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Using what you have: Understanding and utilizing the intergenerational make up of a porous,
fluid classroom to better serve non-profit students

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in TESOL degree at
SIT Graduate Institute Brattleboro, Vermont

April, 2020

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A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Timothy C Bowman". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned in the center of the page.

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ABSTRACT

In South Florida, non-profit education centers struggle to keep seats filled consecutively throughout the class semester. The fluid nature of attendance based on job availability means that teachers struggle to maintain a sense of continuity and forward momentum in their lesson plans. Coupled with expected benchmarks from outside financial partners and unknown student populations, the teachers can start to feel overwhelmed by the outside factors at play in their classroom. At El Sol Community Center in Jupiter, Florida, that is exactly the case- it is a place where the community and the classroom truly merge into one in fluid, unpredictable manner. In the day, it is used as a job hub for migrant workers, and at night it becomes an educational facility for those same workers. The Latin American culture that makes up the class is a family-oriented culture with many familial teams attending class together. I will provide a literary review of current writings on intergenerational, porous, and fluid classrooms and provide an approach to utilizing these elements in a classroom effectively.

Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) Descriptors

Intergeneration, Age, Porous Classroom, Fluid Attendance, Non-profit

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Introduction

“Village! I learned that word from my daughter!” one of the level 4 students at El Sol said, as they were reading through a script for their pronunciation practice. I had been volunteering at the center for 6 months teaching English as a second language. This was, coincidentally, the first time that any of my students had vocalized something that I had been trying to uncover since I started thinking about the implications of intergenerational learning in January of last year. How can intergenerational learning be used as a tool for a teacher to utilize both inside and outside the classroom? What my student said without outright saying was that there is cross generational education happening at home, and that education is being brought to the classroom to further emphasize both her learning and the learning of her peers as well.

The question of intergenerational learning started while at SIT Graduate Institute in my intercultural communication for language teachers research question, how can a students’ education be enhanced through the home environment? In addition, two of my sub questions, “how can children help their parents,” and “what can a teachers’ role be in bridging the school to home gap,” directly tie into the current topic of this paper, how can a teacher harness the intergenerational make up of a porous classroom with fluid attendance?

That question alone carries three loaded terms that I want to clarify as they pertain to the question at hand and the research context, which I will get into more later. *Intergeneration*, and as it will be used in this paper, *intergenerational education*, is a term used to describe something that transcends accepted age boundaries. In the case of Heydon’s (2013) case study, intergenerational education encompassed 4 and 5-year old’s and seniors in an assisted living complex. For the purpose of my research, I decided to close that gap- focusing on the relationship between primary school-aged children (first through fifth grade) and their parents, a

demographic that is seen throughout Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti's (2005) *Funds of Knowledge*, which became the base of my research into a porous classroom. 'Funds of knowledge' is a concept which draws attention to the existence of resources and practices that can be found in the students' homes. It is thought that by harnessing this prior knowledge (resources, family histories, and home culture) a teacher can be more successful in their delivering of lessons because the students will be able to 'see themselves' in what they are learning.

A *porous classroom* is a concept where the classroom is not a stand-alone entity. Sandy (1998) defines a porous classroom through the connections that it has with the "external environment," and it is through these connections that knowledge is shared and expanded upon. It is a mutual connection in which both parties' benefit. In the case of the English as a second language classes hosted by El Sol, Wells Fargo, Florida Atlantic University's Health and Wellness program, the police department, and the greater community of Jupiter, Florida, have a stake in the education of the students. These entities not only have a presence in the curricula of El Sol's English program, but also in the overall livelihood of the students, who benefit from the partnership. A case can also be made to discuss a "porous classroom" in the sense of any time education is taken out of the traditional classroom. Gonzales *et. al* (2005) focused on bringing the home life into the classroom as a way to motivate and connect with their students, and their histories, in an effort to ground the education in something tangible.

And finally, the term *fluid attendance* is when a teacher can never expect which students will be attending a class from one day to the next. In the case of El Sol, it was likely that I would have 60 students registered for a class but only 24 would come to class the first day of the week, 32 the second day, and 19 the last day. Attendance is not mandatory and, therefore, it is hard to know who will be in attendance from one day to the next. This is especially true with the

migrant population that makes up El Sol. It is more important for a student to work and take care of their family than for them to continue with their English education, thus, when work is available, students are less likely to participate in class. Likewise, the students rely on bikes and walking for transportation. When there is bad weather, students are more likely to stay home than to ‘brave the storm’ and attend class. It is, from my experience, a hallmark of free English classes offered from the non-profit sector.

It is my goal to analyze how all three of these terms can be utilized to help promote a students’ education. Whereas *intergenerational learning* and *porous classroom*, do not necessarily have a negative connotation to them, *fluid attendance* does seem to have that connotation. The thoughts that accompany the term conjure the idea of lack of motivation and drive, that the students do not really care and are not invested in their education. It was my desire to understand how these three terms could work in harmony and provide a way for a language teacher to continue to promote their students’ education, even when their attendance might be more ‘fluid’ than desired.

Research context: El Sol- Jupiter, Florida

Palm Beach County is the third most populated county in Florida, with almost 1.5 million people living within its borders (Census, 2020). The median age is 45, and the average household income is just under \$62,000 and median property value at \$299,800. Jupiter is the northernmost city in the county. It boasts a population of 62,000 people, with a median age of 46. However, the median household income is \$79,731, with the median property value of \$328,900. This is the city that boasts homes of Celine Dion, Tiger Woods, Olivia Newton-John, amongst others. Yet right in the middle of all the wealth lies El Sol.

El Sol is a non-profit organization founded in 2006 as a response to a major immigration problem that had attracted media attention and became a focal point for anti-immigration groups (Vega & Steigenga, 2013). In response to the open-air labor market that had been established, where workers would stand on the side of the street with the hope that someone- a farmer, a construction foreman, business owner, or the like- would pick them up for day work, the community and several outside organizations came together to create a resource center to not only ease some of the hardships faced by the workers, but also gave a sense of a clean-up of the community (Chastin, Cink, & Kelly, 2007).

The majority of the population that use the services that El Sol offers are of Guatemalan and Mexican decent, though there are several outliers to this data (three Caucasians who use the employment services, and one Albanian student in level 4 of the English classes). As seen in Figure 1 (Cordero, 2020), about 63 workers show up in the morning for employment, however, just over half of those workers end the day with employment.

2019 Worker Statistics									Employer Statistics	
Month	General Attendance	Average General Attendance per day	Job Worker Attendance	Average Job Worker Attendance per day	Workers Hire d	Average Workers Hire d per day	*Daily Placement Rate %	**New Workers Registered	New Employers	Employer Attendance
January	2,754	89	1,936	65	852	28	44	19	68	452
February	2,755	98	1,879	67	816	29	43	31	71	496
March	2,977	90	2,086	67	1,029	33	49	52	93	565
April	2,658	89	1,789	60	1,129	38	63	29	75	633
May	3,094	100	2,122	68	1,375	44	65	44	96	698
June	3,088	103	2,011	67	1,312	44	65	29	108	666
July	2,770	89	1,916	62	976	31	51	26	76	587
August	2,866	92	1,932	62	1,191	38	62	42	122	716
September	2,678	89	1,812	60	1,050	35	58	26	85	631
October	2,862	92	1,842	59	1,059	34	58	21	88	666
November	2,456	82	1,559	52	1,171	39	72	20	78	692
December	2,782	90	1,914	62	906	29	47	22	48	482
Total	33,740	92	22,798	63	12,866	35	56	361	1,008	7,284

Figure 1: Day laborer statistics for 2019. A factor that will be discussed on the topic of the fluid classroom is the fact that May, June, and July have a higher rate of employment, however, the highest percentage(s) are seen during the times when class is in session.

This is not shown to bemoan the existence of the labor services that El Sol provides, in fact, it is the key reason for El Sol’s existence in the first place. The English classes (and other educational courses offered) are auxiliary services that have developed to help further the education of the migrant workers. However, as stated in the report (Cordero, 2020), there is a major overlap between the people who show up for work, and those that attend the evening English classes. It should also be noted that not shown in the graph above is the percentage of students who have found a “permanent” position through the resources offered. It is thought that about 25 percent of workers who started out as “day laborers” fall into this category (Vega & Steigenga, 2013).

English classes are held three nights a week for two hours, with additional “conversation” opportunities available on Saturday morning and during the week while workers are waiting to get hired. Figure 2 (Cordero, 2020) shows the distribution of registration in the English classes.

ESL Level 1						ESL Level 2					
	# Classes	# Students Enrolled	Attendance	Average Attendance	# Promoted*		# Classes	# Students Enrolled	Attendance	Average Attendance	# Promoted*
January	5	111	270	54		January	5	36	85	17	
February	12	111	378	32		February	12	36	186	16	
March	10	111	328	33		March	12	36	90	8	
April Spring	3	111	76	25	14	April Spring	3	36	26	9	3
April Summer	1	47	19	19		April Summer	1	32	18	18	
May	12	47	188	16		May	11	32	111	10	
June	12	47	130	11		June	12	32	131	11	
July	5	47	45	9	7	July	6	32	33	6	8
August	-	-	-	-		August	-	-	-	-	
September	10	80	297	30		September	10	31	94	9	
Oct	14	80	329	24		Oct	14	31	100	7	
Nov	3	80	51	17	1	Nov	1	31	6	6	5
Dec	-	-	-	-		Dec	-	-	-	-	
Total:	87	238	2111	24	22	Total:	87	99	880	10	16

Figure 2: Though there are 4 levels of English class offered, only levels 1 and 2 are offered here, as they have the highest rates of enrollment and are, predominantly, representational of the crossover in use of services offered by El Sol.

Level 1, across the board, has the highest rate of registration, and it also has the biggest difference in attendance numbers. Comparing the two figures, one would notice that for both levels of English classes, the winter term (January through April) has the highest rate of registration and the biggest class (based on pure numbers, not the registration/attendance percentage), which is also the time that we see lowest rate of placed workers.

With all classes, regardless of how many students actually show up, El Sol relies on the assistance of volunteers, who help manage and provide one on one attention to the students. There is a ‘head teacher’ in every class, and, in the case of level 1, there are at least three volunteers who manage smaller groups of students, ranging from 3-12 students on any given day. Volunteers stay with their groups throughout the terms, and often times the rapport between the volunteers and the students carries over into the next term, where the groups are maintained.

At this point I am going to switch from talking about the general to the specific. For the past year I have been a volunteer in level 1. I have the biggest group, averaging about 12 students during any one class. For the most part, in every class, I have a “core” group of ten students- eight men and two women- though there are other students who have a more fluid connection to our group. What I consider a hallmark of my group, however, is the age make up and relations of the students. I have four familial teams in my group- a mother and daughter (40’s and 9), a father and son (60s and 16), an uncle and nephew (50s and 16), and a father and son (40’s and 15). The other two students who consistently make up my group are in their early 20’s. These “familial teams” were the catalyst for my research on intergenerational learning, whereas the very nature of El Sol provided the backdrop for the added layers of the porous classroom and fluid attendance question that hovers over the entire education foundation of El Sol.

Problematizing the context

El Sol is a very unique place, and as Vega and Steigenga (2013) praise it, should be seen as a model to help ease the immigration and nationalistic sentiments that the United States continues to face. Though it is a novel resource center, the English as a Second Language program that it offers is not without its problems.

Perhaps the biggest problem that the teachers and volunteers face is something that cannot be avoided, the fluidity of attendance. As stated earlier, there is a strong correlation between the employment of the students and their ability to attend classes- employment will always come first. Even if students are not working during the class time, it is the nature of the work that they are doing that may keep them from attending class. The majority of the work that is available to the day laborers is very physically demanding- ranging from farm work to construction, house-keeping to landscaping. Of the student group noted, six students work as landscapers, two work as painters, and one works in the kitchen of a restaurant. Only one member of the group, the youngest, is able to spend the day without having done physical labor.

Another factor that plays into the fluidity of the attendance is the weather. On days where the weather is not very good, there is a marked decrease in the attendance. And that is due to the way that the students get to class. Very few students have access to motor vehicles of any type- when learning adjectives, a teacher made the mistake of asking what color a students' car was, which did not produce a viable answer from any students. The majority of the students either walk to class or ride their bikes, as public transportation is not as widely accessible in Jupiter as it is in Greater Palm Beach. Therefore, the main detriment to a students' attendance is not necessarily a students' investment, it is their physical ability to get to class.

Going along with the sense of the fluid attendance is the second problem that is inherent to free, non-profit courses, and that is that students will stop coming to class if they feel that they are not progressing. In Figure 2, there is a sizable decrease between January and February, a time when attendance could not necessarily be blamed on unemployment (the lack in additional “workers hired” at this time in figure 1 could support this). Similar trends are seen across the board from the first month of classes to the second month. There has been a problem with an ill-prepared teacher in the level one class, and students had made it known that there was a disconnect between them and their teachers (a sentiment shared in follow-up interviews with volunteers). Cited issues emerged from the prominence of rote like instruction, lack of creativity (classes were boring), and teachers sticking to a textbook that, in itself, had a lot of problems. Many students expressed a feeling of stagnation and stopped attending class, only to return at the start of the new term to give the classes a second chance.

The final problem comes from a lack of training on the part of the volunteers. Very few of the volunteers have any sort of teacher training, let alone training as an English as a Second Language teacher. The first lack of understanding in English as a second language teaching is a change in pedagogy due to the emergence and support behind translanguaging. In many classes, a well-meaning older volunteer would admonish her younger students/student dyads (and sometimes other student/volunteer dyad) interactions that were conducted in Spanish. This ‘English Only’ sentiment, though it once had its prominence, has fallen out of use. What that volunteer was missing was what Huang (2016) describes as a missed opportunity to gain and maintain rapport between the dyads, a factor that, in such cases, has as much to bear on a students’ investment as their continual production of the target language.

The second lack of understanding stems from the older volunteers' desire to be helpful and model good language use. Cordella and Kokubu (2016), cite it as one of the main ways to negatively impact mutual trust between a teacher and a student, and that is when the teacher gives the correct answer or talks for the student. In the case of El Sol, many of the teachers adopt a pedagogy of 'lead by example,' which can help model good usage for the student but can just as easily take agency away from the students.

The main issues of El Sol stem from not only a lack of understanding of accepted English teaching pedagogy, but also the effects that the lack of training and preparedness have on the students' perception of educational progress. Add in a students' physical pursuit of survival and the other factors that contribute to the fluidity of the attendance and some gaps in personal and professional knowledge appear. The question is no longer *what factors lead to the decrease in attendance*, but rather, *what can I (the teacher) do to assist the students during that drop-in attendance?* Couple that with the porous nature of El Sol and the intergenerational make-up of the class and the need for an all-encompassing solution emerges.

Intergenerational classes

The concept of intergenerational language learning is not a new one, however, there seems to be a lack of literature in the field as it pertains to English as a Second Language teaching. It is best to understand the benefits of intergenerational learning by first understanding the pros and cons of young learning versus aged learning.

Since the 1960's, the question of age and mastery of a foreign language has seen many different hypotheses, studies, and 'answers.' Perhaps the most widespread hypothesis, the Critical Period Hypothesis (Lenneberg, 1967), stills remains as the leading hypothesis when it

comes to the question of age. The cornerstone of the Critical Period Hypothesis is that there is an age at which all of the biological components are optimal for a child to easily and affectively learn a foreign language. Using evidence of lesions on the right hemisphere on people suffering from aphasia, Lenneberg (1967) showed that language was affected in children, and not adults, because of this injury to the right hemisphere. His theory was that language learning was cemented by puberty. However, Krashen (1973) came out with his own hypothesis, the “lateralization-by-five” theory, using the same evidence that Lenneberg used, to show that language learning does not simply stop because of the progression of age.

However, in recent years, the idea that there is a ‘drop off point’ after which learning a language is not possible has started to come under fire due to the questions that it poses as opposed to the ones that it answers. Though there are some merits to the hypothesis, it has “far from unanimous support” (Muñoz, 2006, p. 3), and since the early 2000’s, it seems, a subset of thinking around this topic have picked it apart, homing in on one part of the hypothesis over another. Singleton and Ryan (2004) sum up the field nicely, “with specific regard to L2 (second language) acquisition, it is no longer possible to accept the view that younger L2 learners are in all respects and at every stage of learning superior to older learners, not that older learners are in all respects and at every stage of learning superior to younger learners.” (p. 226) It is the point that they make here that provides the best framework for an understanding of age and intergenerational learning, and it is the idea of stages of learning in relation to the different stages of life.

Pros and cons of young learning

Children have an inherent inquisitiveness, and the pursuit of knowledge is not something that is imposed on them, rather it is something that is obtained (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2005). As a result of this understanding, there has been a shift away from formal linguistic proposals in the field of child language acquisition (Muñoz, 2006), because the view of the child as a whole self fails to explain the imbedded reasons that children become skilled users of a natural language (Gonzalez, Andrade, Civil, & Moll, 2005).

Perhaps one of the simplest reasons that it is a better idea to start learning a second language early is the fact that there is less ‘ground to make up’ (Cummins, 1981). If a child starts learning a language early, they will be learning a second language in conjunction with the exploration of their first language, leading them to draw connections and conclusions in an easier manner than if they were starting from zero later in life. The access to the “Universal Grammar” (Chomsky, 1986), the idea that children have an innate structure that is designed to learn language, would be optimal at this point in the child’s development. A similar hypothesis, the Domain-Driven Hypothesis (Plante, 2015), proposes a left-lateralized in-born molecular network that exists to help someone learn a language, which is easily accessed by children.

Though the jury seems to be out on the scientific explanations of why learning a language as a child leads to native like fluency, one thing that all studies seem to point to is that starting to learn a language early will lead to a more native-like ability to produce the language from an accent and pronunciation standpoint. One analysis (Asher & Garcia, 1969) of 70 Cuban born immigrants found that the immigrants who arrived in the country earlier in life had a higher probability to obtain a native-like accent, though the time in the country could also be a contributing factor. Oyama (1976) had a similar finding. In a test of Italian immigrants, it was

found that those who arrived under the age of 12 performed within the ballpark of the native control group. The relationship between age and native-like pronunciation is, perhaps, the strongest correlation that researchers have been able to find between age and language.

Perhaps one of the biggest constraints when it comes to starting to teach a second language in the younger years is the parameters that are put on the acquisition of such an education- that is, the reliance on the school system. To this end, there is the prominence of grade self-efficacy, (Huang, 2016b) which is the correlation between a students' confidence in their ability to obtain a specific grade and the students' academic success in the course. If students feel that they are supported in their classes and are progressing at a satisfactory pace, they are more likely to excel academically. However, if students 'get lost' or do not feel that they are 'getting it,' they are less likely to perform as they may wish, which, in turn, provides a negative perception on their feelings and attitudes to learning another language. As a result, the students' motivation (Muñoz, 2006) falters in a way that is detrimental to the overall pursuit of a second language.

There is also, as González *et. al* (2005) point out, the factor of standardized testing that the teachers have to adhere to. Children learn language through their own exploration of the world around them. Vocabulary emerges as they take in their surroundings, and grammar follows in a pre-determined, inherent order. Though teachers have the best intentions, performance has to reach specific benchmarks of proficiency, which, in many cases, can go against this natural instinct of living and learning with the language. As Heydon (2013) also points out, there are "limits so many well-meaning educators place on the possibilities for children and their learning," (p. 4) especially when it comes to the 4-6-year old's.

Along with the issues revolving around the formal education, there is also the question of the importance of the language practice outside of the classroom. A Welsh project called Twf (Edwards, 2005) tackled this dilemma by creating an approach that was socially inclusive. By using a multi-faceted approach of incorporating both the whole of the community and the entire family, language education was able to bridge the gap between school and the wider world around the students. This ‘real world’ application, which is something that is seen more in adult education, provides a supplement to what students are learning in school. Unfortunately, this approach works best when there is support from (and utilization of the second language in) the home, which is not something that is widespread at the current time (Muñoz, 2006). Indeed, it is hard for students to grasp onto a language when there is no ‘real world’ application to support the efforts that they are putting into their studies.

Accent aside, researchers have not been able to come up with a definitive conclusion on why it is better to start teaching children a second language early in life. As Krashen (1973) discovered, it may not necessarily be what is learned in these early stages that is important, but rather the linguistic stimulation that is received that ‘primes the pumps’ for further language acquisition.

Pros and cons of aged learning

“Is there sufficient ground to treat elderly people as a more or less homogenous group with its own specific characteristics?” (de Bot & van der Hoeven, 2011, p. 125) This is a question that needs to be kept in mind while on this particular path of inquiry.

Learning a language as an adult has a different sense of purpose than it does for children. Whereas children are predominately exposed to the second language in a scholastic setting,

adults have an investment in their education (Menard-Warwick, 2005). This investment emphasizes learner agency, there is a desire to increase their cultural standing (or capital), and they do so by committing time and resources that children may not necessarily have. de Bot and van der Hoeven (2011) cite it as a pursuit of lifelong learning, a way to keep the mind active as adults progress into their retirement years, which in turn has its own benefits. The ‘nun studies’ (Snowdon, 2003, as cited in de Bot & van der Hoeven, 2011), pointed to the existence of a “cognitive reserve” that is tapped into as the effects of age and dementia take hold of the brain. Advanced vocabulary and knowledge of language (being bi/multilingual) leads to longevity in an individual’s ability to communicate and function appropriately later in life. Further supporting this point, Bialystok *et al.* (2007, as cited in de Bot & van der Hoeven, 2011) showed that bilinguals, on average, have been found to show symptoms of dementia four years after their monolingual counterparts (though there is no correlation on that span being elongated with the addition of more languages). There is substantial reason for adults to be invested in learning another language, especially as they approach retirement age, when free time and the potential for authentic exposure to that target language become more likely.

However, this investment cannot be seen as the end-all-be-all of language learning. Adults, though they might have the time and resources to put into learning a second language, have just as much, if not more, social restraints and historical baggage that keeps them from actively pursuing a second language (Menard-Warwick, 2005). Though these adults have many diverse funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) that they are able to tap into to help them draw connections to the things they are learning, the teacher needs to be hyper-aware of not only the trauma that the adults can bring with them, but also the biases that have held them back in the past (Huang, 2016a).

Many researchers point to the lateralization of the brain as the reason why it is harder for adults to learn another language (see Lenneberg, 1967), however, as Krashen (1973) and Plante *et al.* (2015) have later shown, lateralization is not the final moment in second language learning that it was once thought to be. The ‘Norwegian Study’ (Plante, 2015) was a study that used brain imaging technology to record the effects in the brain as an adult is exposed to a new language. At first exposure, both the left and right superior temporal gyrus were activated. But eventually, the researchers were able to find that “the pattern of increasing left-hemisphere lateralization parallels increases in lateralization seen during childhood, rather than resembling the decreasing pattern described for the adult years.” (Plante, 2015, p. 14) The ‘Norwegian Study’ effectively showed that what has been touted as the reason for a decreased potential to learn a second language later in life is not a valid excuse to hold someone back.

To further complicate the matters, many studies (Justman and Nass, 1956; Donoghue, 1965, and Dunkel and Pillet, 1962, as cited in Singleton and Ryan, 2004) have found that there is no true correlation to acquisition of a language and age. In fact, adults (or in some cases, older/matriculated students) proved to show an initial superiority over the mastery of a language. However, the effects of the longevity of study cannot go unmentioned.

There are three ways in which learning language as an adult can prove to be problematic. de Bot and van der Hoeven (2011) refer to the ways as the “three changes of ageing,” (p. 126) and they are separated into physical changes, psychological changes, and social changes.

Physical changes include the effects of age on hearing, sight, and the brain. “Age related hearing decline is the rule, not the exception,” (de Bot & van der Hoeven, 2011, p. 133), which is an unfortunate reality of the aged population in the world. There is hope, with the development of technology in recent years, it is easier for those who are experiencing age related hearing loss

to retain their ability to hear. Likewise, with the refinement of cataract and corrective eye surgery, the effects of vision loss are becoming less and less of a problem. Unfortunately, there has not been many substantial strides made in the field of brain decay, however the ‘Nun Studies’ (Snowdon, 2003, as cited in de Bot & van der Hoeven, 2011), mentioned earlier, can provide a base for potential further investigation.

Psychological changes include the knowledge capital loss as a result of the physical decay of the brain, like the loss of memory due to dementia discussed earlier. However, there are other internal factors (Menard-Warwick, 2005) that play a part as well. Good and bad memories (which supports the importance of trauma informed instruction) are paramount to the lived experiences of the adult students. Perception of education from an adults’ parents, along with literary and education strategies that have or have not worked in the past (like rote memorization) also play a factor. And finally, anxiety and concerns about survival, living, and dying (Heydon, 2013) are never far from an adults’ mind, depending on the various factors and the way they view themselves.

The final change of aging is the social change that adults experience. The adult population in Heydon’s research (2013) comprised of adults who had been sent into nursing facilities by their families for various reasons. As Radermacher *et al.* (2016) point out, though, this is not necessarily a ‘death sentence’ to an adults’ ability to learn and transmit a language. The key to this percentage of the population becomes the support of the elders in their endeavors. If they are not supported, there can be a negative effect on the self-esteem of the adults. Aside from retirement homes, there are many other social changes (Menard-Warwick, 2005) that can hinder an adults’ ability to pursue a language: ESL Class schedule, jobs, child care, and application forms can negatively affect an adults’ ability or desire to participate in class.

Role of intergenerational learning

There are obvious benefits to starting to learn a language early in life, but that does not mean that learning a language later in life is not possible. The question I sought to answer, with the inconclusiveness of the evidence to provide a clear answer, was, *is it possible to harness the benefits of learning at both ends of life? How can a teacher use the knowledge of these benefits to create a mutual relationship between the two parties?*

Baltes and Schaie (cited in de Bot & van der Hoeven, 2011) proposed the idea of life span development, the idea that throughout life there are major life events that affect the development of a students' language use. Because learning continues throughout life, adults are better positioned to provide the support to the things that the younger students are yet to experience. After all, learning language is a societal need (Gursoy, 2011), in which all parties benefit from the wider communication opportunities and standards that are created when there is a mutual ability to communicate.

Intergenerational learning is not something that is new to many of the English language learners in America, and certainly is not something that is unknown to the students of El Sol. Heydon (2013) uses the term 'habitus,' the ways of being, going, and acting in the world across generations, time, and space, to define the intergenerational relationships that many of the students are familiar with. The Latin culture is one based on familial relationships- children very rarely 'belong' to just their parents, a fact that became extremely evident in the funds of knowledge research carried out by a group of ethnographers and teachers (Browning-Aiken, 2005). Velez-Ibanez and Greenberg (2005) further this idea by talking about the existence of

generational funds of knowledge, grandmothers who give word problems to the kids before bed, or grandfathers teaching their grandchildren wood working skills.

Another inherent reality of a lot of students is the social network (Tenery, 2005) that is created by the families to deal with realities of their lives: unemployment, immigration, illiteracy, and discrimination. At its most basic level, that is what intergenerational learning does (Cordella & Huang, 2016). It is a utilization of all the community language resources, which enriches the experience of all participants by fostering a greater understanding between the young and old participants. It also is a way (though not necessarily applicable in El Sol and other tight-knit communities) to break cultural stereotypes and encourage an appreciation of different cultures. It is a way to promote multiculturalism (Gursoy, 2011), which is closely tied to the trend of multilingualism.

Though these social networks play a role in the transmission of language from one generation to the next, there is also the idea of personal and familial trajectory (Menard-Warwick, 2005) that needs to be taken into consideration. Yes, the family is a resource for the overt education of the children, there are various internal ramifications based off of the perceptions that the family gives off. For example, one of Menard-Warwick's (2005, p. 166) students who was followed throughout her study, Brenda, talked about how her mother pushed her to study, even as Brenda pushed back, because her mother believed that the education that Brenda received would be valuable and serve her children.

Children are not passive bystanders in the world (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2005). There is the obvious notion of parents teaching their children the basics of language and basic life skills, but children are also active participants in their learning experience. Children are teaching their parents new things all the time (like the example at the beginning of the paper),

but they are also often times contributors to their households, not only in monetary ways but also in language utilization and acquisition. As a result, it is easy to blame the deficit model (Menard-Warwick, 2005) for a students' language failure on the parents, but in reality, it is the social network that families have created that led to a divergence in the desired structure (Kalish, Griffiths, & Lewandowsky, 2007). This is perhaps one of the more natural examples of intergenerational language transmission, that each generation learns a bit of language from the data produced by the generation that preceded it. Kalish *et al.* (2007) use an example of the "deaf Nicaraguan protolanguage" (p. 288) that, through generations, has solidified into the language used by the Nicaraguan deaf community. Though it is not a perfect data transfer, it is a "compromise solution" (p. 289) that tends to grow to be consistent. Thus, the emergence of slang, colloquialisms, and accents that can be vastly different from one town to the next- we pick up on the data that is transmitted to us from the older generations.

Kalish *et al.* (2007) call this transfer between the generations, no matter how imperfect it is, iterated learning, and there is more to iterated learning than just the instruction that is given on a second language. Many of the older generations have lived the "migration experience" (Kerswill, 2006, as cited in Lambert & Cordella, 2016), and even if there hasn't been a traumatic event, they have seen the developments and changes over time and place that put them in a better position to help the younger generation deal with the similar issues, whether they themselves are dealing with it or are trying to make sense of the policies and news that they hear.

An examination of intergenerational teaching literature seems to show that there is a lack of literature revolving around studies and programs and the benefits such institutions offer, though what has been written seem to agree on the benefits of such styles. Though it should be noted that even in the small percentage of intergenerational language learning/teaching literature,

an even smaller percentage revolved around the transmission of English. However, the topics and points that are brought up, though discussing the learning of languages other than English, can be applicable to English as a second language teachers and learners.

Perhaps one of the biggest benefits of intergenerational language instruction is the informal and natural support that the students get (Cordella M. , 2016) that goes beyond the classroom. The Welsh group Twf (Edwards, 2005), discussed previously, seems to be one of the leading proponents on this line of thinking. Though specifically encouraging the transmission of Welsh because of the decline in speakers, they sought to create a shift in the communities. The concentration of speakers of Welsh, like native Hawaiian and Aboriginal languages, is focused in the older populations, and if transmission is not encouraged, there is the possibility of those languages dying out. Twf has found that encouraging intergenerational language transmission in the homes (Twf got the information in the homes through midwives), coupled with formal education, was shown to “slow, halt, or even reverse language shift in communities.” (Edwards, 2005, p. 299) It is their goal to not only help elongate the life of this minority or native language, but to also champion the use of the language needed to communicate widely, a fact that is echoed throughout other pieces of literature (Menard-Warwick, 2005; Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005).

The most sizeable collection of information specifically regarding intergenerational teaching comes from Australia (Cordella & Huang, 2016). Again, this literature does not tackle the transmission of English, but rather focused on the transmission of Spanish, German, and Chinese from dyads consisting of older, native speakers and younger, English speakers. It was found that even though there was the desire to transmit one of the three target languages, there was a fair amount of English that was transmitted to the older population as well (Huang,

2016b). Code switching became a source of not only maintaining and building rapport, but also to access the already known grammatical structures. By doing this, the dyads were able to achieve interactional competence (Huang, 2016a), facilitated through the use of repetition, correction, scaffolding, compliments, and code switching, which is, arguably, the ultimate goal of second language learning. The reciprocity of the exchange of resources, knowledge, and ideas, (Feldman, Radermcher, & Browning, 2016) in a purposeful and ongoing way is beneficial to not only the younger and older participants individually, but also to the society as a whole due to the multicultural information that is transferred through the learning of the second language.

There are, however, three problems that can immerge in the pursuit of intergenerational language learning programs. “Intergenerational curricula requires intergenerational planning,” (Heydon, 2013, p. 78), and a big part of the planning comes from the fact that, depending on how the curricula is set up, the main role of “educator” is transferred to one part of intergenerational make up (that is, either the older or the younger population). The problems that can develop can be boiled down into two categories: under-accommodation and over accommodation.

Under-accommodation is the main problem that was described in “Problematizing the context” at the beginning of the paper. A hallmark of under-accommodation is interruptions (Cordella & Kokubu, 2016). An example noted previously was a volunteer chorusing ‘English Only!’ whenever she would hear a dyad conversing in Spanish, no matter the make-up of the dyad or the reason for the code switching. Speaking for the student is another example of under-accommodation, though it can come from a place of well meaning. Inattentiveness and lack of interest also fall under this category, though they have not been seen in El Sol and examples in the literature of this were very minimal.

Over-accommodation, on the other hand, is when one member of the dyad (or, even, the teacher) tries to make things easier for the students to understand. One example that Heydon (2013) noticed in her survey of intergenerational art classes was what Ryan (1994, as cited in Cordella & Kokubu, 2016) calls ‘elderspeak’- using the collective ‘we,’ speaking slowly, and repetition. Though part of elderspeak stems from the physical changes that is experienced throughout the aging process, especially hearing loss, it can still be perceived as patronizing to the adults in the intergenerational learning setting. Other factors bridge the gap between elderspeak and general over-accommodation, such as using basic vocabulary and grammar, overstated intonation, and inappropriate terms of endearment. Unlike under-accommodation, overaccommodation is often well intended. Whoever is in the ‘teacher’ role is trying to build rapport with the student and make the subject easier for them to understand. However, it tends to come off as demeaning, like the student is being ‘talked-down’ to.

Intergenerational learning is not something that is new to many language learners. The old saying “it takes a village” is not something that is specific to Latin cultures, and popular literature is filled with examples. The idea to incorporate such a teaching style into the classroom is one of practicality. Because both children and adults have different abilities and experiences they can draw on to learn and maintain a language, harnessing the value of both sets would, hypothetically, create a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and processes to result in optimal language learning. However, as stated earlier, literature seems to be fairly lean on analyzing these effects in language learning institutions. It will be interesting to see the implications of this application on a macro level, though in the foreseeable future it will most likely be relegated to educational extracurricular activities (like in Australia), nursing homes (Heydon, 2013), and language maintenance programs (such as Twf).

Seeing the benefits of a porous classroom

As Sandy (1998) states, a porous classroom is not an ecosystem that is separate from its societal soundings. Just like the biological definition, the walls (or rather, doors) are not rigid and allow access to only school officials and the students- it is when the community as a whole has a stake in the education that is happening in the institution. As opposed to traditional school settings, non-profits are more susceptible to a porous classroom organization, as is the case with El Sol, where Wells Fargo, Florida Atlantic University, and the greater Jupiter community have an investment in the students. Looking at El Sol specifically, a point could also be made that the volunteers and helpers (and the cultural institutions they represent) that rotate through the classes add a greater sense to the permeability of the walls of El Sol.

Huang and Cordella (2016), state their belief that “socially situated interactions are valuable for [second language] learners” (p.39), which is why they based their study of intergenerational interactions in the wider immigrant and educational community they were studying. Situated learning, as they call it, is an essential part of a students’ second language acquisition, as it is only then that the lessons and practice are put into actual, tangible use. Supporting this idea, Twf (Edwards, 2005), states that if a “language is not to be associated primarily with the classroom, authentic social spaces need to be created for its use,” (p. 300) supporting the notion that until the students have a place and ability to practice outside of the classroom, the language is of no real applicable use. Twf furthered this belief by not only appealing to the parents individually, but also by including highly frequented businesses to continue to spread and enforce the message.

Coleman (1988) talks about the mutual connection that the permeability of a classroom has on social capital. If the class participants feel that they are involved in the community, there will always be a positive correlation for both the individual's education and the perception of themselves and the community as a whole. Heydon (2013) furthers this point by asserting that to delay the future application of the valuable knowledge that its participants are gaining is dehumanizing, that students need to be able to connect with the material in the here and now. After all, it is one thing to learn the vocabulary and do a roleplay of ordering food in a restaurant. It is a different experience going to a restaurant and using the target language to order a meal and converse freely by reacting to the stimuli from the surrounding environment.

Perhaps the biggest theory behind the benefits of a porous classroom can be found in Brown's (1980) optimal distance model. Brown proposed the idea that "the interaction of language and culture produces a syndrome which gives rise to a certain stage during which language learning achieves an optimal level." (p. 158) It is best to harness the lived experience of being in the target language culture to become more fluent and adaptable with the language. One factor of the optimal distance model, anomie, plays a particular role in the investment of the students and their perceptions of themselves in the second language culture (Gursoy, 2011). The feelings, such as euphoria, uncertainty, dissatisfaction, and anxiety, that come from the interactions that students face outside of the classroom are paramount to their relationship with the language.

The role of the teacher, however, cannot be downplayed when discussing the idea of a porous classroom. It would do a disservice to simply give students a set of vocabulary and instruct them to go to the closest restaurant and order a meal. Teachers, as both educators and cultural guides, need to have an active presence to help the students navigate the anomie that

they will undoubtedly face during their residence in the second language culture. On this end, rapport is perhaps the most important aspect in maintaining the porous classroom (Cordella & Kokubu, 2016). Not only does a strong rapport make learning enjoyable for the students, it is also the cornerstone that supports the student as they explore the target language and culture, which Gonzalez *et al.* (2005) discuss in terms of ‘confianza en confianza,’ or trust in mutual trust.

The ethnographers and teachers that were a part of the funds of knowledge program took the idea of a porous classroom in a different direction. The ethnographer and teacher teams went into the homes of the students to discover what they could about the base knowledge that all students possess. What are the familial histories? What stories can be used to create a curriculum module on? In some cases, however, it was as simple as, to paraphrase Amanti (2005, p. 135), tell me what you know so I don’t waste our time.

Whereas the ability to go into the field and conduct home interviews is not as widely plausible as it was for these teams, some of the information that they uncovered does have applications to second language teaching as a whole. Teachers are encouraged to adapt a culturally sensitive pedagogy (Gonzalez N. , 2005) by becoming aware of the cultural issues and cultural norms that the students bring into the classroom. U.S.-Mexican children come from a unique cultural system (Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 2005) that has similarly unique household economies, resources, and traumas. Not only that, but many students are international travelers, (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2005) and though it may not be as glamorous as the wealthy student who goes to Europe for holiday, it provides a sense of movement unique to cross-border familial bound students.

This is perhaps the most important factor that should be kept in mind in the discussion of porous classrooms, that of trauma informed teaching. Teachers “need to understand how learners contend with the constraints and resources that mediate their opportunities to acquire a target language,” (Menard-Warwick, 2005, p. 166) and to accomplish that, it is the teachers responsibility to be attuned with the elements that are outside their classes on both the community and national level. As Stone (1995) points out, traumatic situations are pervasive. It is unlikely that the students will ever be able to let go of it, so it has to go to the teacher to mitigate the effects that such trauma can have on the students. Though this is a much larger conversation that goes beyond the borders of a porous classroom, it is brought up in order to discuss the potential for the emergence of new traumas in the classroom. Students will always bring baggage to class with them- something that happened at work, new governmental policies, living situations, etc.- and this baggage can be a detriment to the classroom on both an individual and class-as-a-whole level. To combat this, Menard-Warwick (2005) suggests confronting these macrolevel challenges by taking these internal and external language learning dilemmas and making them explicit topics in the group setting. By providing a safe space for the students to learn from each other and discuss their feelings and sentiments, the teacher is providing a time and place for processing what is often times a shared experience.

The image of a “porous classroom” is not a static one. At its base, it is the mix of academic instruction and professional practice. In the case of an English as a second language porous classroom, it is one where the students are able to experience real world application of the language that they are learning. In the case of El Sol, there are public accountants giving a lesson on checks, writing checks, and things you can do at a bank (without Social Security numbers), a volunteer from the local theatre teaching sewing in a conversation class, and

policemen breaking down the local implications of new immigration policies. There is also “field trip” opportunities for students to practice the target language in a natural setting. For English as a Second Language institutions, the idea of a porous classroom is to make the mental knowledge physical, it is the chance to enforce the multiculturalism that is inherent to multilingualism.

Fluid Attendance: How to combat the slump

As stated in the “Research Context: El Sol” introduction, one of the biggest problems that the administrators face is the reality of fluid attendance. The effects of job availability and weather are, perhaps, some of the most obvious reasons for the fluidity in the attendance. Although students are personally invested in the classes and their educations, schooling will always fall to the wayside when economic and cultural survival are at stake (Menard-Warwick, 2005). But just because students are not physically in class does not mean that they are still not being active participants in the pursuit of their education. To this end, teachers need to be cognizant of what they can do to assist their students in the outside-of-class time, as well as understand the benefits of spending time away from the classroom.

It is possible that there is a greater sense of learner agency when classes are not structured in a way that attendance is mandatory in every class. As Huang *et al.* (2016) noticed, the “classroom environment may impose certain constraints on a students’ motivation or sense of identity.” (p. 226) For many students, especially of native decent as seen in El Sol, schooling has not been a focal point of their lives. Formal education has not been a priority, and yet they are where they are in life. If this is in fact the case, then teachers should work on the strengthening of a students’ self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). If a student is encouraged to think, believe, and feel

that they can succeed in the target language even while they are outside of the classroom, there is a higher probability that they will perform positively.

However, it has to be kept in mind that even if there has been a high level of education (or, rather, any formal education) in the past, it does not necessarily mean that the students are able to match the time they can give to the class to the level of investment they feel (de Bot & van der Hoeven, 2011). When placed against the setting of migration and personal trajectory, the time they may devote to class may not be available (Menard-Warwick, 2005). In combination with the idea of the porous classroom, it is vital to know what is happening outside of class to better understand what is happening inside, or, in this case, why a student may not be in attendance.

To embrace the idea of a fluid classroom, there has to be a change in the pedagogy of what makes a “good” class. Through her research, Heydon (2013) developed a recipe of what is needed to ensure that each class is a “stand alone” class, enforcing the idea that it is okay for the students to not show up if they cannot or do not want to. What Heydon has found is a set of key structures for a successful class: “orientation, catalyst, technical focus, working on the project, and completion.” (p. 91) This is not a new-found way of teaching, in fact it is probably the way most teachers approach their lesson planning. There is a general orientation- introductions and a periphery examples of what the lesson is going to be about. Then, the catalyst follows, which initiates the need for a deeper examination of the target of the class. The technical focus provides the information, methods, and rules that are needed to understand and recreate the catalyst. “Working on the project” is the part where students are actively working on the task at hand, whether that be conversations, oral or written exercises, or producing something entirely novel. And, finally, the class comes to a completion, and it is this part that is needed to truly

embrace a fluid structure. There has to be a sense of completion in a way that, even if the student has the best intentions to be present in the next class, if they miss it, they do not feel like the classes they did participate in were worthless.

Cordella (2016) provides some guidance on how a teacher can maintain a sense of purpose for the students during times that their attendance may be flagging. She proposes the establishment of dyadic pairs, consisting of one who, though they are a student, is more proficient in the language, and one who is the true 'student.' She shows that even outside of a formal classroom setting, the 'language instructor' will begin to operate as a teacher: answering questions from the student, negotiating meaning, enacting repetition, correcting the student when applicable, and clarifying any general confusion that may emerge (either in real time or afterwards, so they are better able to help the student in the next meeting). Huang *et al.* (2016) call this "legitimate periphery participation," (p.40) a social practice that changes and adapts to the students in a genuine and personal matter, thus creating an organic 'curriculum.' Even when dyadic partnerships between students is possible, the teacher needs to instill in them the reality that they must engage in meaningful interactions outside of the classroom. Only interactions with native speakers will provide the students with the ability to discover the sociolinguistic rules that come into play in genuine second language situations in the second language culture. This was the catalyst of the Twf (Edwards, 2005) project upon the realization that educational interventions was not enough- that genuine practice with native speakers was the key to successful language transmission.

With the emergence of technology in recent years, there are ample ways for students to continue to be active participants in their education when they cannot be in attendance. Phone applications, such as Duolingo and Busuu, and other programs, such as Rosetta Stone, have

made it even easier to bring education right to the hands of the students. Even with the background of a global pandemic we are starting to see how fluid a class can really be. It is no longer vital to be present and seated in front of a teacher. WhatsApp, Zoom, Skype, and recorded classes continue to connect teachers and their students on a level that, though it may not be ideal, is embracing the idea that students do not need to be ‘present’ in order to learn.

The idea of a fluid classroom is not the easiest one for teachers to grasp. If a teacher sees that she has 87 students registered and every class the attendance numbers drop, there is bound to be some internal struggle and questioning of “what could I have done better?” To embrace this idea may take a paradigm shift, but it should not be the hallmark of a bad teacher that it may seem to be. If teachers instill in the student a sense of self-efficacy and support them in a genuine way when they are in class, it is likely that their sense of accomplishment will be a drive for them when they are unable to attend. Dyadic pairings are a resource that teachers can give to their students, so they always have someone to practice with. And finally, it should be encouraged that the lack of class participation can lead to the opportunity for genuine practice with native speakers. If these self-motivational guidelines do not work, teachers have a host of technological support at their fingertips that they can easily disseminate to their students. A fluid classroom is not a hard concept, it just requires thinking outside of the classroom boundaries.

Practical application

El Sol has the makings of many non-profit language classrooms- an unknown student population, outside resources that need benchmarks met, and questionable class size from day to day.

Though this certainly doesn’t fit into the mold of traditional ‘classrooms,’ it is none-the-less a

place where authentic learning can happen and where genuine rapport can be built to carry the students through their second language learning journey.

Amanti (2005) believes, and so do I, that “students should participate in determining the direction their learning should take,” (p. 135) and part of that comes from the regular, authentic conversations that working in a non-traditional setting, like El Sol, allows. However, though some of the concepts outlined earlier may point to direct movement on the part of teachers, we have to ensure that learning in these ways is not something that is done to the students as passive participants, but with the students in a way to give them full agency over their education (Heydon, 2013). And contrary to what other volunteers may think is best, emphasizing a bi/multilingual environment, as opposed to just the target language, is an important practice to ensure that the agency stays in the students’ hands (Edwards, 2005).

The most important piece of learning to be taken away from this is the importance of building and maintaining a strong rapport with the students. If there is a strong rapport, a teacher is able to harness the benefits and fight the difficulties of all three topics discussed here—intergenerational learning, porous classrooms, and fluid attendance. Amanti (2005) summed this fact up nicely:

Why are these bonds so important? Because you can know the academic standards inside and out, and write the most creative lesson plans, but if positive, affirming, and mutually respectful relationships are not the norm in our classrooms, no learning will take place.

Even academic knowledge must be distributed through social relations. (p. 140)

There is a mutual respect that is gained between these relationships, one that transcends the teacher and student dynamic. In the view of intergenerational teaching, the rapport created between dyadic partners provides a place to genuine target language practice and, in a way,

enforces the idea that there doesn't need to be a 'teacher' present for learning to happen. In the porous classroom situation, rapport leads to a greater understanding of the world that the students are coming from and provides a chance for the teacher to learn what funds of knowledge students are bringing to their class. In the fluid attendance sense, a strong rapport may not just encourage students to come to class even when they do not feel like it, but may encourage a positive self-efficacy, which will help push them to practice when they are not in class.

The importance of pedagogical content knowledge (Heydon, 2013) is also key in these hybrid-like classes. When a class is organized in a "stand alone" fashion, it is vital for the teacher to weave content and pedagogical knowledge so that the students are given viable access to the content in question. This requires knowledge on the external factors that affect the lives of the students. Not only will knowledge of jobs, scheduling, and at home life (as external factors) provide insight into why students may not be in attendance but can illuminate both funds of knowledge that the teacher can harness to build upon in class and areas of high need for the students (Menard-Warwick, 2005). As Tenery (2005) stated, "the harder their lives, the more coping and survival skills they develop," (p. 129) and it is those survival skills that can be tapped into for instructional use. Though it is important to be cognizant of these issues out-side of the classroom, it is important for the teacher to adopt a problem-posing approach (Menard-Warwick, 2005) by acknowledging the problem and giving the students a space to analyze it and collectively look for a solution. By not providing a solution, the teacher is letting the students express a greater sense of ownership over their problems while encouraging vital vocabulary and grammatical structures that otherwise may not be pertinent in the language learning curriculum in use. The use of the 'participatory approach' (Auerbach, 1992), where the teacher draws a

connection between the classroom and the struggles that their students are facing, provides further insight into how to incorporate this concept into the ESL curriculum.

A teacher should also keep in mind the idea of an asset-oriented curriculum (Heydon, 2013), which comes from having a strong rapport with the students. Such a curriculum focuses on the student's strengths and what they already know and have access to through their social spheres (their funds of knowledge), and recognizes the students' need to communicate in a variety of ways on a variety of topics. In a level one lesson at El Sol, the lead teacher demonstrates this by bypassing the initial verbs that have to do with leisure time, and instead focuses on verbs that would be of immediate use to the careers of the students. By using information that is well-known to the student, the teacher is able to streamline the learning process, because the teacher is not teaching some new, foreign concept. By focusing on something that is easier for the students to 'get,' the teacher is also building their self-efficacy by easing the students into the language with ease. Edwards (2005) enforces this idea by promoting the use of concrete messages with which the families are able to identify. If the student can see themselves in the lesson, then it will, inherently, be more successful. Menard-Warwick (2005) calls this the use of "concrete historical circumstance," (p. 179) highlighting the importance of a teachers' familiarity with the student's historical context.

Perhaps the most practical application taken from the research is the importance of connected and meaningful, yet stand alone, lessons (Heydon, 2013). The goal of such lessons is for the students to leave class with a sense of completion, that if they are not able to come to the next class, they still had a night of concrete learning that they can fully use. This is particularly important in the fluid classroom sense, though it also is applicable when looking at the porous classroom and intergenerational make up factors. For example, at El Sol, every Wednesday is

devoted to the health and wellness department of Florida Atlantic University. The information they provide, though valuable and immediately applicable to the students, often diverges from the curriculum and flow that the teacher had built throughout the week. By having the class be stand alone, there is a clear beginning, middle, and end, so the students know that there may not necessarily have any bearing on the actual language lessons. It also doesn't hurt that by having a set schedule, students know what to expect and when it may be okay for their attendance to falter.

The biggest take away, in sum of the knowledge that the research has illuminated, is the idea of providing students with what they need to deal with the here and now. "Adults taught by example that learning is not about preparation for the future, but about what it can add to today." (Heydon, 2013, p. 39) It is important to remember that though unknown student population and fluid attendance can be a stressor for teachers, it is an important challenge that is worth rising to. At the end of the day, teachers want to ensure that the students are left in a better position than what they came in, and even if they only learned one word, that is access to one more part of the target language that they did not have previously. An obvious problem with an aged population is their health and, unfortunately, longevity in class. It is dehumanizing to view knowledge and the pursuit of it as capital that will come into play at some unspecified date. Though embracing the ideas of intergenerational learning, a porous classroom, and fluid class attendance may require a shift in teaching pedagogy, the paradigm shift that will accompany such a change is bound to revolutionize the educational programs specifically in the non-profit sector.

Further Research

As noted in the intergenerational section, there seems to be a lack of literature revolving around intergenerational language (specifically English) programs. Heydon (2013) provided the best look at the organization and practical application of intergenerational learning, though the meat of her research revolved around intergenerational art classes. The biggest resource on intergenerational language learning, *Rethinking Second Language Learning: Using intergenerational community resources* (Ed. by Cordella, 2016) provides the most concrete evidence of intergenerational learning, though the primary focus was on learning a language other than English. It would be interesting to see a similar program carried out in which the roles, as portrayed in the study (older, native speaker, younger student) are shifted with the ultimate goal of the acquisition of English.

It was also daunting, at times, to uncover the benefits and potential problems that the existence of a fluid classroom can have on a students' language learning. At the outset of the research, I echoed a sentiment that Messing (2005) shared, and that was the focus of what I could give to my students and their families, and what kind of curriculum could I find or develop for them at home when they are not able to come to class. Though I was a little disappointed on this front, there was some valuable insight in the research on the importance of genuine interactions that cannot happen in the classroom. It is still a goal to develop some sort of curriculum that the students are able to take home and apply to themselves to continue learning, even when they are not able to attend class.

I believe that the bulk of my research has given me a better understanding of how I can approach working in the non-profit English education sector. Though the research did not give me direct results in the "follow these rules to really embrace a fluid classroom" sense, it did

provide me with a greater sense of what a student needs to succeed outside of the classroom setting. I will be interested to see how students and teachers are handling this time away from classes and if there was a shift in their investment when formal classes are no longer able to be held.¹ It will be interesting to see what natural resources (i.e., intergenerational, familial resources) students are turning to when their only chance for formalized English education has to be conducted online.

¹ This paper was written at the time of the COVID-19 Pandemic, Spring 2020. Due to the pandemic, EL Sol, like all other classes, has gone on-line with its language instruction.

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