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ACCENT MODIFICATION PROGRAM: A PROGRAM FOR FOREIGN-BORN EMPLOYEES AT ST. JUDE CHILDREN'S RESEARCH HOSPITAL

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**ACCENT MODIFICATION PROGRAM:
A PROGRAM FOR FOREIGN-BORN EMPLOYEES AT
ST. JUDE CHILDREN'S RESEARCH HOSPITAL**

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PIM IELR 77

A Capstone Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of
International Education at SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont, USA.

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List of Abbreviations

ACTFL	American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
AMP	Accent Modification Program
APO	Academic Programs Office
E-MAIN	Employer – Memphis Area Immigration Network
ESL	English as a Second Language
HR	Department of Human Resources
PI	Principal Investigator (primary research scientists in whose labs postdocs work)
Postdocs	Postdoctoral Research Associates
St. Jude	St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital
TESL/TEFL	Teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
U of M	University of Memphis

Abstract

Some foreign national employees lack English proficiency, have poor pronunciation skills, and find it difficult to be understood due to their strong native accent when speaking English. The Accent Modification Program (AMP) is designed to provide an opportunity for non-native English-speaking employees at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, primarily postdoctoral research associates, to advance their English-speaking skills especially as it relates to oral presentation proficiency. The program design is informed by the needs assessment based on data collection via personal interviews, professional observations and experience of the author. AMP will provide regularly scheduled group sessions with a native-English speaking facilitator. The curriculum of the program is based on ESL principles combining practical tools and communication skills needed for successful oral presentation and audience understanding. This program is funded by St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and is offered to any interested non-native English-speaking employee at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Introduction

The vision of St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital is “Finding Cures, Saving Children.” There is no geographical delimiter in this vision. Consequently, their philosophy is to freely share knowledge, technology and research data so that every child may be given the best chance of a cure both in the clinics and around the world. Freely sharing knowledge occurs in a myriad of ways including online website resources and collaborative projects between universities and hospitals. Freely sharing technology occurs within the St. Jude Affiliate Program and through the expansion of the new Global Pediatric Medicine Department. These ventures allow an off-site network of pediatric hematology-oncology clinics, hospitals and in some cases, universities to collaboratively deliver state-of-the-art care and innovative clinical trials to children with cancer and blood disorders via technology. Two of the ways research data are freely shared are through conferences and poster presentations. In both of these settings, the presenter orally presents their research findings either formally or informally. Busà (2010) explains that “the number of opportunities for interaction in English has increased and so has the need to learn strategies for successful oral communication in English.” With globalized research and medicine on the cusp of today’s medical realm, it is even more important to share and receive expert information. However, communication cannot take place if the listener does not understand the speaker’s message. As a result, some foreign national employees have had less-than-ideal experiences for these research-sharing opportunities due to their lack of English proficiency, poor pronunciation skills, and their strong native accent when speaking English. Though St. Jude has always been a fertile training ground for postdoctoral research associates (“postdocs”) and other research staff, there has not been a program provided to assist foreign nationals with

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advancing their English-speaking skills on a personal level, which in turn influences oral presentation proficiencies.

St. Jude is a multi-cultural, diverse institution with almost 100 countries represented in its 5000+ employee population. Due to the international personality of St. Jude, it is not uncommon to walk the hallways and sidewalks and hear conversations taking place in languages other than English. It is also not uncommon to see employees, as well as patient families from different countries, conversing in English – sometimes broken, sometimes fluent, and most times exerting great effort to be understood. Data from research conducted by Meuter, Gallois, Segalowitz, Ryder and Hocking (2015) supports the need to understand “the role that language plays in creating barriers.” By providing an overview of St. Jude’s culturally and linguistically diverse population, the importance of communicative language proficiencies can be better conveyed. This introductory glimpse of life at St. Jude serves as the cornerstone for the design of an Accent Modification Program (AMP).

Immigration Services Team

St. Jude is fortunate to offer to its campus an Immigration Services team with more than 75 collective years of experience shared between four team members. As Immigration Services team members housed within the Human Resources Department (HR), we have the distinct honor of working with a myriad of foreign national employees who comprise the St. Jude family - brilliant scientists, innovative researchers, compassionate and caring physicians, and exceptionally talented technology experts, to name a few. Many of these foreign nationals enter St. Jude through the Academic Programs Office (APO) as postdoctoral research associates (postdocs). As the Senior Immigration Specialist at St. Jude, my role has been focused on

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assisting foreign national employees with expected benefits, such as timely immigration filings with the government to ensure continued employment authorization and legal presence in the United States. My passion comes into play with offering unexpected benefits, such as accompanying a new foreign national employee to the Social Security Administration office or the Shelby County Department of Motor Vehicles to ensure communication and understanding are being experienced from all parties involved with these processes.

Postdoctoral Research Associates

When conducting research, a postdoc typically spends much time in the lab with their experiments and trials. As a result, there may be little spoken interaction in English especially if other researchers in their lab speak their same native language. While this may not be problematic for conducting research, it does present challenges when presenting one's research to an audience or when collaborating with other English-speaking researchers. In order to present or collaborate, the researcher must be able to communicate clearly and be accurately understood. Most postdocs have time restrictions for additional extracurricular activities outside of their research. Consequently, one value of AMP is the fact that the program is directly related to daily professional experiences.

Case Studies

“Krishna” is a St. Jude staff member from India. He is an information technology person who spends almost 100% of his workday behind his computer. When people speak to him in passing, he typically just nods his head and keeps walking. Krishna is not a new foreign national arrival, but has lived in the United States for several years. His conversation skills generally

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consist of one-word answers that still contain a heavy Indian accent despite his many years in the States. Even yes and no answers are not given orally, but rather with a head nod indicating the response. Due to his consistent lack of engagement with other employees, it seems apparent that he is not comfortable with English conversation. He obviously reads and understands English, but is not able to converse with ease. In an unrelated conversation with Krishna's direct supervisor, she shared that Krishna had acknowledged this challenge and she affirmed both of their desires to find a solution for him. I pondered if there may be a way that St. Jude could create a win-win situation for all involved. If online accent modification resources could be found to supplement in-person English conversations, maybe Krishna would be willing to review the online resources. By critiquing these online programs, he would be practicing his English skills and then reporting on the efficacy of the programs. He would also be getting English conversational practice by discussing the pros and cons of each online program.

"Sofia" is a scientist at St. Jude. She and her husband and daughter left Italy to move to Memphis five years ago. At home, they exclusively speak Italian. Even in her lab there are other Italians and as a result, they speak their native language at work. She only speaks English when the other person does not speak Italian. As a result, her conversational English lacks fluency. In a past meeting with Sofia, she shared some communication problems she was having with their landlord. They had experienced some water damage in their house after outside pipes burst in the winter during a hard freeze. Initially, the landlord had been responsive, but soon seemed to withdraw from providing repairs. In English, with a strong Italian accent, Sofia tried to explain to the landlord what had happened and asked how they could resolve the problem. Even in casual conversations with Sofia, her Italian accent makes some English words difficult to understand. Likely, frustration was experienced by both Sofia and the landlord when trying to

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communicate – Sofia, feeling aggravated that the landlord was not being sympathetic, and the landlord, eventually giving up because he could not understand all she was trying to say. As a result, they came to an impasse where Sofia and her family felt they had no choice but to move out. While this situation is not work-related, it does impact Sofia and her family’s contentment with life in Memphis. If St. Jude had provided a type of intensive English program to build Sofia’s oral fluency, could this situation have been avoided?

Theoretical Foundations

Data from research conducted by Meuter, Gallois, Segalowitz, Ryder and Hocking (2015) defines barriers related to language competencies. Some of these barriers include being a member of the “linguistic minority” which defines individuals whose “first language is not the majority language.” Other barriers may be “increased psychological stress” and “inequities inherent in the social dynamic” of the native/non-native English-speaking encounters (Meuter et al., 2015). Munro, Derwing, and Sato (2006) examined early studies which revealed that “the degree of accent exhibited by a speaker is related to status judgments” (p. 71). In the same exploratory study, Kalin and Rayko “reported that native speakers of English generally judged non-native speakers to be less suitable for high-status jobs and more suitable for low-status jobs than native speakers” (as cited in Munro, Derwing, & Sato, 2006, p. 71). These stereotypical attitudes can create additional psychological stress on a person who may be building their career in the United States. At no fault of their own other than a native accent, these individuals face obstacles that the average American likely does not face. Linguistic barriers can clearly be seen in the examples given above. Krishna and Sofia are both members of a linguistic minority in the

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United States. As a result of their experiences, it is likely they have felt increased psychological stress as well as insecurities based on the social dynamics felt in any of the above situations.

In many research institutions, including St. Jude, the Principal Investigator (PI) tends to employ lab staff from their same home country. For example, if the PI is Chinese, it is common for the staff within the lab to be primarily Chinese. While this makes communication easy within the walls of the lab – typically Chinese is spoken – it presents larger obstacles when communicating (in English) outside the lab walls. Chris Joseph (2018) discusses the dangers of developing cliques when employees of

similar cultural backgrounds or who speak the same primary language bond together.

Individuals may have little social interaction with those outside their clique, engaging them only out of business necessity. In culturally integrated work groups, some members may choose to speak their primary language with each other instead of the primary workplace language, leaving others to feel they are being excluded from the conversation (para. 4).

Speaking the same language as one's colleagues makes the lab work flow more easily for postdocs especially when collaboration is needed for outcome results. However, collaboration in research expands much wider than one's lab. It occurs beyond the lab walls, beyond the institution walls, and is commonly seen beyond country borders.

While it is important for the foreign nationals at St. Jude to feel respected as individuals, it is also important that everyone be able to communicate as effectively as possible. The above quote from Chris Joseph characterizes the situation created in Sofia's lab. She speaks Italian at home and when she comes to work, since her lab has other Italians in it, they all speak their

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native language. The only time she engages in English social interaction is when necessity calls for it. Unfortunately, she has not yet developed the skill to speak English naturally.

The motivation for PIs is to uncover something new that has not yet been realized. In order to do this, the PI capitalizes on their own past research, the research findings of other scientists and collaborative efforts with colleagues in their field. Collaboration is essential in research. In order to collaborate with other experts, the PI must establish himself/herself as a credible partner with novel research. This is done through communicating one's research throughout the field both nationally and internationally using various mediums. The postdocs in a lab are essential to the PI in finding new scientific discoveries within the PI's research field. The more a postdoc can clearly articulate the research being done, the more collaborative opportunities will arise.

To be considered for employment at St. Jude, most postdocs have already authored at least one scientific publication in English. Foreign national postdocs have had to exceed the minimum score required on TOEFL tests to get admitted into their academic programs. According to an article in *US News & World Report*, the average minimum TOEFL score required by ranked National Universities in Fall 2015 was 78 (Ross, 2017). Most postdocs at St. Jude read and write English with fairly sophisticated communicative competence. It is when they know the words but others cannot understand their pronunciation that there is a problem. The cases of Krishna and Sophia provide examples of this very situation. With Krishna's case, his department hired a Speech Pathology tutor to provide one-on-one instruction for accent modification. While this proved effective, it was quite costly. On a grander scale for all of St. Jude, it is not financially feasible to hire individual tutors for every foreign national that may

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need accent modification instruction. Consequently, a comprehensive group program is needed to teach similar lessons to what a private tutor would provide.

New employees are typically eager to embed themselves within the framework of St. Jude. However, foreign-born employees may have more hurdles to surpass in order to meet this target. One of the most obvious hurdles to overcome is their English language ability when coupled with distinct native accents from their home country. In a study of adult learners at language institutions, Derwing & Rossiter observed “over a third of respondents considered that the primary cause of communication breakdown was due to accent” (as cited in Park, Klieve, Tsurutani & Harte, 2017, pp. 3-4).

In a sociolinguistic research study on attitudes towards language conducted by Eisenchlas & Tsurutani (2011), it was discovered that native speakers of English are more receptive towards those individuals who “share their native accent” (p. 216). Additional research by Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner & Fillenbaum revealed that these same native English-speakers also tend to respond “cautiously, perhaps negatively, towards those speaking in ‘accented’ English” (as cited in Eisenchlas & Tsurutani, 2011, p. 216). Further, it was observed that “the impact of accent does not appear to be restricted to communication, but also has been linked to stereotypical views that may lead to inaccurate judgement” of intrinsic ability (Eisenchlas & Tsurutani, 2011). Trends in this research area can be seen in higher education. The expected performance of an international student in an academic setting can mean that foreign nationals with non-standard accents are offered fewer opportunities in class participation. For example, an Asian student may state they are not comfortable participating in class discussions. Oftentimes, this explanation is justified and accepted by the professor/facilitator. Munro, Derwing & Sato concluded that “unfavourable judgement of international students on the basis of their non-native

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accent can result in these students being given lower marks in speech-related activities or sidelined in classroom activities” (as cited in Eisenclas & Tsurutani, 2011, p. 219). Similar to the experiences of an international student in an academic setting, it is possible that a foreign national postdoc may receive fewer opportunities to participate in lab activities which require group communication and/or in research presentations offered to a wider audience.

The St. Jude Department of Human Resources (HR) is charged with recruiting and retaining top tier talent. In order to fulfill this charge, the institution must find compelling avenues of recruitment and creative methods of retention. An Accent Modification Program can be used as an incentivized recruitment tool for potential foreign national candidates who may need this type of service. It will also serve as an innovative retention tool for hiring departments. Funding this program may assist the HR Department in fulfilling their responsibility of recruiting and retaining.

The Academic Programs Office (APO) strives to ensure that all academic trainees (postdoctoral fellows/research associates, graduate students and undergraduate students) are provided a professionally enriching experience while at St. Jude. Offering the opportunity to strengthen one’s English-speaking proficiency further develops the professional skills of the trainees in their area of specialization. This additional language education will better prepare the foreign nationals for the next steps in their careers.

Needs Assessment

As the Senior Immigration Specialist at St. Jude, I am aware of diverse perspectives around campus. Varying viewpoints about the many facets and benefits of an Accent Modification Program can be found from PIs to foreign nationals to the Department of Human Resources (HR) to the Academic Programs Office (APO) to other local institutions with whom

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St. Jude may collaborate. PIs feel the need to have as many researchers in the labs as possible in hopes of finding that elusive link to a cancer cure. Foreign nationals want to be well equipped with English language skills so they may converse and/or share their research without judgment. The Department of Human Resources (HR) has a charge to recruit and retain top tier talent at St. Jude. The Academic Programs Office (APO) must ensure that all academic trainees are provided a professionally enriching experience during their time at St. Jude. Collaborative opportunities with other institutions such as the University of Memphis (U of M) provide local support towards the mission of each individual body (See Appendix A). These individuals, departments, and institutions are key stakeholders to the success of an Accent Modification Program (AMP) at St. Jude.

A stakeholder analysis was conducted to better understand the needs of the non-native English speaking foreign national population at St. Jude. Information collected through purposive sampling, interviews, and a literature review supported the need for such a program. Purposive sampling, such as Krishna and Sofia, provided both hard data and soft data which documented the need for such a program. The information gathered from various individuals provided clear focus for responses to the three primary questions posed by Kiritz (2017), “1. What is the situation motivating your organization to take action? 2. What is the significance? 3. What are the causes?” (p. 43). These questions have guided the overall development of the program to ensure the need was being met.

The three sources of data that have informed the needs assessment part of this capstone are: 1.) purposive sampling, 2.) individual interviews with PIs, foreign national employees, and the U of M, and 3.) my experiences from past communication with St. Jude departments, other Memphis-area employers and previous foreign nationals no longer employed at St. Jude.

Purposive Sampling

The case studies of Krishna and Sofia were selected through purposive sampling (Marshall & Rossman, 2014) of approximately 525 St. Jude foreign nationals for whom the Immigration Services team currently provides immigration assistance. Participants were selected on the basis of individuals who had resided in the United States for more than ten years. The ten-year criteria piece was further refined to include those foreign nationals who would likely benefit from an accent modification program, despite the fact that they had lived in the United States for many years. It is important to note that elements from these case studies were communicated to HR and APO using the pseudonyms stated in this paper to protect the identity of the foreign nationals. Portions of their stories were shared in discussions with key stakeholders outlining the purpose and need for an AMP program at St. Jude.

Interviews

The interviews I conducted helped identify the necessity and confirm the crucial components of an Accent Modification Program at St. Jude. They consisted of open-ended questions (See Appendix B) that allowed the interviewees to express their opinion on the following topics:

- Past communication experiences
- The benefits of an AMP
- Important key topics to include in an AMP

The open-ended questions provided the interviewees opportunities to share more and include anything they thought was relevant but not specifically covered by the questions posed. Please

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note that the questions posed to the U of M were revised a bit to be more applicable to the proposed partnership between St. Jude and the University (See Appendix B).

The first step of the needs assessment was to interview select foreign national employees so as to better understand their experiences with English communication and how it had impacted their life and work. The interviewees chosen were individuals for whom an accent modification program may be beneficial to them personally. It is important to note that in working with foreign nationals, the Immigration Services team is entrusted with many personal details of their lives. Even with this trust already established, there are many cultures that do not freely share what may be perceived as negative experiences. Consequently, it was important to continually nurture this trust in such a way that the employee felt comfortable sharing uncomfortable experiences with me. Before broaching the open-ended questions with each individual, it was clearly communicated that any information shared in the interview would be held with the utmost of confidence. No names would be shared nor departments represented by these employees. Throughout these individual interviews, it was critical to establish and focus on the personal and professional benefit of AMP involvement to the foreign national.

The interviewees included a total of two male and four female foreign nationals with representation from Italy, China, Israel, South Korea, India, and Japan. These individuals were chosen randomly based on their availability. Since the aim of this program is to provide an intensive English class focused on accent modification, the foreign nationals interviewed represented individuals who may personally benefit from this program. Three of the foreign nationals were postdocs and the three remaining foreign nationals were staff. The open-ended questions posed to the foreign nationals can be found in Appendix B.

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The information gathered from these individuals represented a wide range of experiences when asked about communication with native-English speakers. Recurring themes included:

- American English is very different from British English and various American accents make understanding difficult for non-native English speakers (50%, n=3)
- Using another tool to assist with communication efforts (50%, n=3)
 - Some used a phone app to communicate because their native accent was too strong for English speakers to understand initially
 - Drawing – if the foreign national did not know how to say something in an understandable manner, they would attempt to draw it
 - Some tried to find a native English speaker to assist with bridging the communication gap
- Cultural differences are equally as important as learning the language (50%, n=3)

Additionally, 83% (n=5) of the individuals interviewed expressed a personal need for conversational and presentation skills to be included in this type of program.

It quickly became evident that an Accent Modification Program at St. Jude was definitely needed. It also became evident that the topics to be covered in AMP needed to extend beyond solely linguistics, but also to include modules on American culture and oral presentation skills.

The second step of the needs assessment was identifying which St. Jude departments had a heavy foreign national population and which PIs conducted research in those departments. The two PIs selected for individual interviews work with many foreign nationals in and out of their respective departments. The open-ended questions posed to the PIs can be found in Appendix B. The first PI was an American who is “extraordinarily collaborative” as it relates to presenting his research and working with other institutions (B. Abraham, personal communication, Feb. 8,

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2019). He has had much interaction with foreign nationals throughout his career and the department in which he is located is one with a very high percentage of foreign nationals.

The second PI with whom an interview was conducted was a German national who had recently obtained his green card after spending many years in the United States on a work visa. He works within a department that has foreign nationals and interacts often with other departments with high populations of foreign nationals. In addition, because he himself was once a foreign national postdoc, he understands the path on which postdocs may find themselves and stressed that an AMP is “very relevant” and he “would recommend it if they needed it” (M. Fischer, personal communication, Feb. 12, 2019).

Both PIs opened the conversations with broad statements about language itself. According to Dr. Abraham, “Language breeds trust and it is the heart of hearing people. If you hear someone construct language the way I do, you can trust and not think ‘does this person mean what I think they mean?’ Language is much more than language” (B. Abraham, personal communication, Feb. 8, 2019). Dr. Fischer shared, “Language is a social thing. It is good for people going through the same thing together” (M. Fischer, personal communication, Feb. 12, 2019). Both PIs shared common thoughts on the importance of oral presentation in a safe environment. It was interesting to note that both PIs expressed the need for oral language proficiency in topics related **and** unrelated to work. They agreed that science topics may be easier for scientists and researchers to communicate, but other topics may not be. (Interesting note: One of the foreign nationals told me that scientific English is harder than casually conversing in English.) Hence, it is equally as important to enhance oral proficiency with topics/discussions/presentations related to life in general.

Accessibility and time constraints limited the PI and foreign national interviews to a select group. Despite the small sample size, a diverse subset was chosen to represent the viewpoints of the larger population. The interview questions and the informed consent form can be found in Appendices B and C of this paper. Based on the responses received, these are the factors and conclusions that influenced the final program design.

The final step of the needs assessment was determining who the appropriate contact person was at the University of Memphis to discuss a possible collaborative program between the U of M's ESL graduate students and St. Jude. The Coordinator of the Postdoc Program in APO at St. Jude was a tremendous resource concerning institutional programming that had previously been offered to international postdocs. The Professor of Applied Linguistics at the U of M currently manages the practicum scheduling for ESL graduate students. In an extensive interview, she explained that AMP at St. Jude would be most successful if it incorporated both personal and professional oration skills based on the participants' needs. She also confirmed that the U of M ESL graduate program would be interested in offering a practicum site opportunity on the campus of St. Jude as it would "give them the experience of working with foreign nationals" (R. Adams, personal communication, Feb. 13, 2019).

Limitations

The major limitation as related to the data gathering phase of this program was the fact that I was interviewing foreign nationals at St. Jude who all ultimately want a green card. As the Senior Immigration Specialist, they see me as a member of the Immigration Services team who assists with that process. Consequently, they may have been eager to accommodate me in my quest for information in this study because they would like my help with their green card

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process. This limitation was evident in at least three of the interviews since questions arose inquiring as to the green card process, how important it was to them, and inquiring as to when we could begin their process.

Observations from Past Communication

I am a member of a grassroots organization called Employer-Memphis Area Immigration Network (“E-MAIN”). It is comprised of immigration representatives from primarily for-profit Memphis-based employers. St. Jude is the only non-profit employer currently represented in the group. During one of the quarterly meetings within the past year, discussion centered around English language programs offered to staff at three of Memphis’ large employers. None of the three employers offered any type of an intensive English language program for its foreign-born employees. It is important to note that these three companies all have many branch offices throughout the United States. Consequently, they have many employees based outside of Memphis. Nevertheless, none of them offered any type of AMP assistance to any of their foreign national employees located anywhere in the United States. This conversation documented a definite void in intensive English programs offered by large employers in Memphis.

In a previous meeting in 2018 with the Immigration Manager at a large local academic health center, the same type of conversation surfaced: “Do you currently have any type of accent modification program for your employees?” A negative response was given followed by conversation on the desperate need for such a program not only for their institution, but for Memphis employers in general since Memphis is home to the corporate headquarters of several large global companies including Fedex, AutoZone, and ServiceMaster. If an accent modification program was developed locally, these other global employers may be able to

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develop their own AMP using the St. Jude program as a model. The large local academic health center continues to express an interest in extending this benefit to its own foreign nationals.

They are in hopes that their employees may eventually be able to attend classes on the St. Jude campus once the program is established. A potential future collaborative program for participants would help to offset the cost of the program.

Goals and Objectives

The goals of the AMP at St. Jude are closely tied to the participant goals, but they also represent one of St. Jude's larger overarching strategic goals which states, "Our goal is to ensure an environment where employees can do their best work, make the most of their careers and get the most satisfaction from their jobs" (St. Jude 2016-2021 Strategic Plan, 2015).

Program Goals and Objectives

The main goals of the program are:

- To advance English-language skills for foreign born employees at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital
- To develop increased self-confidence in English-speaking abilities

In order to achieve the above goals, the program has the following objectives:

- Conduct small group sessions with varying topics on a regular basis so participants interact often
- Facilitate small group sessions incorporating lessons and activities that easily transfer to daily life and research work at St. Jude

Participant Goals and Objectives

The participant goals are as follows:

- To speak English with ease and understanding when conversing or presenting to an English-speaking audience
- To become more confident when speaking English, both conversationally and professionally

In order to achieve the above goals, the participant has the following objectives:

- Participate in regularly scheduled small group sessions and activities
- Practice speaking English outside of normally scheduled AMP classes
- Present two brief impromptu presentations and a scheduled 3-5-minute oral presentation in class on any topic of choice
- Maintain a goal-setting journal with weekly updates

Program Description

The Accent Modification Program (AMP) focuses on communication skills for adult non-native English speakers. AMP sessions will begin in the Spring, Summer, and Fall of each calendar year. AMP sessions will meet for 12 weeks covering 6-10 thematic topics. Small group instruction is the primary method of education. Regular small group sessions will meet twice weekly on the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital campus focusing on various language mechanics. The weekly sessions consist of multiple thematic modules with an integrated focus on personal and professional benefit. Modules may consist of, but are not limited to the following topics (in random order):

- Interviews

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- Grammar
- Living in Memphis / Favorite vacation destinations
- Emotions
- Presentations
- Things that People Value

Each calendar year period will offer three 12-week AMP sessions from which to choose.

Facilitator-led small group sessions are offered for learning with a minimum of five and a maximum of 10 students per AMP session. Students may repeat the entire 12-week program if space is available.

The participants of AMP are adult foreign-born St. Jude employees, primarily postdocs, who are not native English speakers. They may participate in AMP based on encouragement from their supervisor or PI or they may participate on their own volition. The vision of Danny Thomas, the founder of St. Jude, was - and still is - that “no child is denied treatment based on race, religion or a family’s ability to pay” (St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, 2019).

Staying consistent with this same type of philosophy, no international employee will be turned away from participation in an AMP session. Due to the limited number of spaces available each session (maximum of 10), there may be instances when an interested participant may have to wait until the next AMP session to begin. For example, if all spaces for the Spring session have already been filled, then the remaining interested foreign nationals would be placed in the following Summer session.

The program is a collaborative effort between St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital and the University of Memphis. The AMP instructors/facilitators are ESL graduate students from the

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U of M who are using AMP as their practicum fulfillment within their degree program. An overseer, provided by the U of M, will also attend the small group sessions to provide feedback for the graduate student. ESL graduate students interested in completing their practicum requirement at St. Jude must notify the Professor of Applied Linguistics at the U of M by mid-semester of the term preceding their practicum term. The Professor of Applied Linguistics will make the final decision regarding which graduate student is chosen for placement as an AMP facilitator for each session at St. Jude.

Program Timeline Overview

The entire implementation of an AMP session will be approximately six months. The marketing campaign will begin approximately four weeks prior to the beginning of each session. Interested participants may register for class during the two-week period immediately preceding the start date of each AMP session. Each session will overlap the deadline for the upcoming session's interested ESL graduate students to confirm their interest in an AMP practicum at St. Jude. See Appendix D for more detailed information on the program timeline for an entire year.

Curriculum

The Accent Modification Program will be woven with elements from two learning theories. The first theory is by Jerome Bruner within the field of Linguistics which uses “scaffolding.” Bruner coined the phrase “scaffolding” which describes the way a learner builds on the information they have already mastered. Scaffolding is also defined as “the support given during the learning process which is tailored to the needs of the student with the intention of helping the student achieve his/her learning goals” (Map of Learning Theories, 2013). Much of Bruner’s work rests on the second theory - Les Vygotsky’s Social Interactionist Theory of

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language development. Social interactionist theory emphasizes the role of social interaction between the developing student and linguistically developed instructors. The goals within this academic program will be centered around the needs of the adult participants. These adult students already have an English language foundation and will be participating in the program to improve the language basis they have already established. Consequently, the scaffolding concept fits well within this program since it is tailored to meet the needs of the students. Using the social interactionist theory, Bruner's approach emphasizes the social and interpersonal nature of language which is the primary objective of the program. The participants will be focused on improving language skills in social settings, both personally and professionally. The learning that will take place will occur primarily in social settings – within a small group with an instructor.

The curriculum will be fashioned using the backward design model as defined by Wiggins and McTighe (2005). The three stages of backward design create a 'map' by which the program's success is based. Stage One – Identify Desired Results – is established with the overarching AMP goals and participant goals. Stage Two – Determine Acceptable Evidence – is displayed with the participant's presentations using concepts learned in class. Stage Three – Plan Learning Experiences and Instruction – is established with thematic modules which address both personal and professional topics and their correct usage.

Communicating effectively is not just about linguistics. It is not just about reducing one's native accent in order for the listener to be better able to comprehend. It is not just about improving one's language fluency in professional settings. It is a combination of all of these ideas and more. Effective and ineffective communication happen every day, every hour, every minute. The ability to effectively communicate is not based on one's job title, one's country of

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birth, or one's social status. By exploring the English communication needs of individuals such as Krishna and Sofia, it is easy to see how offering an Accent Modification Program at St. Jude is beneficial. The PIs benefit from improved English communication skills of their research staff. Colleagues are better able to collaborate on and off campus. Lastly, social interaction by St. Jude foreign nationals may be more enjoyable for them with an increased ease of English. In the words of Paul J. Meyer, an American businessman, "Communication - the human connection – is the key to personal and career success" (Great Thoughts Treasury, n.d.).

Facilitator-led small group sessions are offered for learning with a minimum of five and a maximum of 10 students per session. Small group sessions are facilitated by a University of Memphis ESL graduate student. An overseer, provided by the U of M, will also attend the small group sessions to provide feedback for the graduate student. Thematic modules, recommended by the U of M ESL department, include but are not limited to (in random order):

- Interviews
 - Three minute 'elevator pitch' on one's research work
- Grammar
 - Article usage
 - Prepositions
 - Verb tense usage
 - Count/non-count nouns
 - Gerunds/infinitives
 - Passive voice
- Living in Memphis / Favorite vacation destinations
 - Expressing details; listening for details

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- Emotions
 - Happy/sad
 - Fear/courage
 - Body language
- Presentations
 - Components of a well-organized presentation
 - Adequate planning and U.S. expectation
 - Attention-getting introduction
- Things that People Value
 - Money/wealth
 - Happiness

Building on the English already learned and using Bruner's social and interpersonal approach (Map of Learning Theories, 2013) between student and instructor, learning activities are conducted in instructor-led small group classes allowing for maximum interaction. Group discussion and role-playing scenarios are incorporated into the small group work. During the 12-week session, each participant will give two impromptu presentations which will be recorded by the facilitator using an iPhone or Android phone. A learning activity from a sample class – "Does It Really Matter?" - can be found in Appendix E. The learning activity format in Appendix E is a sample of activities used in most classes. Application of concepts learned is encouraged outside of class with informal collaborative conversation within the postdoc's lab and with other colleagues.

Staffing Plan

AMP will draw upon the expertise of U of M language and linguistics professors mentoring their ESL graduate students for the small group instruction. Each twelve-week session, comprised of 5-10 adult learners, will be facilitated by one ESL graduate student who is joined by an overseer who provides feedback for the graduate student. The small group facilitation on St. Jude's campus will serve as a paid practicum for the ESL graduate student's completion of core course ENGL 7530 – Field Experience and Practicum in ESL – as per U of M's required coursework in the TESL/TEFL Graduate Certificate Program. Based upon her previous experience with English language programming for international postdocs, the Coordinator of the Postdoc Program will oversee the implementation of AMP for all staff on the St. Jude campus.

Program Marketing

When marketing the AMP program, it is important to stay mindful of differences. “Cultural beliefs have many dimensions, including decision-making styles...expectations and assumptions about privacy/disclosure, status/hierarchy, socio-economic status and immigration status” (Maples, 2017). Through discussions and information-sharing, it is critical to establish and focus on both the personal and the professional benefit of program involvement to the foreign national.

The program will be marketed in the month preceding each AMP session using expertise and guidance from the St. Jude Internal Communications team. Digital flyers will be displayed on all digital signage across campus. Advertisements will also occur using the daily campus-wide email distribution newsletter. An information flyer is shared with all new foreign national

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employees during their Immigration Check-In with a member of the Immigration Services Team. Lastly, the information flyer is displayed in the PostDoc Lounge on campus. See Appendix F for a sample information flyer.

Participant Recruitment and Admissions

Participants will be recruited using the above marketing methods. Participants may also participate at the recommendation of their supervisor or PI. Recruitment will be targeted to foreign national employees at St. Jude. Since AMP is a voluntary program, there is no formal admission procedure. However, all interested participants must complete a registration application during “open registration” and submit by email or hard copy to the Coordinator of the Postdoc Program. See Appendix G for a sample registration application.

Logistics

Since this program is being held on the St. Jude campus, there is no travel necessary for participants to attend class sessions, nor does the program have any housing requirements/needs. Class sessions are held in a campus conference room allowing for easy access from any building where employees may be located. All teaching supplies will be provided by St. Jude including, but not limited to paper pads (to be used as journals), note cards, flip charts, textbook, A/V equipment and laptop computer for classroom instruction. U of M instructors/facilitators/overseers will be responsible for their own travel to/from campus.

Health and Safety Plan and Crisis Management Plan

Participants are located on the St. Jude campus which provides full support for health, safety, and crisis management. Participants will attend class sessions in conference room space

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where standard safety measures are in place. Consequently, additional accommodations and plans are not necessary.

Budget Narrative

One of the main ideas behind this three-month program which is offered three times per calendar year is to make it cost effective and easy to implement while creating a mutually rewarding collaboration between two local institutions. The total annual cost of the Accent Modification Program is \$9,405. This amount includes personnel expenses, supplies, and facility costs. Since the Coordinator of the PostDoc Program will oversee AMP as part of her normal St. Jude job responsibilities, there are no additional funds budgeted for her program role. The HR department at St. Jude is fully funding this program which allows for a no-cost program for interested employees.

Annual Budget

Annual AMP Budget

Program Details	
Number of Participants	30
Number of Staff	3
Number of Programs offered	3

SUMMARY	
Personnel	\$6,000
Supplies	\$1,950
Facilities	\$600
Total Direct Costs	\$8,550
Indirect cost @ 10%	\$855
GRAND TOTAL	\$9,405

REVENUE	
St. Jude-Funded	\$0

DIRECT COSTS				
BUDGET ITEM	Cost per unit	Unit description	# of units	Total
PERSONNEL				
Instructor stipend	\$2,000	per quarter	3	\$6,000
SUPPLIES				
Books	\$50	per book	30	\$1,500
Classroom supplies	\$150	per program	3	\$450
SUBTOTAL SUPPLIES				\$1,950
FACILITIES				
Audio visual set up	\$200	per program	3	\$600
TOTAL ALL DIRECT COSTS				\$8,550
INDIRECT COST: calculated at 10% of qualifying direct costs				\$855
PROGRAM TOTAL: All Costs				\$9,405

The annual budget above covers one full year which is comprised of three sessions of the Accent Modification Program. Each Accent Modification Program session has a budget of \$3,135.

Budget Notes

Personnel

- The **instructor** is an ESL graduate student from the University of Memphis who is responsible for facilitation and instruction of a full quarterly session of AMP. Since this is a student, there are no benefits given – only a stipend.

Supplies

- A **book** will be provided for each participant in each session (Text: World English, National Geographic Learning and Cengage Learning)
- **Classroom supplies** will cover the costs of consumable classroom supplies used by the instructor and participants

Facilities

- **Audio visual** equipment will be set up by a St. Jude AV team member prior to each class session

Evaluation Plan

Since this is not an academic credit-bearing course, no proficiency exams are required or given. It is a voluntary program offered as a resource to non-native English-speaking employees. Using the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, the small group instructor will informally assess participant language skills to ascertain understanding and correct mechanics at the beginning of each 12-week program. See Appendix H for a sample Initial Evaluation form to be used at the beginning of the program. Through informal collaborative conversation in labs (application work), the postdoc participant will become more confident in communication abilities to present

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lab outcomes at team meetings. During the program, two short impromptu presentations will occur. The facilitator will video each presentation using an iPhone or Android cell phone. A written evaluation using the Impromptu Presentation Evaluation form is completed by the facilitator and sent by email to the participant the following week. The email will include a copy of the recording, via email attachment, so the participant can hear themselves and hopefully notice some errors or things that can be improved. See Appendix I for a sample Impromptu Presentation Evaluation form. In the final week of each 12-week program, participants will be given an opportunity in class to share a 3-5-minute presentation of their current research or the topic of their choice followed by a Q&A session. The final presentation will be videotaped and evaluated using the Final Presentation Evaluation form. See Appendix J for a sample Final Presentation Evaluation form. At the conclusion of the AMP session, a one-on-one 15-minute conference (facilitator and participant) will be scheduled with each participant to discuss their final session presentation and the facilitator's comments. A final AMP and Facilitator Evaluation form will be distributed by email to participants at the conclusion of each AMP 12-week session to determine successful and progressive learning. See Appendix K for a sample Accent Modification Program (AMP) and Facilitator Evaluation form.

Each 12-week class session will consist of six modules with an integrated focus. Generally, two weeks will be spent on each module; however, adjustments may be made based on the needs of each particular group of participants. At the beginning of the 12-week session, each participant will be encouraged to keep a goal-setting journal which will be reviewed and updated weekly with new goals set each week based on the modules taught. At the end of the 12-weeks, the participants will be able to review the progress made in each module and see their list of accomplished goals over the course of the class session.

Conclusions

This capstone project was designed with a goal of creating an intensive English program for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital non-native English-speaking employees with focus on accent modification to assist with personal and professional communication skills. The data to support the need for this type of program was clear that such a program is considered beneficial from two perspectives – that of the foreign national employee as well as that of the principal investigator. Though the data was limited, it was an unexpected surprise to hear principal investigators expressing support for future AMP sessions. The expected outcome with PIs was pushback with more convincing needed in conversation. Though the PIs interviewed did not provide the expected response, but rather a supportive one, it is still anticipated that some PIs will push back more than others for a variety of reasons. Nevertheless, the initial response from the PIs interviewed was quite encouraging and provided impetus to continue moving forward.

A national survey by Schmidt and Sullivan (2003) addressed the need for training in foreign accent modification. The results of their survey “suggest the inclusion of university coursework and university practicum experiences” to prepare future speech-language pathologists and ESL teachers to work with multicultural individuals (p. 127). The collaboration between St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital and the University of Memphis has a proven benefit for both institutions. For St. Jude’s foreign nationals, the benefit is engaging U of M students and mentors who have expertise in ESL topics, instruction methods, and communication strategies. The benefit to the U of M is that St. Jude is providing a new site location to expand their coursework and practicum experiences for students. As an added benefit to the City of Memphis, providing a practicum site location for expanded interaction with foreign nationals in

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the Southern United States can only continue to break down cultural barriers that have plagued the South throughout its history.

Finally, St. Jude has always been viewed as a haven of hope for patients and their families. It is a specialty research hospital focused on providing exceptional care to patients. That responsibility, though, does not stop with patients, but extends to its employees as well. The Accent Modification Program at St. Jude is a haven of hope for its non-native English-speaking employees. The program's very existence documents the exceptional care and concern for the foreign-born staff at St. Jude. Watching the self-confidence level of participants increase both personally and professionally is fulfilling. AMP teaches deeper levels of communication for its participants which, in turn, allow for deeper levels of research through collaborative efforts. The philosophy at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital is to freely share knowledge, technology and research data so that every child may be given the best chance of a cure. For employees, the philosophy at St. Jude is to freely share knowledge, skills, and abilities so that every foreign national employee may be given the best chance at success. AMP fits perfectly within that philosophy.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Mission Statements:

St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital – To advance cures, and means of prevention, for pediatric catastrophic diseases through research and treatment.

University of Memphis – To provide high quality educational experiences while pursuing new knowledge through research, artistic expression, and interdisciplinary and engaged scholarship.

Appendix B

Interview Questions

PIs:

1. In what ways could an Accent Modification Program for non-native English-speaking employees be beneficial?
2. What are possible challenges that we may face with development of such a program?
3. What do you think should be included in the program that may enhance oral presentation proficiency?

Foreign Nationals:

1. What is your experience in communicating with native-English speakers?
2. How receptive are people around you to your communication efforts in English?
3. If St. Jude wanted to offer an Accent Modification Program (AMP) to its non-native English-speaking employees, what do you think would be important to include?

University of Memphis:

1. What are the criteria to become a practicum field location for TESL/TEFL graduate students?
2. If St. Jude were to offer an Accent Modification Program for its foreign national employees, what key topics would you recommend?
3. What ideas do you have to make the AMP a successful program?

Appendix C

Participant Informed Consent

Title of the Study: Accent Modification Program (AMP)

Researcher Name: Lisa Gaddy

My name is Lisa Gaddy and I am a student with the SIT Graduate Institute Master of Arts program.

I would like to invite you to participate in a study I am conducting for partial fulfillment of my MA in International Education. Your participation is voluntary. Please read the information below, and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and you will be given a copy of this form.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore the need for and clarify the objectives desired for an Accent Modification Program at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital (St. Jude).

Some foreign national employees lack English proficiency, have poor pronunciation skills, and find it difficult to be understood due to their strong native accent when speaking English. The Accent Modification Program (AMP) will provide an opportunity for non-native English-speaking employees, primarily postdocs, to advance their English-speaking skills specifically as it relates to oral presentation proficiency. AMP will provide weekly group sessions and one-on-one conversation opportunities with native-English speakers.

STUDY PROCEDURES

Your participation will consist of responding to interview questions and will require approximately fifteen (15) minutes of your time. The interview will take place at a location of your convenience. The interview will be audio-recorded. You may still participate in this research study if you do not wish to be audio recorded.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study and no penalties should you choose not to participate; participation is voluntary. During the interview, you have the right not to answer any questions or to discontinue participation at any time.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

There are no direct benefits to the participant. As a result of this research study, I hope to develop and design an Accent Modification Program plan for implementation at St. Jude.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any identifiable information obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. I will use a password protected audio recording device (iPhone) during the interview. After the interview and during the remaining weeks of the research study, the data collected will be stored on my personal computer which is password protected. Once the research study has concluded (May 11, 2018), the audio recording will be permanently deleted from the audio recording device used at the interview.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

“I have read the above and I understand its contents and I agree to participate in the study. I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older.”

Participant’s signature _____ *Date* _____

Researcher’s signature _____ *Date* _____

Consent to Quote from Interview

I may wish to quote from the interview either in the capstone presentation or written paper resulting from this work. A pseudonym (fake name) will be used in order to protect your identity.

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

_____(initial) I agree to quotes being used from the interview in the capstone presentation or written paper resulting from this work.

_____(initial) I do not agree to quotes being used from the interview in the capstone presentation or written paper resulting from this work.

Consent to Audio-Record Interview

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

_____(initial) I agree to be recorded by audio.

_____(initial) I do not agree to be recorded by audio.

RESEARCHER'S CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions or want to get more information about this study, please contact me at lisa.gaddy@mail.sit.edu or my advisor at linda.gobbo@sit.edu.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT – IRB CONTACT INFORMATION

In an endeavor to uphold the ethical standards of all SIT proposals, this study has been reviewed and approved by an SIT Study Abroad Local Review Board or SIT Institutional Review Board. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about your rights as a research participant or the research in general and are unable to contact the researcher please contact the Institutional Review Board at:

School for International Training
Institutional Review Board
1 Kipling Road, PO Box 676
Brattleboro, VT 05302-0676 USA
irb@sit.edu
802-258-3132

Appendix D

Annual Program Timeline

SPRING SESSION

November 15	Deadline for U of M ESL graduate students to notify Professor of Applied Linguistics of their interest in using St. Jude AMP as their practicum
December 1	Reserve conference room for Spring AMP session dates/times
January 1-15	Marketing campaign for upcoming AMP session
January 16-31	Open registration until spaces are full
January 20	Confirm logistics
February – April	12-week Spring AMP session
May 1	Evaluation from participants; evaluation from U of M

SUMMER SESSION

March 15	Deadline for U of M ESL graduate students to notify Professor of Applied Linguistics of their interest in using St. Jude AMP as their practicum
April 1	Reserve conference room for Summer AMP session dates/times
May 1-15	Marketing campaign for upcoming AMP session
May 16-31	Open registration until spaces are full
May 20	Confirm logistics
June – August	12-week Summer AMP session
September 1	Evaluation from participants; evaluation from U of M

FALL SESSION

July 15	Deadline for U of M ESL graduate students to notify Professor of Applied Linguistics of their interest in using St. Jude AMP as their practicum
August 1	Reserve conference room for Spring AMP session dates/times
September 1-15	Marketing campaign for upcoming AMP session
September 16-30	Open registration until spaces are full
September 20	Confirm logistics
October – December	12-week Fall AMP session
January 1	Evaluation from participants; evaluation from U of M

Appendix E

Learning Activity – “Does It Really Matter?”

Stage 1: Identify Desired Results

Goals: Participants can illustrate through their own words how language changes when purpose and audience are considered. The two primary aims are to persuade and to inform.

Understandings: Participants will understand....

- The importance of knowing how one’s audience influences language selection
- Disregard for one’s audience can greatly impact the effectiveness of language exchange
- Words matter!

Questions:

- How does the makeup of my audience change my content and/or word choice?
- How does my tone of voice or style impact message delivery?

Knowledge and Skills:

- Participants will be able to communicate appropriately based on the discussion purpose and audience members
- Participants will be able to understand the purpose of a discussion
- Participants will be able to quickly evaluate the language needs for successful impact of any discourse

Stage 2: Determine Acceptable Evidence

Tasks:

- Using short role-playing scenarios, participants will demonstrate appropriate language usage in the following contexts:
 - Persuasive request
 - Informative instructions
- Participants will critique the scenarios and offer helpful feedback to demonstrate understanding of concepts and contexts

Stage 3: Plan Learning Experience and Instruction

Background Information:

St. Jude hosts an employee event three times a year called Judestock. This event takes place from 11a-1p and features food trucks, a live band, tents, vendors, etc. It is a company-wide event that encourages camaraderie and employee interaction across campus.

Supplies needed:

Index cards

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Pens

Flip chart

Activity time:

One class session – 45 minutes

Participants: 8-12

Instructor: 1

Pre-class preparation:

Prepare four index cards (two identical sets) of one of the following scenarios on each card – two identical index cards per scenario:

1. You are a big fan of the St. Jude Mighty Electric Band and you just heard that the St. Jude Mighty Electric Band is playing at Judestock next Wednesday. Unfortunately, you are scheduled to record test results from 9:00a-2:00p in the lab on Wednesday. In a conversation with your manager, explain why you would like to attend Judestock.
2. A former college friend is visiting Memphis and plans to meet you at the St. Jude Kay Kafe (cafeteria) before joining you for Judestock. However, this friend does not know the campus. In a telephone conversation with this friend, explain how to drive to campus and where to meet.

Prepare Effective/Non-Effective Comparison Table on flip chart

(Using WHERETO indicators by Wiggins and McTighe, 2005, p. 22)

W – Help the students know **Where** the unit is going and **What** is expected. Help the teacher know **Where** the students are coming from.

H – **Hook** all students and **Hold** their interest

E1 – **Equip** students, help them **Experience** the key ideas and **Explore** the issues

R – Provide opportunities to **Rethink** and **Revise** their understandings and work

E2 – Allow students to **Evaluate** their work and its implications

T – Be **Tailored** (personalized to the different needs, interests, and abilities of learners)

O – Be **Organized** to maximize initial and sustained engagement as well as effective learning

5 min

Questions to ask the group (H)

- “Have you ever wanted to participate in a conversation, but instead remained silent because you weren’t sure how best to present your perspective in English?”
- “Have you ever been afraid to ask your PI (principal investigator/manager) for time off or time away from the lab?”
- “Have you ever been afraid to talk to a colleague? Or an American friend?”
- “Have you ever responded to a question and your response was completely misunderstood?”
- “Have you ever had someone smile, or even laugh, at your use of the English language?”

Instructor gives a brief overview of a Judestock day. (E1)

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5 min

Participants are split into four groups of 2-3 in each ensuring there is at least one person in each group that has experienced and participated in Judestock. (W, T)

Distribute a blank index card to each participant. (E1)

Instructions are given for group work and individual work. (W)

10 min

Each group of 2-3 participants receives one scenario index card and must work individually (5 min) and collaboratively (5 min) to respond to the assignment on the card. (R, O)

15 min

Each group presents their response. (E)

While listening to the response, the remaining participants record pertinent words and ideas the group has used to adapt its language to the task and audience. (R, E2, T)

10 min

Discuss the strategies used by the presenting group and illustrate how the responses differ using the below comparison table on a flip chart. (E2)

EFFECTIVE/NON-EFFECTIVE COMPARISON

<u>Situations</u>	<u>Effective Words/Tones</u>	<u>Non-Effective Words/Tones</u>
#1 – Manager (persuasive)		
#2 – Friend (informative)		

Appendix F

ARE YOU A NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKER?

Have you heard of the **Accent Modification Program**?

Meets:
Tuesdays, 12-1 PM
Fridays, 1-2 PM
Danny Thomas
Research Tower,
E1004

Focused on advancing English language skills of foreign-born employees in order to improve communication skills, both personally and professionally.

Classes are offered in 12-week sessions in the Spring, Summer and Fall. There are conversational and presentation focused sessions offered as well to further foster the confidence in one's English speaking abilities. For more information, see the Coordinator of the Post Doc program for registration.



Appendix G

ACCENT MODIFICATION PROGRAM (AMP) REGISTRATION FORM

SPRING _____ SUMMER _____ FALL _____ YEAR _____

Please print neatly or type the following information:

Family Name _____

First Name _____

Local Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone Number _____

Email _____

Date of Birth: (month) _____ / (day) _____ / (year) _____

Home Country _____

First Language _____

Type of visa _____ Visa expiration date _____

Current department _____

Position _____

Certification Statement

I hereby certify that the above information is correct and that I will abide by the expectations for participants in the Accent Modification Program (AMP) at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix H

Initial Evaluation

In order to meet your English language needs, please answer the following questions. Your answers will be used to determine the structure/focus of the course.

1. What is your major area of study or research?
2. What is your native language?
3. What are your goals for improving your English?
4. What problems do you experience when talking with or listening to native English speakers?
5. Which of these skills is the most *difficult* for you to do in English?
 - a. Listening
 - b. Speaking
 - c. Reading
 - d. Writing
6. Which of these skills is the *easiest* for you to do in English?
 - a. Listening
 - b. Speaking
 - c. Reading
 - d. Writing
7. How much time do you spend every day listening to or speaking with native speakers of English?
 - a. 30 minutes–1 hour
 - b. 1-2 hours
 - c. More than 3 hours
8. What kinds of writing do you do in English?
9. What kinds of reading do you do for pleasure (not related to your major area of study/research)?
10. What work related tasks are you required to do in English?
11. What do you believe to be your greatest need in English? (What do you need the most help with.....pronunciation....writing....speaking....understanding American culture....ethical issues in the lab? etc.)
12. What are some activities you would like to do in this class that would improve your English language skills?

Appendix I

Impromptu Presentation Evaluation

Name _____ Topic _____

Date _____

SCALE

- 10-13 Frequent, noticeable difficulty; interferes with communication
14-16 Occasional difficulty; interferes slightly with communication
17-19 Satisfactory competency for level; comfortable communication with native English speakers
20 Above average competence for level; easily understood by native speakers; near native-like

PROFICIENCY

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|----|----|--|
| 10 | 14 | 17 | 20 |
| Comprehension (of listener) | | | |
| | | | *volume of voice and rate of speech enhances comprehension |
| | | | *engages listener in active construction of meaning |
| 10 | 14 | 17 | 20 |
| Pronunciation | | | |
| | | | *clear enunciation (open jaw, engages mouth, teeth, and tongue in sound formation) |
| 10 | 14 | 17 | 20 |
| Grammar / Word Order | | | |
| 10 | 14 | 17 | 20 |
| Vocabulary | | | |
| | | | *use of a variety of descriptive vocabulary and expressions |
| 10 | 14 | 17 | 20 |
| Fluency | | | |
| | | | *ease of speaking / degree of hesitation / use of fillers |

TOTAL _____

COMMENTS

Appendix J

Final Presentation Evaluation

DATE _____ SPEAKER _____

TOPIC _____

DELIVERY **RATING** **COMMENTS**

Eye contact 1 2 3 4 5 _____

Volume of voice 1 2 3 4 5 _____

Rate of speech 1 2 3 4 5 _____

Enthusiasm 1 2 3 4 5 _____

Adherence to Time Limit 1 2 3 4 5 _____

CONTENT

Attention-getting opener 1 2 3 4 5 _____

Preview 1 2 3 4 5 _____

Organization 1 2 3 4 5 _____

Supporting materials 1 2 3 4 5 _____

Visual aids 1 2 3 4 5 _____

Transitions 1 2 3 4 5 _____

Summary and
Concluding remarks 1 2 3 4 5 _____

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS _____

Rating Key

1=Poor

2=Fair

3=Acceptable

4=Good

5=Excellent

Appendix K

Accent Modification Program (AMP) and Facilitator Evaluation

In an effort to further develop this program we would appreciate your honest and thorough evaluation. Part A consists of general questions while Part B contains more specific questions.

PART A: For each statement, please choose one answer.

SA=Strongly Agree **A**=Agree **N**=Neutral **D**=Disagree **SD**=Strongly Disagree

- _____ 1. Class began and ended on time.
- _____ 2. The facilitator was well-prepared and organized.
- _____ 3. I could understand what the facilitator was saying.
- _____ 4. The facilitator's answers to participants' questions were clear and easy to understand.
- _____ 5. The amount of material covered in the class was: (Choose A / B / C)
 A. Too much B. Just right C. Too little
- _____ 6. The classroom activities were useful.
- _____ 7. The textbooks were useful.
- _____ 8. I was satisfied with the feedback from the facilitator on my assignments.
- _____ 9. AMP met my expectations.
- _____ 10. I will recommend this class to others.

PART B

Please comment on the following questions / statements. Your feedback is very important to the development of the program.

1. Did you find the language learning activities to be useful and enjoyable? Why or why not?

2. In what way(s) was the textbook, *World English*, useful / beneficial? _____

Accent Modification Program

3. Please comment on the grammar activities presented each week. Were they _____
a. helpful b. not helpful c. neutral

4. Which of the following grammar lessons were helpful? Circle all that interested you.
a. article usage (a/an/the)
b. prepositions
c. verb tense review and usage
d. count / non-count nouns
e. gerunds / infinitives
f. passive voice
g. (other) _____

5. You did two short impromptu-type presentations that were digitally recorded and sent to you via email attachment. In what ways were these beneficial? _____

How many would you prefer to do? _____ a. one b. two c. three

6. Please comment on the video-taped final presentation. How useful was this activity?

7. What changes do you think should be made in the content of this program in order to better meet the English language needs of participants? (More American culture lessons? More pronunciation activities? More listening / speaking activities? Other?) _____

Please return the completed evaluation form by email to the Coordinator of the Postdoc Program or send by intra-office mail to Mail Stop 304.

Thank you. ☺