A comparative analysis of the perceptions of ESL teachers and adult students regarding the effect of certain selected educational and sociological factors involved in learning English as a second language.

Marjorie E. Lennon Zobeir

University of Massachusetts Amherst

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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF ESL TEACHERS AND ADULT STUDENTS REGARDING THE EFFECT OF CERTAIN SELECTED EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL FACTORS INVOLVED IN LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

A Dissertation Presented

By

MARJORIE E. LENNON ZOBEIR

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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Dedicated to

Mamie Louise Lennon
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ABSTRACT

A Comparative Analysis of the Perceptions of ESL Teachers and Adult Students Regarding the Effect of Certain Selected Educational and Sociological Factors Involved in Learning English as a Second Language

(February, 1978)

Marjorie E. Lennon Zobeir, B.A., North Carolina Central University
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The investigation sought to compare ESL teachers' perceptions of speaking problems with ESL adult students' perceptions of speaking problems encountered by the non-academic adult when in the process of learning English as a second language. In addition to comparing the perceptions of ESL teachers and adult students, the investigator sought to discover if Chinese adult students learning to speak English encounter a different set of problems than do Hispanic adult students learning to speak English.

Evidence suggests that in some problem areas, there are differences in teacher and student perceptions. There is, however, agreement among ESL teachers and their adult students that speaking is the most difficult of the four skills needed in learning a language—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. ESL teachers perceived the categories of final sounds, irregular verbs and stress as posing greater problems
than did their ESL adult students; both groups assess these areas as relatively more difficult than vowels and initial sounds. Both ESL teachers and their adult students agree that idioms are the most difficult.

Other findings of the study reveal that non-academic adult Chinese students do, in fact, encounter different problems when learning to speak English than do non-academic adult Hispanic students. Chinese respondents reported more difficulty with the initial sounds /c/ and /g/ than did Hispanic. More Chinese respondents experienced difficulty with initial /th/ than did Hispanics. The consensus was that initial /h/ is very difficult for the Hispanic and not difficult at all for the Chinese.

Hispanic respondents encounter more difficulty with the irregular verb (to be) than do Chinese. Both groups agree that intonation is difficult. Chinese respondents experienced more difficulty with stress than did Hispanic and with the vowels /e/ and /a/. Neither group appears to have difficulty with the vowels /o/ and /u/. Hispanic respondents report somewhat less difficulty with the idioms than do Chinese respondents.

Since different groups experience different speaking problems when learning English, the curriculum developer should be apprised of the advisability of ethnological curricula. More innovative bilingual/bicultural curricula are suggested. Moreover, the unique learning problems of the adult require an adaptable methodology which will provide for the exclusive needs and interests of the adult language learner. Finally, a re-examination of the patterns of teacher training might serve as a catalyst in achieving more effective language learning programs.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Since the 1960's, there has been a sizeable increase in the number of adults with limited English-speaking ability settling in the Northeastern part of the United States. In New York City, for example, the presence of non-English speaking adults has increased the demand for adult education programs in English as a second language, often referred to as ESL. Data published by the New York City Board of Education indicate that the number of adults learning ESL increased during the years from 1973 to 1976. More specifically, these data showed that in 1976, there were in the borough of Manhattan alone 108 classes for adults learning to speak English. \(^1\) An earlier report released by the New York City Board of Education reveals that in 1973-1974, there was a total of 118 classes in ESL in all five boroughs, including Manhattan\(^2\) (New York City is comprised of five boroughs: Manhattan, Brooklyn, Bronx, Staten Island, and Queens). This increase in the number of ESL classes provided by the New York City Board of Education underscores the growing importance

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\(^1\) Board of Education, City of New York, Directory of ESL Classes in New York City, Division of Educational Planning and Support, Office of Career Education. June, 1976, p. 5.

\(^2\) Ibid., June, 1973, p. 3.
of ESL instruction in New York City as well as the rest of the country. Although the statistics may vary in other Northeastern communities, the trend is, for the most part, similar.

One international authority in teaching ESL to adults, Mary Finocchiaro, sums up the problems of the illiterate immigrant in New York City:

Of these newcomers to New York City, many never have attended school. Some may have attended school for a few hours a day in a rural area in their country of origin and may be functionally illiterate in Spanish. Some lack fundamental language skills in the English language arts; others lack basic concepts in the curriculum areas offered in our schools. All have been uprooted from an environment that differs in many respects from the urban setting to which they have migrated.

Whatever their educational background, these new arrivals must eventually learn to speak English.

Finocchiaro further notes that there is a distinct difference between learning one's native language and learning a second language, particularly after childhood. The difference is that over a period of five or six years, the child listens to his native language as it is spoken around him. This is usually not possible with a second language because after early childhood, the second language is most often heard within the formal context of the classroom.

Another well-known writer in the field of ESL methodology, Robert A. Hall, concurs with Mary Finocchiaro on the notion that learning a new

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language after childhood is indeed a difficult task. He maintains that:
"By the time a person is, say, twelve years old, he or she is linguistically
speaking--an adult--and especially in literate cultures, can no longer
learn a new language, just as a child does." There are, of course, ex-
planations for the problems which the adult language learner experiences,
especially with pronunciation. Hall points out that pronunciation is per-
haps the most difficult skill to acquire in language learning. In sup-
port of this notion, he writes:

The older learner no longer has the muscular resilience of childhood, nor
does he so easily comply with the discipline of required practice. But he may compensate for these handicaps by the strength of his mo-
tivation, and by mature insight into the value of the learning pro-
cess, and by having specific goals that serve to focus his efforts.

Hall's writings further suggest that good pronunciation for the
adult language learner is the result of continuous practice. While de-
creasing the strain on the muscles, practicing the new sounds returns
resilience to them. Since pronunciation is a skill that is dependent
upon one's ability to understand and be understood by others, it should
be accorded a high priority in the ESL adult curriculum.

On the other hand, achieving good pronunciation is naturally
easier for some adults than for others. More specifically, some adults
who learn to speak a second language are able to speak it with close-to-

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native fluency. It is not uncommon to characterize some people as having a "foreign accent" or speaking brokenly even though their vocabulary fluency may be quite satisfactory in the acquired language. Although these people have little difficulty in being understood, they are apt to be considered as perpetual foreigners or outsiders.

In an attempt to further clarify the difficulty of language learning for adults, a recent UNESCO report concludes that: "Individuals who learn new languages later in life, especially after the age of fifteen or so, characteristically have more difficulty with new structures than with vocabulary, and the difficulty seems to increase with age." The report notes that as the individual matures, the pronunciation problems which he encounters are primarily from interference by the first language. Support for this position can also be found in the writing of Mary Finocchiaro who maintains that the ingrained habits of one's native language (of making sounds or of placing sounds in certain positions) often cause serious conflict for the average adult when he attempts to change his speaking habits. Finocchiaro provides some examples of the phonemic (sound) problems which the adult experiences in second language learning:

Although similar sounds may exist in one's native tongue, they may be found in different positions in the second language. The sound system (phonic and phonemic system) may operate in a different way.

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7 Ibid., p. 50.
For example, English uses stress or accent (e.g., convert/convert; the White House/the white house to convey meaning. One's native tongue may not.\(^8\)

Further documentation of the precise difficulty which the adult learner experiences is provided in a 1963 bulletin published by the New York City Board of Education in which curriculum researchers confirm that next to structure patterns, the adult student tends to have the greatest difficulty with pronunciation of English sounds.\(^9\)

Although there is general agreement that the sounds and structure of the English language are difficult for the average adult learner, there is very little agreement on the degree of difficulty. This apparent lack of agreement may be attributed to several factors. Foremost among these are: the ESL teacher, the cultural/linguistic group to which the learner belongs, the teaching/learning environment, and the instructional methods and materials.

The teacher is a key factor in the ESL class since he is usually the first contact which the foreign student has with the new language and culture. The teacher, more or less, determines the learner's success or lack of success in language learning. Thus, the need for ESL teachers who are appropriately trained in ESL theory is a necessity. Upon receiving a sound background in education, the teacher can then devote

\(^8\)Finocchiaro, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

a sufficient amount of time to trying out the various language teaching theories. A great part of each of the theories which determine a particular instructional method has been drawn from the field of psychology. The contribution of psychology is to describe how a person learns and then how to apply this knowledge to curriculum design and teaching methodology.

There are, of course, several varieties of instructional methods such as the audiolingual method, the structural method, the context method, and the cognitive code method. Due to this variety, a good deal of confusion exists today in the ESL teaching field since methods which serve well in one situation are often forced upon teachers in quite different situations. Clearly, teacher training should provide overall knowledge of the various methods and their appropriate application. But the choice of a particular method should be left to the teacher. Robert J. Dixson, a major contributor to ESL curriculum, supports this notion:

No one method of teaching yet exists which is so good that it has universal approval or application. All teaching materials and methods should be judged as to their value in the immediate school or classroom situation.10

The ESL teacher's ability to select and/or combine several methods of instruction within one class is dependent, of course, on his knowledge of the various methods and also on his experience in using them. The teacher's ability to select relevant materials and then tailor the methodology to meet the learner's immediate needs is essential.

In addition to teaching competency, the need for a teacher who is at least sensitive to the fact that the learner is a member of a particular cultural group is vital in an ESL class. Some knowledge about the learners' culture does provide the teacher with insight which facilitates teacher/learner communication. As the ESL teacher learns how to communicate effectively with the student, he gradually learns his individual strengths and weaknesses. At this particular stage, the teacher can begin to design strategies to overcome the learners' deficiencies. Thus, the level of awareness congruence between the ESL teacher and the ESL student is a primary factor in language learning.

In light of the high priority now accorded oral language development, auditory discrimination and comprehension deserve a considerable amount of time in the ESL curricular design since they are key indicators of the student's ability to speak the language effectively. Robert A. Hall maintains that any foreign language program has to reflect the four main stages involved in the process of learning any given linguistic phenomenon:

The initial stage of imitation and memorization forms the basis for the other three: analyzing the patterns of the target language, practicing these patterns intensively, and finally using the basic patterns in linguistic activity or improvisation.11

Previous research efforts that focus on finding solutions to the problems of adult language learners have centered around the design of the ESL curriculum. In this regard, Francis Johnson, a student at Columbia

11Hall, op. cit., p. 50.
University, conducted a pilot study in which he attempted to develop a set of curriculum materials that could be used across national, cultural and linguistic boundaries.

The purpose of Johnson's study was "to examine the work of the TESL (teaching English as a second language) Materials Project as representing a prototype research project of the direction of some future research in materials design." The findings indicate that the research and materials design and construction being carried out by the TESL Project warrant wider and more rigorous investigation. Johnson concludes that the current materials design of the TESL Project may make a beginning contribution to this research and that with some modifications (for example, language content), the materials may be used as research instruments to investigate the "single-versus-multiple sets" question much more thoroughly. On pragmatic grounds, the need for a greater range of materials which may be used across linguistic and cultural backgrounds of students is self-evident. Johnson's research provides valuable insight into the need for supplying different sets of curriculum materials for different cultural or linguistic groups.


13 Ibid.
Differences in the sound structures among languages have been the focus of several investigations. One of the most noted researchers, Robert Lado, found these major phonological differences:

Sound systems differ drastically at times in intonation, stress and rhythm. French has syllable-timed rhythm and no phonemic stress. English has stress-timed or phrase-timed rhythm and four phonemic stresses. Spanish has syllable-timed rhythm and three phonemic stresses. Chinese has a minor intonation system but an elaborate system of phonemic tones that identify words much as consonants and vowels identify words in English.\(^{14}\)

This brief comparison of some specific aspects of the sound structures of four different languages, one of which is English, further confirms the fact that the English language contains fairly complicated patterns of stress in which some syllables are heavily stressed; some syllables are unstressed, and still others are only slightly stressed. More specifically, in the Romance languages and many others, the syllables follow each other in a steady, even flow—the unstressed syllables receiving just as much time as the stressed ones in what is known as syllable-timed rhythm as opposed to English which has stress-timed and phrase-timed rhythm.\(^{15}\)

A close examination of the extreme phonological differences among English, Spanish, French, and Chinese further supports the importance of auditory discrimination and comprehension. According to Christina Bratt Paulston, former president of TESOL (Teachers of English


\(^{15}\)Ibid., p. 93.
to Speakers of Other Languages), the ability to comprehend the spoken form of a language is one of the most difficult tasks for the language learner; and yet, it is probably the most neglected skill in second language teaching. Perhaps this neglect can be attributed to the fact that learners outside of large urban areas are not likely to be exposed to a number of native speakers of the target language. Consequently, the learner may experience considerable difficulty comprehending the spoken form of the language when he hears it.

In many respects, the problem of non-English speakers trying out their English is particularly acute for adult learners living in cities where a significant percentage of the population speaks only Spanish and Chinese. For example, Spanish speakers in New York City have other Spanish speakers to talk to. And since Spanish is becoming an acceptable second language in the city, there is less chance that Spanish speakers learning English will speak the language outside of the ESL class. Since good pronunciation can only be achieved through constant practice to retrain the vocal musculature, it seems clear that the lack of practice in oral language further inhibits the ability to speak. Moreover, speaking effectively has its own rewards. One of these is discussed by Finocchiaro:


There is evidence, too, that oral skills can facilitate the development of the learner's ability to read and write, particularly when the teacher emphasizes for the learner the ways in which the already-familiar auditory signals can be transferred to the written symbols. In essence, developing proficiency in oral skills paves the way for developing proficiency in written skills.

Overall, the studies cited previously on the nature and function of language acquisition lend support to the notion that developing oral skills is a difficult part of language learning, therefore a sufficient amount of time and effort should be given to oral language development. Some problems encountered in learning to speak a new language and their causes have been presented. Several factors which influence the level of difficulty such as the ESL teacher and the teaching/learning environment in terms of materials and methods have also been discussed. Not only has the ESL teacher's role been highlighted, but the difficulty encountered by the adult student in language learning has been emphasized. These two factors are considered crucial to the adult's progress in his new language.

A major assumption of the present study is that the adult learner plays an important role in his own learning process. Within this framework, the learner's view—especially his perception of the difficulty aspects of learning to speak the language—is coupled with the teacher's awareness of the specific strengths and weaknesses of each student. Thus, this study was implemented.

Specific Statement of the Problem

The intent of this study is to: (1) describe and compare the perceptions of the ESL teacher and his adult student in regard to speaking problems in learning English; and (2) compare Hispanic and Chinese adult students in terms of their perceived difficulties in learning to speak English. The study was designed to provide additional data on the difficulty of specific sounds and structures as perceived by ESL teachers and their adult ESL students.

More specifically, answers were sought to the following research questions:

1. Are there differences in teacher and adult student perceptions of problems in learning to speak English? If there are differences, what are the specific differences?

2. Do Chinese adult students learning to speak English encounter a different set of problems than Hispanic adult students?

Significance of the Problem

Since the 1960's, there has been an increased migration of Puerto Rican and other Spanish-speaking people to the mainland United States in general and to New York City in particular. In addition to the large number of Spanish-speaking people entering the United States, there has also been a noticeable influx of Chinese-speaking people settling in various parts of the country. The larger number of Chinese entering the
country is linked to the immigration quota which was changed in 1968-1969 from one hundred persons to over twenty thousand.\(^\text{19}\)

Non-English speaking immigrants who settle in large urban areas generally experience greater hardships in their attempt to learn the American way of life. Aside from being a social stigma, the inability to speak English makes it difficult for these newcomers to find suitable employment or to continue their education through the medium of English. In New York City, where large numbers of skilled persons are vying for jobs, it is virtually impossible to compete when language is a barrier. Immigrants with skills must learn to communicate before entering the labor market. The problem is compounded for unskilled immigrants who must not only learn the language but must also learn a skill before they can become employed.

In response to the problem of massive numbers of unemployed—non-English speaking immigrants—several unusual training programs have been initiated. One experimental project, funded by the Manpower Development Training Program (MDTP), was designed to teach vocationally related English to foreigners. The project was intended exclusively for Chinese and Hispanic youth. In defending the necessity of the ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages), Evelyn Sussman maintains that oral language is vocationally related. Very few employers will hire persons who do not speak

English effectively. In many urban communities, a speaking knowledge helps to reduce the high unemployment rate.

Oftentimes, native speakers of English fail to acknowledge the fact that the sound system of the English language is quite complicated and therefore offers considerable difficulty to foreign adults for whom a knowledge of English is often a prerequisite to employment. Certainly, curricular materials used in teaching English to students who have been in the United States for some time should be different from those which are used to teaching persons who have little or no prior knowledge of English.

Findings from this study will permit the ESL curriculum writer to highlight the differences in the curricular design, thereby potentially reducing the time needed by the student to learn the target language. A study which pinpoints areas of discrepancy between teacher and pupil perceptions of problems will provide important information in this regard. Data revealed in this study will be of value to ESL teachers and ESL curriculum writers as they will be able to organize materials, plan teaching strategies and evaluate progress and achievement with specific knowledge of the problem areas.

Assumptions

Listed below are the major assumptions made by the researcher in designing this study:

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20 Ibid., p. 11.
1. There is a correlation between the curriculum and the effectiveness of language teaching.

2. Oral language problems can be recognized when described on a questionnaire.

3. Adult students have an awareness of their own problem areas.

4. Teachers have an awareness of pronunciation problems.

Limitations of the Study

1. The investigation was conducted in a large urban setting with a cross-cultural adult student population. The characteristics of the students and teachers in the study may differ significantly from those of other urban communities.

2. The problems studied are not those of beginning students but those of intermediate and advanced ESL adult students enrolled in English as a second language classes. These subjects were chosen because they have enough proficiency in speaking English to at least verbalize some specific difficulties which they are currently experiencing.

3. Participation was limited to teachers; supervisors were excluded.

4. The study was also limited to topics amenable to study through a survey technique. The outcome of the survey of perceptions was not corroborated by actual analysis of speech.
Plan and Content of the Thesis

Chapter I begins with a presentation of the background of the problem. As the chapter progresses, the writer discusses some possible causes and solutions. A general and a specific statement of the problem under investigation are discussed. The significance of the problem, the major assumptions and limitations of the study conclude the chapter.

Chapter II provides an overview of research studies which highlight the problems of English sound and structure. The second section encompasses an in-depth presentation of the numerous methods of language instruction. In the third and final section, the latest trends—developments and studies in linguistic research—are reviewed. The definition and the purpose of contrastive analysis and error analysis and their relationship to second language learning conclude the methodological review.

Chapter III presents the design of the study. A detailed description of the method of selecting the sample is provided. The development and piloting of the survey instrument with an analysis of each instrument are discussed.

Chapter IV gives an interpretation and a discussion of the data which have been collected. Simple counts, percentages, and rank order statistics are used to analyze the data.

Chapter V summarizes the results of the study. Conclusions based on the data are presented. Noting the significance of the results, the researcher-writer discusses implications for the future. The chapter is concluded with her comments and recommendations.
English as a second language has been an integral part of the curriculum of the evening adult schools since the first influx of European immigrants. As the immigrant population increased, so did the number of ESL classes. The need to learn English as a second language was especially critical for the immigrants who settled in industrial urban areas. For example, New York City, long considered the city of immigrants, established evening adult schools so that newcomers could learn English to become eligible for employment. Until the decade of the fifties, few solutions to the numerous problems encountered in learning to speak a new language were available. In the 1950's and 1960's, renewed impetus was given to the oral approach by the development of audio devices, particularly the tape recorder. 21

Even though the use of tape recorders and record players facilitates the task of language learning, there are still a number of problems associated with teaching English as a second language that have yet to be looked at by linguistic researchers. Cultural awareness on the part of the language teacher is a significant factor in student progress. Moreover, it is essential that the ESL teacher becomes aware of the needs and linguistic problems of his students. Further, the extreme differences in

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21 Hall, op. cit., p. 23.
sound systems in terms of intonation, stress and rhythm naturally present different problems to different linguistic groups. Chinese students may experience a different set of problems than those which the Hispanic students may experience. More specifically, in the Chinese language, sentences frequently occur with no subject or verb--to ask someone how he is, one can inquire simply Hau pu hau? (literally, "well, not well?"). It should come as no surprise, then, that Chinese students learning English often experience difficulty with English sentence structure.

As noted previously, the Chinese and Hispanic migration to New York City has increased tremendously. In light of this increase, educating the immigrant population has become a major concern of the New York City Board of Education. Mary Finocchiaro writes:

The effective and rapid integration of Spanish-speakers into the full life of the school, the community and the city has been a continuing concern of education and social agencies in New York City for the past two decades. It has generally been recognized that special educational provisions are needed for the approximately two hundred thousand children of Puerto Rican and other Latin American origin in our schools today. Special educational provisions are needed for adults as well as their children. The literature reviewed in this chapter focusses on the adult learner. This review is intended to provide the reader with insight into some specific problems encountered by adults learning a second language.

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23 Finocchiaro, op. cit., p. 58.
The first section of the review focusses on research studies in English sound and structure.

The second section concentrates on the numerous methods and approaches along with the basic theories which support these methods. Although several methodologies are reviewed, the Direct Method theory appears to be the most widely accepted. Several related methods of language instruction are reviewed.

The third and final section describes the process researchers utilize to explore contrastive analysis and error analysis with respect to language acquisition.

The process of comparing the learner's mother tongue with the target language, contrastive analysis, is one attempt to predict some of the problems the learner will experience. Linguistic research in error analysis, a procedure of collecting, analyzing and categorizing performance errors concludes the discussion. Overall, the literature to be reviewed focusses on research studies designed to find solutions to language learning, especially for the adult.

Research in the Sound and Structure of the English Language

Language authorities generally agree that learning a new language encompasses mastery of the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Although all of the skills of language acquisition are equally important, some linguists, the most notable, is Nelson Brooks who goes one step further in assessing language learning requirements.
Brooks lists three other "short-range objectives":

First, control of the structures of sound, form and order in the new language; second, acquaintance with vocabulary items that bring content into these structures; and third, meaning in terms of the significance these verbal symbols have for those who speak the language natively.²⁴

Brooks' assessment suggests that beginning language learners need to spend much more time learning to listen and to repeat the new structures until a degree of control has been attained. Failure to devote a sufficient amount of time to this initial stage of language learning may result in faulty pronunciation.

On matters of English sound, two prominent investigators—Robert Lado and Charles C. Fries—have written extensively on some of the basic English pronunciation problems. In English Pronunciation, they stress that:

With the development of linguistic science has come the realization that sounds of a language operate in a system. Many words are distinguished solely by a difference of vowel sounds as in peal, pill, pale, pal, pool, pull, pole, and Paul. Likewise, there are many words that are differentiated by a single consonant sound as in the series fin, pin, tin, din, kin, sin, shin, and thin. These contrasts in English sounds present difficulty for the non-English-speaking person.²⁵

Unlike Robert Lado and Charles C. Fries, who concentrated their research efforts on English sounds, Francine Steiglitz focussed on English

²⁴Brooks, op. cit., p. 59.

Inher study, Steiglitz examined the specific effect of sentence length and grammatical structure on repeatability of sentences for ESL students. As a research instrument, Steiglitz used a test of 126 sentences which varied in length, grammatical pattern and type of sentence expansion.

The results of Steiglitz's study suggest that the ability to repeat sentences correctly depends on the type of sentence, the pattern and the number of words in the sentence. As sentences become longer, the findings suggest that the effect of structure becomes more pronounced. In comparing respondents, Steiglitz found that the native speakers did best, the advanced foreign students were next, and the intermediate foreign students performed most poorly. An analysis of the content of the sentences in the study revealed that the largest percentage of errors, which were omissions, were made in eleven-word sentences. In eight-word sentences, the largest percentage of errors were substitutions. Steiglitz notes that one of the most frequent substitution errors, particularly among the foreign students, was changing singular nouns to plural and vice versa. A subsequent test indicated that when the words were presented in isolation, the subjects had little difficulty repeating them. The results of this study led Steiglitz to conclude that when constructing drill sentences, sentence expansion and length should be given prime importance. The study did not reveal, however, specific factors which influence the

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structure of native and non-native speakers. Briefly stated, the findings of this study seem to suggest that the ease or difficulty in repeating sentences may be influenced by other factors.

In a similar investigation, Alan C. Nicholas focussed on the sounds of English structures and their effect on the learner. He did this by investigating the student's ability to hear the sounds of the new language. Using foreign students as subjects, Nicholas tried to assess how sentence length, vocabulary level and naturalness affected the number of errors made in transcribing material presented orally. Nicholas found that while the main effects of sentence length, naturalness and vocabulary were not significant, the interaction between the variables of omission, substitution and insertion were. The results of this study suggest that the increased difficulty of vocabulary deviation from naturalness had a direct effect on the ability of foreign students to transcribe the material which they heard orally.\(^\text{27}\)

Nicholas also conducted a study in aural perception in which he tested native speakers using written recall of dictated sentences. Sentences ranging in length from three to twenty-three words were used.

There were two levels of naturalness. (Naturalness was defined as whether a sentence would be spoken in a classroom lecture or in conversation.) The results showed that sentences of low naturalness and

infrequently used words tended to be less frequently recalled than those of high naturalness and frequently used words. Further, recall tended to decrease as the length of the sentence increased, although enough exceptions occurred to warrant only tentative conclusions and to indicate the need for further research.  

In essence, the structural composition of the English sentence as well as the sound of the sentence influence to a large degree comprehensability.

An Overview of Language Teaching Methods and Supporting Theories

Direct Method

Methodology is indeed a vital concern in language teaching. Several methods of instruction have been devised and have proven successful; however, the question remains as to which method or methods are most appropriate to meet the immediate needs of the learners. Despite the method selected, some insight into the theory which supports the particular method is crucial to its understanding. The following discussion focusses on three major methods and their supporting theories.

As was noted previously, a great deal of the theory of language teaching has been taken directly from the field of psychology. David M.

\(^{28}\)Ibid., Volume 33, p. 91.
Harding, a specialist in language teaching, has identified three components as being basic to the Direct Method theory:

1. The belief that language should be taught initially through speech; that the spoken language should take precedence over written language in presenting both of them to the pupil;

2. The notion that translation should not be a teaching device because it involves a mental exercise that is far removed from the normal experience of spontaneous speech;

3. The fact that there must be a direct association between the new word in the language being learned and the object, action or idea designated by that word (a vital belief of the Direct Methodists).  

In the Direct Method, a great deal of importance is attached to the use of the speech sounds and the study of phonetics.

Charles Fries of the English Language Institute of the University of Michigan defines the Direct Method as one which teaches the foreign language through conversation, discussion and reading—using the language directly rather than translating from the mother tongue to the target language. According to Fries, the Direct Method does not employ the pupil's native language (NL) nor does it teach any formal grammar. Advocates of the Direct Method feel that the mother tongue should not be used.


30 Ibid., p. 54.
Major critics of the Direct Method theory are, for the most part, language theorists who view other methods as more functional.\(^{31}\) Perhaps one of the most notable critics is Palmer who maintains that the most "direct" way of conveying a new word might be simply to translate it into the native language.\(^{32}\) The learner is then able to internalize the new word and remember it by association. It is argued that this process would prove economical in time and effort to both the teacher and the learner.

From the Direct Method came two other major methods of teaching language: The Oral Method and the Audiolingual Method.

**Oral Method**

The Oral Method is intended to build a set of habits for Oral production of a language for the receptive understanding of the language when spoken. Practicing the patterns over and over until they are internalized is an important feature of this method. Essentially, the overall goal in this approach is centered around habit formation.

Basically, the Oral Method is intended to divert the learner's attention away from that element which is to be learned. For example, a sentence such as: He is looking at the painting—can be effectively used to practice a pattern. After one repeats the pattern a sufficient number of times, the structures is looking and at the become internalized.

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\(^{32}\) Harding, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
At that particular point, other nouns may be substituted within the particular frame which painting occupies. Example: He is looking at the girl, at the garden, at the house, etc. And in so doing, it is felt that a particular structure may become internalized without any cognitive participation on the part of the learner. This approach, often referred to as pattern practice, remains a controversial subject in language teaching. The controversy stems from the merits to be derived from constantly practicing the same patterns over and over. It is often argued that the learner only knows the patterns that he has learned and is unable to construct new patterns when the need arises.

Fries summarizes the rationale for habit formation in language learning by saying:

The fundamental matters of the language that must be mastered on a production level should be made an unconscious habit. For this purpose, many whole sentences, questions and responses demand repetition and more repetition, and those will become automatic reactions early.33

As the name implies, the emphasis in the Oral Method is on oral production. In support of the Oral Method, Lado and Fries advocate substitution drills:

The materials were built upon the principles that to establish new language habits, the practice must shift from exercises in which attention is centered upon repetition of the pattern through a conscious choice of the elements of the structure to be learned to a variety of lexical meaning substitutable in the structural frame.34


In spite of the strong support given to the Oral Method, there were language specialists who criticized both the method and its goals. The most notable critic, John B. Carroll, a leading authority in psycholinguistics, agrees with the notion that learning a second language requires both the acquisition of knowledge about the rules and the formation of habits described by these rules. Carroll questions, however, the efficacy of repetitive drill in learning a foreign language. He argues that the only virtue in practice and repetition is that time is provided for the new sounds and structures to become internalized.\(^\text{35}\) It appears, then, that Carroll feels that it is not the repetition of the structures but the time element involved which enables the student to learn the new sounds and structures.

There are, of course, basic differences in the two methods. In the Direct Method, the skill of reading may be introduced at the very beginning of the language study. In the Oral Method, reading is not introduced until the structure of the new language is firmly grasped... and it may never become an important part of the study.\(^\text{36}\)

With the Oral Method theory, as is often the case with new theories, critics arise to question its effectiveness. These, in turn, often become advocates of a new theory. In this fashion, the Oral Method grew out of the Direct Method. Even though these two are the most widely used, there are other methods which have also gained recognition.


\(^{36}\)Fries, op. cit.
Audiolingual Method

The third major method of language teaching, often referred to as the audiolingual approach, became popular in the early sixties. As the name implies, the audiolingual method concentrates first on hearing the new sounds as they occur in patterns; then repeating the patterns over and over. During the initial phase, the emphasis is placed on the development of listening and speaking skills. This method is based on the conviction that language is first of all speech; and that the ability to communicate by means of spoken words is of primary importance. The acquisition of the ability to understand the foreign language as it is spoken by educated native speakers and to speak it in a manner acceptable to such native speakers should receive serious and sustained attention at the beginning. And every opportunity should be provided to maintain and increase these skills as long as the instruction lasts.  

Advocates of this method argue that audiolingual skills are matters of habit, not knowledge; and that extensive practice is the only known way to develop habit. Moreover, interference from written symbols should be avoided until a proper foundation for good audiolingual habits has been laid. Thus, the audiolingual foundation acquired during the initial period will simplify the task of learning to read and to write.

In 1957, Nelson Brooks, a well-known specialist in language teaching, coined the term "audiolingual" to describe the linguistic approach

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to language learning. This technique stresses the practice of new patterns until they become a part of the speaking vocabulary. Brooks provides an unusual analogy of pattern practice and its relationship to communication with playing the scales in musical development.

It is to communication what playing the scales and arpeggios is to music: exercise in structural dexterity undertaken solely for the sake of practice, in order that performance may become habitual and automatic as it must be when the mind concentrates on the message rather than on the phenomena that conveys it. Pattern practice capitalizes on the mind's ability to perceive identity of structure where there is a difference in content and its quickness to learn by analogy.38

The audiolingual approach was initiated on a nation-wide basis in the early sixties. The changeover from the grammar-translation method which was used previously to the more modern audiolingual method necessitated a tremendous change in ESL curricular design and in teacher training as well. Since the audiolingual approach has not been fully evaluated, its long range results cannot be accurately measured at this time. It is certain, however, that the shift in emphasis from learning rules of grammar and translating to hearing and then speaking the new language has made language teaching and learning more appealing and more practical for both the teacher and the learner.

Three other methods, although not as widespread in the United States, have gained recognition in other parts of the world: the Structural, Context and Cognitive Code Methods.

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Other Methods

Chandresekhar of India describes the Structural Method as one which seeks to present teaching materials on the basis of the different points in the structure of the language being taught. Drills in the graded structures are done through substitution techniques and oral work. The emphasis in this method is on structure.

A novel approach to teaching language is the Context Method which stresses the natural environment as opposed to the formal setting of the language classroom. This approach simulates natural conditions by (1) providing a concrete environment, and (2) providing an opportunity to hear the foreign language spoken in a natural manner. This environment can often be created by means of pictures and models; or in the absence of live models, by appropriate video tapes and movies.

The final approach commonly known as the Cognitive Code Method focuses directly on a knowledge of the structure of the target language. Theoretically, this method supports the position that adult second language learning is not a matter of habit formation, but should involve, at some stage, a conscious knowledge of structure. Other features of this approach are:

1. Exercises designed to teach grammatical understanding of the concepts being introduced;

\[39\] Chandresekhars op. cit., p. 20.
\[40\] Ibid., p. 22.
2. Grammar explained deductively prior to any practice with the structure; and

3. All the language skills practiced from the beginning of the course. 41

Several research studies have been devoted exclusively to comparing the various methods in order to determine the most successful. K. Chastain conducted a study of Spanish-speaking adults in which he compared the relative effectiveness of the audiolinguai habit theory with the cognitive code learning theory. He discovered that there were no significant differences between the two methods used in developing the students' ability to comprehend spoken Spanish or to speak it. There was, however, a significant difference in the reading scores in favor of the Cognitive Code Method. Chastain maintains that the major implications of his investigation are:

1. Deductive presentation of material is superior to inductive;

2. Analysis is superior to analogy;

3. Drills stressing understanding are superior to pattern practice;

4. Using all the senses in assimilating material being studied is superior to the natural order of presentation. 42


42 Ibid., p. 279.
Little research has been done regarding what takes place in the ESL classroom. Studies done by Krashen and Seliger, Jones, Zelinski, and Usprich recently confirmed what many language teachers have known for a number of years: for adults, formal instruction is, in general, of more benefit for second language learning than exposure to and use of the second language in "natural" situations.\^\textsuperscript{43}

In the research done by Krashen, Jones et al., "formal instruction" was operationally defined by simply asking the respondents: "How many years have you studied English?" When the respondents were matched for years of exposure to English, the ones who had studied English in school were more proficient than those who had not attended school. There was only a slight correlation between the number of years a student lived in an English-speaking country and proficiency in speaking English.\^\textsuperscript{44}

Briefly, it appears that merely living in a country does not assure the newcomer that he will automatically develop proficiency in speaking the new language. However, classroom instruction is a much more reliable way of becoming fluent in the language.

Several studies have been done in order to compare one method of instruction with another method. In one of these studies, Herbert Seliger of Queens College, a division of the City University of New York, compared two methods of teaching a syntax pattern to adult learners of English as


\^\textsuperscript{44}Ibid., p. 175.
a second language. The purpose of the experiment was to make a controlled comparison between two teaching methods using adult learners as subjects. The respondents, all beyond the beginners level, were foreign students at the English Language Institute of Queens College. The design of the study consisted of two experimental groups and one control group. One of the experimental groups was taught by an inductive method similar to that advocated by Charles Fries and others. The second experimental group was taught by what was defined as a modified deductive method. This method was characterized by the presentation of the language rule before drill and practice. The control group did not receive any special instructions, but remained in class with a teacher and studied something not related to the experiment. 45

Both experimental groups performed significantly better on both the recall and the retention tests than did the control group. The important comparisons between the experimental groups showed that on the recall test, there was no significant difference. However, on the retention test, which was given three weeks after the lessons, the experimental group which was taught by the deductive method performed significantly better than the group taught by the inductive method. Seliger concluded that no broad generalizations can be formulated since the study dealt with a specific aspect of syntax and a specific method. This study indicates that a deductive method can be more effective for teaching English as a foreign language to adult learners. Further research is needed in order

to construct a valid theoretical method based on the deductive approach.46

In retrospect, there has been tremendous progress in developing the science of linguistics with psycholinguistics (the psychological aspects of linguistics). Investigations in psychology and linguistics have focussed primarily on unifying and systematizing a body of knowledge, materials, procedures, and techniques designed to facilitate language teaching and learning. These scientific achievements in linguistics, along with the behaviorist school of psychology, have revitalized language instruction.

However, no single method can be held above any other. Rather, a combination of methods, approaches and techniques which are appealing to adult language learners who require variations in the teaching approach should be used. Even though several methods are available, those having widest acceptance are based on a variation of the same theme. Labels such as "oral-aural", "oral approach", "audiolinguial", "direct", and "natural" appear to be based on the same theoretical assumptions as the Direct Method theory.

Amid the controversy surrounding the best method, the work of Robert Lado appears to have been the most influential in changing language teaching methods in the New York City public schools. Lado argued that language learners had developed a distaste for learning a new language

because they were unable to speak it and that they tended to develop an inferiority complex about language learning in general. Lado's argument was so convincing to the New York City Board of Education that in 1965, the New York City Board of Continuing Education formally introduced into the curricula of the evening adult school the linguistic principles of teaching English as a second language. Essentially, the linguistic approach is based on a combination of methodologies and encourages the use of a variety of instructional techniques. Further, this method seeks to teach vocabulary and patterns by visual association achieved through teacher demonstration and identification of illustrative objective materials. In essence, the linguistic approach overcomes two major faults of the old grammar-translation method by:

1. Substituting language drills for grammar rules, and

2. Emphasizing spontaneous language usage rather than continuous translation.

Eventually, it became apparent to the New York City Board of Continuing Education that the methods used to teach English as a second language were in need of much improvement.

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47 A Look At New York City Fundamental Adult Education Program, Fundamental Adult Education Series, Board of Education, City of New York, pp. 11-13.

48 Ibid., p. 13.
Language Acquisition

Contrastive Analysis

In 1959, the Center for Applied Linguistics attempted to solve some of the problems encountered in learning a foreign language. Consequently, a group of language teachers and linguists were commissioned to work out analysis contrasting the structure of English with that of French, German, Italian, Russian, and Spanish. These specialists operated on the theory that although each language possesses its own unique structure, it is not only possible to contrast two languages in some meaningful way but it is also possible by means of contrastive analysis to predict the difficulties which speakers of one language will have when they try to learn the other.\textsuperscript{49} It is sometimes said that errors in the second language could perhaps be avoided if we were to make a comparison of the learner's mother tongue and the target language. The sum of the differences in the structure of the native language and the target language would constitute his learning difficulties.\textsuperscript{50} This information could then be used to develop better teaching strategies.

Problems in language learning have been a prime concern in the research and writings of Robert Lado. In his book, \textit{Linguistics Across


Cultures, printed in 1957, Lado presented the first methodological procedures for contrastive analysis. During the last two decades, especially in the United States, contrastive analysis has achieved overwhelming acceptance as a more sophisticated and reliable method than error analysis. Lado's initial research provided a frame of reference for future studies.

A number of arguments have been advanced by the proponents of contrastive analysis. One advocate, W. Nemser, notes that contrastive analysis is based on two main assumptions: that the native language (NL) interferes with the learning of the second language (SL); and that the greater the difference between a structure in (NL) and one in (SL), the greater the difficulty for the learner. However, because there is a great deal of similarity between languages, the supporters of contrastive analysis believe that on the basis of a comparison of the phonologies, grammars and lexicons of the languages in question, predictions and explanations concerning learning behavior can be made. Where there are differences, these differences can easily be explained to the adult student. For example, when an adult learns the structure, "I'm going to the store," he may attempt, by analogy, to use the preposition "to" in another context—"He's looking to the boy." The error of substituting (to) is the result of negative transfer. One solution to the problem of negative transfer may be found in the appropriate selection of curriculum materials which may be so designed to block negative transfer—a predictable area of difficulty.

Other studies of contrastive analysis also suggest that difficulty in repeating sentences may be caused by dissimilar structures in the language. Supporters of this notion argue that the sounds and structures that are similar in both the native language and the target language ought to be introduced in the initial stage of language learning. This notion is supported by the writings of Gerhard Nickel and Hena Wagner who state that:

Phenomena that have been found to be similar or even identical in both languages can be taught at an early stage even if they are very complex.52

Similarities and differences in language structures are a major concern to some supporters of contrastive analysis.

Overall, research in the areas of linguistics and psycholinguistics have made language teachers more aware of the nature of language and more sensitive to the difficulties which language learners experience. The awareness is seen in the concern expressed by some language teachers who are beginning to ask: By what process do language learners begin to discriminate between the intricate new sounds? How do language learners begin to internalize the different structures and then produce them at the appropriate time? Answers must be sought not only to these questions but to many others.

Opponents of contrastive analysis argue that there are many shortcomings in the process. Wardhaugh, for example, notes that the predictive

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factor in contrastive analysis is untenable at present because it makes demands that cannot be met on either the linguistic theory or its own non-existent theory.

Error Analysis

Language teachers are no longer content to merely correct their students when they make errors. The most recent trend is to analyze the errors—a process which is often referred to as error analysis.

It is not uncommon to characterize language learning in general as a difficult process. Some researchers, in trying to find out the reasons for the difficulty, have collected, analyzed and categorized the errors which learners make. This approach is based on the assumption that the frequency of identical errors is proportional to the degree of the learning difficulty. Identifying and noting the frequency of errors enables researchers to study patterns and further to provide a systematic categorization of these errors. The final outputs are more than mere tabulations of errors in order of frequency. Instead, attempts are made to detect the underlying source of errors. In addition to its diagnostic role, error analysis provides data to verify and supplement contrastive analysis.


54 Ibid., p. 122.
A major contributor to the field of error analysis—Tran-Thi Chau—investigated the language learner's view and specifically, his perception of difficulty and then related the outputs to error analysis and contrastive analysis. He attempted to evaluate the relative merits and shortcomings of each method, and then to devise a more adequate approach to ease the difficulty of second language learning.55

Tran-Thi Chau used a Spanish grammar test based on Pimseleur's Spanish Proficiency test which was designed by the author to reflect proficiency of high school students toward the end of their second year of Spanish.

A detailed analysis of errors revealed that interference from the native language (NL) or "interlingual interference" was the greatest single cause of errors, accounting for approximately fifty-one percent of the 1,314 errors analyzed. This type of error can be easily traced to a particular structure in the target language (TL).

Another type of error which was analyzed was classified as "intralingual errors." This type of error formed the second largest group of errors—twenty-seven percent of the total number. Errors of this type, most prevalent at the morphological level, had nothing to do with (NL). They were caused by factors such as the systematic complexity of TL, inadequate rule learning, over-generalization, and the process of analogy. The results of Tran-Thi Chau's study indicate that the predictive efficiency of contrastive analysis was found to be negligible as is

55Ibid., p. 146.
evident in the low correlation coefficient between contrastive analysis and error analysis.  

In terms of error analysis, Jack C. Richards also divides errors into two types—interlingual and intralingual. He explains the difference between the two:

Interlanguage errors are the result of interference from the learner's mother tongue. Intralingual and developmental errors are the result of the development process; for example, did he come, what you doing? Errors of this nature are frequent, regardless of the learner's language background. Rather than reflecting the learner's language inability to separate two languages, intralingual and developmental errors reflect the learner's competence at a particular stage and illustrate some of the general characteristics of language acquisition.  

Richards classifies the causes of intralingual and developmental errors as follows:

1. Overgeneralization;
2. Ignorance of rule restrictions;
3. Incomplete application of rules; and
4. Hypothesis of false concepts.

It would seem that the type of error which the learner makes is more indicative of his present stage of development than a cause for serious concern.

56 Ibid., p. 134.
58 Ibid.
A leading critic of the process of error analysis, J. Lyons, contends that this approach lacks objectivity. In this regard, Lyons poses the following question: How does one define "error"? An acceptable utterance, according to Lyons, is one that has been or might be accepted by other native speakers belonging to the language in question.\(^5^9\)

Of course, the various degrees and kinds of acceptability make it difficult for the supporters of error analysis to decide what is right and what is wrong.\(^6^0\) The notion that error analysis lacks objectivity is further supported by P. Stevens who writes:

> The identification of errors is essentially subjective. It is possible for two educated native speakers to differ in a surprisingly large proportion of cases as to whether items are acceptable or unacceptable; and hence, as to whether they should be counted as errors. Consequently, the degree of prescriptiveness of the individual analyst greatly affects the number of errors to be categorized.\(^6^1\)

In addition to methodological limitations, critics of error analysis contend that the process lacks an explanatory function. Moreover, the outputs of most error analysts are simply lists of categories or errors classified according to frequency of occurrence.

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\(^6^0\) Ibid.

Summary

Essentially, the overall discussion centered around the fact that comprehending the spoken form of a language is perhaps one of the most difficult tasks, and yet it is probably one of the most neglected. This neglect may be caused by several factors: a lack of awareness of the ESL teacher of the inherent difficulty of certain English sounds and structures, a lack of insight by the teacher with respect to the learner, his native language and culture. Moreover, the ESL adult student can provide valuable insight into his own speaking problems.

For the average adult language learner who may have experienced a slight hearing loss, the problem of articulating the new sounds may present an even greater problem than is often recognized. Alan C. Nicholas investigated aural perception in the hope of determining some specific factors which affect the learner's ability to hear the new sounds.

The results of research done by Brooks, Steiglitz, Lado, and Fries underscore the need to devote a sufficient amount of the ESL curriculum design to listening and then speaking the new language.

The second part of the review concentrated on some of the major refinements in language teaching methodology—some of which have changed the emphasis and the function of language techniques over the last fifty years. Because oral language development is a difficult undertaking, several methods of instruction have been designed in the hope of facilitating the overall process. While the basic method, referred to as the
Direct Method, emphasizes teaching the language through conversation, discussion and reading, the other major methods presented also emphasize speaking the target language. The difference in the methods employed lies in the means of achieving proficiency in speaking. Whatever the method or methods selected, the ESL teacher is a key factor in the ESL class. Evidence exists to support the conclusion that language is best learned with teacher guidance within a formal setting. A study done by Krashen, Usprich, Seliger, and Jones confirm the validity of formal instruction as opposed to absorbing the language in a natural environment.

The third and final section of the review introduced the latest developments, trends and studies in linguistic research. Major contributors Richards, Nemser, Nickel, and Wagner sought approaches to predicting learning behavior. Through the use of contrastive analysis and error analysis, diagnostic tools of the linguists, hopefully a body of knowledge will soon be made available to the language teacher. From this information, improved teaching strategies and curriculum designs based on an awareness of the major similarities and differences between the target language and the learner's native language may be constructed. This type of individual program of instruction may be appropriately tailored to the immediate needs of the learner thereby cutting short the time that it takes to become fluent in a language. Future studies such as the one done by Tran-Thi Chau hopefully will add to the body of existing knowledge and will enable future researchers to better evaluate the relative merits and shortcomings of both contrastive analysis and error analysis, and also to devise a more adequate approach to ease second language learning.
CHAPTER III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this investigation was to describe and compare teacher and adult student perceptions of problems encountered in learning to speak English as a second language. In order for the researcher to approach the problem as presented, a pilot study was undertaken which involved ESL teachers and their adult students. This was done to insure satisfactory completion of the main study. Furthermore, a follow-up study was done to assist in the selection of data in the principal study. Answers were sought to the following research questions:

1. Are there differences in teacher and adult student perceptions of problems in learning to speak English? If there are differences, what are these specific differences?

2. Do Chinese adult students learning to speak English encounter a different set of problems than Hispanic adult students?

During the fall of 1973, the investigator contacted the New York City Board of Continuing Education in order to explain the nature of the study and to solicit their support and cooperation. Several meetings were held for the purpose of familiarizing the staff with the necessary research. At this time, the investigator was also given an overview of the structure and internal operation of the division of continuing education. Upon completion of the administrative formalities,
permission was granted to conduct the study. Letters granting permission to participate in the study were then sent to the designated schools from the Central Board of continuing education.

The Sample

Initially, the researcher sought to identify the population from which the sample would be taken. In a metropolitan community as immense as New York City, it was necessary to limit the investigation to those evening adult schools which met the following two conditions:

1. Heavy concentration of adults enrolled in intermediate and advanced ESL classes;
2. Heavy concentration of adult Hispanic and Chinese students.

In planning for the research, it was decided that beginning English as a second language classes would be excluded from the sample. This limitation on the level of proficiency was set because student respondents were required to comprehend a questionnaire presented in English. For this reason only the intermediate and advanced ESL classes were asked to participate. Schools with a large enrollment of Chinese students were first identified. This process was facilitated by information collected that included maps indicating the location of each evening adult school in New York City, lists of students' names and addresses and the names of the teachers-in-charge. These listings also contained the schools which provided ESL; however, the number of classes and the levels of instruction were not indicated on
the lists. Further, data regarding the level of the ESL classes and the ethnological composition of the students were obtained by a telephone canvass to the evening adult schools in the boroughs of Manhattan, Bronx and Brooklyn. Each administrator in charge of a cluster of evening adult schools was contacted.

The telephone canvass showed that twenty-five out of thirty-two evening adult schools were providing ESL instruction. Evening adult schools in the boroughs of Manhattan and the Bronx were providing fewer ESL classes on the intermediate and advanced levels than were the evening adult schools in Brooklyn, therefore Brooklyn was selected.

Preliminary information collected further revealed that the largest number of Hispanic adults learning English were concentrated in Brooklyn in school districts 13, 14, 15, and 17; the largest number of Chinese adults were in district 2 in Manhattan. A decision was made to conduct the pilot study in school district 13 and the principal study in the three remaining districts. In addition to Hispanic speakers, a sizeable number of Hasidic Jews were enrolled in district 14. The Chinese adults learning English were attending the English Language School which is attended exclusively by Chinese adults learning English. Registration records revealed that there were a total of 247 ESL students enrolled in the intermediate and advanced classes within the selected schools. One hundred ESL students were selected from this group to participate in the study.

Once the ESL student respondents were selected, the next step taken was the identification of ESL teacher respondents. Additional
information concerning the ESL teacher respondents was obtained from the central Board of Education. The information furnished by the Board revealed that altogether there were a total of fifty ESL teachers in the English Language School and the evening adult schools in school districts 14, 15 and 17.

Forty of these ESL teachers participated in the investigation. The forty ESL teachers selected from the aforementioned districts were polled using the instrument designed to investigate the two research questions posed. Levels of instructional responsibility for the ESL teacher respondents included a mixture of beginning, intermediate and advanced ESL classes. Therefore, the ESL teacher respondents may or may not have been teaching the ESL students who participated in the study.

With respect to the ESL teacher respondent who participated in the study, a descriptive analysis of the demographic variables of sex, age and education reveals that there were more males than females. The majority of the teachers were between twenty-five and twenty-nine years of age. All ESL teachers had Bachelor degrees; sixty percent held a Masters Degree; ten percent held a certificate of advanced study; five percent held a Ph.D. or an Ed.D. In terms of ESL teaching experience, forty percent had taught one to less than three years. Of the forty teachers, 22.5 percent had attended a New York City Board of Education Workshop on ESL. In addition, the data revealed that thirty-five percent of the ESL teachers spoke Spanish, the mother tongue of forty-one percent of the student respondents. There were 17.5 percent of the ESL teachers listed as native Chinese speakers with twelve percent who spoke Hebrew.
The idiosyncratic data on the student sample revealed more male than female student respondents participating in the investigation. Forty-one percent of these respondents were between eighteen and twenty-four years of age. The vast majority of respondents, eighty percent had not completed high school. Demographic information also showed that twenty-nine percent of the student respondents had lived in the United States for one year; an additional twenty-nine percent for one to two years, and eleven percent three to four years. Almost half of the students or forty-one percent were from Spanish-speaking countries and twenty-five percent were from the Republic of China; the remainder were from other non-English speaking nations.

Data were also sought on how long the respondents had been enrolled in English as a second language class. It was found that twenty-four percent of the students had studied English in another school in the United States before attending the present school. Seventy-six percent were enrolled for the first time but at the time of the study were placed in an intermediate or advanced level.

Noteworthy is the high rate of employment among student respondents. There were seventy percent who were employed in operative or clerical type jobs. The remaining thirty percent were unemployed. With respect to reasons given for learning English, the majority of the ESL students indicated that they were learning English to get a better job or to continue their education for self improvement.

Overall, the typical ESL student respondent may be described as under-educated, young and desirous of a better education. Despite the evidence of a lack of formal education, the ESL adult student had
found employment. It appears that the lack of formal education in his native country has precipitated an interest in continuing his education upon his arrival in the United States. After employment, education appears to be his second greatest concern.

Development and Piloting of the Survey Instrument

The goal of this stage of the investigation was to develop and pilot the instruments to be used in the study. The nature of the problem under investigation and the characteristics of the student groups influenced to a degree the measurement format. Since the student respondents were non-academic, foreign-born adults whose knowledge of both spoken and written English was minimal, a simple self-administered questionnaire and a rank order list appeared most expedient.

Since the investigation focussed on some specific problems encountered in learning to speak English, the first step in developing the instrument was to compile a list of common speaking difficulties encountered by adults learning to speak English. From this list, a questionnaire was then designed and piloted with only intermediate and advanced ESL students, and ESL teachers in school district 13.

The pilot questionnaire was used to enable the researcher to make an initial assessment of the problems in learning to speak English as a second language and then to use this information to improve the instrument and further facilitate its administration. Designing a single instrument that could be used for both ESL teachers and students was viewed as being not very practical. For this reason, separate
questionnaires were designed for each of these groups.

The ESL teacher pilot questionnaire in the first three items requested ESL teaching experience, level of current teaching responsibility, and some general difficulties that most of the current students were experiencing in learning to speak English (see Appendix A). Next, ESL teachers were requested to describe some of the new habits that they intended to instill in their current students. Question five asked which one of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing present the greatest difficulty for most of their current students.

Question six, the nucleus of the questionnaire, presented fifteen potential problem areas which ESL teachers were requested to rate according to the difficulty students encountered. A four point scale was used with the designations: 1 - Very Difficult; 2 - Fairly Difficult; 3 - Somewhat Difficult; and 4 - Not Difficult. Twenty ESL teachers from school district 13 completed the pilot questionnaire. If a potential problem area were recognized as a problem by at least three ESL teachers, then this problem was included on the main questionnaire.

The second pilot questionnaire designed exclusively for ESL students in school district 13 was intended to elicit the student's version of problems. Questions were stated in the lexicon familiar to the language student. The first three questions in the student pilot questionnaire asked the length of time that the student had been enrolled in ESL and the languages spoken at home. Next, the student was requested to provide demographic data of age, nationality and previous education. Question six asked the reasons for learning English.
Question seven was an open-ended question concerning the problems that the student was currently experiencing in learning English. Question eight asked the student to identify which of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing present the greatest difficulty for him. The two final questions sought the length of time the student had lived in the United States; the student was asked to indicate his sex. The student pilot questionnaire was administered to fifty ESL students enrolled in school district 13.

As the data to the open-ended questions on both teacher and student pilot instruments were analyzed, the researcher sought to identify problems within categories such as initial sounds, intonation and final sounds. For example, one teacher respondent listed the following problems: confusing /th/ with /sh/ and /r/ with /l/ when they are in an initial position. If as many as three teachers or three students mentioned the same problem, it was listed on the final questionnaire.

Description of the Completed Questionnaire

The validity of the questionnaire was dependent upon its specificity for the ESL student respondents who generally have a limited knowledge of the English language. This concern was addressed by utilizing terminology which would not insult the professionalism of the ESL teachers and yet would be simple enough to be easily understood by the ESL student respondents. For this reason, specific problems were stated in the lexicon familiar to language teachers. Following
in parenthesis, the same problem was restated in the lexicon familiar to non-academic students. In order to provide additional clarification with respect to the ESL student, a sample of the problem was also presented.

An overview of the instrument used to answer the questions of the present study follows this discussion. Both demographic and substantive questions were included in the questionnaire format. Although the first part of the questionnaire was designed to elicit a different set of data from ESL teachers and students, the problem category considered the nucleus, was identical for both groups of respondents.

**ESL Teacher's Questionnaire**

Question one asked the total number of years that the teacher had been teaching English as a second language.

Question two requested the number of classes that the teacher respondent was now teaching in the beginning, intermediate and advanced levels. The second part of the question asked the total number registered in the classes.

Question three asked what languages the teacher spoke in addition to English.

Question four sought the teacher's educational background in terms of specific degree held.

Question five asked the sex and age group of the respondent.

Question six asked that the teacher respondent determine which one of the four skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) was the most difficult for most of his current ESL students.
Question seven asked what additional training in teaching English as a second language had the teacher received.

The last part of the questionnaire was identical for both ESL teachers and ESL students. Question eight asked that the teachers rate specific problems as to their degree of difficulty for their current students. This section of the questionnaire format was divided into eight sub-problem categories: structuring sentences, pronouncing specific initial sounds, pronouncing specific final sounds, forms of the irregular verb (to be), intonation, primary and secondary stress, short and long vowels and an idiomatic expression.

Specific problems within each category were stated briefly employing terminology familiar to language teachers. Parallel to each problem was a five-point rating scale. The teacher was requested to rate on this five-point scale the extent of the problem for the majority of his current ESL students. The highest point on the scale of "5" represented the very difficult with numerical gradations of "4" for fairly difficult, "3" for somewhat difficult, "2" for slightly difficult, and "1" for not difficult at all.

An analysis of the sub-problems within question eight for the teacher and nine for the student reveals each sub-division as it appeared on the questionnaire.

Part A dealt with structuring sentences or (placing the words in the right order to form sentences).*

Part B dealt with pronouncing the following sounds when they are in an initial position. The samples given were: through, ship, state, foot, very, right, land, height, bank, cent, send, and general.
Part C covered pronouncing the following sounds when they are in a final position. Samples: classes, enough.

Part D dealt with the proper use of the irregular verb or (using the correct form of the verb). Sample: to be.

Part E dealt with intonation or relative height of the voice or (when to raise or lower the voice).

Part F dealt with primary and secondary stress or relative degree of loudness of a part of a word or (what part of the word to emphasize).

Part G dealt with learning short and long vowels or (learning the different sounds of words containing the short and long vowels. Sample: hat - age, let - equal, it - ice, hot - open, cup - use.

The final part (H) included an idiom or (an expression whose total meaning cannot be derived from the meaning of each individual word within it). Sample: shoot the bull, take the bull by the horns.

ESL Student's Questionnaire

For the student's version of the questionnaire, the directions were simplified as much as possible. In broad terms, the directions indicated that the problems listed below were areas which present problems for some students learning to speak English. The ESL student was then asked to read each sub-problem description carefully and then decide whether or not the situation described posed any difficulty for him or her and show how difficult a problem it was by circling one of the five numbers on the five-point scale.
After reading the directions, the ESL student was directed to check or circle the proper response. Very little writing was required. Previously, the ESL teachers had been asked to evaluate the terminology employed on the student's questionnaire and they found it adequately simple.

A description of the student's version of the questionnaire is presented below.

Questions one, two and three requested age, sex and the highest grade or college level completed by the student.

Question four asked the length of time that he had been enrolled in English as a second language class and if he had studied English in another school before enrolling in the current school.

Question five asked the amount of time that the student had been in the continental United States.

Question six dealt with the language or languages spoken in the home.

Question seven asked that the student respondent determine which one of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) was the hardest for him.

Question eight asked why the student was learning English.

Question nine, as previously stated, was identical on both the ESL teacher and student questionnaire. Sub-parts A through H are included in question nine.

Question ten requested the birthplace of the student respondent.
Question eleven asked if the respondent were employed and if so, the kind of work. Both the ESL teacher and student instruments are available in Appendix A and B.

The Rank Order Instrument

The rank ordering was an attempt to study further the perceptions of speaking problems among Hispanic and Chinese students and then validate the findings from the earlier questionnaire. (The approach to the second research question was to correlate the perceptions of problems.) This was accomplished by asking Hispanic and Chinese respondents only to rank the same problems presented on the main questionnaire.

In order to ascertain specificity in perceptions of problems, the investigator returned to school district 2, the English Language School in Manhattan and school district 14 in Brooklyn.

The second instrument used to gather the needed data was a rank order check list. A scale of "1" to "10" was used to rank order each problem as it appeared on the list. While "1" represented the problem perceived as the least difficult, "10" represented the most difficult. For the purpose of this ranking, two of the eight problem categories were subdivided to make a total of ten.

Altogether, there were fifty-two Hispanic and Chinese respondents who participated in this phase of the study. Specifically, thirty-two Hispanic and twenty Chinese adult students rank ordered the ten problem categories. The ten problem priorities were: initial
sounds, final sounds, structure, irregular verbs, intonation, accenting words, vowels, idioms, tense of verbs, and pronunciation in general. The actual worksheet used can be found in Appendix E.

Data Collection

Questionnaires were mailed on January 11, 1974 to the English Language School in district 2 in Manhattan and to school districts 14, 15 and 17 in Brooklyn. Each envelope contained an introductory letter, an instruction sheet and questionnaires for each ESL teacher in the selected schools. Also, a self-addressed envelope was enclosed for returning the completed questionnaire to the researcher. Follow-up telephone calls were made to each school in order to ascertain receipt of the package.

Eighty percent of the respondents (forty teachers) completed and returned the ESL teacher questionnaires. No response was received from four schools with ten ESL teachers. When these four schools were contacted, it was discovered that they had not received the letter from the Central Board of Education granting them permission to participate in the study. This twenty percent lack of response was attributed to poor communication.

The student questionnaire was administered by the researcher to one hundred ESL students during regular class time. Prior to administering the questionnaire, directions were read and thoroughly explained. All questions concerning the investigation were answered. The following procedure was used: After a brief explanation of the
research and how the data would be used, pencils and questionnaires were distributed to the entire class. Directions were read again by one student as the others listened. A sample of a check (✓) and a circle (〇) as placed on the chalkboard, and the five degrees of difficulty were discussed. Students were requested to use their best judgement when rating the problems. As the students completed the questionnaires, the researcher and the ESL teacher served as monitors making sure that no questions were skipped. The approximate time required to complete the questionnaire for the majority of students was one-half hour. Before the researcher left the classroom, it was explained that the findings would be shared with the continuing education division.

Treatment of the Data

The survey instruments yielded three kinds of data: categorized demographic data, ratings on difficulty factors and rank orderings of problem priorities. Descriptive statistics were used to characterize the responses of the sample and thereby answer the two research questions posed. Simple counts and percentages describe the respondents and their ratings of the difficulty factors. The Spearman rank order correlation coefficient was used to describe the correspondence between the two ordered lists of problem priorities.

Data for teachers and students were analyzed separately. Also, a breakdown of student responses on the substantive questions, according to ethnic group, was obtained. The number and percent of
respondents in each sub-group rating the difficulty of each problem were calculated. The findings of the study are presented in terms of percentages so that subsets of data can be compared.

Definition of Terms
Used in This Document

**Adults** -- As the term is employed in this study are those persons who have passed the age of sixteen.

**Audiolingual** -- A term used currently to indicate the "linguistic" approach to language learning--first by hearing, then repeating.

**Bilingualism** -- Instruction in the basic skills with a curriculum oriented to the student's primary language and culture. As the basic skills are acquired, the second language is incorporated into the overall curriculum.

**Culture** -- The customs, traditions, mores, values, beliefs, and language of a group of people.

**ESL** -- Designated English as a second language and is designed specifically for non-English speakers.

**Inner City Schools** -- Those schools located within metropolitan New York.

**Linguistics** -- A science which analyzes and describes a language as it is used by its native speakers.

**Monolingual** -- Person who speaks one language.

**Morpheme** -- A minimum meaningful element in a language such as un, do, flower, ing.
Morphology -- The branch of grammar or linguistics dealing with forms of words affected by inflection, derivation, etc.--example: sing, sang, sung.

Mother Tongue -- First language learned.

Non-academic -- Outside the college or university.

Phonemes -- One of a group of distinctive sounds that make up the words of a language. The words cat and bat are distinguished by the initial phonemes "k" and "b".

Psycholinguistics -- Psychological aspects of linguistics.

Semantics -- The branch of linguistics that involves the scientific study of word meanings, especially their development and alteration.

Sociolinguistic -- Social aspects of linguistics.

Speech Community -- A group of people who speak the same language or dialect.

Syntax -- The arrangement of words in utterances and sentences.

Standard English -- The speech of the cultivated persons; the language used in writing and the conduct of public affairs.

Summary

In this chapter, the methods and procedure used in conducting this investigation were discussed. Samples were chosen from the evening adult schools in school districts 13, 14, 15, and 17 in Brooklyn and the English Language School in Manhattan provided both teacher and adult learners who participated in the study. These schools had fifty
ESL teachers, forty of whom returned the questionnaire. One hundred
ESL students were selected from intermediate and advanced classes of
the schools within these districts. All of the ESL staff and selected
ESL students in the designated schools were polled using the question-
naire which was designed to investigate the research questions posed.
In the initial section of the chapter, the research instrument used
was described.

Apart from the demographic data requested, the main section or
the nucleus of the questionnaire was identical on both the teacher and
student format. The content of this section was based on sentence
structure, pronouncing initial sounds, pronouncing final sounds, an
irregular verb (to be), intonation, primary and secondary stress, short
and long vowels, and an idiomatic expression. Both ESL teachers and
students used a five-point scale to rate each of the problem items.

The research was accomplished in three stages: developing and
piloting the research questionnaire, administering the questionnaires
and finally collecting, classifying, analyzing, and reporting the find-
ings. A glossary of operational definitions used in the study concluded
the chapter.
The two major purposes of this study as described in Chapter I were to determine:

1. Are there differences in teacher and adult perceptions of problems in learning English? If there are differences, what are these specific differences?

2. Do Chinese adult students learning to speak English encounter a different set of problems than do Hispanic adult students?

These two research questions are now examined in light of the findings of the study.

Three instruments were used to collect data; two questionnaires—one for the ESL teachers and one for the ESL students. In addition to the questionnaire, a rank order of problem priorities was completed by Hispanic and Chinese students. The survey instruments yielded three kinds of data: categorized demographic data, ratings on difficulty factors and rank orderings of problem priorities.

Descriptive statistics were used to characterize the responses of the respondents and thereby answer the two research questions posed. Simple counts and percentages describe the respondents and their ratings of the difficulty factors. The Spearman rank order correlation coefficient was used to analyze the problem priorities ordered by the student groups (Chinese and Hispanic).
The Most Difficult Skill Area as Identified
By ESL Teachers and Adult Students

Ratings by the ESL teachers and their adult students of the relative difficulty of the four skills needed to learn a language indicated that speaking is the most difficult skill. The figures in Table I reveal that fifty-six percent of the one hundred ESL students and 72.5 percent of the forty ESL teachers who participated in the study perceived speaking as the most difficult of the four skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

TABLE I

Skill Areas Identified as Most Difficult
By ESL Teachers and ESL Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem Area</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
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<th>Students</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teacher and Adult Student Rating of Problem Items

The perceptions held by ESL teachers and students were determined by analysis of the following research question: Are there differences in teacher and adult student perceptions of problems in learning to speak English? If there are differences, what are these specific differences? In seeking answers to this question, eight problem categories were investigated: structuring sentences, pronouncing twelve consonant sounds when they are in an initial position, pronouncing two final sounds when they are in a final position, choosing the correct forms of the irregular verb (to be), intonation, primary and secondary stress, associating the five vowels (a, e, i, o, u) with the appropriate sound in specific words, and giving a literal meaning for an idiomatic expression.

The findings presented in Table II show that sixty percent of the ESL teachers rated structuring sentences as somewhat difficult. ESL students were about equally divided in their opinions with thirty-four percent rating sentence structure as very difficult and twenty-nine percent rating it not difficult at all. In the category of pronouncing twelve consonant sounds when they are in an initial position, with the exception of two sounds tested, responses of the students were similar to one another for the various sounds. A large majority of the students thought that most of the initial sounds were not difficult at all. Many ESL teachers agreed with them, but there were others who held different opinions, including as many as forty-five percent who rated particular initial sounds as fairly difficult or very difficult.
Two sounds for which the pattern of responses was an exception to the preceding description were th and h in an initial position. With respect to the th, almost half of the students perceived it as very difficult, while the remainder did not have particular difficulty with th in an initial position. A majority of the ESL teachers perceived th as either fairly difficult or very difficult. A bimodal distribution of student responses was observed with the initial h. Half of the ESL students perceive h in an initial position as not difficult at all, while most of the remaining agreed that h in an initial position was very difficult.

Table II further reveals that responses to the ratings of difficulty of final sounds, the irregular verb and stress were similar to one another. Generally, ESL students did not find these aspects of English difficult to learn. Teachers perceived these three areas as posing greater problems than did students. This result indicates that final sounds, irregular verbs and stress were relatively more difficult than vowels and initial sounds.

Also, in Table II, ratings for each of the five vowels are presented separately. The modal responses of ESL teachers fell in somewhat difficult category for each of the five vowels. The majority of the ESL students perceived them as not difficult at all.

Overall, idioms were perceived as very difficult by both ESL teachers and students. There were 42.5 percent of the ESL teachers who perceived the idiomatic expression as very difficult and eighty-nine
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Problem Item</th>
<th>Very Difficult</th>
<th>Fairly Difficult</th>
<th>Somewhat Difficult</th>
<th>Slightly Difficult</th>
<th>Not Diff. At All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T*  S*</td>
<td>T*  S*</td>
<td>T*  S*</td>
<td>T*  S*</td>
<td>T*  S*</td>
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<td>5 1</td>
<td>17.5 1</td>
<td>20 4</td>
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<tr>
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<td>17.5 4</td>
<td>10 3</td>
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<td>15 1</td>
<td>32.5 3</td>
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<td>15 1</td>
<td>15 5</td>
<td>37.5 2</td>
<td>15 87</td>
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<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>15 4</td>
<td>22.5 -</td>
<td>12.5 -</td>
<td>22.5 2</td>
<td>27.5 93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>7.5 4</td>
<td>2.5 -</td>
<td>20 5</td>
<td>35 6</td>
<td>35 85</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>5 2</td>
<td>7.5 1</td>
<td>7.5 2</td>
<td>15 1</td>
<td>65 94</td>
</tr>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>22.5 2</td>
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<td>17.5 2</td>
<td>30 4</td>
<td>22.5 83</td>
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<td>Th</td>
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<td>17.5 7</td>
<td>12.5 8</td>
<td>7.5 39</td>
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<td>H</td>
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<td>20 3</td>
<td>10 2</td>
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<td>12.5 2</td>
<td>40 3</td>
<td>27.5 2</td>
<td>12.5 84</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gh (/f/)</td>
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<td>32.5 10</td>
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<td>30 67</td>
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<tr>
<td>(To Be)</td>
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<td>15 2</td>
<td>45 10</td>
<td>22.5 7</td>
<td>7.5 54</td>
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<td>17.5 -</td>
<td>40 22</td>
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<td>12.5 63</td>
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<td>17.5 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>5 -</td>
<td>15 -</td>
<td>55 1</td>
<td>12.5 5</td>
<td>12.5 94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>7.5 1</td>
<td>22.5 -</td>
<td>40 14</td>
<td>22.5 5</td>
<td>7.5 80</td>
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<td>32.5 3</td>
<td>37.5 56</td>
<td>17.5 7</td>
<td>5 13</td>
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<td>Idiom</td>
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<td>25 -</td>
<td>22.5 2</td>
<td>7.5 3</td>
<td>2.5 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*T - Teachers  *S - Students
percent of the ESL students rated it with the same degree of difficulty. Most of the remaining ESL teachers rated it as fairly difficult or somewhat difficult.

A Comparison of the Differences and Similarities of Chinese and Hispanic Adult Students

The second research question was: Do Chinese adult students learning to speak English encounter a different set of problems than do Hispanic adult students who are learning to speak English? Table III presents a summary of Chinese and Hispanic student responses to the same eight problem categories which were previously described.

The two groups responded similarly in rating the difficulty of structuring sentences, with slightly more Chinese students perceiving it as very difficult. In the category of initial consonants, again responses were mostly similar to one another. The Hispanic students as well as the Chinese generally agreed that the initial sounds tested were not difficult at all, with a few more Chinese students perceiving them as more difficult than did the Hispanic students. Initial consonants were mainly easy for both groups; there was a slight tendency for them to be more difficult for the Chinese students. Differences between groups were noted, however, for th, c and g.

Two sounds for which the pattern of responses was an exception to the preceding description were th and h in an initial position. With respect to th, the majority of the Chinese students, sixty-four percent perceived it as very difficult while the remainder twenty-eight
### TABLE III

**HISPANIC AND CHINESE STUDENT RATING OF PROBLEM ITEMS EXPRESSED IN PERCENTAGES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem Item</th>
<th>Very Difficult</th>
<th>Fairly Difficult</th>
<th>Somewhat Difficult</th>
<th>Slightly Difficult</th>
<th>Not Diff. At All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H*  C*</td>
<td>H*  C*</td>
<td>H*  C*</td>
<td>H*  C*</td>
<td>H*  C*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sentence Structure</strong></td>
<td>24.4 40</td>
<td>4.9 8</td>
<td>31.7 28</td>
<td>7.3 -</td>
<td>31.7 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pronouncing Initial Sounds</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sh</td>
<td>2.4 12</td>
<td>2.4 -</td>
<td>2.4 -</td>
<td>2.4 -</td>
<td>90.2 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St</td>
<td>7.3 12</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>7.3 4</td>
<td>2.4 4</td>
<td>82.9 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>2.4 4</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>2.4 -</td>
<td>4.9 -</td>
<td>90.2 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>- 3</td>
<td>2.4 -</td>
<td>7.3 -</td>
<td>2.4 22</td>
<td>87.7 75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>4.9 -</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>4.9 -</td>
<td>7.3 4</td>
<td>92.7 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>4.9 8</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>9.8 -</td>
<td>7.3 4</td>
<td>78 88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>- 4</td>
<td>2.4 -</td>
<td>- 4</td>
<td>4 -</td>
<td>97.6 88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>4.9 32</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>2.4 -</td>
<td>7.3 4</td>
<td>35.4 64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>14.6 12</td>
<td>- 4</td>
<td>12.2 -</td>
<td>4.9 12</td>
<td>63.3 72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>- 20</td>
<td>- 8</td>
<td>2.4 3</td>
<td>2.4 4</td>
<td>95.1 64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Th</td>
<td>34.1 64</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>7.3 4</td>
<td>9.8 4</td>
<td>48.8 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>45.3 44</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>4.9 -</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>48.8 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Final Sounds</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S (/z/)</td>
<td>7.3 16</td>
<td>2.4 4</td>
<td>4.9 -</td>
<td>4.9 -</td>
<td>85.4 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gh (/E/)</td>
<td>17.1 20</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>7.3 8</td>
<td>4.9 -</td>
<td>70.7 72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Irregular Verb (To Be)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36.6 16</td>
<td>- 4</td>
<td>12.2 -</td>
<td>9.8 8</td>
<td>41.5 72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stress</strong></td>
<td>17.1 20</td>
<td>2.4 4</td>
<td>14.6 40</td>
<td>4.9 8</td>
<td>61 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vowels</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>2.4 16</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>19.5 24</td>
<td>7.3 8</td>
<td>70.7 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>4.9 20</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>12.2 52</td>
<td>4.9 4</td>
<td>78 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>- 4</td>
<td>2.4 -</td>
<td>7.3 4</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>90.2 92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>2.4 -</td>
<td>4.9 -</td>
<td>92.7 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>12.2 16</td>
<td>4.9 4</td>
<td>82.9 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intonation</strong></td>
<td>22 24</td>
<td>2.4 -</td>
<td>46.3 64</td>
<td>9.8 -</td>
<td>19.5 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Idiom</strong></td>
<td>78 100</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>2.4 -</td>
<td>7.3 -</td>
<td>12.2 -</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*H - Hispanic  *C - Chinese
percent perceived it as not difficult at all. A bimodal distribution of responses occurred in the Hispanic student rating of the initial th. Although 48.8 percent rated it as not difficult at all, 34.1 percent rated it as very difficult. Both groups agreed in their ratings of h with close to half of each group rating it very difficult or not difficult at all.

The data presented in Table III also show that there was a similar pattern of responses to the ratings of difficulty of final sounds with a large majority of both groups rating the two sounds as not difficult at all. On the irregular verb (to be), more Chinese students rated it not difficult at all than did Hispanic students. Even though 41.5 percent of the Hispanic students perceived it as not difficult at all, 36.6 percent of the same group perceived it as very difficult. The modal rating for intonation for both groups was in the somewhat difficult category, but close to a quarter of both groups rated this skill as very difficult.

Ratings for stress were variable with Chinese students rating it at a somewhat higher difficulty level than did Hispanic students. In the same category, forty percent of the Chinese perceived it as somewhat difficult and half of the remainder or twenty percent perceived it as not difficult at all. The others, twenty percent, perceived it as not difficult at all.

And finally, the findings presented in Table III show that a similar pattern of responses occurred between the Chinese and Hispanics in rating the form of the five vowels. More Chinese students perceived difficulty with the vowel sounds than did Hispanics, and this has especially true for the vowel e.
A majority of the Chinese students rated the vowel $e$ as somewhat difficult to very difficult. The most frequent response for the vowels $i$, $o$ and $u$ was that they were not a problem.

The final item on the questionnaire was an idiomatic expression. All Chinese students, one hundred percent, rated the idiom as very difficult and seventy-eight percent of the Hispanic students rated it as very difficult. Generally, the Hispanic students perceived various degrees of difficulty.

Generally, the students tended to use only three categories: not difficult, somewhat difficult or very difficult. The variability with the respondents from one item to another indicates that they did not have particular difficulty making the judgements reported.

Chinese and Hispanic Adult Student  
Rank Order Analysis

The final data collected were rank orderings of ten problem categories by thirty-two Chinese and twenty Hispanic students. The sum of the ranks for the items in each list was used to form a composite ranking of problems for each group. A Spearman rank order correlation was used to compare the two composite rank orderings. A correlation of minus .14 was obtained, suggesting a lack of agreement between the composite rankings between both groups.

The two rankings presented in Table IV show the perceived relative difficulty of the various problem areas. The results indicate that the Hispanic respondent perceives structuring sentences as the most difficult. Next in rank order were pronouncing initial consonant
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem Category</th>
<th>Hispanic N = 20</th>
<th></th>
<th>Chinese N = 32</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sum of Ranks</td>
<td>Composite Rank</td>
<td>Sum of Ranks</td>
<td>Composite Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronouncing Initial Sounds</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronouncing Final Sounds</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Structure</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irregular Verbs</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intonation</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accenting Words</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vowels</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idioms</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tense of Verbs</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
sounds, irregular verbs, accenting words, pronunciation, intonation, idioms, when to use the proper tense of the verb and pronouncing final sounds. Vowels were perceived by both Chinese and Hispanic respondents as not very difficult.

Pronunciation in general was ranked sixth by the Hispanic respondent. Noteworthy is the position of intonation which was ranked fifth by both groups of respondents. Proceeding to the least difficult were idioms and when to use the proper tense of the verb. While the most difficult item appears to be structuring sentences, the least difficult appears to be vowels.

On the other hand, the findings presented in Table IV show that the Chinese respondent ranked pronunciation in general as the most difficult with using the proper tense of the verb and accenting words next in order of difficulty. Idioms were ranked seventh with irregular verbs appearing less difficult. Intonation was ranked fifth by the Chinese respondent as well as the Hispanic respondent. Vowel sounds were ranked number one—the least difficult by the Hispanic and fourth by the Chinese. While sentence structure appears to be the most difficult item for the Hispanic, it was ranked third by the Chinese. Pronouncing final sounds was ranked number two by both groups. The least difficult item for the Chinese respondent appears to be pronouncing initial sounds.

The most extreme differences in the rank orders occurred in the following problems: structuring sentences, initial sounds and using the proper tense of the verb. Hispanic respondents perceived structuring sentences as the most difficult, and ranked it accordingly
10", whereas the Chinese respondent ranked structuring sentences as "3". For the Hispanic respondent, initial sounds were ranked "9" and the Chinese respondent ranked the same item "1", not particularly difficult. Using the proper verb was ranked "3" by the Hispanic respondent and "9" by the Chinese respondent.

Overall, the ranks assigned are at variance with the data obtained from the questionnaire. Student ratings on the questionnaire and rankings of ten problem areas do not agree when considered on an ethnic sub-group basis; mainly Chinese and Hispanic. There were obvious differences of perceptions when the two data were compared.

With regard to initial consonants, the Hispanics and Chinese respondents indicated on the questionnaire that pronouncing initial sounds was not a problem. However, the difference of perceptions appeared when the Hispanic respondents later ranked this category as "9" or the next most difficult.

Other differences appeared in the category of sentence structure. On the questionnaire rating, the Hispanic respondents were evenly divided in their rating from somewhat difficult to very difficult. And yet the Hispanic ranked this same category as the most difficult item. The Chinese respondent ranked sentence structure less difficult than he rated it on the questionnaire. The Chinese respondent showed consistency in ranking pronunciation in general as the most difficult, while the Hispanic respondent ranked the same item "6".

Finally, there was consistency among the two groups in rating and eventually ranking the following problem items: pronouncing final
sounds presented little difficulty for both groups. Irregular verbs appear to be more of a problem for the Hispanics than for the Chinese.

Intonation continues to receive a modal rating of somewhat difficult for both groups. Accenting words or stress continues to be ranked at a higher difficulty level by Chinese respondents than Hispanic respondents. More Chinese still rank vowels as more difficult than Hispanic respondents. When to use the proper tense of the verb appears more difficult for Chinese respondents than for Hispanic respondents.

Summary

This chapter presents an analysis and an interpretation of the data collected in the investigation. Simple counts, percentages, sums of rank orders are reported in Tables I, II, III, and IV. The data describe the respondents' ratings of difficulty factors or problems encountered in learning to speak English. Narrative presentations accompany each table.

In response to the first research question posed, it is clear that there are differences in teacher and adult student perceptions of problems in learning to speak English. In some problem areas, the differences are more extreme than in others. Specifically, there is agreement between ESL teachers and students that speaking is the most difficult of the four skills. The two exceptions in initial sounds were th and h. Teachers perceived the categories of final sounds, irregular verbs and stress as posing greater problems than did the students. However, these areas appear relatively more difficult than
vowels and initial sounds. Both teachers and students agreed that idioms are difficult.

With respect to the second research question posed, the findings reveal that Chinese adult students do, in fact, encounter some different problems when learning to speak English than to the Hispanic adult students. It appears that some problems are common for both groups. One specific problem category where contrasts were revealed are initial sounds. The data suggest that the Chinese respondent encountered more difficulty with the initial sounds /c/ and /g/ than did the Hispanic respondent. More Chinese respondents experienced difficulty with initial /th/ than did Hispanics. There was a consensus between both groups that initial /h/ is very difficult for some and not difficult at all for others.

The data further revealed that Hispanic respondents encounter more difficulty with the irregular verb (to be) than do Chinese. Both groups of respondents agreed that intonation is difficult. Chinese respondents experience more difficulty with stress than did Hispanic respondents. Chinese respondents appear to encounter more difficulty with the vowel /e/ and somewhat more with the vowel /a/ as well. Neither group seemed to have difficulty with the vowels /i/, /o/ and /u/. Finally, Hispanic respondents appear to encounter somewhat less difficulty with the idioms than do Chinese respondents.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The goal of this investigation was to describe and compare perceptions of problems in learning to speak English. Four groups of respondents were compared: ESL teachers, ESL adult students, ESL Hispanic adult students, and ESL Chinese adult students.

Three instruments were used in data collection: two survey questionnaires—one for ESL teachers and one for the ESL students, and a rank order list. The ESL survey instruments yielded three kinds of data: categorized demographic data, ratings on difficulty factors and rank orderings of problem priorities.

Descriptive statistics in the form of simple counts and percentages were presented descriptively. The Spearman rank order correlation coefficient was used to analyze Chinese and Hispanic students in ranking the ten problem priorities.

Research studies in the sound and structure of the English language initiated the review of the literature. Next, an overview of language teaching methods and supporting theories were presented. The discussion on the various methodologies documents the conclusion that a number of refinements in language teaching has occurred over the last fifty years. Essentially, the conceptual basis for language teaching methods originated with the Direct Method movement. Two other popular
methods which emanated from the Direct Method were the Oral and Audio-lingual Methods.

Most current research suggest that the behavior and learning patterns of adult learners necessitate continuous variations in the teaching approach and in the selection and organization of curriculum materials. Further, that the distinct differences between first and second languages need to be fully understood, especially if the second language is to be used as a bridge to higher education.

Throughout the document, bilingual education has been suggested as one alternative for bridging the gap in continuing the basic education for the non-academic adult. It may be added that bilingual education does not replace learning the dominant language. The theoretical method of bilingual-bicultural education is: Instruct the learner in the basic skills with a curriculum oriented to the learner's primary language and culture. As the basic skills are acquired, introduce the second language and culture and incorporate them into the overall curriculum.

Discussion of Findings

Regarding the first research question: Are there differences in teacher and adult student perceptions of problems in learning to speak English? If there are differences, what are these specific differences?

Given the overall data, the differences revealed were not extreme. There were specific differences of perceptions revealed in
structuring sentences. The inconsistencies in perception are perhaps due to the position of adjectives and objectives. The standard format of the English sentence is: subject - verb - object; whereas the Spanish sentence is: subject - object - verb. In Spanish, the objects change position according to the form of the verb.

Differences were found among ESL teachers and adult students in pronouncing the aspirate sounds of th and h when they are in an initial position. The fact that the initial h is silent in Spanish, perhaps explains the difficulty factor with the aspirate sounds. Also, s in a final position revealed differences of perceptions between ESL teachers and ESL adult students. Perhaps this difference may be attributed to the lack of awareness that the final s can vary the form of the word, the person or the number.

Some commonalities of perception among ESL teachers and adult students revealed by the data are: Ratings by the ESL teachers and their adult students of the relative difficulty of the four skills needed to learn a language indicated that both groups perceived speaking to be the most difficult skill. Overall, idioms were perceived as very difficult by both ESL teachers and students. There was a consensus of opinion between Chinese and Hispanic respondents that the initial h is very difficult for some and not difficult at all for others.

There were some problem categories where ESL teachers and adult students differed in their perceptions. While teachers perceived initial sounds and vowels to be somewhat of a problem, students did not.
An analysis of the items on the questionnaire suggests that the student perhaps did not attempt to view the problem in broad terms and did not visualize the difficulty factor using initial sounds and vowels in words other than those which appeared on the questionnaire. It seems clear that ESL students considered the samples on the questionnaire as rather easy to pronounce.

Teachers perceived stress as somewhat of a problem and students did not. Clearly, some non-English speaking persons do not differentiate between primary and secondary stress and therefore do not perceive it as a problem. There was an agreement among ESL teachers and adult students on the difficulty of idioms for non-English speakers.

The second research question is now discussed in light of the findings. The question: Do Chinese adult students encounter a different set of problems when learning to speak English than do Hispanic adult students? Chinese and Hispanic respondents differed in their perceptions of the difficulty in pronouncing initial sounds. In the rank ordering, the Hispanic respondents perceived this item as very difficult whereas the Chinese respondents did not. Perhaps the reason for the difference may be found within the structure of the Spanish language. Rules governing Spanish pronunciation are much clearer and more uniform than English. English permits the occurrence of many clusters of consonants at the beginning of words and even greater numbers at the end. Example: street, splendid, scream. Spanish, on the other hand, permits only a few initial consonant clusters of two consonants as in plaza,
credo, and no final clusters.¹

The problem of structuring sentences was perceived differently by the Chinese and Hispanic respondent. While the Hispanic respondent ranked structure as most difficult, the Chinese respondents were consistent in ranking pronunciation in general as the most difficult. However, this problem area was ranked sixth by the Hispanic respondent. The reason for this difference may be found in the fact that Chinese is a tone language. Every word is monosyllabic and each monosyllable is expressed in musical terms, in a rising, falling or level melodic movement. The same monosyllable, if uttered in a different tone, conveys a different meaning.²

Data revealed in the questionnaire ranking and the rank orderings indicate that pronouncing final sounds is consistently not difficult, and irregular verbs are consistently more of a problem for the Hispanic student than for the Chinese student. Intonation is somewhat difficult for both groups. Even though Spanish uses practically the same alphabet as English, few sounds are identical. The intonation of Spanish is quite different from that of English. The alternate rise and fall of the pitch depends upon the particular meaning of the sentence, the position of stressed syllables and whether the sentence expresses command, affirmation, interrogation, exclamation, request, or other

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factors. Chinese, Thai and other tone languages use contrastive pitch units as phonemes of pitch or tonemes. When the pitch units are part of the sentence and the phrase rather than of the word, they constitute intonation. Perhaps due to the vast structural differences, accenting words or stress appear more difficult for the Chinese respondent.

Vowels appear more difficult for the Chinese respondent than for the Hispanic respondent. This may be attributed to the fact that there are five English vowel phonemes that are very similar to the five vowels phonemes of Spanish. Spanish-speaking students will need to hear and imitate the teacher as he models these sounds in words, phrases and sentences. However, it will not be necessary to drill these sounds intensively as they are not difficult for speakers of Spanish. The English vowel phonemes similar to the five vowel phonemes of Spanish are:

/i/ - /sit/ as in seat; /p/, /t/ as in pet
/a/ - /fa/ as in father; /u/, /pu/ as in pool
/o/ - /obo/ as in oboe

/e/ as in mate is similar to the Spanish diphthong /i/ as in peine (comb). It is not likely to cause much difficulty to native speakers of Spanish. On the other hand, the Hispanic respondent experiences more difficulty using the proper tense of the verb than does the Chinese respondent. Basically, the results of the study indicate that there are distinct

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4 Lado, op. cit., p. 27.
differences in perceptions of problems encountered by Hispanic and Chinese adults in the process of learning to speak English. Therefore, one standard ESL curriculum appears inappropriate. Linguistic descriptions for the major problem areas for Hispanic students as revealed in the investigation were categorized as syntactical, phonological and morphological. For the Chinese, the major problem areas were pronunciation in general, morphological and phonological. The findings of this study strongly suggest redesign of the ESL program curriculum as a prerequisite to effectively meet the educational needs of Hispanic and Chinese adults in the evening school.

It is necessary to teach the sound system just as the system of structure is taught. Once the adult learner has internalized the rules of English grammar, time must be spent explaining the inconsistencies in English spelling. In words such as through and enough which appeared on the survey questionnaire, respondents attempted to pronounce these words as they are spelled; therefore, many rated them very difficult. It is necessary to have some consistent representation of the language so that ESL students can have a clearer understanding of the distinctive sounds which exist in the language.

While some language learning problems are common to all adult second language learners regardless of their cultural background, there are some specific problems peculiar to certain groups. The findings reveal that Chinese and Hispanic adults learning to speak English encounter a different set of problems. Since this is the case, the curriculum specialists may consider presenting the ESL curriculum in units.
The diversities in the ESL adult class in terms of age, education and language versatility necessitate first addressing common needs and then diversifying the curriculum to respond to the specific oral communication problems experienced by various ethnic groups.

Aside from the problems of structure, distinct sounds seem to present a great deal of difficulty. Many words are distinguishable only by the difference in the vowel sound. Adult learners require remedial assistance to sharpen their listening skills so that they can discern the difference in vowel sounds.

Specific reference is made to questionnaire item "to be" which may have been in the student's active vocabulary. However, he may not have known the various persons such as I am, you are, he, she, or it is. Since this is one of the most frequently used verbs, pattern practice employing all six forms is necessary.

Evidence indicates that Hispanic respondents have more difficulty with the infinitive "to be" than do Chinese respondents. On the other hand, Chinese respondents experience more difficulty with stress than do Hispanics. Both Chinese and Hispanic respondents encounter difficulty with intonation. The aware ESL teacher can therefore anticipate these specific linguistic problems and institute measures to lessen the learner's anxiety.

Implications of the Study

The present study has implications for second language teaching in general and teaching ESL to adults in particular.
Respondents who voluntarily participated in this investigation were not college students. Rather, they were attending the public evening adult schools for which no academic credit is given. There has been little empirical research accomplished with this segment of the population and yet there are data available which suggest that older student enrollment in colleges and universities is continuously increasing. The evening adult schools are considered preparatory in that they prepare the students for higher education.

It is hardly surprising that the findings strongly support the need for changes in ESL program development for adult learners. If the adult is to adequately fulfill his role as an adult, then the language barrier must be overcome as soon as possible so that he can use his second language to advance his educational and economic aspirations and hopefully reach his maximum potential as a human being.

The results have implications for those persons who are faced with the arduous task of writing the ESL curriculum. Basically, ESL teachers and their adult students concurred on the difficulty of certain problem categories. The concern to curriculum writers might be those areas on which they did not agree—specifically, the initial sounds of /h/ and /th/, the final sound /s/ and stress. Perhaps this difference might be attributed to the student's lack of perceptions in the specific function of final /s/. In many cases, ESL students drop the final /s/ when speaking, and therefore do not perceive its importance.
One approach to this problem may be some commentary on the importance of the final /s/ in determining number, in making a third person verb singular or forming the plural. This commentary may be in the student's mother tongue.

Perceptions of problems among Chinese and Hispanic respondents suggest remedial action where there are differences such as the infinitive "to be" might be prepared in advance by curriculum writers. Common problems such as intonation might be drilled in a group situation. In other words, some problems can now be anticipated and solutions provided.

There is now convincing statistical data available that listening comprehension is a most measurable activity. Hopefully, more evaluative tools such as this might become available in the ESL classroom. Rather than repeating information which the student has already internalized, the ESL teacher might continue from a particular stage of development. In brief, language learning may be viewed on a continuum.

Perhaps another alternative to meeting the needs of the language learner might be to consider competency-based language learning. Determining exactly the competencies which one needs to function effectively in an English-speaking society and concentrating on reaching them might eliminate extraneous ESL curricula, thus shortening the time needed to learn English.

Though the study answers specific questions, it raises new ones with respect to the adults who are learning to speak English. The
necessity to incorporate more of the adult learning theory into the overall design and then diversify it is apparent. Clearly, no one method or curriculum design consistently works "best" for all adult learners. Indeed, tentative evidence does suggest that combining several methods and curricula may be more successful.

Even though English as a second language has been an integral part of the public schools since colonial times, it has not been fully researched to the extent necessary. Adult language learners require different approaches in language methodology. Present-day educators are beginning to realize that the ethnic and social minorities have not been served well by the traditional classroom practices designed exclusively for the native speakers of English. With the increasing numbers of culturally-different adults who are entering the public schools, their unique learning problems must be effectively addressed by the educator, linguist and psychologist alike. In essence, the present monolingual-monocultural system of public education more or less de-educates the culturally different adult due to the educational gap which results in his inability to complete a basic education in his native language. He is never taught the basics of English; rather he is taught in English as if he were a native speaker.

The need to take a more informed look at the present system of adult education is apparent. Education is losing the input of one of its greatest resources--its culturally different student population. Clearly, the meanings given things of one culture do not exist in other cultures and therefore cannot be replaced or adapted. Moreover, the
special needs of adult learners require different methods and techniques. Traditional pedagogical approaches are not always acceptable in andragogy (adult education). Long-range benefits of improving adult education for the non-academic learner may serve as the missing link in the problems of educating the child.

In light of the findings presented in this study, some of the results imply that ESL adult students have different expectations when they enroll for the course. Perhaps the professional opinion needs to be reconsidered in terms of the student's personal desires.

The typical ESL student who participated was young, multi-cultural, multilingual and undereducated. The obvious diversity within an adult ESL class with respect to age, previous education, culture, language, and socioeconomic background necessitate diversity in curriculum materials, teaching approach and staffing pattern. One standard ESL curriculum appears inappropriate.

As Robert Lado suggests, language teaching must obviously differ for literate and illiterate students. Based on the finding that the average respondent in the study had an eighth grade education and had been out of school for at least three years or more, it is safe to conclude that he lacks a basic education in his native language as well as in English. For this obvious reason, basic instruction in his native language along with basic instruction in the language to be learned constitute bilingual education. It is generally agreed that a basic education is the passport to higher education. Without a foundation in the
new language, the learner will be unable to pursue his education as far as he can go. Thus, he reaches an impasse in his educational development.

Recommendations for Further Study

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. That ESL teacher training programs focus more on the motivation, values, goals, and expectations of culturally different adult learners.

2. That teacher preparation provide specific courses which enable teachers to select, improvise and modify curriculums to meet the particular needs of a diverse adult enrollment.

3. That additional training in the nature of language learning be provided.

4. That teacher training programs provide linguistic and cultural experiences within the ethnic community in conjunction with the language laboratory.

5. That teacher training programs provide for the study of the nature, structure and styles of communication inherent in ethnicities which constitute the majority in the population.
6. That ESL curriculum provide ethnic units designed specifically to address speaking problems peculiar to specific ethnic groups.

7. That the curriculum provide basic instruction in the learner's native language and culture in conjunction with basic instruction in the language to be learned. Bilingual/bicultural curriculums are strongly advocated.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


**Pamphlets**


Articles


Unpublished Materials


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

PILOT STUDY:
LEARNING A SECOND LANGUAGE AS AN ADULT

Teacher Questionnaire

1. How long, altogether, have you been teaching English as a second language?

2. Are any of your current classes (read categories)...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>beginning classes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intermediate classes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>advanced classes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. What are some of the problems most of your current students have in learning English?

PROBE: What other problems do most of your current students have in learning English?
4. What are some of the new habits that you are instilling in most of your current students?

PROBE: What other habits are you instilling in most of your current students?

5. As you well know, four skills are important in order to learn a language--speaking, reading, writing, and listening.

Which one of these four areas presents the greatest difficulties for most of your current students?

| Areas of Greatest Difficulties |  
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| speaking                      | 1 |
| reading                       | 2 |
| writing                       | 3 |
| listening                     | 4 |

6. Hand respondent self-administered list and explain:

On this sheet are listed some areas which might present difficulties in learning the English language.

Please rate each area in terms of difficulty for most of your current students. Circle the number which most closely approximates your opinion.
7. And now a few background questions about yourself and then we'll be finished with the interview.

Do you have any college or university degrees?

YES (Ask A) . . . . 1
NO (Ask B) . . . . 2

A. If Yes, What degrees do you have?

B. If No, What is the highest grade or year of formal school or college that you completed?

8. What was your age on your last birthday?

Thank you very much.
You have been very helpful.
APPENDIX B

PILOT STUDY:
LEARNING A SECOND LANGUAGE AS AN ADULT

Student Questionnaire

Classification: ________________________________

1. How long, altogether, have you been enrolled in this English as a second language class?

2. What language or languages are spoken in your home?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swahili</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Twi</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: (Please specify)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. How old were you on your last birthday?

4. In what country were you born?

5. What was the highest grade that you completed in school?
(see following page)
1st grade . . . . . . . . . 01
2nd grade . . . . . . . . . 02
3rd grade . . . . . . . . . 03
4th grade . . . . . . . . . 04
5th grade . . . . . . . . . 05
6th grade . . . . . . . . . 06
7th grade . . . . . . . . . 07
8th grade . . . . . . . . . 08
9th grade . . . . . . . . . 09
10th grade . . . . . . . . 10
11th grade . . . . . . . . 11
12th grade . . . . . . . . 12

If 12th grade: (A) Did you get a high school diploma?

YES . . . 1
NO . . . 2

If any college or university years completed: (B) Do you have any college or university degrees?

YES . . . 1
NO . . . 2

If yes, Ask A:

A. What degrees do you have? ________________________________

6. Why are you learning English?

PROBE: What are some of the other reasons that you are learning English?
7. What are some of the problems that you are having in learning English?

PROBE: What are some of the other problems that you are having in learning English?

8. Which of these four areas presents the greatest difficulties for you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of Difficulties</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>speaking</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reading</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>listening</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. How long have you been in this country?

Respondent's Sex
Male. . . 1
Female. . 2

School
APPENDIX C

STUDY:
LEARNING A SECOND LANGUAGE AS AN ADULT

Teacher Survey

1. How many total years have you been teaching English as a second language? Please check next to the appropriate category. Consider this partial year as one full year.
   ___ One to less than three years.
   ___ Three to less than five years.
   ___ Five years or more.

2. How many classes are you now teaching in each of the following categories?
   ___ Beginning
   ___ Intermediate
   ___ Advanced
   A. What is the total number of students registered in the above classes?
      ______

3. In addition to English, which of the following languages do you speak? Check the space provided.
   ___ Spanish             ___ Swahili
   ___ French              ___ German
   ___ Hebrew             ___ Chinese
   ___ Italian             ___ Other  (Please specify)
4. Do you have any college or university degrees? Check one.
   __ YES
   __ NO

   A. If yes, please indicate the highest degree which you have received in the appropriate place.
   __ A.A.
   __ B.S. or B.A.
   __ M.S. or M.A.
   __ Ph.D. or Ed.D.
   ___ Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study
   ___ Other ____________________________ (Please specify)

5. Please check your sex and age group:
   __ Female __ 30 - 34
   __ Male  __ 35 - 39
   __ 18 - 24 __ 40 and over
   __ 25 - 29

6. As you know, four skills are needed to learn a language—speaking, reading, writing, and listening.

   Which one of these four areas presents the greatest difficulty for most of your current students? Check one.
   __ speaking
   __ writing
   __ reading
   __ listening

7. Apart from any training which you may have received in your college degree program, have you ever had any additional training in teaching English as a second language? Please check one.
   __ YES
   __ NO

   A. If yes, please check the appropriate category:
   __ College sponsored workshop
   __ Other professional conference
   __ N.Y.C. Board of Education
   __ Other ____________________________
8. Listed below are some areas which present problems for some students who are learning English as a second language. Read each description below and decide whether or not it is a problem for you and show how difficult a problem it is by circling one of the five numbers on the scale.

Rating Scale

VERY DIFFICULT 5 4 3 2 1 NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL

For instance, if a problem were not so difficult, you would circle point two above.

Problems:

A. Structuring sentences. (Placing the words in the right order to form sentences.)

Rating Scale

VERY DIFFICULT 5 4 3 2 1 NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL

B. Pronouncing the following sounds when they are in an initial position. (Pronouncing a word when it begins with):

Sample:

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Height</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
C. Pronouncing the following sounds when they are in a final position. (Pronouncing a word that ends with):

Sample:

- classes
- enough

D. The proper use of irregular verbs. (Using the correct form of the verb):

Sample:

- I am
- You are
- He, she, it is

E. Intonation or the relative height of the voice. (When to raise or lower your voice):

F. Primary and secondary stress--the relative degree of loudness of a part of a word. (What part of the word to emphasize):

G. Learning short and long vowel sounds. (Learning the different sounds of long and short vowels):

Sample:
H. Idioms. (An expression whose total meaning cannot be derived from the meaning of each individual word within it):

Sample:

Shoot the bull
Take the bull by the horns

10. In what country or commonwealth were you born? 

______________

11. Are you employed?

___ YES

___ NO

A. If yes, what kind of work do you do? ________________

__________________________
APPENDIX D

STUDY:
LEARNING A SECOND LANGUAGE AS AN ADULT

Student Survey

1. How old were you on your last birthday?  

2. Please check your sex:  ___ Male  ___ Female

3. Check the highest grade or college level that you completed:

   ___ 1st grade  ___ 2nd grade  ___ 3rd grade  ___ 4th grade
   ___ 5th grade  ___ 6th grade  ___ 7th grade  ___ 8th grade
   ___ 9th grade  ___ 10th grade  ___ 11th grade  ___ 12th grade

A. If you completed the 12th grade, did you get a diploma or a certificate? Check the correct response:

   ___ YES
   ___ NO

   ___ College or University/Institute or Vocational School

   ___ 1 year  ___ 2 years  ___ 3 years
   ___ 4 years  ___ 5 years  ___ 6 years

B. If you went to a college or university, do you have a degree?

   ___ YES
   ___ NO
C. If you went to an institute or vocational school, do you have a certificate?

___ YES
___ NO

4. How long have you been enrolled in an English as a second language class? (Check one)

___ Less than 12 months  ___ 2 to less than 3 years
___ 1 to less than 2 years  ___ 3 years or more

A. Did you study English in any other school before you enrolled in your present class? (Check one)

___ YES
___ NO

B. If yes, how long, altogether, did you study English before you enrolled in your present class?

5. How long have you been in the continental United States?

6. Check the language or languages which are spoken in your home.

___ Spanish  ___ French  ___ English  ___ Chinese  ___ Hebrew  ___ Italian  ___ Twi  ___ Swahili  ___ Other (please specify)

7. Do you live alone?

___ YES
___ NO
8. Four skills are needed to learn a language--speaking, reading, writing, and listening.

Which one of these is hardest for you in learning English?

___ speaking  ___ writing
___ reading    ___ listening

9. Here is a list of reasons why some students are learning English. Read the list and then check your reasons for learning English.

___ To become a United States citizen.
___ To continue my education.
___ To get a better job.
___ Because it is the language of North America.
___ To listen to radio and television.
___ To make friends.
___ To improve myself.
___ To help my children in school.
___ Other ________________________________

10. Listed below are some areas which present problems for some students who are learning English as a second language. Read each description below and decide whether or not it is a problem for you and show how difficult a problem it is by circling one of the five numbers on the scale.

Rating Scale

VERY DIFFICULT 5 4 3 2 1  NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL

For instance, if a problem were not so difficult, you would circle point two above.
Problems:

A. Structuring sentences. (Placing the words in the right order to form sentences.)

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</tr>
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<td>NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

B. Pronouncing the following sounds when they are in an initial position. (Pronouncing a word when it begins with):

Sample:

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<td>Ship</td>
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<td>Cent</td>
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<td>Send</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C. Pronouncing the following sounds when they are in a final position. (Pronouncing a word that ends with):

Sample:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{classes} \\
\text{enough}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
5 & 4 & 3 & 2 \\
\hline
1 & & & \\
\end{array}
\]

D. The proper use of irregular verbs. (Using the correct form of the verb):

Sample:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{I am} \\
\text{You are} \\
\text{He, she, it is}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
5 & 4 & 3 & 2 \\
\hline
1 & & & \\
\end{array}
\]

E. Intonation or the relative height of the voice. (When to raise or lower your voice):

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
5 & 4 & 3 & 2 \\
\hline
1 & & & \\
\end{array}
\]

F. Primary and secondary stress--the relative degree of loudness of a part of a word. (What part of the word to emphasize):

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
5 & 4 & 3 & 2 \\
\hline
1 & & & \\
\end{array}
\]

G. Learning short and long vowel sounds. (Learning the different sounds of long and short vowels);

Sample:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{A hat - age} \\
\text{E let - equal} \\
\text{I it - ice}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
5 & 4 & 3 & 2 \\
\hline
1 & & & \\
\end{array}
\]
H. Idioms. (An expression whose total meaning cannot be derived from the meaning of each individual word within it):

Sample:
Shoot the bull
Take the bull by the horns.

11. In what country or commonwealth were you born?

_________________________________________________________________________________

12. Are you employed?

___ YES

___ NO

A. If yes, what kind of work do you do?

_________________________________________________________________________________