

EMPOWERING SPACES: A STUDENT INITIATIVE IN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

A Paper  
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty  
of the  
North Dakota State University  
of Agriculture and Applied Science

By

Jade William Sandbulte

In Partial Fulfillment  
for the Degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS

Major Department:  
English

April 2014

Fargo, North Dakota

North Dakota State University  
Graduate School

---

**Title**

Empowering Spaces: A Student Initiative in Language Acquisition

**By**

Jade William Sandbulte

The Supervisory Committee certifies that this *disquisition* complies with North Dakota State University's regulations and meets the accepted standards for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS**

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

Andrew Mara

Chair

Kevin Brooks

Stacy Duffield

---

Approved:

4/13/14

Date

Gary Totten

Department Chair

## **ABSTRACT**

A major concern for many international students is improving their spoken English, which requires engaged interaction with other speakers in a comfortable environment. This exploratory study analyzes a student-run language acquisition program to determine the extent to which it provides an empowering space for non-native speakers of English through its cultural presentations and small-group conversations. By using recorded conversations at the meetings, interviews, and surveys, this study found that the native English speakers often focused more on sustaining the conversations than providing opportunities to learn. Several strategies were noted that either encouraged or limited the engagement of non-native speakers of English, such as asking open questions and being sensitive to the interests of the other participants. This student-led program provides international students with the necessary exposure to English conversation but is not a substitute for structured English instruction.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Having completed my undergraduate and master's study at NDSU, I am greatly indebted to the entire English Department for their continued support of my education. In particular, I would like to thank Drs. Betsy Birmingham, Bruce Maylath, and Amy Rupiper-Taggart for their assistance during the initial stages of this project. Also, thanks to my committee members: Drs. Andrew Mara, Kevin Brooks, and Stacy Duffield. Their suggestions throughout this research process and feedback on my drafts helped develop me into a more thoughtful and thorough researcher.

Also, I could not have completed this project without the help of everyone who has shaped CEC into what it has become over the years. A special note of thanks is due to Eunice Johnston, Vivek Mathew, Joshua Anderson, and Michael Bashford for their work with CEC.

I would also like to acknowledge the support of my family and friends, particularly those who have helped broaden my view of the world, and also to the One who had this journey planned out for me long before I could have imagined it.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iv
LIST OF TABLES .....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES .....	vii
INTRODUCTION .....	1
Background of CEC .....	4
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	7
Theoretical Framework .....	7
ELL Education .....	11
Peer-to-Peer Education .....	13
METHODS .....	16
Recordings .....	16
Interviews .....	18
Surveys .....	18
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION .....	20
Results .....	20
Discussion .....	24
CONCLUSION .....	50
REFERENCES .....	55
APPENDIX A. TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS .....	60
APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS .....	61
APPENDIX C. SURVEY .....	62

## LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. Summary of the Six Recordings .....	21

## LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. Weighted data from survey results .....	23
2. Weighted data with first-time participants removed.....	24

## INTRODUCTION

From 1992 to 2012, the number of international students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities has almost doubled from 439,000 to 820,000 (Institute of International Education, 2013). International students bring many benefits to universities, such as culturally enriching the lives of domestic students, improving the image of the university, and bringing in capital from enrollment fees. Unfortunately, these benefits can cause lapses of judgment, resulting in some institutions to be accused of turning into “diploma mill[s] for foreign students” (Wetzel, 2012, para. 4). To ensure that they are truly focused on educating their students, schools that recruit international students onto their campus have a responsibility to ensure that the students are receiving the support they need.

One form of support that many international students need is language assistance. Due to the demand of writing placed on students—from small class assignments to doctorate dissertations—many universities offer services such as writing centers to assist students who struggle with writing in English. However, universities often provide little assistance with spoken English. Speaking fluency is an important skill for students to learn by the time they graduate because it has been linked to earning potential (Dustmann & van Soest, 2014). Being immersed in an English-speaking culture certainly helps international students with their spoken English; however, research has shown two obstacles that many international students face: 1) many international students have limited opportunities to practice spoken English in their regular academic classes (Hodne, 1997, p. 85); and 2) even with exposure, students are less likely to gain fluency without structured institutional interventions (Saunders, Goldenberg, & Marcelletti, 2013, p. 16). For these reasons, it is recommended that institutions take a role in assisting English language learners (ELLs) with their speaking skills. Unfortunately, providing the



financial and human capital necessary for ELL instruction can be a strain for institutions, especially with the number of ELL students increasing so drastically (Goodwin, 2013; Hosford & Sampson, 2013). Because funding for English language instruction has been known to be unstable, many language programs rely on volunteers to help ELLs with their language acquisition (Belzer, 2006; Blumenthal, 2002).

Language acquisition is a social process; it requires “meaningful and motivated interaction with others” (Saunders et al., 2013, p. 14). Ideally, this interaction should involve peers and take place in a familiar environment to avoid placing extra stress on the language learner (Brown & Yule, 1983, p. 34). This suggests that an approach similar to tutoring might be effective. The use of peer-to-peer tutoring has been shown to be superior to traditional classroom teaching because it promotes the co-construction of knowledge rather than simply transferring knowledge (Chi, 1996, p. 546). In Paulo Freire’s book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2003), he supports the notion of co-constructing knowledge through an ideology he calls liberating education. In liberating education, teachers work alongside the learners and allow the learners to contribute to the knowledge-building and agenda-setting (2003, p. 79). Freire’s call to “learn, with the people, about the people’s world” (2003, p. 180) is particularly relevant to ELL education because ELL students bring rich cultural knowledge into the classroom. Having opportunities to express their cultural viewpoint can put students at ease since being required to speak in a foreign language can feel like it is eroding on their linguistic identities (Hodne, 1997, p. 88). Spaces that provide opportunities for ELLs to improve their English while remaining in control of their education and taking pride in their culture has the potential to empower these students; thus, for this paper, I will be referring to such places as *empowering spaces*. Empowering spaces can potentially exist in classrooms, tutoring services, or other places on

campus; however, the effectiveness of an empowering space is largely determined by the behavior of the participants.

In this study, I will examine a volunteer language acquisition program to determine how well it fulfills the goals of an empowering space. The program being examined is an event called Conversational English Circles (CEC) that is sponsored by the English Club at North Dakota State University. A unique characteristic of CEC is that it was not initiated by the institution but rather by native English speakers (NESs) who wanted to help their non-native speaking (NNS) peers improve their oral communication skills. The NESs at CEC are not trained educators providing English lessons; instead, they are regular students who take time to converse with NNSs during the weekly CEC meetings. Since there is no formal division between the participants' roles (e.g. teacher/student or tutor/tutee), this has the potential to create an empowering space where everyone participates equally. However, the NESs' fluency in English obviously gives them an advantage in the conversations, which could result in the NESs controlling the conversations during CEC and limiting CEC's potential as an empowering space.

In my study of CEC, I was primarily interested in the roles that the participants adopted during the meetings. I hypothesized that these roles would stem from the participants' reasons for attending CEC; for example, were they coming to teach, learn, build friendships, etc.? I also hypothesized that these roles would influence the way participants interact during the conversations. Therefore, I developed the following research questions:

- 1) Why do CEC participants choose to attend CEC meetings?
- 2) What do the interactions of the NESs and NNSs reveal about their perceived roles within the meetings?

To answer these questions, I conducted personal interviews and surveys of CEC participants. I also used Conversation Analysis (CA), an inductive research method that relies on close description of speech samples (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1988, p. 116), to analyze recorded CEC conversations. Although initially performed as an assessment for CEC, this exploratory study holds significance for TESOL educators and administration who are faced with growing ELL needs at their institutions. CEC provides a useful case study on the effectiveness of untrained, volunteer students with limited assistance from the university who are trying to meet the needs of NNSs on their campus. This research also reveals conversational practices that help or hinder NNSs as they work on improving their spoken English.

### **Background of CEC**

Although CEC is an event sponsored by English Club, its origins lie with the university writing center. The NDSU Center for Writers has traditionally offered help with spoken as well as written language, but few students took advantage of the former. However, when there was a sudden increase in demand for conversational practice, the writing center became concerned that they did not have the time or resources to help these students while also fulfilling their primary goal of writing consulting. Therefore, in the fall semester of 2010, several writing consultants approached English Club with the proposition of starting an event where international students could practice their conversational English. The English Club agreed, and CEC became a weekly event where NESs and NNSs would come together to discuss a variety of topics.

CEC is held in a campus meeting room that has six tables that can seat 8-10 people. Each meeting begins with a short cultural presentation by a NES or NNS. The presentation concludes with a series of discussion questions. CEC participants then engage in conversation around their tables, sometimes following the discussion questions and sometimes ignoring them. After

several minutes of discussion, the presenter (or presenters) continues with another short presentation, which is again followed by conversation. This cycle typically occurs three to five times during each meeting.

Throughout its four years of operation, CEC has undergone several changes. Initially, most of the NES participants were writing consultants, but gradually the connection to the writing center lessened and more NES students, usually English and English Education majors, became involved. Furthermore, several NNSs took active roles in planning and setting up the meetings, and the current English Club president (and therefore overseer of CEC) is a Chinese student majoring in marketing. Also, what began as mostly word-of-mouth advertising has expanded to include listserv emails, brochures, and posters that advertise CEC as an opportunity to “Learn about cultures from other countries and improve your ability to speak conversational English.”

CEC’s connection to the university has also gone through several noteworthy—though subtle—changes. CEC still functions as an event sponsored by a student organization, which means that English Club can request meeting rooms and refreshments for CEC, but the university does not officially recognize CEC as one of its services. However, several instructors in the English and Modern Languages departments encourage students to participate, either for extra credit or as a formal assignment. Furthermore, the international programs office recognizes attendance at CEC as a cultural sharing experience, which meets the requirements of a scholarship that many international students receive from the university. Therefore, CEC has gained recognition across the university but no official status beyond that of a regular student organization.

Having described CEC's background, it would be remiss of me as a researcher to ignore my role in CEC as my role could lead to potential bias. I played no part in the idea for CEC or in the initial planning; however, I was a writing consultant who was aware of the issue. Furthermore, I was the president of English Club, which meant I am the one who agreed to make CEC a priority for English Club. I have continued to participate in CEC and currently hold the position of Assistant Advisor in English Club. However, I have little responsibility other than to participate in the conversations as much as any CEC participant. Therefore, my perspective provides me with a historical narrative of CEC and an interest in improving CEC's services.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

At its inception, CEC was not based on pedagogical or language theories but rather on the experience of its founders, who were undergraduate consultants at the university writing center. However, in analyzing CEC, a knowledge of relevant theories and research can reveal how well CEC follows current practices in ELL education. This literature review will begin by discussing some of the theoretical lenses that can describe CEC's role in the university, followed by specific recommendations for ELL and peer-to-peer education.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Thanks to the noticeable increase of international students as well as immigrants and refugees seeking higher education (Matsuda & Silva, 2001, p. xiii), universities are increasingly becoming places that house a wide variety of cultures, and new spaces and events are being created on universities to reflect their diverse populations. The spaces on universities that include people from multiple cultures have been alternatively called borderlands and contact zones. "Borderlands" is a term coined by Gloria Anzaldua (1987) to refer to places where "two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle, and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy" (p. vii). Similarly, "contact zones" is defined by Mary Louise Pratt (2002) as "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (p. 4). Pratt uses words like "clash" and "grapple" to point out that cultures do not always meet each other as equals; often, one or more groups will seek to establish dominance over the others. However, contact zones do not need to be sites of power struggles. Reflecting on her volunteer work with childcare

providers, Daphne Key (2002) states that contact zones can be places of victory for all participants if everyone is willing to lay aside their pride and perceived authority in order to learn from others (p. 103).

Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2003) has many suggestions for educators who want to create an environment like the one Key describes. First, educators must recognize that many traditional classroom practices adhere to banking education, where "the teacher is the Subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects" (2003, p. 73). Freire states that when students are treated as objects, they represent an oppressed group (2003, p. 57). In order to change this situation, educators need to join with the students as partners and learn to trust them (2003, p. 75). This leads to liberating education, which "consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information" (2003, p. 73). When liberating education is taking place within a contact zone, it is also important to use the approach of cultural synthesis rather than cultural invasion. According to Freire, people with a cultural invasion mindset approach all cross-cultural contact and problem-solving with their own values and ideologies as a baseline that they expect others to adopt. Cultural synthesis, on the other hand, involves approaching a new culture not "to *teach* or *transmit* or to *give* anything, but rather to learn, with the people, about the people's world" (2003, p. 180).

Many examples of liberating education exist in classrooms today, particularly among composition and rhetoric courses. For example, in *Writing Without Teachers*, Peter Elbow (1998) describes a composition classroom that empowers writers by forming groups in which nobody is the sole expert on writing. In these writing groups, participants provide each other with honest feedback to show the writer how her or his writing was received by various audiences. Elbow believes that this learning environment is beneficial because participants are

more likely to respond to the *message* of the piece of writing. Although CEC deals with spoken rather than written language, CEC mimics the teacher-less environment that Elbow proposes through its small-table discussions, which ostensibly allow all participants equal opportunities to share without feeling that their performance will be graded.

CEC's provision of a space to improve English fluency could also make it a type of literacy sponsor. Deborah Brandt (2010) defines literacy sponsors as "any agents, local or distant, concrete or abstract, who enable, support, teach, model, as well as recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy—and gain advantage by it in some way" (p. 16). This definition begs the question of what advantage CEC participants hope to gain by helping students with their spoken English. On the other hand, Brandt points out that not every agent connected to literacy is necessarily a sponsor; for example, composition instructors are "neither rich nor powerful enough to sponsor literacy on [their] own terms" (2003, p. 31), thus making them brokers who mediate between the sponsors and the sponsored. Therefore, it is also possible that CEC is a literacy broker mediating between the international students and the university. This would fit in well with its position as an event sponsored by a student organization. According to Kuk and Banning (2010), student organizations have the ability to support or hinder a university's diversity efforts. Among Kuk and Banning's classification for student organizations, CEC seems to fall under Social Action: "When student organizations take deliberate actions to recognize and solve campus multicultural issues that promote and enhance the institution's diversity goals" (2010, p. 358). From this typology, it would appear that CEC has chosen to take on the form of a broker to assist the institution in meeting its diversity goals by providing additional language support for NNSs. However, it is still possible that NESs have other reasons for attending CEC that pertain toward their own personal goals.



Therefore, to understand CEC's role among NNSs, it is important to know the goals that CEC participants have. Brandt (2010) claims that literacy sponsors have their own motivations for passing on literacy that might not match with why the sponsored are eager to learn (p. 17). Similarly, Pratt (2002) points out that people in contact zones are not always "engaged in the same game" because the participants may have different goals or are operating under different rules (p. 13). Finally, Freire (2003) also states that liberating education "cannot present its own program but must search for the program dialogically with the people" (p. 124). If the NESs and NNSs have different goals for CEC, it is possible that one group's goals might override the other's. CEC is also less likely to be effective if participants are not working toward the same end. Therefore, it is important in this study to learn why participants choose to attend CEC.

Along with suggesting that understanding participants' motivations will reveal the role that CEC plays in the university, the three theories of contact zones, liberating education, and literacy sponsors support the notion that learners at CEC should feel empowered to control their education. Therefore, for CEC to meet the ideal criteria for an empowering space, all participants should have the opportunity to learn and contribute to the education that occurs in the meetings. One way to assess participants' ability to contribute to the meetings is through analyzing the conversations that take place at CEC. According to Conversation Analysis (CA) studies, the speech that occurs during conversations is strategically used to accomplish certain tasks (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1988, p. 19). By analyzing detailed descriptions of speech, CA attempts to understand what task is being accomplished by the language and how the participants are orienting themselves to that task (1988, p. 99). Therefore, CA provides a useful methodology for assessing whether or not the speech of participants contributes to an empowering space. By understanding the function of participants' speech, it is possible to

determine if all participants are contributing to the conversation or if certain speech acts are limiting the actions of other participants.

### **ELL Education**

As the number of international students has increased at universities, so has the research on educating ELL students (Matsuda & Silva, 2006, p. xiii). One of the most important principles in ELL education is that learning a language is a social process that requires “meaningful and motivated interaction with others” (Saunders, et al., 2013, p. 14). However, NNSs face many obstacles that can limit their interaction with English speakers. Along with their own reluctance to speak up in class when they fear embarrassment, many NNSs believe that teachers avoid calling on them in class because the teachers want to avoid language problems (Hodne, 1997, p. 86). Similarly, NNSs’ fear of embarrassing themselves carries over into their work with NES classmates. NNSs often worry that they do not have the language necessary to communicate their thoughts clearly and will waste their classmates’ time if they try (1997, p. 88). For this reason, many NNSs choose to speak with other NNSs. This, in turn, can make the NESs believe that the NNSs have no desire to interact with NESs and results in both groups of students ignoring each other (1997, p. 85). If NESs and NNSs do not interact with each other even when they are in the same class, then the NNSs may continue to lack confidence with the spoken language, creating an unfortunate cycle.

Brown and Yule (1983) suggest that NNSs will feel more confident to practice their spoken English if they face less communicative stress (p. 34). Communicative stress applies to all speakers whether or not they are speaking their native language. However, communicative stress can exasperate fluency problems for those who are speaking a foreign language. According to Brown and Yule, the amount of communicative stress that a speaker feels is

connected to the context, the knowledge of the listener, and the task the language is meant to accomplish. They suggest reducing communicative stress for NNSs by having them speak with a peer rather than an authority figure; speak in a familiar, private environment; and focus on a topic the speaker is familiar with (1983, p. 34). CEC follows the first recommendation by allowing NNSs to speak with other students who are not grading their spoken language. CEC also tries to create a comfortable atmosphere by meeting in a student union and sitting around circular tables. The topics of CEC, however, are subject to change from meeting to meeting and even from table to table.

Familiarity with a topic plays a large role in how well someone can participate in a conversation. Morris-Adams (2013) states, “The construction of mutual understanding in conversation is not dependent on language use alone, but also on the existence or establishment of personal, social, or cultural background knowledge relating to the topics under discussion” (p. 336). If NNSs are forced into a conversation about a topic they are unfamiliar with, they are likely to experience communicative confusion that stems from ignorance of the topic’s context rather than a lack of vocabulary (although the presence of content-specific vocabulary can also cause difficulties). Therefore, many strategies for helping NNSs improve their spoken English focus on allowing the NNSs to communicate information they already possess (Brown & Yule, 1983, p. 117).

One study on the importance of topic selection in NES-NNS conversations was conducted by Michael H. Long (1983). After analyzing recordings from NES-NNS conversations, Long noted several strategies used by the NESs, such as selecting topics the NNSs were familiar with, relinquishing topic-control to the NNSs, treating topics briefly, checking for comprehension, accepting unintentional topic-switches, requesting clarification, and repeating

themselves and the NNSs (1983, p. 132). Long also observed that NES-NNS interactions tend to be built around question-answer sequences (1983, p. 133), which reduces stress for NNSs because the questions provide vocabulary that the NNSs can use in their responses (Brown & Yule, 1983, p. 29). Long noted that the use of these techniques depended on how much experience the NES had with speaking to NNSs (1983, p. 139). NESs who are more accustomed to speaking with NNSs are more familiar with the trouble that NNSs encounter and can take steps to avoid or repair problems that occur during conversations. Therefore, another method for reducing communicative stress for NNSs is to provide opportunities to speak with people who have experience or training that has improved their cross-cultural communication skills.

The above literature on ELL education only covers a few of the broad principles that language experts agree on. Much more research exists on specific practices that can improve classroom learning; however, as an alternative to traditional classrooms, it seems more pertinent for CEC to follow these broader principles. The research shows that, as an empowering space, CEC should strive to create an environment where NNSs are comfortable engaging in conversation that is meaningful and connected to their own knowledge.

### **Peer-to-Peer Education**

Based on the above literature, it seems clear that CEC's peer-to-peer approach to language acquisition has many merits. CEC's approach likely stems from its origins within the university writing center. Writing centers, like CEC, are spaces within the university that function as borderlands and contact zones (Severino, 2002). Writing centers use peer-to-peer tutoring because tutoring has been found to be more effective than classroom teaching (Chi, 1996, p. 533; Graesser, Person, & Magliano, 1995, p. 495). Although CEC's approach to language acquisition differs from one-on-one peer tutoring, the practices that tutors are

encouraged to adopt are relevant to CEC participants who want to create an empowering space for NNSs.

According to research, tutoring is more effective for student learning than traditional classroom practices because it promotes co-construction of knowledge rather than simply transferring knowledge from one person to another (Chi, 1996, p. 546). Co-constructing knowledge requires tutors and tutees to work together. Following Freire's advice, this means that tutors need to trust the tutees and relinquish control of the session. However, studies show that tutors differ greatly on the amount of control they give to tutees. For example, in a study on adult literacy volunteer tutors, two different tutoring approaches were noticed: 1) a directive style, characterized by a business-like relationship and lack of student decision-making; and 2) a conversational style, characterized by more equal speaking turns and less displays of authority on the part of the tutor (Pomerance, 1990, p. 210-211). The approach that a tutor uses can be influenced by a number of factors, such as personal beliefs about their role and the practices of the institution in which they work (Levin, 2006, p. 263). Tutors are also influenced by the students they are working with. For example, tutors tend to take a more directive approach when working with ELL students (Jones, Garralda, Li, & Lock, 2006, p. 3). Furthermore, the tutees sometimes participate in the power imbalance by not contributing and relying on the tutor to be the sole knowledge-builder (Pomerance, 1990, p. 199).

Many scholars insist that peer-to-peer tutors should deliberately share control of the tutoring session with the tutee. Unfortunately, as Graesser et al. (1995) point out, strategies for sharing control "are not in the repertoire of the normal tutor" (p. 501). One solution is to provide tutors with training, but this can be a difficult task, particularly when the tutors are volunteers. If tutors are already volunteering their time to work with the tutees, they may be reluctant to

dedicate more time for training sessions. Furthermore, volunteer tutors have a high turnover rate, which means that tutoring programs would need to constantly train new tutors (Pomerance, 1990, p. 7). However, choosing not to train tutors results in needy populations being served by the most underprepared members of society (Perry & Hart, 2012, p. 120), which suggests a lack of concern on the part of the institution involved (p. 111). For the good of the learners as well as to increase the confidence of the tutors, many scholars strongly encourage volunteer programs to provide training. After conducting a study on the practices of volunteer tutors, Alisa Belzer (2006) suggested that tutors should first receive training on basic tutoring principles such as how to work *with* the learners when deciding what the tutoring sessions will focus on (p. 135). Once the volunteers have conducted a few tutoring sessions, further training could be provided to teach more specific tutoring strategies (2006, p. 136). Following this suggestion, it is possible that, if CEC participants do not follow the practices conducive to an empowering space, a brief training session on conducting effective conversations may be beneficial.

The literature presented in this chapter suggests that CEC has found an effective method for teaching NNSs: informal, peer-to-peer conversations in which—theoretically—all participants can contribute to knowledge-building. However, the effectiveness of this approach may be undermined by the individual actions of the participants, particularly by NESs failing to share control of the conversation. Therefore, my study will focus on how well CEC lives up to the standards of an empowering space by considering the actions of the CEC participants and their reasons for attending CEC.

## **METHODS**

Three research methods were used in this study. First, in order to determine if the behaviors of CEC participants adhered to the idea of an empowering space, several conversations were recorded and then coded using Conversation Analysis to group types of behaviors together. Next, individual interviews with several CEC participants were conducted to identify specific roles that participants adopt during the meetings, thus shedding light on the behaviors identified in the analysis. The interviews also revealed several motivations for attending CEC. To get a broader sense of what motivates participants to attend CEC, a survey was distributed to all CEC participants during one of the weekly meetings. All three methods were approved by the Institutional Review Board at NDSU (Protocol #HS14162).

### **Recordings**

Six audio recordings were collected for this study. The recordings contain the conversations at three separate tables during two CEC meetings. Many of the same CEC participants were present at both meetings, but none of the conversations contain the exact same group of participants. Prior to the recordings, permission was obtained from all participants for their conversations to be recorded. The recordings were transcribed using the conventions described in Appendix A, and both the transcripts and the recordings were studied and coded using Conversation Analysis (CA) techniques.

CA is an example of a discourse analysis method. Several other discourse analysis methods were considered for this project. Many studies in education use classroom discourse analysis, which looks specifically at how teachers interact with their students (Levin, 2006, p. 33). However, this method assumes a traditional classroom environment, which often has only one primary speaker. Another potential approach was critical discourse analysis, which focuses

on “the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 249). Critical discourse analysis provides useful tools for considering the role of power and authority in CEC conversations, but it comes with the assumption that “social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk” (van Dijk, 2001, p. 352). Instead of entering into the discourse analysis with these assumptions, I wanted to determine if the data naturally suggested that such power differences existed and were enacted in the speech of CEC participants, which is why CA was chosen.

As mentioned in the introduction, CA is an inductive research method that relies on close descriptions of speech samples (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1988, p. 116). Like classroom and critical discourse analysis, CA can show how authority and power are displayed in discourse (1988, p. 7); however, CA is more readily adaptable for speech that involves multiple participants. As an inductive method, a CA study does not start with a hypothesis but rather analyzes the data to discover any noteworthy phenomena (1988, p. 94). Some of these phenomena, such as turn-taking, question-answer sequences, and call-response sequences can indicate which participants hold the most power. However, conversation analysts stress the importance of taking context into consideration before assuming that certain speech acts indicate a demonstration of power (1988, p. 164). For example, while many people believe that overlapping speech indicates one participant is interrupting another and is attempting to take control of the conversation, many CA studies show that overlapping speech can occur to show understanding or when a participant recognizes a legitimate end of a speaking turn (1988, p. 118).

CA theory stresses that participants are not bound by specific cultural roles and usually have the means of controlling a conversation. However, participants often orient themselves and



others to certain roles in a conversation, which has the potential of limiting or at least discouraging certain conversational resources (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1988, p. 170). Therefore, when analyzing the recordings and transcripts, I paid particular attention to the roles that the participants appeared to be adopting and ways in which certain speech acts functioned to maintain these roles.

### **Interviews**

After analyzing the recordings, I interviewed six CEC participants individually, three NESs and three NNSs. The participants were a convenience sample recruited through personal invitation and selected because they had attended CEC for different lengths of time, ranging from six months to over three years. The three NESs were all English majors. The three NNSs were all from different countries (China, Brazil, and Turkey) and had noticeably different levels of English fluency. The interview questions are included in Appendix B. The interviews were recorded, and the six recordings were reviewed to determine recurring themes. In particular, I focused my analysis on behaviors that the interviewees noted about themselves or other CEC participants and their personal reasons for attending CEC.

### **Surveys**

Using the interview responses, a survey was constructed to determine the most important reasons why NESs and NNSs attend CEC. The survey (Appendix C) asked respondents to read through a list of reasons for attending CEC, select the top five, and rank them 1-5 with 1 being the most important. Forty surveys were distributed, and 37 were completed. Of the 37, nine had to be discarded because they did not rank the top five reasons. Of the remaining 28, 7 had been completed by respondents identifying as having native fluency and 21 by those who identified as not having native fluency. The results were tabulated by assigning scores to the rankings so that

a rank of 1 equaled 5, a rank of 2 equaled 4, and so on (as described by the Statistical Services Centre of the University of Reading, 2001). The total scores for the NESs and NNSs were then averaged so that they could be compared side-by-side.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To describe what this study revealed about how well CEC matches the ideals of an empowering space, I will begin by briefly summarizing the results of each research method, and then I will discuss how these results work together to present three categories that describe the behaviors of CEC participants: leading, learning, and engaging. While discussing the results, I will use the terms participants, interviewees, and respondents to refer to the people who were involved in the recordings, the interviews, and the surveys, respectively. Furthermore, I will use the term conversation to refer to the entirety of speech at a table during a meeting, and I will use discussion to mean speech that centered on the same topic during a conversation. The transcripts use aliases that are representative of the home country for each participant, and the speech of NNSs is presented in bold text for easy identification.

It should be noted that the analysis is not meant to criticize the speech excerpts or behaviors of any CEC participants. Many of the behaviors that are described as ineffective are quite normal and acceptable in regular conversations, but they may not match with the ideal behaviors of an empowering space.

### Results

#### *Conversation Analysis*

Analysis of the recordings showed that each conversation had unique characteristics, making it difficult to find an overall pattern that would describe all interactions at CEC. Therefore, I focused on each conversation separately to understand the differences that I was noticing. The most significant difference appeared to be the level of engagement among the NNSs. Engagement was evident when NNSs had a relatively equal number of speaking turns and offered feedback, which are expressions such as “yeah” or “really?” that show that the

participant is listening (Wu, 2013, p. 89). Recordings 4 and 5 had a high level of engagement among the NNSs. Recording 5 was particularly noteworthy because most of the discussions were initiated by a NNS, which was a rare occurrence in the other recordings. Recording 1 also revealed a high level of NNS engagement, but it differs from the other conversations because it only included one NES, which meant that much of the conversation centered around the single NES answering questions. Recordings 3 and 6 had very low levels of NNS engagement. In both of these conversations, the discussions often centered around American topics and the NNSs had difficulty contributing to the conversation. Recording 2 initially had low NNS engagement and long stretches of silence. However, when a new NNS joined the table, all of the NNSs contributed more and there were shorter pauses between discussions. A summary of each conversation is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

*Summary of the Six Recordings*

#	Duration	Participants	Summary
1	38:15	1 NES 4 NNS +1 NNS at 24:14	Discussed education in the US and China. High level of NNS engagement. NNSs chose most of the topics. The NES answered the most questions since he was viewed as the expert on American culture.
2	52:19	4 NES 3 NNS +1 NNS at 36:57	Discussed American education and North Korea. Noticeable silences and low level of NNS engagement. Later, the topic changed to uniforms and a NNS joined who led the conversation by breaking silences and starting new topics, increasing overall NNS engagement.
3	57:24	5 NES 2 NNS	Discussed education in the US and China. Low level of NNS engagement with few pauses between NESs' speaking turns. NESs chose most of the topics. The conversation sometimes split into separate discussions.
4	22:55	2 NES 2 NNS	Discussed American and Korean films and education and Korean culture. High level of NNS engagement. NESs led by switching topics based on NNSs' interests.
5	23:58	2 NES 3 NNS	Discussed American films and film-related vocabulary. High level of NNS engagement. One NNS initiated and led discussions, and another NNS asked vocabulary questions. A handout was used to encourage vocabulary learning.
6	24:12	4 NES 1 NNS	Discussed American films. Low NNS engagement. NESs led by discussing films the NNS seemed unfamiliar with. Some film-related vocabulary was discussed.

### *Interviews*

The interviews suggested three primary purposes of CEC: for students to learn about different cultures, for international students to practice spoken English, and for students to share about their own cultures. All three NNSs stated that they initially attended CEC because a language teacher or tutor had suggested it as an effective way to improve their English. However, two of them said that they now attend CEC to learn about other cultures and chat with friends rather than to improve their English, and the third NNS also stated that correcting spoken English did not seem to be the focus of CEC. Of the NESs, one came at the suggestion of her advisor and to help NNSs feel more comfortable with their spoken English, whereas the other two initially came to obtain credit for a class. One of the NESs who came for class credit said he was interested in staying involved since he was looking for an extracurricular activity to join, but he is now questioning whether he will continue to attend because he is not sure if he or the NNSs gain anything from his attendance. The other two NESs stated that they continue to come to learn about cultures and meet new people.

When asked about their individual roles in the meeting, the three NESs responded with contributor, participant, and table leader. One of the NNSs also labeled his role as that of a contributor, whereas the other two NNSs said they were learners. However, one of these NNSs quickly amended this answer by saying she was sometimes a learner and sometimes a friend chatting with other friends, and the other NNS said that the term learner applied to all participants, not just the NNSs.

### *Surveys*

After the survey responses were calculated according to the method described earlier, the bar graph in Figure 1 was created to visually display the results. Since there were 21 NNS

responses and 7 NES responses, it should be noted that each NES response had a greater impact on the average scores than the NNS responses.

Of the 28 respondents, 11 (3 NESs and 8 NNSs) indicated that this was their first meeting. Concerned that these 11 newcomers might have come to CEC for very different reasons than those who regularly attend and therefore the data might not represent that of a regular CEC meeting, I removed their data and created the bar graph in Figure 2. As you can see, the results of the NNSs changed very little, indicating that NNSs who attend CEC for the first time and those who attend regularly have similar reasons for attending. Among the NESs, however, the answers “Class or extra credit” and “Special event” decreased noticeably. This is not surprising since most (if not all) of the NESs who were there for the first time were giving a presentation for a class assignment. Since it is very common for CEC to have new NESs who are there to present for class, these respondents’ answers are likely representative of a regular CEC meeting.

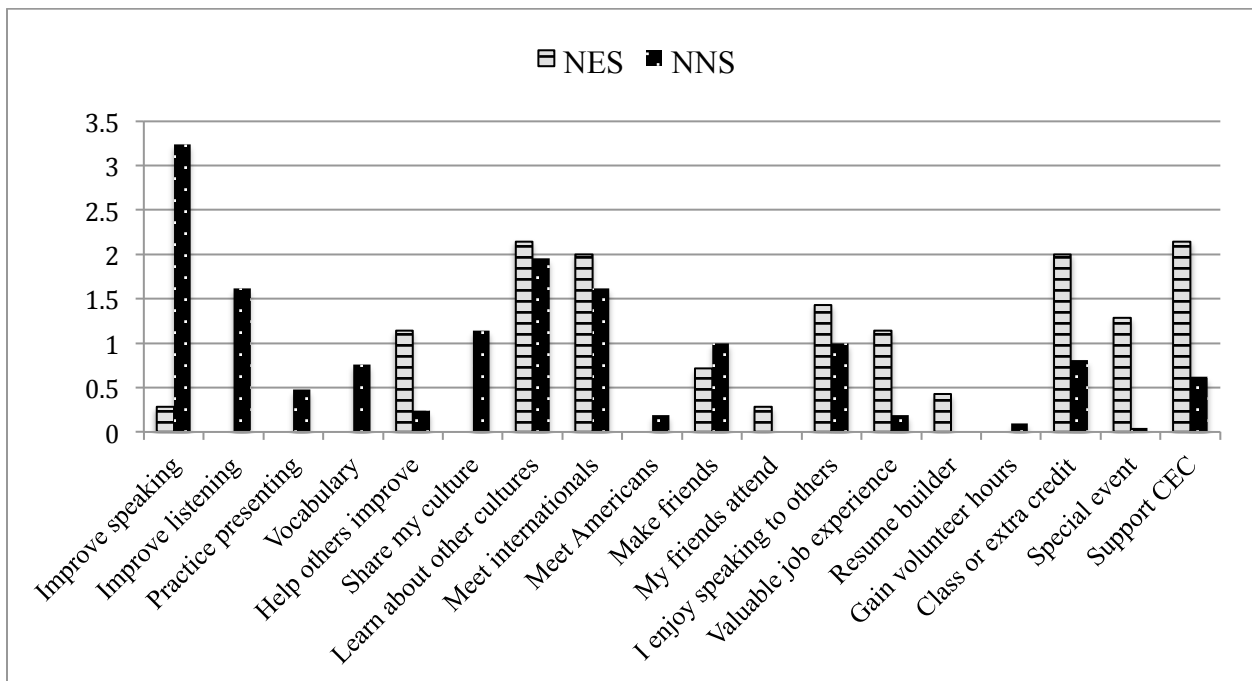


Figure 1. Weighted data from survey results

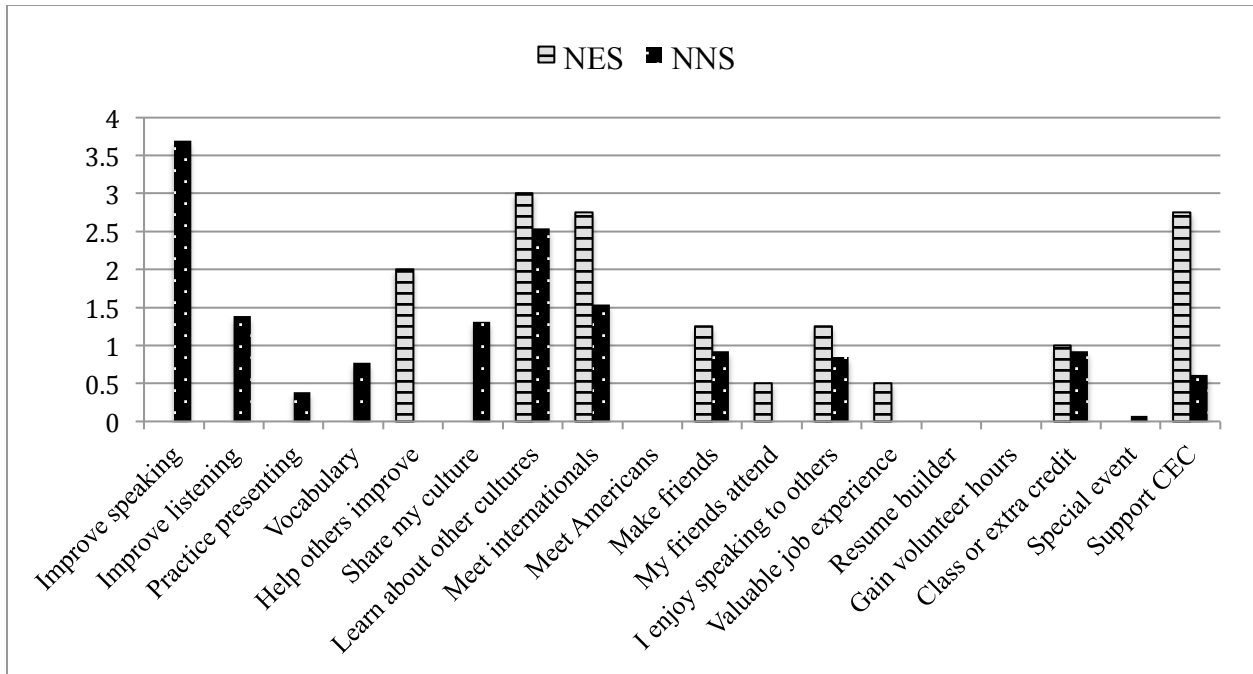


Figure 2. Weighted data with first-time participants removed

## Discussion

### *Leading*

Among the survey respondents, the most important reason that NESs identified for attending CEC (tied with “Learn about other cultures”) was “Support CEC.” This suggests that NESs feel they are partially responsible for the success of CEC. For this reason, many NESs view themselves as table leaders, a term that was given by one of the NES interviewees. If a NES chooses to function as a table leader, she or he would likely take responsibility for beginning the conversations and making sure that the conversation adhered to the meeting’s agenda.

Since verbal permission needed to be granted by the participants before the recordings could begin, none of the recordings include the very beginning of the conversations. However, several speech acts from the NESs demonstrate that they were attempting to manage the conversation according to CEC’s guidelines. For example, in Recording 1, the NES halts the

conversation when a presenter was about to speak. Later in Recording 1, after an 8-second pause, the NES says, “Let’s see. Other things about education?”, thus taking it upon himself to continue the conversation within the constraints of the meeting’s topic (education in different countries). This suggests that the NES saw himself as a part of the overall CEC structure.

However, NNSs sometimes demonstrated similar behaviors. In Recording 2, when a new NNS arrives, she takes it upon herself to initiate discussions whenever there is a silence. In one case, after a 7-second pause, she asks, “So what is today’s topic? I was late,” indicating a similar desire to keep the conversation within the constraints of the meeting’s topic.

The discussions within the conversations were also usually initiated by NESs, but not always. For example, in Recording 5, one of the NNSs took control of the conversation immediately by asking all participants, “Did you watch the Avengers?” The following excerpt from Recording 1 also shows a NNS leading a discussion topic:

(1) **Fu: Yeah, in elementary school yeah yeah like uh:: three grade (0.9) yes students uh:: in English class what what can they do usually?**

(1.2)

Alex: So if they’re in third grade in English class?

**Fu: Yeah I mean yeah in yeah in like three grade. Yeah. Elementary //school**

Alex: Yep. What they would do in an English class //um::

**Fu: Yeah.**

Alex: They would read some stories.

**Fu: Okay.**

Alex: And answer questions on the stories.

**Da: [Okay.**



**Fu:** [Yeah.

Alex: In third grade they also encourage students to write stories.

**Fu:** Okay

**Da:** [If they write stories]

Alex: [So if]

**Fu:** [How long they] how long the stories they write?

In this excerpt, the discussion is initiated by Fu on a topic that he is interested in. After Alex finishes his response, Fu continues to guide the conversation by asking another question.

Therefore, even though the NES in Recording 1 demonstrated some leader behaviors, the NNSs were also able to function as leaders during the discussions. However, in most of the recordings, it was much more common for NESs to initiate and guide the discussion topics.

### *Learning*

Out of the top four highest survey results for the NNSs, three of them focus on learning: improving spoken English, learning about other cultures, and improving listening skills. This matches the response of the two NNS interviewees who defined their role as learners. However, as one of the interviewees mentioned, the term learner does not apply only to the NNSs.

According to the NES respondents, learning about other cultures was as important as supporting CEC. This shows that all of the CEC participants want to learn from each other, so some of the goals of the NESs and NNSs match.

However, there is also a mismatch of goals represented in the survey data. NNSs' desire to improve their spoken English is noticeably higher than any of the other motivations.

Similarly, all three NNS interviewees said they initially attended CEC to improve their English.

On the other hand, the NES respondents' desire to help the NNSs improve their English is

relatively low. Furthermore, only one of the NES interviewees said that she attended CEC to help NNSs feel more comfortable speaking English. This suggests that NESs at CEC are not concerned about helping NNSs improve their spoken English. One of the NNS interviewees commented on this, stating that she wished NESs at CEC would focus more on correcting participants' speech.

These results are further echoed in recordings. There was very little discussion on correctness or vocabulary in the conversations. For example, in Recordings 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6, only one (Recording 3) included a short discussion specifically focused on vocabulary:

(2) Liz: How about preschool? In the United States we do // we

Kim: Yeah, it's totally optional. // I never

**Shufen: What's preschool?**

**Chao: Yeah, what is?**

Liz: [It's very it's very optional]=

Jane: [Um before:: primary school]

Liz: =[but it's maybe] ages three four

Ann: [I didn't do it either]

Kim: Yeah

Liz: Before before kids go to kindergarten they go to a it's would be a private school. The family has to pay for it and theoretically at least the children are supposed to learn skills that will help them to succeed when they get to kindergarten.

Recording 5 was the exception when it came to directly discussing the English language. In

Recording 5, one of the NNSs read through a list of film-related vocabulary that was listed on a

handout on all of the tables. The NNSs asked for a definition of each term, occasionally guessing and checking for confirmation. This suggests that providing a handout with relevant vocabulary and idioms can encourage discussions focused on learning English, but even with the handout most groups did not enter into such a discussion.

There were situations, however, when NESs provided definitions when speaking, such as the following example from Recording 6:

(3) Mary: You've seen the- and they're still coming out, the action figures you know the little little people this tall.

**Zhen: mmhmm**

Since similar events occurred several times in the recordings, it supports Long's (1983) assertion that NESs often try to preemptively avoid miscommunication when speaking to NNSs (p. 12). Therefore, these speech acts functioned as a way of continuing the conversation more so than to teach.

NNSs seldom asked for definitions, but they often asked (directly or indirectly) for the right word while speaking. Three examples of such speech acts are included below:

(4) Recording 2

**Mei: Yeah. That's really cool. Every class has a different kind of uniform and we wear it to take the- what's what's that? The photo? Like the**

Eric: The class photo?

**Mei: Yeah, the class photo. It's really cool.**

(5) Recording 1

**Fu: Yeah the three teacher has been suspend?**

Alex: I was gonna say I bet the teacher got into trouble.

**Fu: Yeah, yeah right.**

(6) Recording 3

**Chao: Actually and you got some times maybe in maybe in your °how do you say that? In your the- uh the um the last grade in your high school?**

Ann: Mmhmm.

**Chao: And you may you may need to take one more day on a Saturday you may need to take classes // that day too.**

Ann: Oh, wow::.

Liz: Yeah::.

Excerpt 4 represents the most common situation: a NNS asks for the correct vocabulary and receives a direct answer. In excerpt 5, Fu's upward inflection indicates that he is uncertain whether he was using the correct word. Alex does not directly answer this, but he indirectly provides a definition for "suspend" while ignoring the fact that Fu used the improper form of the word. In excerpt 6, nobody answers Chao's question, but he is able to continue his statement. Therefore, it seems that continuing the discussion was more important than correcting the NNSs' English.

As might be expected, it was rare for the NNSs to try teaching other participants about the English language. Once, in Recording 1, several of the NNSs helped another NNS find the right vocabulary:

(7) **Min: Does the does the library I mean Fargo library does they need- I know they need volunteers to (0.9) to to help the the =**

**Da: = the customer?**

**Min: (1.0) Nnno.**

**Fu:** The //library?

**Min:** Just to just to books the right place.

**Da:** Okay.

**Fu:** Arrange the books.

In only one situation did a NNS attempt to teach a NES vocabulary, which occurred in

Recording 3:

(8) **Shufen:** And then I have like an hour to eat for dinner whatever and I have cram school. Like another school after the // regular school and I have to be there til ten.

Liz: Mmhmm

Ann: What school is that?

**Shufen:** It's like (0.9) not officially like from the teacher.

Liz: Kind of a

**Shufen:** Like cram school is like // who teach

Liz: Yeah, cram- cramming that you // cra- get

**Shufen:** Cramming. Yeah.

In this excerpt, Ann directed her vocabulary question to Shufen, but Liz attempted to answer it at the same time as Shufen. Therefore, it appears that NNSs were not expected to provide vocabulary during the conversation.

The recordings indicate that continuing the conversation was often more important than teaching about the English language; however, when communication broke down because of misunderstanding, opportunities for learning were often present. For example, consider the following excerpt from Recording 4:

(9) **Hye:** Not superhero but but there is a Korean traditional story about the hero and then um he was uh:: descended?

Tim: [Oh::

John: [Descended?

**Hye:** Yeah (by Europe) and (1.0) uh uh in the present they made (1.3) movie about the story.

John: It was- what he was descended? [Or he was sent?]

**Hye:** [Uhh, he was-] no, no. The story was (1.2) descended?

**Joo:** The story was //spoken by //by people.

John: Oh oh.

John: Oh by oral?

**Joo:** Yes, oral.

John: Oh, it was told orally

In this example, Hye used the term “descended” to mean “passed down,” which was a non-standard use for the NESs, so they searched for a better way for Hye to express herself. In other situations, a repair was needed because of improper pronunciation, as in Recording 1:

(10) **Min:** That’s because of the blood?

Alex: Yeah, // the flood

**Da:** Flood

**Min:** Oh flood.

**Da:** Flood, okay.

Alex: You don’t want to say blood, that’s a completely di(h)ffer(h)ent (h) thing.

In this excerpt, both a NES and NNS initiated the repair for Min. However, most mispronunciations were ignored if they did not interfere with the meaning of the statement.

Repair occurred on the part of the NESs when they suspected that a NNS did not understand them. For example, the following excerpt from Recording 2 shows a NES exchanging the word “suck” for “stink” when a NNS expresses confusion:

(11) Eric: Does it suck living here?

**Hyo: Sorry?**

Eric: Does it suck living here? Does it stink living here?

This situation could serve as a learning moment for Hyo if she understood the idiomatic usage of “stink” but hadn’t known it could be synonymous with “suck.”

Along with repairing miscommunications, the recordings show signs that the participants were checking for their own comprehension. Usually, for NESs, this involved repeating the NNSs to make sure that they had comprehended correctly, which was also observed in Long’s study (1983, p. 137). In one example, when a NES was checking for comprehension, he provided the NNS with relevant vocabulary:

(12) **Min: And no (1.4) they are not allowed to no hair.**

Alex: You can’t shave? Okay

When it comes to checking the comprehension of others, however, there are few examples in the recordings. The recordings only include two clear examples of speakers checking for comprehension among their listeners, both involving a NNS asking, “You know what I’m saying?” in Recordings 2 and 4. However, NESs would check for comprehension before beginning a long speech turn, such as in Recording 2 when a NES asks, “You know marching band?” before starting a story about being in marching band. Once again, this supports Long’s

(1983) observation that NESs try to preemptively avoid confusion in order to continue the conversation (p. 132). These results indicate that participants—particularly the NESs—are more concerned about carrying on the conversation than teaching the English language, but learning English still occurs through the conversations.

### *Engaging*

As mentioned above, the NNS survey respondents listed improving spoken English and improving listening as some of the top reasons why they come to CEC. However, speaking is ranked much higher than listening. Most likely, this is because NNSs have plenty of opportunities to practice listening to English: in their classes, while watching television, or sitting in a public environment. However, speaking practice is typically more difficult to obtain. If NNSs want to improve their speaking skills, they need to be in a social situation in which they can engage in the conversations occurring around them instead of just listen. For this reason, engagement of participants at CEC is very important.

According to the interviews, several factors can influence how engaged participants are at CEC. Many of the interviewees commented on the importance of topic, particularly that the topic must be interesting and educational. The topics should also be universal, meaning that all participants can contribute to the discussion. Five of the interviewees also said that new participants are often shy and reluctant to join in the conversation. Because of this, the interviewees stated that it is important to actively engage other participants in the conversation by asking questions and getting to know each other. Two of the NNS interviewees also said that sometimes they have trouble contributing to the conversation because a NES might be dominating the conversation.



The conversation analysis revealed many factors related to NNS engagement. To begin with, I will discuss how the NESs attempted to engage NNSs in the conversations. As suggested in the interviews, the most prominent method that NESs used was asking questions. The questions that NESs asked in the recordings can be divided into closed and open questions. Closed questions, which allow for limited answers such as “yes” or “no,” are known to give the questioner more control in a conversation and limit the responder’s ability to contribute (Jones et al., 2006, p. 12). Open questions, on the other hand, usually result in longer speaking turns and more opportunity for the responder to control the topic of the discussion (2006, p. 13). Below are two contrasting examples of an open and closed question on the same topic during two different CEC conversations:

(13) Recording 2: Eric: Can teachers hit you over there?

(14) Recording 1: Alex: What kind of punishments can they give children? If a child does something bad what kind of punishment do they give in schools?

Although the NESs are essentially seeking the same information, Alex asks a question that invites the NNSs to contribute more to the conversation. The question asked by Eric could elicit a full conversation, but not necessarily. An excerpt from Recording 3 shows how conversations are shaped by open and closed questions:

(15) Liz: And Shufen actually graduated from Maplewood High School, right?

**Shufen: Yes::**

Liz: Went there junior and senior year?

**Shufen: Yes.**

Liz: And how did you end up- uh your your family does not live in Fargo?

**Shufen: No, just me here.**

Liz: You came by yourself // to-

**Shufen: Yeah.**

Ann: How was that? Liv- going to Maplewood?

**Shufen: It's // really**

Tia: Intense?

**Shufen: You mean in the beginning? I don't know. Most people was like ask me aren't you afraid like when you're sixteen or fifteen came by yourself and it's no it was interesting.**

The questions at the beginning of the discussion are not only closed, but they are also questions that Liz knows (or at least suspects) the answer to. In fact, this speech is very similar to formal institutional talk, such as in a courtroom or classroom. Institutional talk follows turn-type pre-allocation, meaning that the roles of the participants and the speech acts they are allowed to perform are predetermined (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1988, p. 149). The conversation changes, however, when Ann asks an open question, which allows Shufen to express her thoughts instead of giving yes or no responses.

Although open questions appear to create more engagement than closed questions, NNSs still found ways to engage in the discussions when asked a closed question. One example of this situation comes from Recording 3:

(16) Liz: But how about in China? Did you- were the the books textbooks were they- did you get to use them for the year and then give them back or did you have to buy?

**Chao: We have to buy the textbook actually in just for the high school. Uh now the high school system has been changed and like we are going to go to uh go**

**from ni- nine year obligation edu- obligation education to twelve year which is include high // school three years.**

Liz: Okay.

Ann: Ohh

**Chao: Oh and there are just three years in China for the high school. Not like here with four years**

Liz begins by asking a closed question that elicits a short response (“We had to buy the textbook”), but Chao uses his speaking turn to introduce a new topic: the length of required study in China.

The recordings also include several examples of NNSs engaging or attempting to engage in the discussion but being hindered by the NESs. In some situations, the topic that the NESs chose was difficult for the NNS to contribute to. For example, Recording 6 involved a discussion of movies that CEC participants could watch at a future meeting. Since the NNS was unfamiliar with many of the movies, it was difficult for him to contribute until one of the NESs provided him with an opening:

(17) Carol: Have you seen Mulan?

**Zhen: Yeah.**

Carol: What do you think of that // as a Chinese person?

Stacy: Yeah?

**Zhen: Uhh that’s just based on Chinese story but with American version very American style like just**

Mary: Disneyfication

**Zhen:** Yeah just for example like the like uh in that (0.9) uh who is that like like there is one photo in that in that uh movie and like the the there is a king and the hand- um shake his hand with that that guy I think it's he's a bishop or something?

Stacy: Yeah

**Zhen:** But an advisor like that and and that and that guy's hand shake shake hands with king and point him and like a smile. In China we don't do // that and that's very American style=

Stacy: No?

Mary: =Now now that might be an interesting approach to it would be to um to take something like that that is based on a

(1.1)

Carol: Yeah

Mary: A traditional Chinese story but has been done in

Stacy: An American

Mary: American version

**Zhen:** Mmhmm

Mary: And talk about what's authentic Chinese and what's yeah (h) not really

Stacy: Really not

Mary: Umm

Gary: The Sandlot is a pretty funny movie.

Carol successfully engages Zhen in the conversation by asking a closed question and following it up with an open question. However, this does not last. The NESs begin discussing the

possibility of watching *Mulan* for a future meeting but no longer ask Zhen what he thinks of the idea. Gary then changes the topic to a movie Zhen is not familiar with, which leaves him less engaged for the remainder of the conversation.

Some NNSs seemed to wait for the NESs to provide them with an opening in the conversation, but many also chose to engage in the discussions without an opening. For example, during a discussion on school attire in the United States, the NNSs were initially unengaged until one NNS inserted herself into the discussion.

(18) Jane: It was the stupidest rule. I don't know. (h) And then we switched principals and that rule wasn't a rule anymore.

(0.9)

**Shufen: I think you guys should be glad like back then we we had to cut our hair like two fingers up your ear, so it's // short.**

Jane: It's a rule?

**Chao: Really?**

**Shufen: Yeah**

**Chao: Even girls?**

**Shufen: Yeah. No, girls. Guys like this.**

In excerpt 18, Shufen successfully contributes to the discussion and transitions the topic to focus on the rules in her school. As you can see, Chao also became engaged in the discussion at this point. Several minutes later, when the discussion had transitioned to discussing one of the NESs' haircut, Chao takes a turn in steering the discussion toward school rules outside of the United States:

(19) **Chao:** **But we cannot dye the cuh- dye the hair as well. We cannot to make it to another color.**

Liz: Ahh. // Dye (or temporary?)

**Chao:** **No other color. No, we just have black hairs.**

Kim: You can't have it any color?

**Chao:** **No.**

Jane: What if your hair was naturally blond?

**Shufen:** **N(h)o, no one.**

Tia: What is the // possibility? (h)

**Chao:** **In China- Yeah (h)**

Ann: [What if you're an albino?]

Liz: [What if you went swimming] in a swimming pool that had a really bad problem with the PH in the water and your hair turned green?

(. . .)

Liz: At one time Fargo North's swimming pool was that bad.

After this, Liz begins a story about a swimming pool, which ends the discussion about school attire. Liz's question in this excerpt does not function as a way to engage the student or even as an appeal for information; instead, Liz uses the question to change the topic. The topic continues to change throughout the remainder of the conversation, but the NNSs make no more discernable attempts to control the conversation and remain less engaged than the NESs.

In some situations, a NNS's contribution was ignored by the NESs. In Recording 3, this resulted in a schism, where a conversation is split between participants (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974, p. 713):

(20) Jane: There used to be a school right there.

**Shufen: Yeah, we don't-**

Jane: It's so quiet out in the country.

**Shufen: We don't have school bus  
at all in**

Ann: Really? (h)(h)(h)

Liz: You have to- How far- How  
long would it take you to get to  
school in Taiwan?

Jane: There's no lights out there. Our road is  
not paved. Our closest neighbors are like  
two miles away.

**Shufen: My mom drove me.**

Liz: Oh, she drove you?

Jane: It's a little scary I always // think

**Shufen: Yeah**

Ann: Feel like there's ( ).

Liz: Very nice mother

Jane: I do think about that sometimes like oh  
what if there's a fire and I'm the only one  
here?

**Shufen: Yeah usually parents  
drove you or or you had to bike.**

Liz: Okay.

Ann: Yeah.

**Chao: Is that far- uh very far away  
from your home?**

In this excerpt, Shufen attempts to engage with the conversation. After her first failed attempt, she tries again, and the conversation splits into two separate discussions: one with two NNSs and one NES, and one with four NESs. In one of the interviews, a NES pointed out that this behavior makes conversations particularly difficult during CEC meetings.

Most likely, one reason that NNSs had such trouble engaging in Recordings 3 and 6 is that they were greatly outnumbered by the NESs. On the other hand, the NNSs in Recording 1

had an easier time engaging and controlling the discussions since there was only one NES. Recordings 2, 4, and 5 had the same or almost the same number of NNSs as NESs, and they differed in their amount of NNS engagement. Recording 5, as mentioned earlier, included a NNS who quickly became the table leader. Recordings 2 and 4, however, did not (initially, at least) have any single participant who immediately took control of the conversation. Yet, Recording 4 had much more NNS engagement than Recording 2. Since these two recordings had similar participants but differed greatly in their level of NNS engagement, the remainder of this discussion will focus on some of the contrasting behaviors that likely influenced how engaged the NNSs were in Recordings 2 and 4.

Recording 2 began after a student presentation about the education system in the United States. One of the NESs begins the conversation by asking the following question:

(21) Lynn: Do you guys think most of that is true, like private schools usually don't have more funding really than public schools or do you think- do you have different experiences?

The question is directed toward the other NESs to either confirm or argue with what had been said in the presentation, which means that the NNSs are not asked to contribute. The next discussion topic in Recording 2 is also introduced by asking a question to the other NESs:

(22) Eric: Is anybody not from North Dakota here? Well, yeah. Y(h)eah. (h) But are you from Minnesota or::: ?

The question elicits a physical response from the NNSs, but Eric indicates that he is directing the question to the other NESs. It is possible that the NESs who asked these questions saw it as their role to educate the NNSs about American culture. It is also possible that they were trying to



focus the discussion on a topic that they were familiar with. Regardless of the reasoning, these actions limited the NNSs' speaking turns.

In contrast, the participants in Recording 4 were very conscious about distributing the speaking turns among each other by selecting topics that everyone was interested in, such as movies and musical artists. Sharing speaking turns was also done explicitly whenever two participants started speaking at the same time:

(23) Tim: [That's- wha- do- do-] Go ahead.

**Joo: [A lot- yeah- I-]**

**Joo: (h)G(h)o ahead. You go ahead.**

Tim: Okay I was going to ask about this movie. Have you seen this movie?

Later in the conversation, a similar event occurred between the same two participants:

(24) Tim: [Us- no no no no no no no no no no] Go right ahead.

**Joo: [I- oh no no no no no no no]**

**Joo: (h) It was holiday in Korea because the government want to encourage people to plant tree.**

The first time the two participants interrupt each other, the NES ended up speaking; in the second instance, the NNS spoke. Therefore, both participants were engaged in the conversation and were also interested in what the other person had to say.

Recording 2 was not devoid of attempts to engage the NNSs; in fact, there are many examples of the NESs trying to engage the NNSs, but the attempts are rarely successful. At one point, a NES initiates a new discussion on a topic that he believes the NNSs can contribute to, which is also a topic that he has read about in the news:

(25) Eric: What do you- I know this is probably nosy but what do you guys think about all the North Korea stuff going on right now?

(Laughter from multiple participants)

Eric: I know uh people probably ask you about that, so (1.1) Because wasn't it didn't they shut down a factory?

**Sun: Yeah.**

Eric: Over there? Like in the DMZ. You can cross the DMZ and work there and then come back but now they shut that down right? For them? Or is there any more news on that? Like can they work again or?

(2.1)

Lynn: She's like I have no idea. (h)

**Sun: Yeah**

**Hyo: That's only (1.1) what politicians care about.**

Eric: The politicians?

**Hyo: Yeah**

Eric: Yeah

**Hyo: General people if they are not interested in politics=**

Eric: Mmhmm.

**Hyo: =we don't care about that much in North Korea.**

Eric: Okay.

**Hyo: But recently we feel scared by them.**

(1.4)

Eric: Okay.

**Sun:** But not that much. (h)(h) General people doesn't care- Actually, they care but they didn't like scared or like this because they many people think that oh maybe the war will be not a problem again.

**Hyo:** Sometimes Americans or other foreigners they'll know about North Korea better than about us.

Eric: They know more about North Korea than South Korea?

**Hyo:** Yeah.

Eric: I'm sure because North Korea gets a lot of the the attention because it's so like shut down from everybody else, you know, which is interesting. Do you guys like (1.1) What is it- so you don't really interact with like talk- do you talk in your public schools about North Korea? Or do you just kind of shut it out completely?

Despite Eric's intention to engage the NNSs in the conversation, the NNSs indicate that they are not interested in or knowledgeable about the topic he has chosen. However, Eric continues trying to engage the NNSs in the topic. Notice that Hyo attempts to guide the conversation by mentioning the American perception about North Korea and South Korea. Eric acknowledges Hyo's statement but continues with his own topic of interest. It is not until later in the conversation that they transition to the topic of American perceptions of North and South Korea, which noticeably engages both NNSs:

(26) Eric: Yeah. But I don't know anything about South Korea which is- you're right everyone knows more about North Korea than (1.7) Totally different.

**Sun:** [Yeah]

**Hyo:** [Yes] so when I came when I came first one of my American friend he ask me you are from North Korea so you're communist so (h) its kind of shocking because we are very different we are not communists.

Eric: Mmhmm

**Hyo:** [So]

**Sun:** [Yeah] we are we are democracy and I think I think we are very developed country now (h) so (h)

Eric: Oh yeah

**Sun:** Yeah not not

Lynn: No, no

Eric: Oh. Oh yeah. Well when you compare it to North Korea-

**Sun:** Not not to each country but we are just develop- developing: (1.0) now

Eric: It's very uh it's like night and day isn't it? From like North Korea to South Korea cuz when you're under like a control like that at all times with a with a communist country it's very hard to help out everybody (0.9) cuz you're only giving out so much but in a in a democracy there's more people that are in charge you know. So. (4.3) So are you all here for four years then? Or do you go home in the summers?

In this excerpt, Hyo attempts to educate the NESs about South Korea. Eric's statement that South Korea is developed in comparison to North Korea could be interpreted to mean that he does not consider South Korea to be very developed, and Sun's response suggests that she interpreted it this way and was trying to correct him. Eric then states that he considers South Korea and North Korea to be very different, indicating that his earlier comment had been

misinterpreted. However, because Eric is trying to show that he understands South Korea, he misses an opportunity to let the NNSs talk about their own country. The discussion quickly ends at that point and Eric searches for another way to keep the NNSs engaged.

In contrast, consider the following excerpt from Recording 5 during a discussion on Korean musicians:

(27) Tim: All right, well um what's- currently, what are the most popular Korean musicians? (1.2) Oh do you know Rain?

**Hye: [Rain? Yeah. But he is in] military service now.**

**Joo: [Yeah, Rain. But he is (h)(h)]**

Tim: What really?

**Joo: Yeah.**

Tim: So even celebrities //have to go?

**Hye: Yep**

**Joo: Yeah, but they they trying not to go but they should go.**

Tim: Military service. Wow. So women don't have to do military service?

When Tim asks about the musician Rain, both NNSs immediately mention that he is in military service. Tim appears to sense that this is an interesting topic to the NNSs, so he quickly shifts the discussion to focus on military service in South Korea. Thus, Tim is exhibiting some of the characteristics that Long (1983) noted in his study such as selecting salient topics and being willing to quickly change topics (p. 134).

In Long's (1983) article about NES-NNS interactions, he noted that the tendency for NESs to use strategies that facilitated the conversation depended on the amount of experience the NESs had with people from other cultures (p. 139). Most likely, this is because NESs who have

spoken with NNSs are more accustomed to the ways that communication with NNSs can break down. However, I believe that there may be another factor involved: willingness to understand a different cultural viewpoint. In Recordings 2 and 4, the NES participants approached the NNSs' culture very differently. In excerpt 26 from Recording 2, the NES has preconceived notions of what the two countries are like and does not invite the NNSs to express their perspectives. Here is a similar example from Recording 2 during a discussion about the school year in South Korea:

(28) **Yoon: We start (h) in March and**

**Sun: Yeah March // and then end in December.**

**Yoon: and end**

Eric: You end in December? Oh that's interesting. Huh. So January February is like your summer months?

(0.9)

**Hyo: January // February is winter vacation.**

**Sun: It's winter.**

Eric: Well- well yeah. Winter vacation. So you have a winter vacation instead of a summer vacation then?

Eric, hearing that the Korean students don't have school in January and February, compared it to the longest break that American students have: summer vacation. He therefore labels January and February as South Korea's summer months because that fits his frame of reference.

Compare that with a discussion in Recording 4 on the same topic:

(29) **Hye: First semester is March to June and second semester is (1.0) uh:: (1.9)**

**October?**

**Joo: Uh second semester maybe (0.9) after (September)?**

Tim: Oh, so it's reverse the

**Hye: Yeah.**

Tim: What what we would consider // reverse.

**Hye: Yeah.**

Similar to excerpt 28, the NES in excerpt 29 compares the Korean school year with the United States school year and says that it is reverse. However, he immediately corrects himself by saying, "What we would consider reverse." This suggests Tim is conscious that his culture dictates what he considers to be normal and that other people would view the situation differently.

Recording 4 includes other examples of both NESs attempting to understand the culture of the other participants without trying to normalize it according to what is done in the United States. For example, when the NNSs stated that men in South Korea usually enter military service early so that they are not older than the other soldiers, one of the NESs tries to understand the situation from a South Korean perspective:

(30) Tim: Do you- in Korean language do you use different words to talk to elder people?

**Hye: [Yeah.**

**Joo: [Yeah.**

Tim: Like you are more polite I'm guessing.

**Hye: Mmhmm**

Tim: So so I guess then uh if you were to go into military service there would be a conflict of how do I address //this person?

**Hye: Yeah**

**Joo: Yeah, it's very crazy**

Tim: Okay.

**Joo: Very different culture.**

In this excerpt, Tim's questions about South Korea gave all of the participants an opportunity to reflect and comment on the differences in culture between South Korea and the United States.

The discussion in this chapter largely focused on how the NESs helped or hindered the NNSs during CEC, but it is important to note that the NNSs also had the opportunity to help the NESs. By engaging in cross-cultural conversations at CEC, NESs have the potential to learn about other cultures and gain the ability to adopt and understand different perspectives. I hypothesize that the NESs who continue to attend CEC are more likely to eventually approach cultural differences with the open-mindedness demonstrated by the NESs in Recording 4.



## CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this study, I posed two research questions:

- 1) Why do CEC participants choose to attend CEC meetings?
- 2) What do the interactions of the NESs and NNSs reveal about their perceived roles within the meetings?

The survey responses indicate that all CEC participants are interested in learning about other cultures and meeting people from other countries, which was also mentioned by four of the interviewees. However, according to the surveys, the NNSs are primarily concerned about improving their spoken English whereas NESs are more motivated by supporting CEC or obtaining credit for class than helping NNSs improve. As for the second research question, the lack of explicit language teaching in the recordings suggest that the NESs do not view English education as part of their role. Instead, many NESs—and the NNSs from Recordings 1, 5, and the end of 2—take it upon themselves to ask questions and guide the discussions to keep the conversation going, functioning more as table leaders than teachers. However, sometimes the NESs overstep this role and dominate the conversations in a way that makes it difficult for the other participants to contribute, such as by asking closed questions (Recording 3, excerpt 15), directing their questions to other NESs (Recording 2, excerpts 21 and 22), or choosing American-specific topics (Recording 6, excerpt 17).

This exploratory study demonstrates a possible method for determining how well the practices of a service like CEC adhere to the goals of its participants. However, it does not give an indication as to how effective CEC's practices actually are. To determine whether or not NNSs are improving their English would require a longitudinal study that would take into account other influences on NNSs' speech acquisition. Another limitation of this study is that

the conversations were recorded a full year before the interviews and survey was conducted, and during that year CEC elected two international students as officers and the number of NNSs increased noticeably. It is therefore possible that new recordings would reveal different findings. This research could also benefit from recordings that involve participants from many different cultures since almost all of the recorded NNSs were from China or South Korea. Furthermore, future researchers should be sure to consider how previous cross-cultural experience impacts participants' behavior.

However, even with these limitations, the data gained from the recordings reveal the helpful and harmful practices that are relevant to NESs working with NNSs. Furthermore, the study reveals how an empowering space can be implemented in a university setting. Since learning about other cultures was such a high motivation for CEC participants, CEC appears to be a contact zone in which, as Key (2002) proposes, everyone experiences victory instead of oppressing one another. The recordings also revealed many instances of cultural synthesis (attempting to learn from people who have a different worldview), although some participants—particularly in Recording 2—seemed unwilling or unable to approach other cultures with this mindset. Additionally, since the interviews and surveys did not reveal any personal benefits gained by the NESs from the NNSs improving their English, the role of a literacy broker might be more fitting for the NESs than literacy sponsor. This is not to say that the NESs' intentions are entirely philanthropic, however. Many NESs attend CEC for class or to enjoy themselves, which could be why education is a rather low motivation for the NESs.

One conclusion drawn from this research is that programs like CEC do not completely meet the needs of NNSs. The NNSs at CEC want to improve their spoken English, but the NESs have different goals and do not always lead the conversations in a way that is helpful for the

NNSs. CEC's primary benefit to NNSs is that it provides them with exposure to English conversations. However, research has shown that students improve their language fluency much more effectively when they receive ample exposure *and* direct language instruction (Saunders, et al., 2013, p. 16). CEC has the potential to greatly supplement English language courses by giving ELL students opportunities to practice listening and speaking English in a more engaging and interactive context than a classroom, but it is not a replacement for the courses.

On the other hand, this research indicates that CEC is providing benefits to the NES participants. According to Martha Merrill (2010), attending a university has been linked to improved citizenship among students. Merrill believes that this stems from the access to diversity that exists at universities, which makes students less frightened and more interested in different perspectives (2010, p. 49). CEC supports this process by encouraging university students to interact with people from multiple cultures and diverse backgrounds. As suggested in the conversation analysis and by Long's research, this exposure improves students' cross-cultural communication skills and ability to approach topics from multiple perspectives.

After completing this research, I have formed several suggestions for language-acquisition programs like CEC. First, NESs should take deliberate steps to invite more NNS engagement in the conversations. One way to accomplish this is to ensure that the NESs do not greatly outnumber the NNSs, since this likely contributed to the lack of NNS engagement in Recordings 3 and 6. Furthermore, NESs should explicitly provide NNSs with speaking turns during the conversations. It is important to remember that turn-allocation can differ across cultures (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1988, p. 115), so participants may be waiting for a specific cue that never comes. In fact, since empowering spaces encourage participants to share about their culture, conversational etiquette in different countries could be an interesting discussion topic

that would also raise NESs' awareness that they ought to approach these conversations differently. A second recommendation for empowering spaces is to provide the instruction that the learners ask for. In the case of CEC, since the interviews and survey suggest that NNSs want NESs to correct their language, the NESs should oblige. On the other hand, NESs should be cautious of providing instruction that the other participants do not want, such as focusing on American topics that the NNSs have not expressed interest in, which occurred at the beginning of Recording 2.

A final recommendation for all members of the academic community (both educators and learners) is to be aware of needs at their institutions and create momentum to encourage change. Student-run initiatives, like CEC, can serve as the starting point for institutional critique, a method for examining the spaces in an institution that have the potential for creating change. According to Porter, Sullivan, Blythe, Grabill, and Miles (2000), institutional critique "insists that sometimes individuals (writing teachers, researchers, writers, students, citizens) can rewrite institutions through rhetorical action" (p. 613). In the case of CEC, the actions of the students who meet every week in the student union communicate to the university that they care about bridging the language difficulties between NESs and NNSs on campus. Although NNSs can theoretically get through the university relying largely on their reading and writing skills, many of them recognize that their speaking skills are also important for their futures. Similarly, NESs do not want to miss out on the culturally-enriching experience that a university campus can deliver. As mentioned in the introduction, classroom environments can actually discourage NESs and NNSs from speaking to each other, and so NESs want a space to practice cross-cultural communication just as much as NNSs want a space to practice English speaking.

Since CEC's inception, more programs have been offered at NDSU for NNSs, such as a preparatory course for international graduate teaching assistants and a weekly Cultural Coffee Hour sponsored by the international programs office. The campus appears to be making its services to NNSs a higher priority. I believe that programs such as CEC communicate to the university that such actions are necessary and appreciated by the student body. Through its thorough analysis of CEC, this exploratory study hopefully provides a model that other faculty and students can use to similarly encourage their institution's movements toward a more diverse, accessible, and mutually beneficial campus environment.

## REFERENCES

- Anzaldua, G. (1987) *Borderlands/La Frontera*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.
- Belzer, A. (2006). Less may be more: Rethinking adult literacy volunteer tutor training. *Journal of Literacy Research* , 38(2), 111-140. doi: 10.1207/s15548430jlr3802\_1
- Blumenthal, A. J. (2002) English as a second language at the community college: An exploration of context and concerns. *New Directions for Community Colleges*. 117, 45-54.  
doi: 10.1002/cc.52
- Brandt, D. (2010) Sponsors of literacy. In T. Deans, B. Roswell, & A. J. Wurr (Eds.), *Writing and Community Engagement: A Critical Sourcebook*. (15-33). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Brown, G. and G. Yule. (1983) *Teaching the Spoken Language*. New York: Cambridge Language Teaching Library.
- Chi, M. T. H. (1996). Constructing self-explanations and scaffolded explanations in tutoring. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 10, 533–549. doi: 10.1002/(SICI)1099-0720(199611)10:7<33::AID-ACP436>3.0.CO;2-E
- Deans, T. (2010). English studies and public service. In T. Deans, B. Roswell, & A. Wurr *Writing and Community Engagement: A Critical Sourcebook*. (97-116). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Dustmann, C. and A. van Soest. (2001). Language fluency and earnings: Estimation with misclassified language indicators. *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 83(4), 663-674.
- Elbow, P. (1998) *Writing without teachers* (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.

- Freire, P. (2003). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (30th Anniversary Edition). New York, NY: Continuum International.
- Goldenberg, C. (Summer 2013). Unlocking the research on English learners. *American Educator*, 4-38.
- Goodwin, L. (2013). English requirement in immigration reform will test underfunded ESL system. *The Ticket*. Retrieved from <http://news.yahoo.com/blogs/ticket/english-requirement-immigration-reform-test-underfunded-esl-system-171501009--election.html>
- Graesser, A. C., Person, N. K., & Magliano, J. P. (1995). Collaborative dialogue patterns in naturalistic one-to-one tutoring. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 9, 495-522.
- Hodne, B. D. (1997). Please speak up: Asian immigrant students in American college classrooms. In D. L. Sigsbee, B. W. Speck, & B. Maylath (Eds.), *Approaches to Teaching Non-Native English Speakers Across the Curriculum*. (85-92). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Hosford, S. D. & C. Sampson (2014). High-ELL-Growth states: Expanding funding equity and opportunity for English language learners. *Voices in Urban Education*, 37, 47-54.
- Hutchby, I. & R. Wooffitt (1988). *Conversation Analysis*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- Institute of International Education. (2013). Open doors report on international educational exchange. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/opendoors> on 1 Feb. 2014.
- Jones, R. H., A. Garralda, D. Li, and G. Lock. (2006). Interactional dynamics in on-line and face-to-face peer-tutoring sessions for second language writers. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 15, 1-23. doi:10.1016/j.jslw.2005.12.001

- Key, D. (2002). Safe houses and sacrifices: Filling the rooms with precious riches. In J. M. Wolff (Ed.), *Professing in the Contact Zone* (102-118). Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Kuk, L. & J. Banning. (2010). Student organizations and institutional diversity efforts: A typology. *College Student Journal*, 44(2). Retrieved from *Expanded Academic ASAP*.
- Levin, K. (2013). *More things than dreamt of in our philosophy: Tutoring, administration, and the other peculiarities of writing center work*. (Dissertation). Retrieved from *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*.
- Long, M. H. (1983). Native speaker/non-native speaker conversation and the negotiation of comprehensible input. *Applied Linguistics* 4(2), 126-141. doi: 10.1093/applin/4.2.126
- Matsuda, P. K. and T. Silva. (2001). Introduction. In P. K. Matsuda and T. Silva (Eds.), *Landmark Essays on ESL Writing*(xiii-xxv). Mahwah, NJ: Hermagoras Press.
- Merrill, M. C. (2010). Public good, private good, positional good: Globalization and paradigms of purposes in U.S. higher education. *AUDEM: The International Journal of Higher Education and Democracy* 1(1), 47-64. Retrieved from *Project MUSE*.
- Morris-Adams, M. (2013). Topic continuity in informal conversations between native and non-native speakers of English. *Multilinguia* 32(3), 321-342. doi: 10.1515/multi-2013-0015
- Perry, K. H. & Hart, S. J. (2012). "I'm just kind of winging it." Preparing and supporting educators of adult refugee learners. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 56(2), 110-122. doi: 1002/JAAL.00112
- Pomerance, A. H. (1990). *Volunteers tutoring adults: The construction of literacy by tutor-student pairs*. (Dissertation). Retrieved from *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*.



- Porter, J. E., P. Sullivan, S. Blythe, J. T. Grabill, and L. Miles. (2000). Institutional critique: A rhetorical methodology for change. *College Composition and Communication* 51(4), 610-642. Retrieved from *JSTOR*.
- Pratt, M. L. (2002). Arts of the contact zone. In J. M. Wolff (Ed.), *Professing in the Contact Zone* (1-20). Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Sacks, H., Schegloff, E. A., Jefferson, G. (1974). A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language*, 50(4), 696-735.
- Saunders, W., C. Goldenberg, and D. Marcelletti. (Summer 2013). English language development: Guidelines for instruction.” *American Education*, 13-39.
- Severino, C. (2002). Writing centers as linguistic contact zones and borderlands. In J. M. Wolff (Ed.), *Professing in the Contact Zone* (230-239). Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Statistical Services Centre. (2001). Approaches to the Analysis of Survey Data. The University of Reading, Department of Applied Statistics. Reading, UK: Statistical Services Centre. Retrieved from <http://www.ilri.org/>
- van Dijk, Teun A. (2001). Critical discourse analysis. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, & H. E. Hamilton, *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (352-367). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- van Dijk, Teun A. (1993). Principles of critical discourse analysis. *Discourse Society* 4(2), 249-283.
- Wetzel, D. (2012). Dickinson State University locked down degree scandal. *HuffPost College*. Retrieved from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/10/dickinson-state-universit\\_n\\_1269667.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/10/dickinson-state-universit_n_1269667.html).

Wu, Y. (2014). Conversation analysis: A discourse approach to teaching oral English skills.

*International Education Studies* 6(5), 87-91. doi: 10.5539/ies.v6n5p87

## APPENDIX A. TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

(Adapted from Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974)

- // The current speaker's speech act is overlapped by the following speech act. A repetition of the symbol means that the speech act after the following speech act overlaps the current speech act.
- [ Overlapped speech between participants. A closing bracket indicates that the overlapping speech has ended.
- = Utterances are connected as if one speaking turn.
- : Prolonged syllable
- Underlined text indicates an emphasized syllable or word
- (2.0) Silence measured in seconds
- Abrupt ending to a word or phrase
- (h) Sudden exhalations, usually laughter
- ° The following speech is low in volume
- ( ) Empty parentheses indicates that the transcriber could not distinguish the words. Parentheses with words indicate the transcriber is unsure if the enclosed word or phrase is correct or the words are a description of an activity, such as laughter. Parenthesis with ellipses indicate that part of the transcript has been left out.

## **APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

What country were you born in?

How long have you been in the United States?

How long have you been going to CEC?

What made you decide to first go to CEC?

Have your reasons for attending CEC changed?

What do you usually do during a CEC meeting?

If you had to label your role, what would you label it as?

What do you think is the purpose of CEC? Is CEC fulfilling that purpose?

What is your favorite part about CEC?

What would you like to change about CEC?

When having a conversation at CEC, what behaviors or practices make it easier?

What behaviors or practices make it more difficult to have a conversation?

Do you think CEC focuses more on the United States, other countries, or both? Which focus do you think would be better?

**APPENDIX C. SURVEY**

English Department  
 NDSU – Dept. 2320  
 P.O. Box 6050  
 Fargo, ND 58108

Jade Sandbulte  
 Minard 318E54  
 701.231.7143  
 jade.sandbulte@ndsu.edu

**Student-Led Collaborative Education in ESL Contexts**

You are invited to participate in this research study by completing this short survey. The survey will take about 5 minutes. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate or stop participating at any time without penalty. The purpose of this study is to determine why participants attend CEC with the goal of improving CEC’s meetings and educate others on how to create similar programs. Please do not include your name; your responses are confidential. If you have any questions regarding this research project, please contact the researcher using the above contact information. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or would like to report a research-related problem, please contact the NDSU Institutional Review Board at 701.231.8908 or ndsu.irb@ndsu.edu

What country were you born in? \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been in the United States? \_\_\_\_\_

From 1-5 (1=Beginning learner, 5=native speaker), how would you rate your English fluency?

How often do you come to CEC (circle one):

**Almost Always      Usually      Sometimes      Rarely      This is my first time**

From the following list, please select the 5 reasons that best describe why you attend CEC and rank them 1 to 5 with 1 being the most important reason.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>_____ To improve my spoken English</p> <p>_____ To improve my listening skills</p> <p>_____ To practice my presentation skills</p> <p>_____ To learn new vocabulary or idioms</p> <p>_____ To help others improve their spoken English</p> <p>_____ To share about my culture</p> <p>_____ To learn about other cultures</p> <p>_____ To meet people from many different countries</p> <p>_____ To meet people from the United States</p> <p>_____ To make new friends</p> | <p>_____ Because I have friends who come here</p> <p>_____ Because I like speaking with people</p> <p>_____ The experience is valuable for future jobs</p> <p>_____ To put my participation in my resume</p> <p>_____ To get volunteer hours</p> <p>_____ For a class assignment or extra credit</p> <p>_____ Because of a special event (games, food, etc.)</p> <p>_____ To offer my support to CEC</p> <p>_____ Other (please explain):</p> |
|---|---|