and negative factors influenced the participants' experience. The participants attributed positive experiences to instructors. Instructors who were empathetic and understanding to English language learners were seen as positive contributors to their English learning experience. There was mention of taking an ESL course and first-year college English together. Taking both courses simultaneously allowed for faster progression with learning. Taking an English only learning course was also seen as positive because learning at a faster pace was seen as overwhelming. The English only course fit the needs of a participant who did not anticipate transferring to a university and was only interested in employment.

The participants disclosed negative experiences. Financial concerns such as relying on parents was seen as negative because participants acknowledged the high cost of attending college. None of the participants wanted to burden their supporters. Attending the community college for its lower cost than other colleges mitigated this negative experience. The participants expressed not obtaining on-campus employment. On-campus employment could have provided several experiences. First, employment could have lessened the financial impact on their supporters, and allowed for some financial independence for the participant. Second, on-campus employment would have been an opportunity for continued immersion in U.S college life. Finally, employment would have provided an opportunity to make social connections with English speakers.

Remote learning was also a negative experience. The participants mentioned that learning at home was stressful as learning occurred in the presence of non-college attendees. Learning in the presence of non-students increased distractions, ultimately affecting their learning experience. Learning remotely also limited interacting with

classmates and the instructor. The participants desired a traditional language learning experience in the classroom, and believed that not having the traditional learning experience was a negative experience and hindered learning progression.

Connection to the Literature

The findings from the participants revealed connections to literature regarding international student experiences while attending U.S higher education institutions. International students bring a variety of experiences from their home country (Arthur, 2017; Poyrazli & Isaiah, 2018; Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015; Yan & Pei, 2018). Despite different learning experiences, all of the participants mentioned learning some English before arriving at the community college. Traditionally, international students were "the best and brightest" from their country due to their academic preparedness (Arthur, 2017). Globalization of education has opened doors to a more diverse body of students who have varying learning experiences (Arthur, 2017). The participants selected a visa that indicated their intent to earn a degree, demonstrating there was academic preparation prior to enrolling at the community college. It would be unlikely enrollment would occur for students who lacked foundational academic skills, particularly since the students take exams to determine academic readiness. Despite preparedness, international students will need to enhance their English language skills. The findings align with literature that international students are prepared academically because of previous learning experiences but language requirements present a challenge (Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015).

The findings aligned with literature that reveal international students are influenced by external and internal motivations, leading them to seek educational

experiences outside their home country (Arthur, 2017; Haisley, Grandorff, Agbonlaho, Mendez, & Hansen, 2021; Holtbrügge & Engelhard 2016).   Most of the participants suggested external motivators guided their decision to learn in the US. The participants mentioned factors such as the "push" to learn English from their government, and family believing learning in the U.S is the best option. This reveals that the decision to learn in the US is affected by encouragement from other sources (Garcia, Garza, & Yeaton-Hromada, 2019; Haisley, Grandorff, Agbonlaho, Mendez, & Hansen, 2021; Nyaupane, Paris, & Teye, 2011).

There is literature that cites internal motivation as a reason why international students learn outside their home country. The participants' mentioned internal motivators such as personal enrichment, the desire to earn a degree, or finding a fulfilling career. Nyaupane et al. (2011) revealed that the internal attitude towards a country not only influences the student's decision to study in that country, the attitude is amended by experiences while in the country. It is reasonable to surmise that international students who have negative experiences develop negative attitudes, which then affect their ability to learn. This negative experience may result in seeking more positive experiences elsewhere. However, Haisley et al. (2021) identified the desire to learn a language, an internal motivation, as the greatest influencer to study outside their home country for international students. All of the participants' acknowledged learning English was essential to reach their goals.

Social interactions are essential for international students' adjustment to college (Wekullo, 2019; Yan & Pei, 2018; Zerengok, Guzel, & Ozbey, 2018). The findings support literature that identifies international students benefit academically and socially

by engaging with faculty and peers (Aaron, Cedeño, Gareis, Kumar, & Swaminathan, 2018; Arthur, 2018; Glass, Gesing, Hales, & Cong, 2017; Hansen et al., 2018; Su, 2018; Yan & Pei, 2018). Without social interactions, students may feel isolated, or feel as if they do not belong at the institutions (Yan & Pei, 2018). The findings from the participants also revealed that student personality affects interaction with both students and peers. Shyness, being older, and language barriers were challenges that made it difficult for students to interact with other students. Shy students also have difficulty interacting with their instructor (Yan & Pei, 2018). Social interactions may come in many forms, and institutions should create opportunities for engagement between domestic and international students (Aaron et al., 2018). For example, one participant mentioned attending an online Zumba class. The activity had another purpose outside of being fun. The activity was designed to keep students engaged. The act of interacting with other students or seeing other students interact points to a social adaptation strategy (Zerengok, Guzel, & Ozbey, 2018), lending opportunities to socialize despite social distancing due to the pandemic.

Furthermore, like the findings from Glass, Gesing, Hales, and Cong's (2017) study, the participants felt interactions with their instructor was the most important interaction. Instructors are the primary source for information about engagement opportunities and provide information about opportunities on and off campus. Similar to Glass et al.'s findings, the participants desired faculty members who acknowledged the differences in international students and was passionate about their success.

Overall, satisfaction with the registration process, interactions with staff and faculty, and satisfaction with institutional processes can lead to positive language

learning for ESL students (Davaasambuu, Cinelli, & Zagari, 2020). Davaasambuu et al.'s study revealed that ESL students cited classroom location, convenient class schedules, helpful staff, and an easy registration process as important for their program. Difficulties with the registration process, lack of knowledge from the academic advisor and financial aid counselors, and problems with faculty were challenges for ESL students (Davaasambuu et al., 2020). The participants in this study cited similar strengths and challenges throughout their experience at the community college. Frustration with the abundance of paperwork, difficulties with advisors, lack of assistance receiving financial assistance can prompt a decline in student satisfaction, as identified by the participants in this study. Despite the challenges, the participants indicated satisfaction with their current progress with both the ESL class and the first-year English class and remained optimistic about their ability to finish the semester successfully. Students who are satisfied with their experiences tend to meet their academic goals and tell others about the experiences, which can reflect highly about the institution's ability to meet the needs of their students (Davaasambuu et al., 2020).

Connection to the Framework

Schlossberg's Transition Model (STM) served as the framework for this study. According to Schlossberg (2012), transitions affect an individual's social interaction, psychological well-being, and physical health (Schlossberg, 2012). Schlossberg identified three transition types; anticipated, non-events, and unanticipated.

An anticipated transition is an event that is expected, and the individual may have prepared to manage the change (Anderson et al., 2012). The participants anticipated enrolling in college in the U.S. This was evidenced by their preparation in English

language during high school or learning English at a community center in their home country.

Nonevents are anticipated events that did not occur (Anderson et al., 2012). An example of a nonevent could be a student not being accepted into a program when the student assumed they would be accepted. None of the participants mentioned non-events explicitly. Most of the participants acknowledged that without substantial English skills, acceptance into another school or into a desired career would not occur, creating a scenario for a non-event.

Unanticipated events are transition events the individual is unprepared to manage and the events can be indicative of a possible crisis (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2012). For the participants, the pandemic was an unanticipated transition. The pandemic created a ripple effect, which created a change from the traditional learning process. The campus closure, the wait for government guidance on visa status, cultural changes at the institution, and social distancing were events the participants did not anticipate.

STM posits four resources to manage transitions: situation, self, strategies, and support (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2012). The four resources, collectively "4 S's," influence the individual's response and transition management. Individuals continuously cycle through the 4 S's as they transition across different points throughout their life. The 4 S's model is often used in counseling adults and provided a framework to explore international student experiences in developmental education.

Situation

Situation requires understanding the start of the transition, creating external and internal awareness of a transition (Anderson et al., 2012). External awareness events were moving to a new country and beginning educational pursuits (Workman, 2015). The participants exhibited internal awareness such as motivation to learn English to meet goals and expressed stress due to not wanting to be a burden on their supporters (Anderson et al., 2012; McCoy, 2014). The participants also mentioned an orientation that assisted preparation to begin their studies at the community college.

Self

The individual's thoughts and self-view underscore their ability to transition successfully (Anderson et al., 2012). A confident individual will more likely see the situation as temporary and can make internal and external adjustments to cope with a situation. A less confident individual may struggle and may lose control over the situation. All of the participants saw the pandemic as a temporary situation that effected their ability to attend on-campus classes. The move to learning remotely created a situation where one would need to have a good understanding of technology. This required the participants to be aware of their ability to use technology. One participant described her technology use as "good but not great" and expressed how happy she was when she learned on-campus classes would resume. This demonstration of self-awareness shows that the individual makes adjustments to successfully transition. International students who manage internal control have better experiences (Poyrazli & Isaiah, 2018).

Support

In addition to self-management, support systems provide more resources for transition management (Anderson et al., 2012). The participants frequently mentioned support from family (Anderson et al., 2012; McCoy, 2014; Workman, 2015). Support from the international student office and instructors guided the participants to resources such as tutors, peer and emotional support from student ambassadors, and encouraged exploration of the English language through student activities (Poyrazli & Isaiah, 2018). Additionally, access to financial support systems, such as employment, would have been added support for the participants. Instructor support was the most important and the participants described the ideal instructor for teaching international students. Instructors who are supportive through their personality and teaching style are necessary for international students to succeed academically (Poyrazli & Isaiah, 2018).

Strategies

Coping strategies were utilized to decrease stress (Anderson et al., 2012). For instance, the amount of time required to study and the increased amount of time being online was seen as having a negative effect, preventing time for leisure activity. One participant's strategy was to force time for personal activity. Another participant made a friend with whom to study. The participants indicated utilizing a range of strategies to mitigate negative experiences. In utilizing the various strategies, students were optimistic about their ability to remain successful throughout the semester and ultimately continue forward towards their educational goals.

STM underscores the idea that international students enrolled in English Second Language courses can have positive and negative experiences that affect their ability to

transition to college-level courses. The participants unknowingly cycled through the 4 S's; becoming aware of a situation, engaging in self-management to decrease stress, recognizing the availability of support systems, and developing strategies to manage their transition in preparation for post ESL objectives. All of the participants acknowledged their English skills needed improvement but evaluated their reasons for being in ESL such a deciding if being taught English by a non-native English speaker, poor advisement, or repetitive learning contributed to their situation (Anderson et al., 2012).

Transition management required recognizing the amount of control in the situation, and the participants recognized certain things were out of their control, such as a pandemic, remote learning, access to financial resources, and even the instructor's demeanor (Anderson et al., 2012). The participants revealed their ability to control the situation was manageable, exhibited self-control, and recognized their ability to control their progress to finish the semester.

Recommendations for Practice

Understanding international students' transition from ESL courses to college level courses provides developmental education administrators insight to improve academic and social experiences for international students. International students continue to select community colleges to start their U.S education. Poyrazli and Isaiah (2018) suggest developing a comprehensive academic plan that encompasses student, faculty, staff, and administrators. A comprehensive plan will help international students academically and socially. The findings from this study suggest that community colleges review their practices regarding ESL and international students.

International Student Services Office

The international student service office was the starting point for international students. Regular assessment of the services offered from the international student office is necessary to ensure seamless transition into the community college. Administrators should use institutional research to support the assessment. For instance, institutional research could be reviewed to determine if the number of available staff to student ratio is adequate.

Another task could be to assess documents to streamline paperwork. The participants mentioned a Designated School Official (DSO) who helped keep the student on par with paperwork. The participants were not clear if their DSO provided on-going advising or only during the first year. However, a quick review of the website clarifies college-ready F-1 students are connected to an academic advisor. This means that the DSO and academic advisor are two different people. The separation of duties between the DSO and the academic advisor makes it clear that strong collaborations are needed. Improved communication between DSO's and academic advisor may create opportunities to connect students with academic and nonacademic resources and improve internal processes. It is recommended that both DSO and advisor duties be reviewed, both groups be provided with professional development, and encouraged to engage in interdepartmental dialogue to provide seamless services.

International students may not be aware of available resources or may under-use services due to cultural norms. The international student services office should be able to refer students to both nonacademic and academic resources. Partnerships with other departments is a low cost strategy that emphasizes utilizing on-campus resources.   For

instance, a partnership with Student Life could entail creating more social clubs and cultural events that interest international students. The Student Life office is more visible with the general community college population and a partnership with this office could lead to more connection opportunities for both international and domestic students. In another example, the international student office could develop a volunteer program where domestic students can serve as on-campus guides for international students. International student ambassadors are usually international students. Expanding the role to include domestic students provides an opportunity to connect with someone who is familiar with the surrounding community. This expansion could also be tailored to pair native English speakers with ESL learners. The international student office should create opportunities for international students to engage with domestic students.

Financial Concerns and Employment

Financial concerns and lack of employment opportunities were challenges for international students. The COVID-19 created problems for financial supporters of international students. Financial supporters became unemployed, effecting their ability to provide financial support. International students need to demonstrate financial support, but there was indication that on-campus employment could alleviate some negative effects. The participants mentioned not knowing about employment. Effective communication regarding employment opportunities should be disclosed from the international student office or in partnership with on-campus employment services. The international student office services could be expanded by creating a partnership with the financial aid office by tailoring financial workshops on finding available scholarships, grants, and other financial resources that will assist international students directly.

Faculty Professional Development and Network

ESL faculty should be provided with on-going professional development opportunities. Given the increasing number and diversity of ESL and international students, ESL faculty would benefit from learning new and emerging best practices for English language learners. For example, faculty could be trained on how to create more opportunities to engage international students and their peers. There are software and applications that faculty can integrate into instruction to create games, poll students, mock interviewing their peers, and other strategies. This could create a more interactive learning experience online and in the classroom and also increase social interactions between students. Soft skills such as body language and tone could also help with their online presence.

ESL faculty should network with other departments, and not be isolated from other departments. Bridging opportunities with academic departments could improve seamless transition from developmental education to college-level courses. The participants mentioned two instructors: one for ESL and one first-year English. Pairing instructors as regular teams would allow for easier communication between courses.

Community colleges can create programs, allocate resources, and improve learning outcomes with the goal of retaining current international students and improving programming for future students. Administrators should plan for international students' success beyond the community college level. By utilizing on-campus partnerships and promoting faculty development, community colleges can implement cost effective strategies that prepare international students for academics and life in the U.S.

Implications for Future Research

The findings from this study presented opportunities to explore international student experiences in developmental education. The participants were interviewed at the beginning of the semester. Expanding the study to interview students at the completion of the semester could alter the results. Future research could explore if the participants completed the semester successfully and continued forward with more college-level courses, transferred to another institution, or gained employment based on the skills acquired. A few of the participants were in corequisite courses and only one was in an ESL course. Future research could explore the experiences of international student enrolled in corequisite only courses. An exploration of how international students' experiences were affected by online learning is necessary. For instance, language acquisition and socialization are core concepts that international students expressed as essential to their learning experience. More information is needed on how international students experienced these concepts in the online environment. The outcomes learned from such a study could contribute to a better understanding on the needs of international students as English language learners.

A delimitation for this study was participant selection. This study explored the experiences of international students enrolled in an ESL program. The ESL program also provided instruction to domestic students who are English language learners. Focus was specifically on international students and their experiences in ESL. Future research could compare and contrast the experiences of both groups in ESL language courses. Exploration of both groups could offer insight into the diverse body of experiences, revealing opportunities to further assess ESL programs.

A limitation for this study was transferability. This study explored international students at a Texas community college. Participant experiences are unique to the state and community college. International students in other states, community colleges, universities, or other higher education institutions may not report similar experiences. Future research could compare and contrast international experiences throughout US higher education institutions, accounting for experiences nationally.

This study was conducted between 2020 through 2021, during the global COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic required the community college to migrate services that were traditionally in-person to an online environment. The idea of social distancing made it difficult to attend in-person events. The experiences during the pandemic are unprecedented and may not be typical to experiences before or after the pandemic. Future research could explore the long term effects of the pandemic on English language learners.

Conclusion

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of international students in an English Second Language (ESL) program at a Texas community college. This study revealed factors that influenced and hindered their progression as they transitioned through developmental education. These factors may influence their retention. Eight participants enrolled in the community college's ESL program participated in this study and were interviewed anonymously to encourage truthfulness about their experiences. Through the participants' words, four themes emerged that highlighted their experiences. The four themes were (a) prior learning

experiences, (b) reasons for learning English in the U.S., (c) social interactions, and (d) progress with learning English.

A combination of positive and negative factors influenced the participants' experiences. Prior to enrolling at the institution, foundational English was established in their home country. Deficient in English skills, the participants were required to enroll in an ESL course. Overall, the participants acknowledged the primary reason for enrolling at the community college was to improve their English to reach educational and career goals. Positive interactions with the international student office and the instructors indicated that social interaction is critical to a good experience. Instructor interactions were seen as the most important.

Understanding the situation, identifying self-management strategies, having multiple support systems, and employing various coping strategies were used as all participants noted satisfaction with their progress in their ESL only course or in corequisite courses. Employing various internal and external resources aided transition. The findings from this dissertation offered recommendations to assess current ESL programs, the international student office, provide innovation in programming, and provide on-going support for faculty and staff who assist international students. Future research suggested exploring the long term effect the pandemic had on ESL learners and international students.

REFERENCES

Aaron, R., Cedeño, C., Gareis, E., Kumar, L., & Swaminathan, A. (2018). Peers to peers: Developing a student-coordinated conversation partner program. *Journal of International Students*, *8*(3), 1316–1327. http://jistudents.org/ doi: 10.5281/zenodo.1254586

Abel, C. (2002). Academic success and the international student: Research and recommendations. *New Directions for Higher Education, 117*, 13-20. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/15360741

Alcazaren, H., & Rafanan, E. (2017). A cross-cultural analysis of language-in-education policies and their implementations in developing countries: The case of selected Asian and African countries. *TESOL International Journal*, *12*(2), 92–102.

Amankwaa, L. (2016). Creating protocols for trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Cultural Diversity*, *23*(3), 121–127. http://www.tuckerpub.com/jcd.htm

Anderson, M. L., Goodman, J., & Schlossberg, N. K. (2012). *Counseling adults in transition: Linking Schlossberg's theory with practice in a diverse world* (4th ed.). New York: Springer.

Arthur, N. (2017). Supporting international students through strengthening their social resources. *Studies in Higher Education*, *42*(5), 887–894. https://doi-org.ezproxy.shsu.edu/10.1080/03075079.2017.1293876

Bailey, T., & Cho. S. (2010). *Developmental education in community colleges.* Retrieved from Community College Research Center

Bailey, T., Jeong, D., & Cho, S. (2010). Referral, enrollment, and completion in developmental education sequences in community colleges. *Economics of Education Review*, *29*(2), 255-270. doi:10.1016/j.econedurev.2009.09.002

Becker, L. (2011). Noncredit to credit transitioning matters for adult ESL learner in a California community college. *New Directions for Community Colleges, 155*. doi:10.1002/cc.454

Bevis, T., & Lucas, C. (2007). *International students in American colleges and universities. [electronic resource] : a history* (1st ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.

Bista, K. (2018). The influence of country of origin and academic level on Asian students' gains of learning. *Journal of International Students, 3*(300). doi: 10.32674/jis.v5i3.598

Bostian, B. (2017). Placement of international English language learners: How different is it? *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Perspectives in Higher Education*, *2*(1), 25–34. https://www.ojed.org/index.php/jimphe/index

Boylan, H., Calderwood, B., & Bonham, B. (2017). *College completion: Focus on the finish line.* Boone, NC. National Center for Developmental Education.

California Acceleration Project. (2018). https://accelerationproject.org/corequisites

Center for Teaching Innovation. (2020). *Collaborative Learning.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, Center for Teaching Innovation. https://teaching.cornell.edu/teaching-resources/engaging-students/collaborative-learning

Chen, T. (2018). But I learn more bad grammars when I write to my classmates: Acquiring academic literacies in a multicultural writing class. *Journal of*

International Students, *8*(2), 638–658. http://jistudents.org/ doi:
10.5281/zenodo.1249047

Chen, X. (2016). Remedial coursetaking at U.S. public 2- and 4-year institutions: Scope, experiences, and outcomes (NCES 2016-405). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch.

Community College Research Center. (2013). *What we know about nonacademic student supports.* New York, NY: Columbia University, Teachers College, Community College Research Center.

Creswell, J., & Poth, C. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Davaasambu, S., Cinelli, J., & Zagari, C. (2019). Adult noncredit students' priorities and satisfaction. *Adult Learning, 2*(57). doi.org/10.1177/1045159519875582.

Emblom-Callahan, M., Burgess-Palm, N., Davis, S., Decker, A., Diritto, H., Dix, S., Parker, C., & Styles, E. (2019). Accelerating student success: The case for corequisite instruction. *Inquiry*, *22*(1). https://commons.vccs.edu/inquiry/

Fass-Holmes, B., & Vaughn, A. (2014). Are international undergraduates struggling academically? *Journal of International Students*, *4*(1), 60–73. http://jistudents.org/

Fass-Holmes, B., & Vaughn, A. (2015). Evidence that international undergraduates can succeed academically despite struggling with English. *Journal of International Students*, *5*(3), 228–243. http://jistudents.org/

Fike, D., & Fike, R. (2008). Predictors of first-year student retention in the community

    college. *Community College Review, 36*(2), 68–88.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552108320222

Finn, H. (2018). Articulating struggle: ESL students' perceived obstacles to success in a

    community college writing class. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 42,* 101-

    106. https://doi.org/10.1016

Garcia, H., Harza, T., & Yeaton-Hromada, K. (2019). Do we belong? A conceptual

    model for international students' sense of belonging in community colleges.

    Journal of International Students, 9(2), 460-487. doi:10.32674/jis.v9i2.669

Glass, C., Gesing, P., Hales, A., & Cong, C. (2017). Faculty as bridges to co-curricular

    engagement and community for first-generation international students. *Studies in*

    Higher Education, 42(5), 895–910.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1293877

Great Schools Partnership (2014). *The glossary of educational reform for journalist,*

    parents and community members. https://www.edglossary.org/academic-support/

Haisley, P. K., Grandorff, C., Agbonlahor, O., Mendez, S. L., & Hansen, M. (2021). Why

    study abroad: Differences in motivation between US and international students.

    Journal of Global Education and Research, 5(2), 185–201.

    https://www.doi.org/10.5038/2577-509X.5.2.1146

Hansen, H., Shneyderman, Y., McNamara, G., & Grace, L. (2018). Assessing

    acculturative stress of International students at a U.S. community college. Journal

    of International Students, 8(1), 215-232. doi:10.5281/zenodo.1134293

Hodara, M. (2015). The effects of English as a second language courses on language

    minority community college students. *Educational Evaluation and Policy*

    Analysis, *37*(2), 243–270.

Hodara, M., & Xu, D. (2018). Are two subjects better than one? The effects of

    developmental English courses on language minority and native English-speaking

    students' community college outcomes. *Economics of Education Review, 1*. doi:

    10.1016/j.econedurev.2018.07.002

Holtbrügge, D., & Engelhard, F. (2016). Study abroad programs: Individual motivations,

    cultural intelligence, and the mediating role of cultural boundary spanning.

    Academy of Management Learning & Education, 15(3), 435–455. https://doi-

    org.ezproxy.shsu.edu/10.5465/amle.2015.0128

Houston Community College System, (2018). *HCC co-requisite acceleration program*.

    https://www.hccs.edu/programs/hcc-co-requisite-acceleration-program/

Houston Community College System, (2018). *HCC/Office of Institutional Research*

    Academic Dashboard. https://www.hccs.edu/about-hcc/institutional-

    research/academic-dashboard/

Houston Community College System, (2018). *Student Handbook.*

    http://www.hccs.edu/support-services/international-students/foreign-credentials/

Houston Community College System. (2018). *Tuition Calculator.*

    https://www.hccs.edu/applying-and-paying/tuition-calculator/

Institute of International Education. (2019). *2019 at a glance: Commemorating a century.*

    https://www.iie.org/

Institute of International Education. (2020). *Fall 2020 international student enrollment snapshot*. https://www.iie.org/

International Student. (2020). *Study in the USA*. www.internationalstudent.com

Iwai, Y., Filce, H., & Ramp, E. (2011). Academic English reading for international college students: The role of metacognitive reading strategies. *Research in the Schools*, *18*(2), 75–87.

James, M., Miller, G., & Wycoff, T. (2016). Comprehending the cultural causes of English writing plagiarism in Chinese students at a western-style university. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *154*(3), 631–642. doi: 10.1007/s10551-017-3441-6

Jennings, R. (2017). International students at community colleges: Challenges and opportunities for this unique segment of U.S higher education. *New Directions for Student Services*, *2017*(158), 61-71. doi: 10.1002/ss.20220

Johnson, C., & Rose, A. (2015). Professing reform while seeking acceptance: The dilemmas of teaching accelerated courses in higher education. *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education, 63*(1), 3-14. doi.org/10.1080/07377363.2015.998068

Kandidatov, P. (2019). English as a second language: Helping international students get ready for college in the U.S. *The Brazilian Scientific Journal of Rural Education, 4*4, e6877. https://doi-org.ezproxy.shsu.edu/10.20873/uft.rbec.v4e6877

Koricich, A., & Boylan, H. (2019). *The importance of developmental education in rural communities*. Boone, NC. National Center for Developmental Education.

Korobova, N., & Starobin, S. S. (2015). A comparative study of student engagement, satisfaction, and academic success among international and American students. *Journal of International Students*, *5*(1), 72–85. http://jistudents.org/

Kuh, G. D. (2009). What student affairs professionals need to know about student engagement. *Journal of College Student Development, 50*(6), 683–706. doi:10.1353/csd.0.0099

Kuo, Y. (2011). Language challenges faced by international graduate students in the United States. *Journal of International Students*, *1*(2), 38-42. https://www.ojed.org/index.php/jis/article/view/551

Kurzet, R. (1997). Quality versus quantity in the delivery of developmental programs for ESL students. *New Directions for Community Colleges, 100*, 53-62.

Lee, E. (2017). An integrated loop model of corrective feedback and oral English learning: A case of international students in the United States. *Journal of International Students, 7*(3), 581–600. doi: 10.5281/zenodo.570024

Liu, S., Keeley, J., & Buskist, W. (2015). Chinese college students' perceptions of characteristics of excellent teachers. *Teaching of Psychology*, *42*(1), 83–86. doi: 10.1177/0098628314562684

Lucy-Bouler, T., & Lucy-Bouler, T. (2012). Service learning positively impacts student involvement, retention, and recruitment. *Journal of Learning in Higher Education*, *8*(1), 19–24.

Mamiseishvili, K. (2012). International student persistence in U.S. postsecondary institutions. *Higher Education: The International Journal of Higher Education and Educational Planning, 64*(1), 1-17. doi 10.1007/s10734-011-9477-0

Martirosyan, N., Bustamante, R., & Saxon, D. (2019). Academic and social support

　　services for international students: Current practices. *Journal of International*

　　Students, *9*(1), 172–191. doi: 10.32674/jis.v9i1.275 ojed.org/jis

McCoy, D. (2014). A phenomenological approach to understanding first-generation

　　college students' of color transitions to one "extreme" predominantly white

　　institution. *College Student Affairs Journal*, *32*(1), 155–169.

　　https://www.sacsa.org/page/CSAJ

Mohamad, M., & Boyd, J. (2010). Realizing distributed gains: How collaboration with

　　support services transformed a basic writing program for international students.

　　Journal of Basic Writing, *29*(1), 78–98. https://wac.colostate.edu/jbw/v29n1/

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mori, S. (2000). Addressing the mental health concerns of international students. *Journal*

　　of Counseling & Development, *78*(2), 137–144. https://doi-

　　org.ezproxy.shsu.edu/10.1002/j.1556-6676.2000.tb02571.x

NAFSA: Association of International Educators. (2018). NAFSA international student

　　economic value tool. Washington, DC: Author. http://www.nafsa.org/

National Center for Developmental Education. (2019). National Center for

　　Developmental Education website. Appalachian State University.

　　https://ncde.appstate.edu/

New Mexico Higher Education Department. (2016). New Mexico English remediation

　　taskforce report. *New Mexico Higher Education Department*.

Nyaupane, G. P., Paris, C. M., & Teye, V. (2011). Study abroad motivations, destination selection and pre-trip attitude formation. *International Journal of Tourism Research, 13*(3), 205–217. https://doi-org.ezproxy.shsu.edu/10.1002/jtr.811

Onwuegbuzie, A., Frels, R., & Hwang, E. (2016). Mapping Saldaña's coding methods onto the literature review process. *Journal of Educational Issues, 2,* 130-150. doi:10.5296/jei.v2i1.8931

Poyrazli, S., & Isaiah, J. (2018). International students' journeys from academic probation to academic success. *International Perspectives in Psychology: Research, Practice, Consultation*, *7*(2), 62-75. doi: 10.1037/ipp0000083

Rosetta Stone. (2013). ESL speaks the language of business. *Community College Journal*, *83*(3), 11–14.

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Saxon, D. P., Martirosyan, N. M., & Vick, N. T. (2016). NADE Members respond: Best practices and challenges in integrated reading and writing, part 1. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 32-34. https://ncde.appstate.edu/jde

Schlossberg, N. K. (2011). The challenge of change: The transition model and its applications. *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 48, 159 – 162.

Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College.

Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College.

Stewart, S., Lim, D., & Kim, J. (2015). Factors influencing college persistence for first-time students. *Journal of Developmental Education, 38*(3), 12. https://ncde.appstate.edu/jde

Su, M. (2018). Work a way out: Breaking monoethnic isolation through on-campus employment. *Journal of International Students, 8*(3), 1363–1385. doi: 10.5281/zenodo.1254596

Sukarno, & Haryati, S. (2015). Developing a model of compulsory basic education completion acceleration in support of millennium development goals in Magelang, Indonesia. *International Education Studies*, *8*(7), 127–138.

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. (2018). *60x30 TX: FAQs HB 2223 Implementation*. www.thecb.state.tx.us

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. (2018). *Revised college and career readiness standards for English/Language Arts, July 2018*. www.thecb.state.tx.us

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. (2018). *Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA)*. http://www.collegeforalltexans.com

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. (2019). *Developmental education rider 33 report, HS college prep course updates, and 2018 – 2023 statewide plan for supporting underprepared students*. http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/reports/PDF/12076.PDF

The College Board. (2018). *Guidelines on the uses of College Board test scores and related data*. https://research.collegeboard.org/pdf/guidelines-uses-college-board-test-scores-and-data.pdf

Tinto, V. (1987). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition.* Chicago-IL: University of Chicago Press.

University of Montana. (2020). *Prerequisite and corequisite frequently asked questions.* https://www.umt.edu/

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. (2020). *Students and employment.* https://www.uscis.gov/working-in-the-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/students-and-employment

Usher, A. (2019). Has president Trump scared away all the foreign students? EdNext Podcast. https://www.educationnext.org/has-president-trump-scared-away-foreign-students-facts-behind-fears-higher-education-revenue-recession/#

Wang, R., & BrckaLorenz, A. (2018). International student engagement: An exploration of student and faculty perceptions. *Journal of International Students, 8*(2), 1002-1033, doi: 10.5281/zenodo.1250402

Wekullo, C. S. (2019). International undergraduate student engagement: Implications for higher education administrators. *Journal of International Students*, *9*(1), 320–337. doi: 10.32674/jis.v9i1.257 ojed.org/jis

Workman, J. L. (2015). Parental influence on exploratory students' college choice, major, and career decision making. *College Student Journal, 49*(1), 23-30. https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/prin/csj/

Wu, H., Garza, E., & Guzmán, N. (2015). International student's challenge and adjustment to college. *Education Research International*, *2015*, 1–9. https://doi-org/10.1155/2015/202753

Yan, L., & Pei, S. (2018). "Home away from home"? How international students handle

    difficult and negative experiences in American higher education. *Journal of*

    International Students, *8*(1), 453-472. doi: 10.5281/zenodo.1134338

Zerengok, D., Guzel, P., & Ozbey, S. (2018). The impact of leisure participation on

    social adaptation of international students. *Journal of Education and Training*

    Studies, 6(2), 1-9. doi:10.11114/jets.v6i2.2680

APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol

Primary Research Questions

(A) What have you experienced as an English language learner?

(B) What situations have influenced your experience with English Second Language

program?

Instructions

Hello. My name is Ivory Jones. Thank you for volunteering for this interview. I

will ask you to talk about your experiences as an international student in an English

Second Language program. The purpose of this study is to understand international

student experiences in developmental education. There are no right or wrong answers. I

want you to feel comfortable with saying what you really think and how you really feel.

Tape Recorder Instructions

This interview will be recorded using audio only. The purpose of recording the

interview is so that I can get all the details and have the opportunity to review

information I may have missed. If you become uncomfortable during the interview and

need to pause the recording, please ask me to stop the recording. Your comments will

remain confidential. I will not use any identifying information in the final report.

Consent Form Instructions

When we scheduled the interview, I sent a consent for to your preferred email for

you to sign electronically. I have received your signed consent form. Before we get

started, do you have any questions about the consent form (pause and wait for response)?

If you are comfortable and do not have any questions, I will begin recording the interview (turn on audio recorder).

Question 1

Describe your English language skills prior to enrolling at the selected institution in terms of use with family, friends, and education. (Write down notes as participant talks.)

Question 2

Describe your feelings toward your English reading, writing, and speaking skills. For example, how do you feel about reading stories in English? (Write down notes as participant talks.)

Follow-up Question. How do you feel about writing in English?

Follow-up Question. How do you feel speaking in English?

Question 3

Have you ever taken English language learning courses? If yes, tell me about that experience. (Write down notes as participant talks.)

Question 4

Tell me about your educational goals and your reason for pursuing an education in the U.S. (Write down notes as participant talks.)

Question 5

Describe your experiences enrolling in the ESL program? (Ask follow-up questions if not mentioned in participant response.)

Follow-up question. Tell me about your interactions with institution staff.

Follow-up question. Tell me about the courses you had that semester.

Follow-up question. Tell me about paying for courses. Were you employed? (Write down notes as participant talks.)

Question 6

Tell me about your instructor/s. What qualities of their teaching style was helpful in your understanding topics for the course?

Follow-up question. Was your instructor easy to contact when you needed assistance with coursework? (If yes) In what ways did the instructor allow you to contact him/her? (If no) What difficulties did you have when reaching out to the instructor?

Question 7

Did your instructors encourage you to attend any college events? (If no, proceed to next question). (If yes) What events did you attend and why?

Question 8

Tell me about your ability to keep up with the coursework. (Write down notes as participant talks.)

Question

Describe what a class day was like for you in the integrated courses and English. (Write down notes as participant talks.)

Question 10

Instructors will often require students to work in groups and present work to the class. Did your instructor require group work? (If yes, proceed with follow-up question.)

 Follow-up question. Describe how you felt working with other students, both English speaking and students whose first language is not English. (Write down notes as participant talks.)

Question 11

How much time did you spend studying for English? (Wait for response.)

Follow-up question. Do you feel this was a lot of time to study for these courses? Why?

Question 12

Engagement opportunities such as service learning or mentoring can help students

connect with the institution. Tell me about engagement opportunities your instructors

have encouraged you to attend. (Write down notes as participant talks.)

Question 13

The institution offers support services for learning such as community language learning,

tutoring, supplemental instruction, employment opportunities, and other support. Discuss

any services you have used while in the ESL program? (Write down notes as participant

talks.)

Follow-up question. What services were helpful you be successful in the course?

Follow-up question. What services were not helpful to you?

Question 14

Were you able to attend any Student Life activities? (If no, go to next question.) (If

yes.)Why or why not?

Follow-up question. (If answer was yes to main question). Do you feel any of these

improved your learning at the institution?

Question 15

What factors helped your success in the courses? (Write down notes as participant talks.)

Question 16

What factors worked against your success in the courses?

Question 17

How do you feel about your abilities to read, write, and speak English after taking these courses? Why? (Write down notes as participant talks.)

Concluding Interview

(After the participant answers the last question) Thank you. Do you have any further details you would like to add to this interview? (If the participant says yes, allow the participant the opportunity to make comments). (If the participant says no) Thank you for agreeing to this interview. Your time and comments are appreciated. The purpose of this interview was to understand international student experiences in developmental education. Your identity and responses will remain confidential. Thank you (cut off the recorder).

Sam Houston State University
Consent for Participation in Research

KEY INFORMATION FOR *Experiences of International Students in Developmental Education at a Texas Community College*

You are being asked to be a participant in a research study about *international students in an English Second Language program (ESL).* You have been asked to participate in the research because *you are an international student in an English language learning program on an F-1 student visa* and may be eligible to participate.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE, PROCEDURES, AND DURATION OF THE STUDY?

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of international students in an English Second language program. Participants will be interviewed via web conferencing software. Participants will be asked to describe their experiences as students in the ESL program. After the interview is transcribed, each participant will have the opportunity to review his or her interview to offer suggestions regarding the information captured. After the participant has provided his or her feedback, their participation in this study is complete.

By doing this study, we hope to learn *how the ESL program has influenced the international student experience.* Your participation in this research will last about *45 minutes.*

WHAT ARE REASONS YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO VOLUNTEER FOR THIS STUDY?

The potential benefit from this interview is participants will have the opportunity to express their concerns about their developmental education experience. The participant may benefit from having a way to disclose their experiences and contribute to possible changes in developmental education.

For a complete description of benefits, refer to the Detailed Consent.

WHAT ARE REASONS YOU MIGHT CHOOSE NOT TO VOLUNTEER FOR THIS STUDY?

There are no risks associated with this study.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any services, benefits, or rights you would normally have if you choose

not to volunteer. As a student, if you decide not to take part in this study, your choice will have no effect on your academic status or class grade(s).

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

The person in charge of this study is *Principal Investigator, Ivory Jones* of the Sam Houston State University Department of Developmental Education Administration, who is working under the supervision of *Dr. Peggy Holzweiss.* If you have questions, suggestions, or concerns regarding this study or you want to withdraw from the study, her contact information is: ~~iji001@~~ ~~phol~~ If you have any questions, suggestions or concerns about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs – Sharla Miles at ~~936-294-1855~~ or e-mail ORSP at ~~sharla_miles@~~.

Sam Houston State University

Consent for Participation in Research

DETAILED CONSENT *Experiences of International Students in Developmental Education at a Texas Community College*

Informed Consent

My name is *Ivory Jones*, and I am *graduate student* of the *Department of Developmental Education Administration* at Sam Houston State University. I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to participate in a research study of *international student experiences in an English Second Language (ESL) program. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the experiences of international students in an English Second language program at a Texas community college.* I hope that data from this research will provide insight on how international students perceive and experience developmental education. You have been asked to participate in the research because *you have been identified as an international student enrolled at the institution on an F-1 student visa, and enrolled in the English Second Language program.*

The research is relatively straightforward, and we do not expect the research to pose any risk to any of the volunteer participants. If you consent to participate in this research, you will be asked to *participate in an interview to discuss your experiences as an English language learner.* Any data obtained from you will only be used for the purpose of *fulfilling a doctoral research requirement and presenting / publishing aggregate findings from the study*. Under no circumstances will you or any other participants who participated in this research be identified. In addition, your data will remain confidential.

This research will require about *45 minutes* of your time. Participants will not be paid or otherwise compensated for their participation in this project. *The interview will be held using web conferencing software and recorded to capture audio. The audio recording will be used to transcribe the interview. Participants will be allowed to review the transcribed interview and offer feedback. All audio material will destroyed after receiving the participant's feedback.*

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled, and the subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me using the contact information below. If you are interested, the results of this study will be available at the conclusion of the project.

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me, *Ivory Jones*, or *Dr. Peggy Holzweiss*. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as research participants, please contact Sharla Miles, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, using her contact information below. *Ivory Jones Department of Developmental Education Administration* Sam Houston State University Huntsville, TX 77341 Phone: (~~~~ E-mail: ~~~~	*Dr. Peggy Holzweiss Department of Educational Leadership* Sam Houston State University Huntsville, TX 77341 Phone: (~~~~ E-mail: ~~~~	Sharla Miles Office of Research and Sponsored Programs Sam Houston State University Huntsville, TX 77341 Phone: (~~~~ Email: irb@shsu.edu

☐ I understand the above and consent to participate.

☐ I do not wish to participate in the current study.

AUDIO/VIDEO RECORDING RELEASE CONSENT

As part of this project, an audio recording will be made of you during your participation in this research project for transcription purposes only. This is completely voluntary. In any use of the audio recording, your name will not be identified. You may request to stop the recording at any time or to erase any portion of your recording. *Participants will be allowed to review the transcribed interview and offer feedback. All audio material will destroyed after receiving the participant's feedback.*

☐ I consent to participate in the audio recording activities.

☐ I do not wish to participate in the audio recording activities.

APPENDIX C

IRB Approval Letter

Date: Dec 14, 2020 1:15:33 PM CST

TO: Ivory Jones Peggy Holzweiss FROM: SHSU IRB
PROJECT TITLE: Experiences of International Students in Developmental Education at a Texas Community College
PROTOCOL #: IRB-2020-364 SUBMISSION TYPE: Initial
ACTION: Approved
DECISION DATE: December 14, 2020
ADMINISTRATIVE CHECK-IN DATE: December 14, 2021
EXPEDITED REVIEW CATEGORY: 6. Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.
7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Restart 2020 (COVID-19 update): The IRB has released specific guidelines for easing or transitioning existing IRB-approved studies or any new study subject to IRB oversight to in-person data collection. Please be advised, before ANY in-person data collection can begin, you must have IRB approval specifically for the conduct of this type of research. Please see the IRB response page for COVID-19 here.

ATTENTION RESEARCHERS! Effective Monday, July 27, 2020, the IRB has revised its online office hours to 12-2 on Zoom Monday through Thursday. These will be permanent office hours. To access Zoom during the IRB's office hours, click here. Just in case, here is the meeting ID: 712-632-8951**. SEE YOU ON ZOOM FROM 12-2**

MONDAY-THURSDAY!

Greetings,

The above-referenced submission has been reviewed by the IRB and it has been Approved. This study received expedited review, and the IRB determined that a renewal submission is needed, but only in the form of an administrative check-in submission. You will receive an email notification on the anniversary of this study approval, which will be on December 14, 2021. This study approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

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-2020-364/December 14, 2020/December 14, 2021.

Modifications: Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please submit a Modification Submission through Cayuse IRB for this procedure.

Incidents: All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please submit an Incident Submission through Cayuse IRB for this procedure. All Department of Health and Human Services and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Study Administrative Check-In: Based on the risks, this project does require a renewal in the form of an Administrative Check-In procedure. This means you are required to administratively check in with the IRB on an annual basis. December 14, 2021 is the anniversary of the review of your protocol. To get started with your next Administrative Check-In procedure, you will submit a Renewal Submission through Cayuse IRB. A reminder email will be sent to you on the anniversary of your most recent approval of Experiences of International Students in Developmental Education at a Texas Community College.

Please note that all research records should be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project. If you have any questions, please contact the Sharla Miles at 936-294-4875 or irb@shsu.edu. Please include your protocol number in all correspondence with this committee.

Sincerely,

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

APPENDIX D

IRB Approval Letter

Institutional Review Board

RESEARCH APPROVAL STATEMENT OF ACCEPTANCE

I accept the conditions stated in the letter of approval and will abide by all conditions set by Houston Community College and with the legal and procedural requirements of Houston Community College and other local, state and federal regulations.

Printed name: Ivory D. Jones

Signature: *Ivory D Jones*

Date: July 26, 2021

VITA

IVORY JONES

PROFILE
Highly motivated higher education professional with a M. A. in Higher Education Administration and over +10 years of experience at a community college. Seeking to apply my experience working with higher education professionals and advance in higher education.

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

External Reporting Specialist
Houston Community College System, Houston, Texas   **3/2018 to Current**

- Responsible for data formatting, data analysis and data verification of assigned area of records and reports for internal, external, state and federal agencies, including the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), and the U.S Department of Education (USDOE).
  - Assist in ongoing management of assign area case data and records. Assist submission of reports by specified deadlines.
  - Coordinate and communicate, both orally and in writing, with designated departments to include internal and external departments or agencies.
  - Participate in internal/external committees as directed.

Student Accounts Representative
Houston Community College System Houston, Texas   **6/2000 to 3/2018**

- Work with appropriate assigned area personnel and other departments to ensure and confirm the accuracy of reported data and to correct process issues.
- Maintain electronic edit files, making necessary changes and revisions.
- Coordinate and communicate, both orally and in writing, with designated departments to include internal and external departments or agencies.
- Receive, sort and transfer electronic files and documents to proper destination.
- Perform data audits of assigned area data sources to ensure data integrity.
- Respond to ad hoc requests for data and information.
- Confer with Information Technology and other departments to ensure and confirm the accuracy of collected and reported data.

SUMMARY OF SKILLS
- Exceptional ability to attend to detail related to data accuracy and integrity.
- Strong analytical and problem-solving skills.
- Able to work in a team environment and independently.
- Excellent interpersonal, oral, and written communication skills.

- Ability to handle projects within the bounds of professional ethics and maintain data confidentiality.
- Professional performance in working with a multicultural workforce, diverse groups, and sensitive to cultural differences.

EDUCATION

5/2017 to Present...................Continuing education towards Developmental Education Administration, Ed.D. Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas

- Member of the National Organization for Student Success (NOSS).

5/2015 to 5/2016 ....Master of Arts, Higher Education Administration, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas

- Certificate in Academic Advising

8/2004 to 12/2011 ....Bachelor of Science, Psychology, University of Houston-Downtown, Houston, Texas

- Member of Psychology Club: Attended service opportunities to help different populations in the Houston Community.
- Member of Pi Gamma Mu: Honor society encouraging superior scholarship in social science.
- Member of Psi Chi: International honor society encouraging scholarship in psychology.

8/2002 to 5/2004 ....Associate of Arts, Liberal Arts, Houston Community College System, Houston, Texas

AREAS OF INTEREST

- Special populations within higher education.
- Developmental education
- Student diversity and equity in higher education.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

3/2008 – 1/2019……………Tour de Hood, Houston, Texas
8/2011 – 12/2011…………..SEARCH Homeless Services, Houston, Texas (Internship)
2003 – 2004………………..Greater Faith Outreach Ministries, Houston, Texas