ACADEMIC VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION AND ADULT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN THE ARABIAN GULF: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF INSTRUCTOR PERSPECTIVES

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment Of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe 11 ESL instructors’ experiences and perceptions of why some adult learners in their college level ESL programs in the Gulf States of the Middle East have challenges to academic reading comprehension success. The theories that guided this study were epistemological and axiological ones whereby participants’ descriptions of perceptions regarding academic vocabulary instruction, instructional self-efficacy, and experiences were explored. Adult learning theory of Malcolm Knowles’ coupled with the social cognitive theory espoused by Albert Bandura are the frameworks that underscore the adult learner context and their social learning and instructional environments within this study. Data collection strategies for this phenomenological study were comprised of standardized open-ended interviews, observations, and document collection. This purposive sampling of criteria of participants was based on age, experience, profession, and setting. The data was analyzed using Moustakas’ seven step procedure and helped to describe the essence of why some adult learners in these programs may have difficulty with English academic text comprehension and academic success at the tertiary level.

**Keywords:** adult English language learner, academic vocabulary instruction and acquisition, academic reading comprehension, instructional efficacy, developmental ESL programs.
This dissertation is dedicated to those who have supported and nurtured my growth. Gharib, my dear husband, and three sons have encouraged me through this process, and I am indebted to them all. I want you all to know that I am so thankful and appreciative of your understanding and support. I could not have done this without you. My Chair, Dr. Charles Schneider, has been a great resource for guidance, expertise, and support throughout the dissertation process.
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List of Abbreviations

CELTA Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (British Council)

EFL  English as a foreign language

ELL  English language learner

ELP  English language proficiency

ELT  English language teaching

ESL  English as a second language

GCC  Gulf Cooperation Council: An Arab regional intergovernmental mutually beneficial relationship based on political and economic agreements. The countries included are: Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates.

L1   Language one (native language)

L2   Language two (second language)
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

This chapter presents the background of English language learner issues in the Gulf region of the Middle East and education reform contexts. The researcher’s situation to self is also provided. The problem statement identifies the gap in the literature while the stated purpose statement identifies how this study may possibly address this gap. The significance of this research grounded study is also described and the research questions and research plans presented. The last section of the chapter focuses on the delimitations and definitions of this study.

Background

For approximately 30 years, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in the Middle East (Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Oman) has attracted and employed expatriate instructors to teach and prepare their citizens for workforce education, technology, and jobs, much of the time through an English language medium. GCC member nations have been encouraging their young adults to pursue higher education to attain national development goals. Usually, this is done through local Gulf area branches of American and European universities. Additionally, elementary through high school level educational reforms were instituted within most GCC countries at approximately the same time as the discovery of oil in the region over 30 years ago (Belhiah & Elhami, 2015). Although this effort has been consistently and generously funded since the 1960s and 1970s, some local English language learners still face significant challenges to their academic performance in English medium institutions (Al-Issa, A., & Al-Bulushi, 2012, Belhiah & Elhami, 2015).
In recent years, countries in the Gulf have been heavily engaged in major education reforms—including language-in-education reforms—intended to ameliorate the low-levels of literacy and the outmoded methods of instruction that focus on rote-learning and memorization. Being educated exclusively in English might exacerbate this situation, especially that students will be reluctant to read in a language that they can barely understand. As some teachers commented, students are becoming more and more averse to reading and writing, not only in English but in Arabic as well. Allowing students to read and write in their first language in class will likely help them gain confidence in themselves as writers and readers in the target language. (Belhiah & Elhami, 2015, p. 21)

Educational systems in the Arabian Gulf region of the Middle East have been going through a rapid period of change with regard to educational structure, curricular and instructional modernization for more than three decades (Dakhli & Zohairy, 2013, pp. 43-46). The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) of the Arabian Gulf countries of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Oman have been marked with successful oil, business, and tourism—based economies coupled with a population in the process of developing the job skills needed to support this unprecedented growth in all sectors (Dakhli & Zohairy, 2013, pp.46-47). This has led to many foreign national English medium colleges and universities relocating to the region and establishing branch campuses in the GCC area to assist in developing local GCC human capital to fill future and present jobs in the region. This has been a developing process with inconsistent and varied results. “The lack of well-qualified graduates to staff private firms, especially in banking, management, and other related business
areas creates a heavy demand for non-nationals, or expatriates, who dominate the workforce in the GCC” (Dakhli & Zohairy, 2013, p. 44).

The issue of local student challenges in college level developmental ESL/EFL classes has been a recurring and ongoing concern not only for the students themselves but for regional governments. Many regional countries have national education visions, programs, and plans for their citizenry to be able to cross over to becoming knowledge—based societies. Some English language learners in the GCC area may not be successful in college level academic ESL/EFL classes, and this at times may lead to a high attrition rate coupled with many repeated attempts into courses not passed. This means that higher attrition rates may possibly impact the available number of qualified and educated people entering the workforce, professional, and political realms. This is a concern for governments and educational institutions in the region (Dakhli & Zohairy, 2013).

Although there has been modest success with college level GCC adult populations, there are some who do not find academic success. A major challenge for many adult learners is acclimating to a new and demanding academic context: “Because integration into the academic environment is a challenge for adult students, developmental educators must understand the background of adult students and develop a curriculum that addresses their particular needs” (Kenner & Weinerman, 2011, p. 90). Addressing the needs of the adult college level English language learner (ELL) should be at the forefront of instructional and curricular priorities. Kenner and Weinerman (2011) take adult learning theory and qualify how instructional sensitivity and instructional awareness need to be present when instructors teach this particular population of college students who face academic challenges. Academic vocabulary instruction
is a definite need in the Gulf of Arabian context for this population of learners, and this issue needs to be taken into consideration and acted upon.

The challenge of passing the developmental ESL/EFL courses at these institutions can be daunting to some students, and it may be due to a combination of factors. A combination of personal or individual styles and strategies of learning, context specific cultural factors, societal influences, and adjusting, adapting, and easing into the college environment, may at times impact student academic achievement. Kenner and Weinerman (2011) argue that “college level learners form their metacognitive skills from their communities, peers, and their local cultures. Role models and peer relationships are also key to their learning strategies” (p. 89). It is clearly important for instructors to identify and employ elements that may help to motivate adult college level learners to continue and persist in especially diverse and culturally unfamiliar academic environments. “By having an awareness of the different learning styles of adult learners, framing learning strategies in immediately useful ways, and using competition and repetition, the developmental educator can enhance the integration of the adult learner into the collegiate environment” (Kenner & Weinerman, 2011, p. 89).

Instructors who teach adults must understand their student population and be able to modify and adjust curriculum and instruction to meet the students’ particular needs. Basic principles of adult learning play a significant role in ESL programs in community college models and developmental ESL programs at universities. The first theoretical framework to guide this study is andragogy or the theory of instruction and learning as related to adults (Knowles, 1970). According to Knowles (1970), instructors should take this into account and guide their instruction according to the needs of the learners that they instruct. “The educator has a responsibility to create conditions and provide tools and procedures for helping learners discover
their "needs to know" (Knowles, 1970, p. 40). Instructors need to guide, mold, and present curriculum and instruction to address the needs of the learners that they instruct.

In the GCC context, students who are not successful in the developmental ESL classes at times may feel they are not able to be successful due to the reading comprehension obstacles they may face. The issue seems to lie in the curriculum, the academic vocabulary instruction, and student self-efficacy. The second theoretical framework that guides this study is social cognitive theory where an individual’s social interactions and experiences may influence their reactions or behaviors. Regarding self-efficacy, Bandura (2001) describes it as “direct personal agency, proxy agency on others to act, and finally collective agency of a group” (p. 1). Personal agency can be observed inside numerous socially structured contexts with the classroom being one of them. As an extension of this concept, Jabbarifar (2011) focuses on how human beings function based on social experiences and those particular experiences then impact their behavior. The author then makes the case for second or foreign language learning and how one’s high or low self-efficacy may or may not enable one to succeed at second language acquisition (Jabbarifar, 2011, p. 118). The article lays the basis of how instructors can understand and then assist their college level ELL learners who may be having challenges (Jabbarifar, 2011). This is one of the issues that may be confronting GCC students in their EFL goals at the college level.

Although there are great strides toward English acquisition and education in the GCC, there still seems to be a noticeable lack of English proficiency with a number of university level students in ESL/EFL programs: “Although tremendous efforts have been exerted, EFL programs in the region still fail to deliver as expected, and the EFL learners’ proficiency in English remains inadequate and below expectation” (Fareh, 2010, p. 3601). This may create unexpected hurdles and difficulties for the instructors as well as the students. There are ELLs in this
particular population that have faced challenges in reading comprehension of academic texts in English. This is likely due to the lack of a wide and deep academic vocabulary base that they can draw from to understand unfamiliar texts. Knowledge and deep understanding of vocabulary leads to defined meaning while at the same time implying context and relevancy to the world (Stahl, 2005).

According to Schmitt, Jiang, and Grabe (2011), there seems to be a linear relationship between the known vocabulary percentage and the level of reading comprehension accuracy. Additionally, vocabulary knowledge, and specifically academic vocabulary for college level learners is a basic component of good academic text comprehension. Nisbet (2010) asserts that ESL instructors need to carefully focus their instruction on widening and deepening vocabulary as well as developing and assisting students in making meaningful connections with the texts that they read. Rance-Roney (2010) also concurs that ELLs need more intensive and intentional vocabulary instruction than struggling native speakers would need.

This research study focused on instructor participants’ descriptions of perceptions regarding academic vocabulary instruction, instructional self-efficacy, and I will explore their experiences. Local Arabic speaking ELLs in developmental ESL/EFL programs at universities and colleges in the GCC region are affected, and there is scant literature that addresses this particular phenomenon. The instructor’s perspective is key in understanding and exploring the depth, breadth, and significance of student challenges in this context. The instructors are the sole individuals with the intimate daily experiences with this population of students, their circumstances, the role of the academic vocabulary instruction in their ESL/EFL programs at their institutions, as well as how to possibly positively impact their academic reading
comprehension, which is one of many factors vital to their success at the college and university level.

**Situation to Self**

The philosophical assumptions for this phenomenological study that led to my choice of research are epistemological and axiological. The theory that assisted in shaping this study is post-positivism where “post positivists do not believe in strict cause and effect, but rather recognize that all cause and effect is a probability that may or may not occur” (Creswell, 2013, p. 23-24). Creswell (2013) furthers this point by asserting that post-positivism looks at reality from several distinct views, where inquiry is considered to be composed of integrated steps coupled with a variety of qualitative data collection methods as well as different approaches to validity. This study topic is a deep seated concern of mine, and I feel there is a need for research in the area of academic vocabulary, its impact on ELLS, and adult attrition in the GCC region. I have been residing in the GCC for more than nine years and am searching to find ways to assist in curtailing adult learner attrition in developmental ESL/EFL college programs. Approximating the reasons for lack of student success in this region is critical, and it would be beneficial to assist my students, as well as the students at colleges in the region. “There may not be absolutes, and the reality of these descriptions will be identified through the research itself while controlling personal and individual perspective in the context of the study” (Creswell, 2013, p.36).

**Problem Statement**

The problem is that a number of adult English language learners in GCC adult ESL/EFL programs in the Gulf region face significant challenges in English language acquisition and reading in language two (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012; Alshenqeeti, 2014; Fareh, 2010; Traish,
The most recent measure of reading comprehension for pre-university students was the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) score from 2012. It reiterates the need for improvement in reading comprehension scores for 15 year old high school students. Gulf countries that participate in this international assessment of over 65 countries have again scored in the lower third of the reading comprehension assessment (OECD, 2014). This may impact their ability to successfully complete their higher education in an English medium as reading is an integral part of learning and studying. This has resulted in student repetition of courses and high attrition rates. These issues may be partly attributed to students not having the academic vocabulary skills they need to be successful in the English context and reading of academic texts. Being successful with academic reading is a major key to university level academic success.

According to Nation (2006), “98% coverage of a text is needed for unassisted comprehension, then a 8,000 to 9,000 word-family vocabulary is needed for comprehension of written text and a vocabulary of 6,000 to 7,000 for spoken text” (p. 59). Moving beyond the amount of words needed to be familiar, Wessels (2011) asserts that “vocabulary knowledge is essential to students’ academic success. If students do not understand the meaning of the words in the text, they will have difficulty understanding the content” (p. 46). The familiarity, breadth, width, and depth of a student’s vocabulary has a direct impact on comprehension and their academic success.

It is critical to study this area because English language learners make up a significant percentage of the college student population internationally at American and English based university branch campuses located in the Middle East Gulf region. Nation (2011), asserts that “there is growing evidence on the need for a large vocabulary size. One of the ways in which teachers can apply this knowledge is to inform learners of vocabulary growth goals” (p. 537).
Understanding the impact of academic vocabulary instruction and learning can assist in widening students’ vocabulary base in order to promote an increase in academic area text comprehension.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore instructors’ experiences and perceptions of ESL/EFL program academic vocabulary instruction, instructional self-efficacy in this area, and perceptions of the students they teach in these programs to see how they possibly impact student success in academic reading. Little qualitative inquiry has been concentrated in the area of academic vocabulary impact and instructor perceptions of instruction and learning in developmental programs in the GCC region.

**Significance of the Study**

Recent research in this area has investigated the issue in different GCC contexts, and findings generally indicate underprepared or inadequately prepared instructors, lack of student motivation, rote learning, and inappropriate assessment and evaluation techniques (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012; Fareh, 2010; Dakhli & Zohairy, 2013; Jabbarifar, 2011). This research study extended the idea of instructional efficacy and meeting the needs of adult learners in developmental ESL/EFL programs in the GCC region. Additionally, academic vocabulary needs to be a cornerstone of continuous and methodical development and instruction for all ELLs. Findings of this research study will be of benefit to local GCC English medium colleges and universities that are searching for a way to meet learner needs and to positively impact student success in these programs. The aim of this study is to hopefully inform pertinent institutions and faculty as well as focus awareness on the needs of the adult learners in these ESL/EFL programs. The current research identified new or existing instructor experiences and perspectives and leads
to the description of a shared common experience of what is needed to positively impact adult learner success in this context.

This study will be of interest to nations such as those in the Arabian Gulf region, as the issue of developing national human capital to address long term national vision goals has a deep and critical impact on their national development in many professional and workforce areas. Instructors are a part of this phenomenon and may be key in helping to detect possible significant areas that need attention. Little qualitative inquiry has been concentrated in the area of academic vocabulary impact and instructor perceptions of instruction and learning in this particular region.

Research Questions

Four research questions guided the development of this study. The studies of Fareh (2010), Dakhli and Zohairy (2013), Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi (2012), and Jabbarifar (2011) helped to shape the formation of my research questions as the studies address lack of instructor preparation, proper assessments and evaluations, as well as instructors’ own personal perspectives of the students they teach in this particular region. The research questions are meant to elicit the instructor beliefs, perceptions, and feelings regarding the academic vocabulary curriculum and instruction at their particular institution. The following research questions will assist in identifying instructor views and perceptions of how to address the issue of academic vocabulary instruction, its impact on student success in reading comprehension, and how to possibly resolve this issue: (a) How do ESL instructors describe academic vocabulary instruction in their institution? (b) How do participants view the role of academic vocabulary in their ESL classes and how it may positively impact ELL comprehension of academic texts? (c) How do ESL instructors describe their experience with this particular population of ELL students? (d)
What challenges in reading comprehension of academic texts do ESL instructors perceive that these ELLs face?

**Research Plan**

A transcendental phenomenological qualitative approach was conducted primarily using observations and interviews. This method choice was appropriate due to the broad questions being asked in relation to the experience the instructors have had and what contexts or situations have affected their experiences.

Transcendental phenomenology of Edmund Husserl is based on individuals who have their particular biographies and future perspectives and who share some common context. It pursues, however, the characterization of a common collective context, being the knowledge of individual idiosyncrasies as just an initial step. The phenomenological concept of the individual, which includes the subjective and inter-subjective aspects of social and social experience, as will be shown, allows the construction of a methodology which starts by considering both aspects in individual participants. Then, through the experience and meaning of the individuals, it unveils transcendentally what is typically social. (Henriques, 2014, p. 452)

This study included the exploration of a phenomenon "through a group of individuals who experienced the phenomenon, with a philosophical discussion where the researcher will bracket herself out, followed by interviews of data collection and analysis” (Creswell, 2013, pp. 78-79). Interviews and observations allowed for the 11 Gulf region ESL instructors to voice their perspectives for this phenomenological inquiry. A combination of “standardized and open-ended interviews where each participant was asked the same questions with the same wording” was used (Patton, 1990, p. 280). Data triangulation was conducted by face to face, open ended
interviews, observations, and document collection. “The process involves corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). This sequence of collection allowed me to have personal interaction with the instructors first through the face-to-face, standardized, and open-ended interview during which I requested their sharing of documents or materials that they use to substantiate their interview responses. This was done so that the shared experience of instructing students who have specific academic challenges to overcome can be identified. This study will explore instructors’ experiences and perceptions of academic vocabulary instruction, instructional self-efficacy, and challenges to student success in the GCC context.

**Delimitations and Limitations**

Participants in this study were ESL instructors teaching adult learners developmental English in colleges and universities in the GCC region of the Middle East. They all had two or more years of teaching in this particular context and were between the ages of 25 and 70. These details have been identified as being insightful to the local GCC ESL instructor experience. Two years of ESL teaching experience was chosen to reflect the experience in instruction for this population of ELLs.

Potential limitations were the number of participants as well as the geographical setting. Since there were only 11 instructor participants involved in this study, an overall general representation will not be feasible. The population studied and geographical site are unique and may not allow for generalizability to other locales.
Definitions

1. *English as a foreign language* - EFL is used to describe English taught as a foreign language (Deshors, 2014, p. 277).

2. *English language learners* - ELL is a term used to describe “English Language Learners and is the most commonly used term to refer to students learning English as an additional language” (Webster & Lu, 2012, p. 86).

3. *Limited English Proficiency* – LEP is a widely used term meaning “limited English proficiency and is the only definition with a highly negative undertone, which includes sufficient difficulty and difficulties may deny such individual the opportunity to learn” (Webster & Lu, 2012, p. 89).

4. *English as a second language* - ESL is the term used for English as a second language and refer to English that is taught as a world variety of English (Deshors, 2014, p. 277).

5. *Culturally and linguistically diverse* – CLD is common term used for “culturally and linguistically diverse students” (Webster & Lu, 2012, p. 88).

Summary

GCC student challenges in college level developmental ESL/EFL classes is a concern for regional governments and university academic bridge programs. Through this phenomenological study, instructors’ experiences of academic vocabulary instruction, instructional self-efficacy and perceptions of the students they teach were explored. Social cognitive theory and andragogy are the two theoretical frameworks that will lay the basis of understanding in the study. The instructors’ perspective is useful in exploring student successes and challenges in this context. The instructors are the individuals with the intimate academic
experiences with this population of students, their circumstances, the role of the academic
to their ESL/EFL programs at their institutions, as well as how to possibly
positively impact their academic reading comprehension, which is one of many factors vital to
their success at the college and university level.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter provides a literature review background relevant to English language learner issues, challenges to ESL programs in the Arabian Gulf GCC countries, and instructional efficacy for English language learners. It also offers two theoretical frameworks that support this study and a detailed presentation of related literature in the areas of reading instruction for ELLs, core strategies to support ELLs, academically unprepared adult students, challenges of ESL in the Arabian Gulf, ELL comprehension success and academic vocabulary, and instructional efficacy.

Theoretical Frameworks

The first theory that lays a base for this phenomenological study is adult learning theory which relates to the teaching and learning of adults. “Andragogy literally translates into leader of adults and is derived from the Greek words anere meaning adult and agogus meaning leader of” (Finn, 2011, p. 36). The concept of “andragogy” was created by Alexander Knapp in 1833 (Finn, 2011, p. 36). There was a new interest in adult learning where the focus was more on self-directed learning, rather than traditional teacher centered instruction to children or pedagogy” (Taylor & Kroth, 2009, p. 3). As the idea of adult education became more popular, there were two areas of investigation that came forth. There was a psychological as well as social perspective of how adults learn and self-direct their own learning (Taylor & Kroth, 2009, p. 3). The two prominent researchers of the psychological and social perspectives of adult learning were Edward Thorndike and Eduard Lindeman (Taylor & Kroth, 2009, p. 3). “Thorndike’s research on adult learning was conducted in a controlled environment, whereas Lindeman worked in a more applied setting” (Knowles, 1984). The latter considered that adults tend to
center on their own learning experiences and that “too much of learning consists of vicarious substitution of someone else’s experience and knowledge” (Lindeman, 1926, p. 6).

Cyril Houle, as cited in Alhassan (2012), who influenced Knowles’ work, studied adult learners and developed further understanding into their patterns of learning. The research that Houle (1961) conducted and wrote about helped to form the basis of adult learning theory. Alhassan (2012) urges that “the experiential nature of adult learners, the ability to critically think and the idea that all adults participate in learning are significant concepts. It is also important to look at adult undergraduates in the context of their complete environment” (p. 164).

The focus into the area of adult education “emerged in the 1800s and then grew in popularity from 1960 to 2000, when Malcom Knowles’ writings on andragogy and adult learning transformed and energized academia” (Taylor & Kroth, 2009, pp. 1-2). Knowles (1980), described how to instruct adults, and that it differed from teaching children because the processes and patterns toward learning are distinct. There are six areas where adult learners differ from other learners: “self-concept, experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learn, motivation to learn, and the need to know” (Knowles, 1984a). As it relates to institutional responsibilities of meeting adult learner needs, Knowles (1970) puts forth the following pillars.

Andragogical process involves the following phases consistently in both levels of application (total programs and individual learning activities: 1) The establishment of a climate conducive to adult learning; 2) The creation of an organizational structure for participative planning; 3) The diagnosis of needs for learning; 4) The formulation of directions of learning (objectives); 5) The development of a design of activities; 6) The operation of the activities; 7) The rediagnosis of needs for learning (evaluation). (p. 59)
Adult learners tend to focus on the practical, job, and life related areas of how their
education will improve their situations. Knowles (1970) astutely asserts that, “People become
ready to learn something when they experience a need to learn it in order to cope more
satisfyingly with real-life tasks or problems” (p. 40). Basic principles of adult learning theory
have a significant role in ESL programs in community college models and ESL developmental
programs. The concepts of andragogy, self-concepts, and the teacher’s concepts of learners are
key issues to address. The prominent andragogic theorist, Malcom Knowles (1970), asserted that
“educators have a responsibility to create conditions and provide tools and procedures for
helping learners discover their needs to know. Learning programs should be organized around
life-application categories and sequenced according to the learners' readiness to learn” (Knowles,
1970, p. 40). Finn (2011) summarizes that andragogical programs and instruction are based on
Knowles’ work that: “adults are self-directed, draw from life experience, focus on their social
roles as well as readiness to learn, are problem-centered, are internally motivated, and need to
know why they need to learn what they are learning” (p. 37). The basic principles of andragogy
play a role that could possibly impact ESL programs in community college models and ESL
developmental programs.

Schraw and Moshman (1995), as cited in Kenner and Weinerman (2011), argue that
“tacit theory and informal theory are useful for instructors with adult learners as they address
how the adult learner organizes and approaches his/her learning as well as how it is formed” (pp.
89-90). Kenner and Weinerman (2011) advocate the need to understand adult learning processes
and how they are formed:

College level learners form their metacognitive skills from their communities, peers, and
their local cultures. Role models and peer relationships are also key to their learning
strategies. There are times when adult learners are not able to achieve the type of success that we would hope they would and that may be due to their challenges to integrate fully within the collegiate atmosphere” (pp. 89-90).

Kenner and Weinerman (2011) take adult learning theory and qualify how instructional sensitivity and instructional awareness need to be present when instructors teach this particular population of non-traditional college students who face academic challenges. A large attrition rate is one of the issues that occur in this population of nontraditional students and at times that is due to the lack of acclimation to the college environment (Andres & Carpenter, 1997; Sandler, 1999; Weldman, 1985). Because integration into the academic environment may be a challenge for adult students, who are also culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD), developmental educators must understand the background of adult students and develop curricular and instructional strategies that address their particular characteristics.

ESL instructors and teams that design adult ESL learner programs, not only need to understand and employ adult learning strategies for the ESL students in community colleges and university settings, but they also need to also ensure that possible life based challenges to learning are addressed by the program format and curriculum (Finn, 2011, p. 35). Finn (2011) addresses the fact that adult ESL learners in developmental and community college settings need programs that are structured to address adult learner characteristics and life challenges. Program developers and instructors should be aware of the “potential situational barriers” that may impede adult ELL success (p. 35). Finn (2011) furthers the logic that adult participation may be contingent upon their cultural norms, jobs, life circumstances, and scheduling issues due to inconsistent or tenuous work situations. Additionally, he emphasizes that ESL programs would best serve adult ELLs by focusing on key programmatic areas (Finn, 2011). Finn cites
Orem (2000) and mentions six impact areas for ESL programs: “1) a common educational core, 2) social and economic adaptation, 3) development of cognitive academic skills, 4) personal relevance, 5) social change, and 6) technological management” (Orem, 2000, p. 442). The article ends with the major principles of adult learning and how appropriate and effective activities for adult learners need to be implemented to help support their particular needs. “Andragogical principles must be sufficiently applied for adult learners, (regardless of the English proficiency level: beginning, intermediate, etc.), in order to create and maintain experiences that are inviting, engaging, motivating, and personally rewarding (Finn, 2011, p. 39). There are multiple variables that impact adult ELL academic success, and being aware and addressing both the programmatic and instructional needs for adult learners helps to create positive climates for ELL growth, development, and success.

Critics of andragogy question whether it actually is a theory based on science because the “anecdotal evidence outweighs the experimental evidence and empirical examinations have tended to be inconclusive, contradictory, and few” (Rachal, 2002, p. 211). Those who question andragogy claim that there needs to be definitive evidence that proves it as a science and theory. “Very few studies have attempted empirical investigation of andragogy (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Pratt (1993) voices the concern that “andragogy has not been tested and found to be, as so many have hoped, either the basis for a theory of adult learning or a unifying concept for adult education” (p. 21). Taylor and Kroth (2009) assert that it would be beneficial to have an instrument to examine andragogical assumptions that are being used in the classroom (p. 8). Since adult learning patterns “firmly move power, responsibility, and motivation toward the learner and away from the instructor, utilizing valid and reliable instruments to gauge such interactions, activities, and assumptions would be beneficial” (Dean & Fornaciari, 2014, p. 703).
Holton, Wilson, and Bates (2009) conducted an empirical study and developed an instrument to measure process design elements as well as andragogical principles (p. 169). These researchers were attempting to address the gap in the literature with regard to empirical evidence in andragogy. The instrument was administered to 404 adult learners in a tertiary degree program. The instrument was designed to be comprehensive of all andragogy principles and process design basics (p. 169). The authors cited it as the most successful study to date with the hopes of strengthening the instrument so as to be able to apply it across distinct areas of adult learning (p. 169). The authors found that a “major and glaring gap in andragogy research is the lack of a measurement instrument that validly measures andragogical principles and process design elements” (Holton, 2009, p. 172). Although their instrument has contributed to the establishment of a good instrument exemplar, they recommend the establishment of a standardized, reliable, and valid instrument to assist in further “strengthening the empirical research base on andragogy” (p. 190).

The next theoretical framework that guides this study is social cognitive theory. It asserts that learners have a hand in their own development and may impact what happens through their own individual actions: “what people think, believe, and feel affects how they behave” (Bandura, 1986, p. 25). Schunk and Usher (2012) focus on social cognitive theory as a “psychological functioning that emphasizes learning from the social environment” (p. 12). The authors focused on Bandura’s landmark works and concluded that “self-efficacy is an especially critical influence on motivation and affects task choices, effort, persistence, and achievement” (p. 12). Schunk and Usher (2012) explain that “human behavior operates involving three sets of influences: personal (cognitions, beliefs, skills, affect); behavioral, and social/environmental factors” (p. 14).
Miller (2011) describes learning as observational and based in attention, retention, production, and motivation (p. 235): “Observational learning may lead to imitation when there is a model to imitate, but it need not lead to imitation” (Miller, 2011, p. 235). The second aspect is that individuals regulate themselves continuously (Miller, 2011, p. 262). Students will “use their observation as sources of information to help them abstract rules.... develop standards of conduct” (Miller, 2011, p. 262). The last aspect is self-efficacy. The individual has a “self-perception of their competence in dealing with their environment and exercising influence over the events in their lives” (Miller, 2011, p. 235). All three of the social learning theory aspects can be applied to second language acquisition interactions, tasks, and student behaviors.

A key part of that is self-efficacy of human behaviors which also lays groundwork for the present study. Bandura (1986) described self-efficacy as “the most influential power in human agency which helps explain why people’s behaviors differ widely when they have similar knowledge and skills” (p. 397). Self-reflection regarding one’s own abilities, self-influence, caliber of functioning, and the goals of one’s life ambitions are all discussed and detailed in Bandura (2001). The author asserts that personal agency functions inside of many socially structured environments where the individual as well as a group of individuals create, produce, and effect distinct social systems, “human functioning is analyzed as socially interdependent, richly contextualized, and conditionally orchestrated within the dynamics of various societal subsystems and their complex interplay (p. 5). This leads to a “direct personal agency, proxy agency on others to act, and finally collective agency of a group” (p. 1). Through the distinct agency roles, individuals are able to affect their goals and self-development: “A functional consciousness involves deliberative processing of information for selecting, constructing, regulating, and evaluating courses of action. This is achieved through intentional
and productive use of semantic and pragmatic representations of goals, and other future events” (Bandura, 2001, p. 3). The author asserts that, “there is much genetic homogeneity across cultures but vast in belief systems and conduct. Given this variability, genetic coding that characterizes humans underscores the power of the environment orchestrated through agentic action” (p. 21). Bandura’s (2001) ideas may assist in supporting and explaining the differences in expectations in taking action and/or inaction for instructors as well as adult ELL students in the GCC context.

Bandura (1986) outlined how behaviors may be affected by self-beliefs: “individuals are likely to engage in tasks in which they feel competent and avoid those which they do not” (p. 394). In this present study, both instructors and students may be viewed through this lens. “Self-efficacy is a powerful determiner of the choices individuals make” (p. 394). Furthering this point, Jabbarifar (2011) asserts that “the higher the sense of efficacy, the greater would be the effort, expenditure, and persistence” (p. 121). Additionally, the author highlights that “self-beliefs affect human agency by impacting individual through thought patterns and emotional reactions” (p. 121). Jabbarifar (2011) cites that “relevant literature indicates that high self-efficacy is accompanied by improved academic achievement and performance” (p. 121).

described it as “people’s judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances.

The author then highlights, Chamot (1993) and Barnhardt (1997), who identified and concurred that those who succeed academically have high self-efficacy behaviors and beliefs (Jabbarifar, 2011). Tremblay & Gardner (1995) extended the idea of high self-efficacy and setting goals for higher personal standards.

Learners' self-efficacy is also associated with the goals they set for learning the language. That is, learners with high self-efficacy set higher goals and higher personal standards. The amount of effort, persistence, or attention exerted to reach a specific goal is also influenced by a perceived probability of the attainability of the outcome. (p. 507)

“Since learner's self-efficacy and goal-setting are interrelated, teachers should guide students to identify challenging, yet manageable goals. Feeling that they can achieve these goals may result in a sense of success and achievement” (Jabbarifar, 2011, p. 123). Jabbarifar (2011) lays the basis of how instructors can understand their college level ELL learners who may be having challenges. This is one of the issues that may be confronting ELL student success in ESL programs in the Gulf.

Jabbarifar (2011) asserts that foreign language/ESL educators at all levels should uncover their students’ self-efficacy beliefs so as to heighten awareness and belief in their own abilities, as well as reinforcing the educator’s belief in the ELLs themselves (p. 122). The self-efficacy of the learner coupled with the educator’s belief in the ELL to succeed are a focal point of Jabbarifar’s 2011 study. “The role of foreign language teachers in exploring learners' beliefs about their abilities as language learners and supporting those who need to develop their sense of self-efficacy seem central. This would allow teachers to either reinforce or challenge certain
beliefs in their students” (p. 122). This ELL self-reflection coupled with instructor concern and belief in her/his students, bring us “to this conclusion that foreign language classrooms should be places where they foster care, respect, and mutual support. In such a place, a positive self-image is enhanced, social relationships are improved, and learning the foreign language is inevitable” (p. 123).

**Related Literature**

**Reading Instruction for ELLs.**

Effective instruction for ELLs is also addressed in the study by Calderon, Slavin, and Sanchez (2011). The researchers used review methods of only effective and successful ELL programs to review for this study (p. 103). Additionally, they only compared long term studies that were in place for over 12 weeks (p. 107). The instruments used to measure the data were the effective studies themselves (p. 107). They were deemed reliable and valid because only large studies were evaluated in this review (p. 107). The author-researchers reviewed many large long-term studies where they identified the key effective instructional elements that made these specific programs successful for ELL learners: “institutional reform, proper leadership, integration of language, literacy, and content, high quality professional development, reading interventions and tutoring, and monitoring and implementation of reading outcomes”( pp. 109-118).

The hypothesis they assert is that based on current studies in reading, the key issue in instructing ELLs is actually the quality of instruction itself (p.107). Additionally, the authors state that carefully structured programs as well as areas such as “school structures and leadership; language and literacy instruction; cooperative learning; professional development; parent and family support teams; tutoring; and monitoring implementation and outcomes” are all key to ELL success (p. 107). The limitations of this review study were that the findings were
generalizable only to the successful ELL programs that were more than 12 weeks in length, had

treatment or intervention procedures in place, and all had professional development for faculty

(Calderon, Slavin, & Sanchez, 2011). Future recommendations for research were in the area of

comprehensive professional development for all educators that are teaching ELLs as part of an

institution wide program to reform instruction with ELLs in mind. “Teachers’ knowledge about

how students acquire languages, their grasp of when and how to maximize the use of the primary

language spoken, and their modeling of academic discourse in the first and second languages can

have important effects on how students learn language and content” (p. 119).

Instructional effectiveness in teaching ELLs requires instructor education and awareness. For

example, reading skills and strategies from a student’s first language are transferable to the

student’s language two reading repertoire and are key to successful instruction. In the meta-

analysis review by Goldenberg (2011), instructional knowledge and awareness were directly

related to improved performance for ELL reading. Goldenberg (2011) highlighted the “five most

recent meta-analyses that have been conducted on topic of transferability of reading skills and

strategies by Francis, Lesaux, and August, 2006; Greene, 1997; Rolstad, Mahoney, and Glass,

2005; Slavin and Cheung, 2005; Willig, 1985” (p. 17). The following outcomes were noted from

the 5 meta-analyses conducted on reading instruction in language one and language two:

(a) Teaching students reading skills in their first language promotes higher levels of

reading achievement in English; (b) what we know about good reading instruction for

English speakers generally holds true for ELLs learning to read in English--to a point;

and (c) when instructed in English, ELLs require additional instructional supports,

primarily due to their limited English proficiency. (Goldenberg, 2011, p. 14)
The author makes it clear that simply using language one is not a “panacea” to ELL reading instruction and that many other key strategies need to be employed (p.17). When instructing adult ELL learners in academic vocabulary and reading, a well-informed and adequately trained background in effective instructional strategies is warranted and needed.

**Core Strategies to Support ELLs**

Instructional efficacy and a focus on academic vocabulary instruction that allows students practice, both assist in ELL language proficiency. According to Barr, Eslami and Joshi (2012), the lack and gap in ELL language proficiency may be a direct result of what teachers are actually doing or not doing to support and push forward student learning success in English. Instructors need to encourage and promote the study of academic vocabulary, structural analysis of the words, and content area vocabulary study (Barr, Eslami & Joshi, 2012). There needs to be a rich overall as well as academic focus on vocabulary as needed, whether general, content area specific, and developing mastery of the vocabulary through meaningful practice study (Barr, Eslami & Joshi, 2012). The authors promote and recommend the idea that direct instruction of vocabulary is important and vital to language learning: “key vocabulary needs to be taught explicitly” (pp. 110-12). In an academic environment “ELLs should be provided instruction to address their language learning needs to raise their levels of English proficiency and academic achievement” (p. 112). They further argue that in order to speed up ELL language learning, “reading with specific vocabulary instruction as an instructional process does support the goals and has continually accelerated language learning and second language literacy development” (p. 113). This article plays a significant role in promoting the idea that explicit and direct vocabulary instruction, alongside instructional efficacy, is necessary to student learning outcomes (Barr, Eslami, & Joshi, 2012).
Academically Unprepared Adult Students

Academically unprepared ELL learners can meet academic challenges with better suited instructional methods as well as additional developmental support within college courses themselves as asserted by Perin (2013). The author discusses the particular needs of college level students who may be academically unprepared and implications of how they can be brought to college level with specific interventions (p. 119): “Sixty percent of the US population of community colleges comes in underprepared. Similarly, their graduation rates and persistence in studying is extremely low. The effectiveness of developmental instruction has been questioned” (Perin, 2013, p. 119).

The ideas of meeting the instructional needs of the academically underprepared learner coupled with the best instructional approaches to reading at a college level were both factors in the 239 studies that Perin (2013) reviewed. The examination of these studies were broken down into the following groups: 16 based on descriptive statistics of the instruction, 13 studies that focused on instructional effectiveness, and 46 that addressed skills assessments (Perin, 2013, p. 12).

The reviewed studies pinpointed numerous weak areas in students’ skills, but it was found that certain reading and writing processes have been overlooked in the literature. Thirteen studies of the effects of instruction were found, most of which focused on strategy instruction or “meaning-making.” The research tended to lack rigor, but five instructional studies reporting relatively robust data were identified. (Perin, 2013) This review of the literature from 2000 to 2012 detailed literacy skills of underprepared college level students in the United States, pinpointed instructional approaches that could impact their
skills and bring them to college level, as well as discussing means by which to include developmental instruction in the college level course work itself.

**Challenges of ESL programs in Arabian Gulf**

Challenges to ESL programs in the Arabian Gulf region have recently been highlighted even though a vast amount of funds has been dedicated to English medium educational institutions. This article will be used to set the tone of how difficult educational reform is in the Arabian Gulf region. Al-issa and Al-bulushi, (2012) assert that a key issue is “teachers’ professionalism because it is as fundamental for any language education plan interpretation and places teachers at the heart of the language education process” (p. 156). A random sample was taken from Omani students in the first year of college who graduated from BES schools at Sultan Qaboos University. Their averages ranged from 78.6% to 93.8% (p. 157). There were 141 students: 89 female and 52 male from 18-20 years old. (p. 159). The two-sample t-tests were used to evaluate differences between male and female participant groups (p. 157). The results suggest less than positive “implications for the quality and quantity of in-service teacher training programs and teachers are the sole interpreters of the syllabus who have powerful impact and suggests a disparity between theory and practice of old and new methodologies” (pp. 167-170). There were no clearly identifiable limitations mentioned by the authors, although it seems that the type of study conducted was not clearly defined by the author researchers (Al-issa and Al-bulushi, 2012). Cause and effect relationships were studied and results were related to the Omani context of college level students who went to either the specific BES reform schools or GES former Omani schools. Results are only generalizable to the Omani educational reform context.
Many recent studies regarding challenges to teaching ESL in the region investigate why some EFL/ESL programs may not be successful. Fareh (2010) synthesized surveys, observations, and the literature in this area:

Although tremendous efforts have been exerted to improve the teaching-learning process of English, EFL programs still fail to deliver as expected, and the EFL learners’ proficiency in English remains inadequate and below expectation. This paper investigates the challenges encountered in teaching English in the Arab World countries. (p. 3601)

The findings of the study revealed that inadequate preparation of teachers, lack of motivation on the part of the learners, teacher-centered methods, and inadequate assessment techniques are among the major problems that render EFL programs unable to deliver as expected (Fareh, 2010, p. 3601). Further larger studies into curricular and instructional skills and details need to be undertaken of each of the following challenges:

There were 8 distinct challenges identified in the literature to the context of instruction in EFL programs in the region: 1) improperly or inadequately trained instructor/teachers and methodology, 2) teacher centered, and not learner centered, 3) Students’ aptitude, initial preparedness, and motivation are low. School and university teachers often complain of the low proficiency of their students. 4) lack of an integrated approach to language instruction, 5) emphasis on rote learning, 6) lack of adequate teaching materials and textbooks, 7) inadequate assessment methods, 8) lack of exposure to English language communication. (p. 3601)

Dakhli, and El Zohairy (2013) have identified possible trends and characteristics within the GCC that have posed challenges to successful English medium higher education initiatives for local populations. Echoing the observations made by Fareh (2010), Dakhli, and El Zohairy
(2013) also asserted that outdated pedagogical methods, in mostly poor quality public sector schools, have hindered successful higher educational achievement as well as resulted in “the decoupling of higher education with the labor market” (pp. 43-44). This issue has resulted in a lack of, and a need for, well-qualified local graduates for private industry, which has found qualified candidates through expatriate labor rather than the local national populations (Dakhli & Zohairy, 2013). Additional trends that contribute to the challenges are: “unsuccessful attempts at educational reform, the growth of private sector business education, growing dominance of the American model of education” (Dakhli & Zohairy, 2013, pp. 44-51). The hurdles and challenges to effective and successful ESL programs in the GCC region are formidable and require innovative solutions to these existing conditions.

**ELL Reading Comprehension success and Academic Vocabulary**

English language learner success with reading comprehension and academic vocabulary is only part of the comprehension process. Reading comprehension is a multi-step process of many different skills and strategies, with the understanding of the vocabulary being one of the tools toward comprehension. Results from Schmitt, Jiang, and Grabe (2011) found that the degree of coverage of vocabulary is contingent on the level of comprehension needed (pp. 35-36). Participants were comprised of twelve locations in eight countries: Turkey, China, Egypt, Spain, Israel, Great Britain, Japan and Sweden (Schmitt, Jiang, & Grabe, 2011, pp. 32-33). From 980 test samples, 661 were deemed viable and valid samples using participants ranged in age from 18 to 33 years, were from freshmen to senior in college, and were also at different points on the proficiency spectrum in English (pp. 32-33). The general length of English language study was ten years, 241 were males and 420 were females of whom 212 were English majors and 449 came from other specialties (p. 32-33). The measuring instruments were two authentic,
extensive, and challenging reading texts that included a pre-vocabulary checklist that was also administered to estimate the amount of words known (pp. 32-33). For reliability and validity, “a two part reading test with multiple choice items was used due to its historical and widespread use in previous studies” (p.32). In addition, the authors followed recommended valid and reliable reading comprehension protocol by formatting the test with “multiple tasks such as graphic organizers so as to do more complex reading tasks and employ higher level reading strategies” (p. 32). “The results support the conclusion above that although vocabulary knowledge is an essential requirement of good comprehension, it interacts with other reading skills in facilitating comprehension” (p. 36). Future recommended research was to identify the range of coverage of vocabulary that may be needed for a focus by reading instructors (Schmitt, Jiang, & Grabe, 2011, pp. 39-40). Vocabulary knowledge and specifically academic vocabulary for college level learners is a basic component of good academic text comprehension.

The size and breadth of an ELL’s vocabulary base is essential as well and may impact reading comprehension. Mokhtar, Rawian, Yahaya, Abdullah, Mansor, Osman, and Mohamed (2010), conducted a quantitative study to assess and evaluate the active and passive vocabulary base of college level Malaysian ELL students. They investigated if ELL students had enough knowledge of high frequency words for academic reading as well as the impact that vocabulary knowledge may have on reading as well as other language skills (p. 72). The random sample of ELL students was obtained from 360 freshmen and sophomore students at the Universiti Teknologi in Malaysia during three college semesters (p. 72). It was found that the students had both weak active and passive vocabularies and “findings revealed that the majority of them did not have enough vocabulary knowledge and vocabulary size to use English as their second language though formal exposure to the language had been given to them for more than 12
years” (Mokhtar et al. 2010, p. 71). The study posed further discussion on the vocabulary knowledge and made recommendations on vocabulary sizes that college level ELLs should develop in order to meet the rigorous demands of college level academic reading texts (pp. 74-75). According to the study, “approximately 17,000 word families should then be the vocabulary size of university-educated non-native English speakers” (p. 74). The authors discuss the need for ELLs to have a similar sized vocabulary base as native speakers (pp. 74-75). That would be approximately 17,000 words and “a vocabulary acquisition rate of 2650 base words per year would allow adult learners of English as a second language to achieve a native-like vocabulary size of 17,200 base words in 6.49 years” (Mokhtar et al. 2010, p. 75). It appears logical that it is necessary to have a large vocabulary in order to be academically successful. “Students who do not have large vocabularies often struggle to achieve comprehension” (Mokhtar et al. 2010, p. 75). There are limitations to this study with generalizability to this context and school. Additionally, a correlational or causal analysis should have been undertaken to include a variety of possible variables that may have influenced these outcomes. The authors suggest that future research focus on 1) the levels of vocabulary knowledge that Malaysian university students should acquire in order to be successful, and 2) can these Malaysian students attain a size of vocabulary like that of a native speaker? (p. 72). They do affirm that the general research already recommends nonnative students to have a vocabulary size that is comprised of at least 17,000 words, which is the range of the size of university level native speakers in order to be successful (p. 74). Since there is a need to widen and deepen the ELL vocabulary base for academic usage, it is wise to ensure that the best possible reading and vocabulary measures and instruction are available as well as reflected in the curriculum of the ESL programs that are established to serve the needs of the college level students.
Being able to understand, identify, and recognize high frequency words in academic texts is a must for all ELLs in the university context: “Research has indicated that many students in an EFL context may not know the high frequency words after several years of study” (Webb & Chang, 2012, p. 115). The issue of not acquiring the most valuable high frequency vocabulary for being able to read academic texts led to the study’s conclusion that “the vocabulary programming may be inefficient” (p. 125). The authors recommend that a well-defined “institutional vocabulary learning plan within and between courses may impact vocabulary knowledge” (p. 125). This quantitative study used a descriptive statistics focus to determine the amounts of words learned on average, as well as the high and low frequency words through a convenience sample which was taken from the same grades with the same participants over a 5 year period (p. 116). All 166 participants were volunteers over a five year period in 6 different classes with 222 original participants, and if a participant was not able to do all 5 assessments, they were excluded from the study (pp. 116-117). A vocabulary language test (VLT) was designed to determine students’ knowledge of words at several frequency bands and the Academic Word List (p. 116). “Five levels of the VLT were administered by one of the researchers to the participants: 1,000, 2,000, 3,000, 5,000, and AWL. The same version of the test was used each year” (p. 117). The major findings for this quantitative study indicated that in the mean scores across the three groups there was a gradual increase in vocabulary acquisition each year with the most marked increase with group A of participants as they had the most instruction in vocabulary as compared to other groups (p. 118). There was a correlation and significant relationship between the instructional time on vocabulary spent and the increase in vocabulary for the students where the “research indicates that vocabulary learning in an EFL context may often be inefficient” (p. 115). The idea that comes to mind is that for ELL programs,
it may be wise to use a vocabulary development and study curriculum within a reading based course so that students are progressively acquiring the vocabulary needed to be successful at the college and university levels.

Knowledge of academic language and vocabulary are necessary for success in reading at the college level for ELLs. Over a 20 year period, the researchers Pongweni and Alimi (2013) identified recurrent mistakes and word confusions, misspellings, and incorrect word usage that appeared to be a lack of phonological and morphological understanding. Additionally, “gaps of vocabulary of comprehension, composition, and literary texts that are based in academic vocabulary were consistently identified (p. 93). The researchers found that “the vocabulary problems that the students confront in processing academic discourse was owed to a gap in understanding the morphological and etymological roots of academic words from Greek and Latin that are commonly used at the university level” (p. 98). The limitations at first are: the study was over 20 years, yet there are no measures for validity, reliability, nor appendices of the actual data formatted in graph nor table form. The data and observations were written, and exemplars are re-stated from the data collection. This data and study may be generalizable to the University of Botswana population as the instructional vocabulary strategies employed there may be distinct to that locale.

We currently leave vocabulary acquisition on the back burner, hoping that our students will learn the words they need for success in their studies incidentally. Yet vocabulary is as central to our subject as all the other topics which we teach, in which our students could perform much better, if only we placed emphasis on vocabulary development, especially that of academic discourse. So we recommend that vocabulary instruction be
made intentional rather than remain incidental, by us creating space in the syllabus for teaching it. (p. 98)

There has also been investigation as to if integrated, isolated, or incidental vocabulary acquisition is best for retention. File and Adams (2010) conducted a qualitative study and also used a one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) as well as descriptive statistical analyses to identify if there were significant differences between integrated, isolated or incidental vocabulary acquisitions (p. 226). The independent variables were integrated, isolated, or incidental vocabulary acquisition and the dependent variables were the student scores on the vocabulary measures (p. 226). “The aim of the study, was to examine which type of focus on form (isolated, integrated, or no focus/incidental) best suits vocabulary learning and retention from classroom-based reading lessons” (File & Adams, 2010, p. 227). Although this quantitative study had 20 student participants, an ANOVA analysis was used to locate any possible differences in the instructional form of the vocabulary, and it was asserted that the results of this analysis possibly indicate that instruction (either isolated or integrated) led to more learning and retention of vocabulary knowledge than incidental exposure (p. 237). However, it did not demonstrate statistical differences between isolated and integrated instruction. The results of this analysis indicate that instruction (either isolated or integrated) led to more learning (pp. 236-237).

These results indicate that there were significant differences in the effectiveness of the three treatments for both learning and retention. This effect is of medium size for learning and is small for retention. The analysis showed, for learning of vocabulary knowledge, significantly less learning through incidental exposure than through isolated (16.85, p = 0.00) or integrated instruction (12.95, p < 0.00). The contrast of isolated and integrated instruction (3.90, p = 0.08) approached, but did not reach significance. For retention of
vocabulary knowledge, incidental learning again was significantly outperformed by both isolated (0.3.80, p = 0.00) and integrated instruction (2.95, p = 0.03). In terms of retention, the two types of instruction were clearly equal (0.85, p = 0.73). The results of this analysis indicate that instruction (either isolated or integrated) led to more learning and retention of vocabulary knowledge than incidental exposure. However, it did not demonstrate statistical differences between isolated and integrated instruction. The results of this analysis indicate that instruction (either isolated or integrated) led to more learning. (pp. 236-237)

The idea is that direct and focused academic vocabulary instruction should be instituted at the college level for ELL students to develop, widen, and deepen their vocabulary to assist in successful reading comprehension and academic success.

Successful reading comprehension of college level academic texts relies on a variety of factors. The recent study by Nergis (2013), highlights that there seems to be conflicting data regarding the impact of “depth of vocabulary knowledge, syntactic awareness and metacognitive reading strategies” on the reading of academic texts (Nergis, 2013, p. 5). This quantitative investigation utilized descriptive statistics in addition to a multiple correlation analysis (p. 1). Forty five undergraduate students from a foundation course in the English Language Teaching Department in a university in Istanbul, Turkey participated in the study, and it was found that “students did not considerably differ in academic reading comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, metacognitive awareness, and syntactic knowledge” (Nergis, 2013, p. 5). Participants were 45 English majors who all had a high level of English language proficiency, and the variables were limited to only 4 logical variables, but background knowledge and previous experience in academic reading variables were not included (pp. 3-6). Moir and Nation
(2002), as cited in Nergis (2013), asserted that adult ELLs are usually not highly motivated to develop “deep vocabulary knowledge in L2 which could help their overall success in L2 learning” and the Nergis 2013 study is an example of this (Nergis, 2013, p. 7).

**Instructional Efficacy/Instructor Perceptions/ESL**

The quality of instruction is a major issue in ELL academic success and Calderon, Slavin, and Sanchez (2011) make it quite clear that instructional effectiveness is a necessary component: “Teachers’ knowledge about how students acquire languages, maximizing the use of the primary language spoken, and modeling academic discourse in the first and second languages can have important effects on how students learn language and content” (p. 119). The authors of this investigation reviewed many large long-term studies where they identified the key effective instructional elements that made these specific programs successful for ELL learners: “institutional reform, proper leadership, integration of language, literacy content, high quality professional development, reading interventions and tutoring, and monitoring and implementation of reading outcomes” (pp. 109-118).

Instructional efficacy through evaluations and interventions may be effective in teaching adult college level ELLs. Yi (2012) found that “formative evaluation not only helps teachers adopt new point of views towards their students, believing that every student has the ability to learn, it also augments the teachers’ confidence in education itself” (p. 33). A descriptive statistical analysis was utilized in this study to find if using formative assessments rather than summative ones are effective for ESL adult students (pp. 32-34). A correlational analysis was used to identify if there was a significant relationship between the evaluation method and student performance and confidence (pp. 32-34). A random sample of 80 EFL students from the College of Continuous Education Of Dalian University of Technology, China were participants with 40
from the experimental group and 40 put in a comparison group of which 41 were female, 39 were male with an average age of 22, approximately 7 years of studying English, and an average English grade of 60%. (pp. 32-34). The researcher found that using formative evaluations and interventions impacted teacher and student perspectives where “students responded positively to the teacher’s new found interest in identifying the learning challenge and responding to it and it gave them a greater sense of confidence” (pp. 27-28).

The aim of the teachers of those adult students is to find the knack to boost their confidence, to correct their mistakes and solve their problems so as to help them greatly improve their language skills. Through the empirical studies, the author concludes that the method of formative evaluation is an approach more suitable for helping adult students learn, improve and master English. (p. 33)

Instructional quality and effectiveness may also positively impact adult ELL students in academic contexts, and yet only “35% of adult ESL teachers in a recent survey reported having had training related to preparing students for academic contexts” (Johnson & Parrish, 2010, p. 619). This data may imply that the mere understanding of how to instruct this population is not being fully studied nor being given the full attention, as is needed. The authors used a qualitative research design using questionnaires and where the variables of interest were the types of academic skills and instructional methods being used in adult ESL classes as compared to college level academic skills and instructional methods and college level and developmental faculty (p. 619). “The report outlines the survey process, highlights specific findings, and shares the impact and implications of professional development activities around the issue of integrating academic skills readiness into adult ESL instruction” (p. 619). The researchers wanted to find out from college level and developmental ESL faculty the same issues, but were looking for
differences in approach, expectations, instructional skills, and the like (Johnson & Parrish, 2010, pp. 621-624).

The data that reveal meaningful gaps in the alignment of college faculty expectations and instructional practices compared with Academic Bridge, transitions-level instruction: (a) critical thinking, (b) technology, (c) note-taking for reading and listening, and (d) presentation skills. The data indicate that there are a number of skills that college faculty deem very to extremely important for success, yet which are only sometimes or rarely taught by the transitions-level teachers surveyed. For example, 56.7% of college faculty report that summarizing, paraphrasing, and synthesizing information from outside sources for writing is very or extremely important, whereas a full 82.6% of ABE teachers surveyed report teaching that skill only sometimes or rarely as important foundational skills. It was indicated that surveyed ABE teachers are not focusing as much as they could be on higher-order academic skills necessary for postsecondary success. (p. 624)

Additionally, many adult ELLs would benefit from academic skills background knowledge as many of them are in developmental programs and would benefit from such preparation. “The impact and implications of professional development activities around the issue of integrating academic skills readiness into adult ESL instruction” would help to support these learners by meeting their adult learner needs (Johnson & Parrish, 2010, p. 619).

Instructional efficacy, quality and effectiveness are also addressed in Wessels (2011), citing the need for instructors to promote new strategies of vocabulary learning that are more interactive and that encourage ELLs to use and manipulate the new vocabulary. “Rich engagement with the vocabulary increases the likelihood that students will take ownership of
their learning” (Wessels, 2011, pp. 48-49). Strategies need to be innovative and engaging for ELLs to promote the usage of the vocabulary and its retention.

Instructor or teacher perspective is also a significant factor to instruction in a variety of ways. Garnering teacher attitudes toward the particular context where they teach ESL is of interest and should be explored to see how it may impact their teaching. Gursoy (2013) undertook a quantitative study that used an ANOVA and t-tests to investigate differences between Turkish teacher trainees’ attitudes toward the English language as well as self-reported daily difficulties (p. 109). The independent variables were demographic information, attitudes, and perceptions with the dependent variables identified as ESL in Turkey (Gursoy, 2013, p. 109). Attitudes and motivations were reported to be closely interrelated, and “the results suggest that the participants have mildly positive motivation toward English, with stronger instrumental motivation than integrative motivation” (Gursoy, 2013, p. 109). The author suggested that it is necessary to identify reasons for “lower integrative motivation because they may affect a teacher’s classroom performance” (p. 111).

Several significant themes of instructor perceptions toward teaching ELLs emerged in the qualitative narrative study conducted by Pu (2012). They were: “teacher negative feelings toward the primary language used at ESL student homes, domain language assumptions, school environment impact, attitudes /negative toward ELs language proficiency, and teacher misunderstanding of classroom accommodations” (pp. 6-11). The author asserts that teaching strategies alone do not suffice to assist in “developing sensitivities and dispositions to work with ESL students” (Pu, 2012, p. 1). Through this study, five themes emerged: “home language assumptions, schooling environment, English language proficiency, ESL accommodations, and
critical awareness” (Pu, 2012, p.1). The study provides information regarding “positioning of the instructors’ identities” as related to ESL instruction and students (Pu, 2012, p. 1).

Self-efficacy for ELLs may be related to instructional efficacy in that the relationship between student and teacher is one of mutual interpersonal relationship. Jabbarifar (2011) focuses on how human beings function based on social experiences and those particular experiences then impact their behavior. The author then makes the case for second or foreign language learning and how one’s high or low self-efficacy may or may not enable one to succeed at second language acquisition (Jabbarifar, 2011, p. 118). This article lays the basis of how instructors can understand their college level ELLs who may be experiencing academic challenges.

Faculty perceptions, behaviors, and lack of understanding toward ELL students is a significant area to investigate as a possible influence in ELL academic success. Ahmed (2013) conducted a quantitative research design with a descriptive statistical component to analyze data from a randomly selected population of 871 ESL instructors who responded to the survey. The author noted a gap in the literature between instructor attitudes and behaviors toward ELLs as well as the apparent and systematic difference of ethnic backgrounds between ELL instructors and their students’ backgrounds (Ahmed, 2013, pp. 4-5). The study aimed to address if adult student academic, social, cultural, and instructional needs were being met (pp. 8-9).

The researcher used a quantitative research design along with a descriptive analysis to analyze the online survey data (p. 56). The sample was from a defined population that was randomly chosen from an entire population of instructors comprised of 871 ESL instructors from 2 and 4 year colleges in the 5 boroughs of New York City (pp. 57-59). There were 36 institutions that participated, ESL departments were randomly selected, and 871 instructors were
contacted, of which only 80 answered the survey (pp. 57-59). The instrument was constructed by the researcher, and validity was conducted by three ELL experts who took the survey and commented on it (pp. 61-63). The literature found, implies that institutions of higher education could lessen the negative impacts on ELLs if there were more institutional support for their academic, linguistic, emotional, and economic needs (pp. 111-114).

The findings were that instructors found themselves to be instructionally adequate as well as their institutions being adequate in providing academic support services, economic and cultural diversity, yet they were found to be lacking with meeting ELL students’ socioemotional needs (pp. 111-114). The work of Northedge (2003), as cited by Ahmed (2013), greatly impacted this dissertation study as it describes the student as entering into “the academic discourse community” where the student is learning to be an active participant (p. 109). Ahmed (2013) suggests an outreach plan to help meet the socioemotional needs of the ELL communities that they serve, and he asserts that there is a need for outreach into the communities (p. 121). He proposed a “consortium” of students, professors, and community members to assist in making ELLs accommodate themselves not only to American culture, but also to the “norms and values of American academia” (p. 176).

The author highlights the issue of addressing learner needs and that the instructors and institutions within New York City must find ways to address their needs so as to help mitigate possible attrition and lack of persistence in higher educational institutions (pp. 134-137). The lack of instructor understanding and awareness of the problems that face adult ELL students may impact student success and “at times students may face academic failure due to issues outside their control. Secondly, high levels of student academic failure indicate that the institution is not recognizing ELL students’ needs” (Ahmed, 2013, p. 5).
Summary

The need to have a wide, deep, and agile vocabulary is a must for college level ELL students. Most native English speakers attain an average of 3,000 words a year, but ELLs must learn much more than that to be able to read academic texts. Academic vocabulary is a key to academic reading and because many ELLs are academically behind their peers, they may experience difficulties in achieving success. In GCC academic ESL programs at the university level, this issue is key in supporting the students in their academic success. Reading is the fundamental skill that they need to learn and be successful at the university level. This issue coupled with other factors such as institutional awareness of adult learner needs, individual learning styles, strategies of learning, as well as context specific cultural and environmental factors, all may impact learner success.

At the same time, as ESL instructors, we must meet the needs instructionally and institutionally of the ELLs that are participants in our college level learning communities if we want to positively impact their success and lessen attrition rates. The integration of adult learners within a developmental college level program is key to persistence within the programs. Integration into the academic environment alone is one of the challenges for many adult students. Many adult learners may not have been in an academic environment before at the college level, or the context may be very different from the academic environment they are used to. It is necessary for developmental educators and institutions to understand and promote institutional support structures and programs that address the background and needs of their adult students.

Adult ELL students at college level institutions have diverse and unique needs that all stakeholders within the particular learning community need to be aware of and attend to. Ahmed (2013) found that most instructor evaluations of institutional as well as instructional efficacy and
impact were considered less than desired. The researcher’s findings were supported with recommendations to couple institutional and instructional efficacy with culturally relevant instructional strategies and programs (pp. 176-178). The areas are cultural, adult life issues, financial, contextual, developmental, and academic climate. If these areas are addressed at the institutional and instructional levels, developmental students in ESL programs in the Gulf may then possibly find the support, programs, procedures, instruction, and adaptation to the new environment that are needed for success. Proper planning of institutional/administrative strategies coupled with appropriate instructional skills and strategies may only increase the chances of persistence within these ESL programs in the GCC region of the Middle East.

One of the most important roles of influence at any institution is the instructor who can become an impetus of change and influence on behalf of the students, the teachers’ instructional efficacy, as well as advocate institutionally.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore ESL instructor experiences and perceptions of academic vocabulary instruction, instructional self-efficacy, and their perceptions of local GCC Arab students that they teach in developmental academic bridge ESL programs in English medium universities and colleges in the region. This transcendental phenomenological study explored these areas by asking four research questions: How do ESL instructors describe academic vocabulary instruction in their institution? How do participants view the role of academic vocabulary in their ESL classes, and how it may positively impact ELL comprehension of academic texts? How do ESL instructors describe their experience with this particular population of ELL students? What challenges in reading comprehension of academic texts do ESL instructors perceive that these ELLs face? In this chapter, the chosen research design, research questions, and setting are all described. The participants, procedures, and the researcher’s role are discussed. Data collection, face-to-face interview questions, and data analysis are also detailed in this chapter. The literature supports the interview questions, and an explanation is given for validation. The chapter concludes with a focus on the study’s trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

Design

A transcendental phenomenological approach was used in this study and is defined as the “common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013, p.76). The researcher collects data from the participants regarding the phenomenon and “develops a composite description of the essence of the experience” (Creswell, 2013, p. 76). It should include what was experienced as well as how it
was experienced (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990 as cited in Creswell, 2013).

Phenomenology has roots in the “mathematician Edmund Husserl’s writings as well as philosophers such as Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty” (Spiegelberg as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 77). The salient features of phenomenology are: focus on a shared group experience, the researcher “brackets” himself or herself out of the study, utilizes a variety of data collection methods such as interviews, observations, and document collection, is guided by steps to narrow down the data into “significant statements”, and ending with a detailed description of the “essence” of the experience and how they experienced it (Moustakas as cited in Creswell, 2013, pp.78-79). This is a valid design as the focus was on a shared common phenomenon experience. Individual experience will be lessened as a focus. This method choice is consistent and appropriate for the research questions because of the broad questions asked related to the experiences the instructors have had and what contexts or situations have impacted their experiences.

**Research Questions**

This study’s research questions helped me to identify instructor perceptions of academic vocabulary instruction, its impact on student success in reading comprehension, and possible solutions: (a) How do ESL instructors describe academic vocabulary instruction in their institution? (b) How do participants view the role of academic vocabulary in their ESL classes and how it may positively impact ELL comprehension of academic texts? (c) How do ESL instructors describe their experience with this particular population of ELL students? (d) What challenges in reading comprehension of academic texts do ESL instructors perceive that these ELLs face?
Setting

The research for this study was conducted at college level developmental ESL/EFL programs in the GCC countries of the Arabian Gulf region. The participant instructors are currently employed at institutions located in the UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Bahrain. Twenty or more university, college, and academic bridge programs in the region were contacted to participate. The student demographics at the institutions researched are predominantly local national GCC Arab students that are middle to upper economic status in this region of the Arab world. The economies of the GCC region are wealthy and may encourage, promote, and subsidize student studies at the tertiary levels. The faculty, for the most part, are expatriate individuals who have travelled to the region to work in this particular context for a variety of reasons. Many of the developmental level ESL courses are taught by individuals with a range of educational qualifications and experience. There are instructors with bachelor’s degrees as well as doctoral level individuals instructing this population. The participants in this study come from the United States, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, as well as local Arab countries from the immediate region. More than half of the participants are native speakers of English, and the other half have near native fluency as instructors of ESL in the Arabian Gulf. All of the participants were between the ages of 25 to 60.

Participants

Standardized and open-ended face-to-face interviews (Patton, 1990) were conducted with 11 ESL instructor participants and enabled sufficient data to be collected to “saturate the model or fully develop the model” (Creswell, 2013, p. 89). These instructors have taught one or more of the following: reading, speaking, listening, writing, or grammar. Participants for the standardized open-ended interviews were instructors of ESL in a college or university
developmental program in the Arabian Gulf region. This was a purposive sampling of criteria based participants that took into account age, experience, profession, and setting (p. 154). This type of sampling is a “non-probability sampling where the researcher makes decisions regarding the participants based upon specialist knowledge and experience with the research area” (Oliver, 2006). All participant and institution names were given a pseudonym for anonymity.

**Procedures**

To start the study procedures, I first applied for Institutional Review Board approval after submitting the forms to do so. After receiving approval, I sent out a request for participation for the study through TESOL Arabia, the most popular and active ESL organization in the Middle East region, requesting responses only from GCC, ESL college level programs, and from instructors that have taught for more than two years in the GCC region. Once a pool of participants gave informed consent, applied, and answered the background information questionnaire, I eliminated those who did not fit the criteria for participation. See Appendices E and F. The next step was that I collected the data by conducting standardized open-ended interviews per participant as well as transcribing all tapes, memos, and personal observations. If warranted, focus groups may be established. Finally, the analysis of data was conducted and reported.

**The Researcher’s Role**

Presently, I am an ESL faculty member at a college in the State of Qatar in the Middle East, although my home is in the United States. I have been an English Language Specialist for the US State Department (2010 to 2014). I was placed on short term curriculum and instruction projects at educational, as well as host nation institutions in Qatar that requested assistance in assessment, evaluation, and development of English language programs through the US Embassy
Doha, Qatar. I have had over 15 years of cumulative instructional experience in the areas of ESL, Spanish, and French. I have been residing in Qatar for the past nine years and have been involved in the kindergarten-twelfth grade system as well as university systems in Qatar. This experience has given me an intimate view of the issues that are affecting educational reform, second language acquisition and literacy issues within the country. My research interests are ESL teacher practices and preparation, literacy issues in language 2, second language acquisition, and multicultural education. I have a deep commitment to service through education.

My relationship to the participants is that we all are teaching ESL in the GCC region of the Middle East and have observed, experienced, and may have distinct perspectives of ELL success at higher educational institutions.

**Data Collection**

Triangulation of the data or “corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective” is vital to the study (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). I employed varying methods of data collection during the course of the research study to ensure validity of the results. A combination of standardized, open-ended (Patton, 1990) face-to-face interviews, observations, and document and material collection was employed to support data triangulation. I have chosen this sequence for economy of time as well as the effort that will be needed to effect each step. Observations and material collection also helped to substantiate participant statements.

**Interviews**

Eleven ESL instructors were interviewed during the study by the researcher. They were conducted in a mutually comfortable location or via Skype when there was a need to use video conferencing due to distance in location. I conducted a “semi structured open-ended interview,
recorded the interview and then transcribed the interview” (Creswell, 2013, p. 160). Interviews were composed of open-ended questions (pp. 145-178). Semi-structured open-ended interviews allow for flexibility and inclusion of the interviewee’s inner feelings and experience about thematic questions that were asked by the interviewer.

The semi-structured interview enjoys its popularity because it is flexible, accessible and intelligible and, more important, capable of disclosing important and often hidden facets of human and organizational behavior. Because it has its basis in human conversation, it allows the skillful interviewer to modify the style, pace and ordering of questions to evoke the fullest responses from the interviewee. Most importantly, it enables interviewees to provide responses in their own terms and in the way that they think and use language. It proves to be especially valuable if the researchers are to understand the way the interviewees perceive the social world under study. (Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 246-247)

I piloted the interview one month before the actual study took place, to give myself time to see if I needed to edit and change item questions. I had a number of experts in the field, who also work in the GCC, review my questions for clarity, appropriateness, and relevancy. The expert review took place before my proposal defense, and the pilot study was effected after approval from the IRB (See Appendix A).

The interviews were recorded, and I transcribed the interviews at the same time they took place. I took notes during the interviews. Interview sessions were approximately 20-30 minutes and addressed the research questions regarding concepts of lack of instructor preparation, proper assessments and evaluations, as well as instructors own personal perspectives of the students they teach in this particular region. Samples of interview transcript will be available (See
Appendix H). Participants have been teaching in the Arabian Gulf region for at least two years and will have taught one or more of the following areas: reading, grammar, writing, and/or speaking. The questions for the open-ended face to face interviews can be found below.

1. Please fully describe your personal and professional reasons for coming to the GCC in the Middle East to teach ESL. Please include your family and friends’ views of your career selection to this region. Please give examples.

2. Please fully describe your complete educational teaching and training history as it relates to teaching ESL here in the GCC region as well as in other locations.

3. Please fully describe your past experiences teaching college level ESL in the GCC. What is your favorite area of ESL to teach at the college level? Why?

4. What is your opinion of academic vocabulary instruction in your institution’s ESL program? How do you think academic vocabulary instruction impacts ELL students?

5. What challenges do you believe some ELLs at your institution have in reading academic texts?

6. What challenges do you believe some ELLs at your institution have in academic success in the GCC college context?

7. What instructional and curricular changes do you think could positively impact ELL academic reading comprehension at your institution? Why?

8. What do you think could positively impact ELL success at your institution?

9. Please describe your personal experience and opinion of working with this population of ELLs.

10. Would you like to add or mention anything else regarding your experience as an ELL instructor in the GCC or of vocabulary instruction?
The rationale for asking questions 1, 2, and 3 was to better understand ESL instructor perspectives of teaching, professionalism, and attitudes in this context. “The teachers’ professionalism is fundamental for any language education plan interpretation and places teachers at the heart of the language education process” (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012, p. 156). The authors emphasize that the responsibility and main role of teachers in any reform of educational policy is in “facing the challenges of the 21st century, fulfilling societal expectations and staying current with the quickly changing information era by providing students with effective EFL instruction to help them survive in an economically competitive world” (p. 156).

Questions 4, 5, 6, and 8 address instructional efficacy and teacher preparation. According to Fareh (2010), challenges in the region start with the instructional efficacy of the instructors themselves. The study found that many are improperly trained or utilize inadequate instructional methodologies. The study asserted that, “teachers can enhance learner motivation, attract learners by establishing good rapport with them, can provide instructional support for English language learners, and can diagnose problems while offering suggestions to remedy them” (Fareh, 2010, p. 3601).

Questions 7, 9, and 10 address not only attitudes and perspectives (Gursoy, 2013) but also instructor and institutional roles in meeting ELL needs at the college level (Knowles, 1970, 2010). Gursoy (2013) asserted that garnering teacher attitudes toward the particular context where they teach ESL/EFL is of concern and should be explored to see how it may impact their teaching. I wanted to identify the factors that may affect ESL teacher attitudes as well as their attitudes toward ESL classroom teaching (Gursoy, 2013, p.108). Reasons for lower or questionable motivation should be identified because they may affect a teacher’s classroom performance (p. 108). Similarly, Knowles’s (1970) andragogy theory asserts that “people learn
something when they experience a need to learn it in order to cope more satisfyingly with real-life tasks or problems. Learning programs should be organized around life-application categories and sequenced according to the learners' readiness to learn” (p. 40).

**Observations**

I conducted observations during the research study time period of the study as I am an ESL instructor at a developmental program at the college level in the region. Observations will be made on a weekly basis for a period of one to two months. According to Ritchie et al (2013), Observation offers the opportunity to record and analyze behavior and interactions as they occur, although not as a member of the study population. This allows events, actions and experiences and so on, to be 'seen' through the eyes of the researcher, often without any construction on the part of those involved. It is a particularly useful approach when a study is concerned with investigating a 'process' involving several players, where an understanding of non-verbal communications are likely to be important or where the behavioral consequences of events form a focal point of study. (p. 35)

I took weekly observations as a non-participant and reflected on instructor perspectives. See Appendix C for observational field note protocol sample. Observations were written as a “nonparticipant/observer where notes from a distance will be taken and will be able to record data without direct involvement with people or activities” (Creswell, 2013, p. 167). The research questions that may be answered through observations were (b) How do ESL instructors describe their experience with this particular population of ELL students? Samples of these observations through field notes are available (See Appendix C).
Document Analysis

Focus participants were asked to submit digital materials/documents that they use to teach vocabulary in their classrooms or as assignments. They were asked to submit any materials that they routinely use in classes for academic and course specific vocabulary instruction and development. It will answer the research questions related to the use and instruction of academic vocabulary. According to Ritchie et al (2013),

Documentary analysis involves the study of existing documents, either to understand their substantive content or to illuminate deeper meanings which may be revealed by their style and coverage. These may be public documents like media reports, government papers or publicity materials; procedural documents like minutes of meetings, formal letters or financial accounts; or personal documents like diaries, letters or photographs. Documentary analysis is particularly useful where the history of events or experiences has relevance, in studies where written communications may be central to the enquiry (for example organizational research, studies of public awareness or information) and where 'private' as well as 'public' accounts are needed. (p.35)

On a weekly basis, I collected and analyzed the submitted materials sent to me by participants. Documents and materials collected were vocabulary handouts, digital presentations, activity sheets, online quiz review, and similar items (See Appendix U).

Data Analysis

Moustakas’ (1994) seven step procedure for data analysis was implemented in this phenomenological study. They are comprised of “data organization, reading through the data, organization and coding of themes, data representation, and finally interpreting them” (Creswell, 2013, pp. 178-180). The data analysis consisted of horizontalization of clusters of significant
statements to themes (using tables /visuals), textural writing (experienced) and descriptions with structural descriptions (context), underlying structure identification, the essential essence of the of the phenomenon, and bracketing/epoche as well as philosophical ideas will be part of the analysis (Creswell, 2013, p. 82). According to Ritchie et al (2013),

Having constructed an initial conceptual framework, the next task is to apply it to the raw data. We refer to this process as ‘indexing’ rather than 'coding' because this more accurately portrays the status of the categories and the way in which they 'fit' the data. When applying an index, it simply shows which theme or concept is being mentioned or referred to within a particular section of the data, in much the same way that a subject index at the back of a book works. The term coding, on the other hand, often refers to a process of capturing dimensions or content that has already been more precisely defined and labelled, as in coding open-ended answers in a questionnaire. (p. 224)

**Reading and Memoing**

As I read through the transcripts of interviews, the observational field notes, and documents or materials, I took notes on the pages and organized similar or related experiences and statements into common preliminary codes to group them within (Creswell, 2013, p. 190).

**Epoche**

In order to focus on the experience of the participant instructors, I wrote down my personal experience with the phenomenon under investigation. I tried to be reflective and truthful in using “epoche” to bracket out my experiences so as to allow a “fresh perspective toward the phenomenon in question” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). This was done so as to try to put aside my own personal experience. I set aside my own beliefs to focus on the phenomenon under investigation. The goal was to focus on participant experience, not that of the researcher
(Creswell, 2013, p. 193). This was the first step in line with analyzing the collected data. I described what I felt the essence of the phenomenon was through reflection and truthfulness. I tried to eliminate bias and bracketed my personal opinions and beliefs regarding academic vocabulary instruction and ELL challenges to reading comprehension success in a reflective notes (See Appendix V).

**Significant Statements**

A list of significant statements for each research question was compiled through the “horizontalization of the data” (Creswell, 2013, p. 82). I organized all the collected data in well-defined files and worked through each as they related to the research questions. This was done by working from the data for each research question regarding how the individuals experienced the topic and treated each statement as equal. I worked through the interview transcripts, observational field notes, and document/material data while highlighting the “significant statements, or quotes that shed light on how the participants experienced the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013, p. 82).

**Categorical Themes**

I then formatted these significant statements into “meaning units” or themes (Creswell, 2013, p. 193). I streamlined the significant statements into themes or codes by gathering and “aggregating the text and visual data into small categories of information and then looking for evidence of the theme from the collected data being used in the study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 184). I found two main categorical themes emerge as I continued to review and re-review the data. I then noted that I saw if “clusters of meaning” appeared in the themes of the significant statements (p. 82).
Textural Description

The next step was to describe the essence of the phenomena or participant experiences as a textural description using actual life and word for word exemplars from the instructor participant interviews. This “narrative description of what the participants experienced was detailed in a long paragraph” (Creswell, 2013, p. 273). I included verbatim examples of the experienced phenomenon as experienced by the instructor participants and was sure to organize it according to the themes.

Structural Description

Following the textural description was the structural description where I further described “how” the experience occurred (Creswell, 2013, p.194). The focus for this step of the description was on the context as well as the setting of how the phenomenon occurred or occurs. I then described how the phenomenon was experienced as a “structural description” (p. 273).

Essence of Experience

Finally, the structural and textual descriptions were combined to attempt to capture the essence of the instructor participants’ shared experience. “This is important because it allows the researcher to analyze specific collected data while identifying themes, implement distinct approaches to make sense of the data so as to find a definitive framework to the essence of the lived phenomena” (Creswell, 2013, pp. 193-195). The open ended, semi-structured interview data was analyzed using textural and structural descriptions. The former is an account of “an individual’s perceptions of a phenomena from every angle and the latter is an account of through regularities, judgment, imagination and recollection that underlie the experience of a phenomena” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 496).
Trustworthiness

The theories presented coupled with the chosen methods and different sources supported evidence gathered. Using at least two or more procedures to address trustworthiness is recommended by Creswell (2013, p. 253). Creswell (2013) remarks on several validation processes and refers to “trustworthiness and authenticity as being terms that researchers should be comfortable using as means of validation” (p. 250). In this study, I utilized peer review, member checks, persistent observation, and rich description for transferability. This process lends itself to reliability and dependability as these all will point toward common theme(s) of the data gathered (p. 251).

Credibility

Two professors and a dissertation advisor were asked to review the study, methods, and all aspects of the study. I used peer reviewers because “professional review will provide validity and objectivity to the study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). Member checks were also requested of participants so that they could go through the transcripts to see if there were mistakes or if the information was correct. The focus was on the participants’ voices rather than on the researcher’s perspective. As cited in Creswell (2013), Lincoln and Guba (1985) consider this stage of validation as “the most critical technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314).

Persistent observation is another measure to lend credibility to the study data. Additionally, since I am an ESL instructor working within the regional setting, I was closely aligned to the phenomena and was able to locate issues that may be related to the problem. “Persistent observation identifies characteristics and elements that are most relevant to the problem or issue. If prolonged engagement provides scope, persistent observation provides depth” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 304).
Dependability

An outside unrelated auditor was requested to peruse and review the study to investigate if “the findings, interpretations, and conclusions are supported by the data” (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). This was done to ensure that the data supports the findings and also lends the study more dependability and validity.

Transferability

Through the rich textural and structural descriptions of the essence of the experientially shared phenomena by the instructors in this setting who all share this phenomena, there becomes a “transferability of information to other settings, to determine if the findings may also be transferred” (Creswell, 2013, p. 252).

Confirmability

Confirmability of this study was enabled through data triangulation which reduces researcher bias and focuses on the voices of the participants and their account of the experience. I used a plethora of participant quotes while at the same time bracketing out my own experiences. Credibility is needed for validity of the study and that will be affected through the use of data triangulation (Creswell, 2013).

Ethical Considerations

In order to promote and uphold ethical considerations for the participants and the information they share during this research investigation, confidentiality and privacy concerns were taken into consideration. All participants were asked to sign an agreement that they understood that they may decide to stop participating in the study at any time due to the voluntary nature of this study. To ensure the privacy of all participants, pseudonyms replaced their real names as well as on all written documents related to their participation. All documents,
written or electronic were locked in a filing cabinet and/or were password protected. All higher education institutions were given pseudonyms and country specific identification was not given, but rather all reference was to GCC countries of the Arabian Gulf.

**Summary**

This chapter detailed the methods of research utilized for this phenomenological study that aimed to explore ESL instructor experiences and perceptions of academic vocabulary instruction, instructional self-efficacy, and their perceptions of local GCC Arab students that they teach in developmental academic bridge ESL programs. Since individual experience was not the focus, a collective and shared experience of the phenomenon was explored through the research questions, open-ended question face-to-face interviews, observations, and document analysis. The four research questions, setting, participants and procedures were presented. In addition, the research plan, and face-to-face interview questions were included. The data collection, data analysis details, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations concluded the chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the data findings from this transcendental phenomenological study. This study’s purpose was to explore 11 instructors’ experiences and perceptions of academic vocabulary instruction, instructional self-efficacy, and student challenges in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman. This study was initiated because although the ESL effort has been consistently and generously funded for decades, some local English language learners still face significant challenges to their academic reading and performance in English medium institutions (Al-Issa, A., & Al-Bulushi, 2012, Belhiah & Elhami, 2015). The intent was to hear participants’ voices and find themes of similarity of experience to find possible comprehensive solutions to assist in positively impacting academic vocabulary learning and adult learner reading comprehension success. The data analysis in this study has enabled a rich insight into the shared experiences of the 11 participants and the findings are presented in this chapter.

Participants

Pseudonyms for all 11 participants were assigned for this study so that they, and the data provided, would stay confidential. The country of origin was also kept confidential, yet regional information is provided. This section provides the background information of each participant’s educational background as it relates to ESL/EFL, their experience in teaching ESL/EFL at the adult level in the GCC, their region of origin, and countries where they have taught ESL/EFL. A sample of interview transcripts is in Appendix H.
Adam

Adam, an instructor in his mid-40’s, has been teaching in the GCC for more than seven years. Prior to these seven years, he worked in Asia and has considerable international ESL experience. He is a native English speaker from North America and was motivated to be a volunteer and participate in this study. He has worked in two institutions these past seven years in the GCC. He started in Asia with a 48-hour course in ESL, and then over time completed an MA in TESL, a teaching license from North America, and a Doctorate in ESL. He has been an expatriate ESL instructor for more than ten years. Presently he is a professor teaching ESL in the Gulf and is an active member of the academic community. Having been a seasoned expatriate educator, his family did not really have many concerns about his work in the GCC in the Middle East. His expectations are to remain in the GCC for a few more years.

Jane

Jane is a native English speaker from North America, and has been an expatriate instructor for more than ten years. She is an ESL instructor with BA and MA degrees that are not in TESOL nor ESL. She is in her mid to late 40s and has been teaching ESL internationally for much of her instructional career. She is passionate about her instruction and takes great length in preparing her lessons. She chose to teach in the GCC, and it has been an impactful transition for her and her family. She has considerable experience teaching in the Middle East, South East Asia, as well as in the GCC. Jane was quite motivated to participate in this research study and has been very detailed about her perspectives regarding teaching ESL in the GCC. Some of her family members were originally somewhat concerned about her choice of working in the GCC in the Middle East, but they have gotten used to her travels around the world to teach. She plans on staying in the region for a short while longer.
Sara

Sara is a professor in her mid-to late 40s who has been teaching in the GCC for 10 years in a private university. She is a native Arabic speaker from a local northern Arab country and is an active ESL community member in the GCC. She has a PhD in TESOL/Linguistics and enjoys teaching English literature as her earlier degrees were in English literature. She has had a long career teaching ESL and has clear and specific ideas about her instructional strategies. She responded early on to the call for participation and contacted me because she felt she would like to make this voluntary contribution toward research. She reported that her family was supportive of her working in the GCC region of the Middle East. Sara has given detailed and clear perspective of her experience instructing ELLs in this region. She plans on staying in the region for some time.

Joseph

Joseph is an instructor in his mid to late 50’s who has been teaching ESL in the GCC for the last eight years and plans on staying there until he retires. He is a native English speaker from the United Kingdom. He has taught in two different countries in the GCC and has considerable experience in other unrelated fields as well as teaching internationally. Neither his BA nor his MA are in ESL/TESOL, and he has recently started a doctoral degree program in either Educational Leadership or an ESL related area. His family members were not too concerned with his moving to the GCC in the Middle East as he has members of his family with ties to the region.

Brenda

Brenda has been an ESL instructor for more than five years and has an unrelated BA, but her MA is in English Language Teaching (ELT). She is a native English speaker from Africa and
has been in the GCC region for more than ten years. Additionally, she trained and earned the CELTA certificate from the British Council. Her family had mixed feelings about her moving to the GCC as she “did not choose to come to the GCC”, but rather her circumstances led her here. Half of her family was happy about her move to the GCC, as it would make it easier for her to visit extended family who live in Africa. The other half of the family was quite concerned and was not enthusiastic about her move to the GCC. She will stay in the GCC for a few more years.

Karl

Karl is an instructor in his 30s with a BA in an unrelated area and an MA in TESOL. He is a native English speaker from North America and has been an instructor teaching ESL for the past five years. He originally decided to teach in a GCC country. His parents were quite concerned about his travel to the Middle East, and they were not sure where the GCC was on the map. He was very enthusiastic about participating and has a positive view of research. He is currently an instructor of ESL in the GCC and plans to be here for a few more years.

Tom

Tom is from a northern Arab country, a native Arabic speaker, and is in his early 30’s. His BA is not in ESL/TESOL and his MA is in Applied Linguistics. He also earned a CELTA certificate from the British Council in teaching English language. He never planned to be an instructor of English, but has undertaken the profession. Tom is enthusiastic about teaching in the Gulf and has taught in two GCC countries. His family is happy that he is employed in the GCC. He is currently teaching ESL in the GCC and plans on staying in the region for some time.
Max

Max has been teaching in the GCC for more than three years, his BA is not in ESL/TESOL, but he has an MA in TESOL/Applied Linguistics. He is a native Arabic speaker from a local GCC country and his family has a mixed European background. His family had mixed reactions to his working in the Middle East. He is in his early thirties and is quite a purposeful speaker who has a dynamic way of looking at ESL issues. He has a love for the region and the students he teaches. Mike is presently an instructor of ESL and plans to be in the region for some time.

Dina

Darlene is a native English speaker from North America who is an instructor in her late thirties. She has been in the region for more than five years. Her BA is not in ESL/TESOL, but she does have one MA in TESOL/Linguistics and another MA in an unrelated area. She also completed the CELTA certificate for teaching English language. Her family has become accustomed to her teaching in the GCC. She will only be in the region for a few more years.

Michelle

Michelle has been working in the GCC for more than 20 years and is a native English speaker. She is in her mid to late fifties and is from North America. She has a BA in a related area, an MA in TESOL and her doctorate in TESOL/Applied Linguistics. She came to the GCC early on (a number of years ago) and has adjusted to life in the region. She has taught ESL in a range of institutions such as k-12, language institutes, and universities. She has been teaching foundation ESL for more than 15 years and will stay in the region for a few more years.

Adele

Adele is an ESL instructor in her mid-50s and has been an ESL instructor in the Gulf for more than 7 years. She is presently an instructor at the college level with a BA not in ESL/TESOL,
her MA in TESOL and her doctorate in Education with a TESOL focus. She did not plan on moving to the GCC originally. Her family has become accustomed to her being in the Middle East. Adele is originally from North America. She will leave the region at some point in the next few years.

The background information for all participants reveals that they are from a 20-year range of ages, from four different geographical regions internationally, and have a diverse range of education as related to teaching ESL at the college level. The participants range from their early thirties to their early sixties, some have taught for more than 2 years and others for more than 20 in the region. This gives a wide spectrum of experience and insight into the instructional and contextual issues to academic vocabulary instruction in the region. Six of the eleven are from North America, two from northern Arab countries, one from the GCC, one from Africa, and one from the United Kingdom. Four of the 11 instructors have a Master’s degree in ESL, and seven do not have a Master’s degree in ESL. Three of the 11 instructors have a doctorate degree in the area of ESL instruction. All of the 11 instructors have an unrelated Bachelor’s degree. Participants have taught in a variety of regions such as the Far East, North America, the GCC, the Middle East, South East Asia, the United Kingdom, and South America. Table 1 illustrates the background information for the 11 participants in this study.
Table 1

*Participant Background*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Educational degree</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Regions taught</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>BA/MA (non-ESL), PhD ESL</td>
<td>N. America</td>
<td>GCC /Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>BA &amp; MA (non-ESL)</td>
<td>N. America</td>
<td>S. America/GCC/Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>BA/MA (non-ESL), PhD ESL</td>
<td>N. Arab Region</td>
<td>GCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>BA &amp; MA (non-ESL),</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>GCC /UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>BA (non-ESL), MA ELT</td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>Far East/ GCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karl</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>BA (non-ESL), MA ESL</td>
<td>North America</td>
<td>GCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>BA (non-ESL), MA (Ling)</td>
<td>N Arab Region</td>
<td>GCC /Middle East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>BA (non-ESL), MA (Ling)</td>
<td>Gulf</td>
<td>GCC / Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dina</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>BA&amp;MA (non-ESL), MA (Ling)</td>
<td>N. America</td>
<td>GCC/Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>BA (non-ESL), MA &amp; PhD ESL</td>
<td>N. America</td>
<td>GCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adele</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>BA (non-ESL), MA ESL</td>
<td>N. America</td>
<td>GCC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Results**

I bracketed my personal and professional views of my own answers to the research questions (See Appendices G and V). I needed to reduce bias and found the process of reflection and bracketing out my views quite helpful and it helped to clear my mind. I had three regional colleagues review the interview questions for clarity, appropriateness, and relevancy before I pilot tested the interview itself. The peer review and the pilot test of the interview were successful, and I felt confident to start the actual interviews face to face. The questions were
pertinent, and I found no need to change the interview questions. I also took field notes in the margins of the observation and interview sheets to record any reflective and descriptive observations that were apparent as the participant answered the interview questions.

All of the 11 participants chose the place for their interview and most were done face-to-face via Skype conferencing due to distance and travel constraints. All participants were asked the same questions that appear on Appendix F; although there were times I needed to ask additional questions. This allowed for emotional and individual responses of the participant’s insight, feelings and expression of the phenomena. Each interview length ranged in time from forty five minutes to one hour in length. There was only one interview that took one hour and thirty minutes. Every interview was audio recorded and transcribed using an application that simultaneously transcribed. After each interview, I listened to each recording and made adjustments to the transcription for accuracy along with the audio recording. The transcriptions’ contents, along with any grammatical errors or statements, were kept as recorded in the spirit of the participants’ expression of his/her experience. I conducted these semi-structured, open ended, face-to-face interviews and wrote observational reflective notes, collected pertinent documents, as well as made observations during the data collection period.

Participants’ academic, vocabulary documents and institutional syllabi that were submitted were gathered and analyzed after the interviews. It took a few days to receive their documents usually, and that gave me additional time to listen to their recordings again and re-read their transcripts. I also had additional time to write reflective notes on their interview sheets.

Observational data were gathered during four days of the data collection phase of this study. As I observed, I was a nonparticipant as I took notes and was able to record my observational data without any involvement. While I observed or interviewed, I took reflective notes to help
qualify the context as well as the responses. Finally, I then listened to and re-read the interview transcripts, the observational and reflective notes, and documents submitted. After I collected all of the data, I used Moustakas’ (1994) method of analysis for this phenomenological study. I pored through the transcripts to glean significant statements that appeared in the text (See Table 2).

The first step in the analysis is the process of horizontalization, in which specific statements are identified in the transcripts that provide information about the experiences of the participants. These significant statements are simply gleaned from the transcripts and provided in a table so that a reader can identify the range of perspectives about the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Table 2

Selected Significant Statements

- To be honest I came here for the money and the work life balance.
- They don’t have grammar or vocabulary knowledge.
- It’s hard for some to apply themselves.
- This program is a vicious circle of being too intensive, too short in length, coupled with some academically unprepared students in lower levels that give up or keep repeating.
- I’ve never taught in an ESL program that had academic vocabulary.
- Our program needs to be longer, it’s too fast.
- It’s too short, too fast, and our students need more support.
- I was surprised at the low level of English that my students have.
- I think it’s really difficult for them to really grasp what we’re actually supposed to be teaching them at the lower levels, and then it just moves too quickly for some of them. They drop, fail, or repeat.
- The program sets them up for failure from the start.
- I came here to earn a high salary and to enjoy high standards of living.
- The main challenge is that they lack basic English vocabulary.
- Some ELLs we teach need support in coping with a new culture and new academic culture.
- Students have no vocabulary foundations.
- Vocabulary instruction in the GCC is for general English, not academic English.
- There are no fair, reliable, nor valid means to assess student competence at our institution.
- We need program standards and a reliable organizational framework.
- We need programmatic quality assurance procedures.
- A professional development program that could provide guidance and support for teachers to ensure students are gaining the most from their learning experiences could help.
- The ESL program as a whole needs to comply with rigorous standards of quality to ensure that all skills are being taught and assessed so that they benefit learners and meet their academic needs.
- I’m here for financial reasons and will stay here until I retire.
- I don’t have any opinion about academic vocabulary instruction as we don’t have it in our programs.
- Isn’t all vocabulary academic?
- I do word study sometimes.
- We need to change the program to integrated skills.
- I have mixed feelings, but students are not ready academically when they come to us and their attitudes are not ready either.
- They don’t like to read and they are academically culturally distinct.
- Rules here are not enforced and it’s too relaxed.
- Public schools here k-12 use unqualified and untrained teachers.
- There is a student attitude issue at times and some don’t understand proper procedures for academic classrooms.
- Instructors in this region do not have quality and I’ve been here for more than 20 years.
- There’s no room for academic vocabulary instruction.
- Despite financial hemorrhaging to teach English in the GCC, there is still low motivation and moderate success in this area.
- Institutional challenges are that there are low standards for entry of a 5 on the IELTS.
- I came here for the good financial package that was offered.
- Some students lack academic skills needed to be successful in the university/college model.
- Instructors are not highly qualified.
- I feel sad that the students don’t get the academic nor institutional support that they need.

I then needed to code the data so that I could form themes and sub-themes. Saldana (2009) describes a code as a word or short phrase that evokes the meaning of the language data that was collected and links it to other data via patterns. Descriptive coding (Saldana, 2009, p. 70) was the first cycle of coding that I used to analyze the data to help identify the topics in the data. It is descriptive in nature which suits all qualitative studies and nascent researchers (Saldana, 2009). I took notes on the transcript pages, and organized similarly related experiences and/or words to 16 descriptive codes (See Appendix W) and significant statements into nine distinct categories. I
then decided, for the second cycle of coding, to use pattern coding. “Pattern coding is a way of grouping into smaller sets, themes, or constructs” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 69). I then grouped them into two common themes with 9 sub-themes under each research question.

**Themes**

As I analyzed the data from the documents, semi-structured, open-ended interviews, and observations, I was able to identify two overarching themes with nine sub themes that were significant to the participants’ experiences and perceptions. As I parsed through the data, I found that many of their areas of concern and interests were similar to one another’s accounts of situations, challenges, and perspectives. The first theme was that of instructor areas of concern which addressed attributes about the instructors themselves. The second theme addressed significant categories related to institutional areas of concern.

**Theme 1: Instructor Focused Areas of Concern:**

- Curricular and instructional awareness
- Intentions: Great financial incentives and travel abroad

**Theme 2: Institutional Areas of Concern**

- Program planning and organization
- Curricular and instructional changes
- Academic ESL programs
- Adult learner program structure
- Program accreditation
- Student readiness and study skills
- Context acculturation: academically and culturally
Summary of Themes

In this study there were two overarching themes: (a) Instructor Focused Areas of Concern and (b) Institutional Areas of Concern. The former theme had two sub-themes of curricular and instructional awareness and intentions (financial incentives and travel abroad). The latter theme had seven sub-themes of program planning and organization, curricular and instructional changes, academic ESL programs, adult learner program structure, program accreditation, student readiness and study skills, and context acculturation: academically and culturally.

Research Questions Answered

The next step was to describe the essence of the phenomena or participant experiences as a textural description using actual life and word for word exemplars from the instructor participant interviews. This “narrative description of what the participants experienced was detailed in a long paragraph” (Creswell, 2013, p. 273). I included verbatim examples of the experienced phenomenon as experienced by the instructor participants and was sure to organize it according to the themes.

Research Question 1

In order to explore the question, “How do ESL instructors describe academic vocabulary instruction in their institution?’ I directly asked this question in the open-ended interview, looked for examples of it in documents found and given to me, as well as observed as a non-participant observer and wrote down my observations in the form of notes.

Institutional Area of Concern: Program Planning

During my interview and as a non-participating observer, I observed several of the participants referring back to the program itself that it was essentially not planned out properly enough to include direct academic vocabulary instruction and learning.
This question with Michelle was related to ESL programs and their focus. “We really don’t teach academic vocabulary in the GCC because we have to cover big territory. We mostly do general study skills and general English. We also do English for specific purposes (ESP). We generally started out 15 years ago with EAP (English for Academic Purposes), but now we just do General English and in foundation programs. There are a lot of problems with academic English” (Michelle, personal communication, Nov.5, 2015).

Jane’s interview was enlightening as she stated that, “in theory it sounds good to have academic vocabulary instruction, but we don’t have time for that. The students’ vocabulary levels in English are very low. This is not a reading culture. Our program covers too much, too quickly, and is not set for that. We almost set them up for failure. The program is not set up for success for the students” (Jane, personal communication, Oct. 12, 2015).

On November 10, 2015, I observed an interaction with a group of instructors as a non-participant observer. Four instructors were discussing the idea of how to improve student success and academic vocabulary instruction. One of the instructors stated that, “the program format, goals, and the way it is set up is like it is for them to fail and that administrators need to focus on the curriculum design, the instruction, and the program goals before they start programs like this. It is a vicious cycle and the instructor cannot do everything” (Instructors, personal communication, Nov.10, 2015).

Adam also suggested that the program where he teaches is not substantial for students as well, but when asked about academic vocabulary instruction, he stated, “Good, that’s on the right track…the AWL (Academic Word list). It’s important, but we need more time in our program. It’s too fast” (Adam, personal communication, Sept. 16, 2015).
**Instructor Area of Concern: Curricular and instructional awareness**

Karl was frank and mentioned that “in my opinion, there is no academic vocabulary taught at all at my institution, and I was under the impression that it was just a general English program. There is no word study done and they do need academic vocabulary instruction also” (Karl, personal communication, Oct. 3, 2015).

The institution where he works does actually include academic vocabulary in the textbooks and it is in all levels of the book used. It is not, however, explicitly stated in the institutional program syllabi/curricula.

Brenda paused for a several seconds at the beginning and hesitated to answer. She said that, “My opinion in the GCC is that there is not a good focus on it, but only in reading a bit. There is no focus on it at any institution I have taught at” (Brenda, personal communication, Oct. 15, 2015).

Max also was not aware of a need for academic vocabulary instruction. “There is no need for academic vocabulary instruction for students who will be going into an Arabic degree of study, but the students who choose to go for an English degree will need the academic word list maybe” (Max, personal communication, Oct. 12, 2015).

Dina “I cannot say what happens in individual classes, but for the most part where I teach in the GCC, ESL is not taught in an integrated way and as such, academic vocabulary is not being taught in my institution. In the GCC, academic vocabulary is not considered significant, but general English is taught instead” (Dina, personal communication, Sept. 28, 2015).

When I interviewed Joseph, he paused for a very long time and then stated, ”I do not have an opinion on our academic vocabulary instruction. We don’t have it in our program but all vocabulary is academic, isn’t it? I do word study sometimes and I have a positive experience
here mostly. There is no motivation and the students are not prepared for writing even after studying in English in high school” (Joseph, personal communication, Oct. 12, 2015).

Adele informed us that “there is no unified nor consistent inclusion of academic vocabulary instruction nor word study at the institutions that I have taught at in the GCC. I have not seen a direct focus on it in the courses that I have been asked to teach” (Adele, personal communication, Nov. 7, 2015).

As was noted throughout the interviews, when participants were asked, “What is your opinion of academic vocabulary instruction, how about in your institution, and how do you think academic vocabulary instruction impacts ELL students?”, six of the 11 participants did not answer the questions directly, but rather discussed the program itself in other aspects, discussed student motivation, or did not answer how it may impact ELL students. Of the 11, three needed further clarification, definition, or explanation regarding the term “academic vocabulary”. These data responses imply that the depth of understanding of how to instruct this ELL population may need more support and development. The impact of teaching academic vocabulary to ELLs is an area that instructors may need more training in (See Appendix P). Furthermore, if the instructors’ institutions do not have a clearly defined or effectively communicated and expected program of study in this area, they may benefit from recommendations as to the importance of this aspect of the academic language instruction curriculum.

Documents Provided

Four syllabi, from two GCC institutions were submitted to me, two for reading, and two for writing. As I read through the reading syllabi, there were items regarding vocabulary instruction for beginning students to develop vocabulary skills as well as new vocabulary related to general topics of personal interest and routine, using a dictionary and understanding entries, guessing
meaning from context, and using that vocabulary in structured activities. Second level student syllabi included language such as to generally develop vocabulary skills, acquire an additional recognition vocabulary of less than 300 words, utilize context to comprehend meaning of new vocabulary items, show familiarity with a growing target vocabulary. In the syllabi for reading, there were neither allusions nor references toward a focus on academic vocabulary instruction, study, reading of academic texts, nor academic word study.

The writing syllabus for first level students talks about using an adequate range or appropriate level of first level vocabulary. There is no mention of academic vocabulary instruction, nor focus for this level. Similarly, the syllabus and rubric for the second level of writing requests students to be able to use an appropriate spectrum of vocabulary to allow for expanding creativity in writing and expression. There is also neither mention nor focus on academic vocabulary learning.

Research Question 2

Exploring the question, “How do participants view the role of academic vocabulary in their ESL classes and how does it impact ELL comprehension of academic texts?” was effected by asking interview questions 7 and 8. I asked about their perceptions in the open-ended interview, looked for examples of it in documents found and given to me, as well as observed as a non-participant observer and wrote down my observations in the form of notes.

Instructor Area of Concern: Curricular and Instructional Awareness

Tom had a lively response and asked me to repeat the question and to define what was meant by “academic vocabulary.” His response after the clarification was, “It is difficult when I introduce new concepts especially when words are conceptual. It is challenging to teach vocabulary and to make it fun. It was difficult in the beginning.” He then added that “we need
more time in our program for them to learn the proper way and we must also give them research skills” (Tom, personal communication, Oct. 12, 2015).

My non-participant and unscheduled observer notes on Nov. 17, 2015 recorded that three of the 11 participants were not aware of academic vocabulary instruction as a focus area of academic language instruction (See Appendix P). Additionally, the textbooks at their three institutions do use the Academic Word List as a basis in their textbooks, but they were unaware of this. I had reviewed the three textbooks used and observed that all three of the texts did in fact focus on academic vocabulary within the units of study. All three of these instructors paused for several seconds before answering questions related to academic vocabulary instruction.

Adele stated that “academic vocabulary and word study is needed to quickly integrate these high frequency words into student ESL curriculum so that these words can help in their comprehension of texts at the college level” (Adele, personal communication, Nov. 7, 2015).

**Institutional Area of Concern: Accreditation**

Dina, rather than discussing the instructional and curricular impact, remarked that, “the institution needs to achieve accreditation in compliance with international standards. Without accreditation, there is no organizational framework in place to ensure the quality of the language program. As it stands now, we do not have a fair, reliable, and valid means of assessing students’ competence. Once accreditation is achieved, quality assurance procedures can help ensure that students are meeting internationally recognized and benchmarked standards”. She further added that “other issues to improve ELL success would be to have a professional development program that provides guidance and support for teachers and staff to help ensure students are gaining the most from their learning experiences” (Dina, personal communication, Sept. 28, 2015).
Institutional Area of Concern: Curricular and Instructional Program Changes

Sara commented that “academic vocabulary instruction impacts students positively, however I need to state that if it’s taught through reading passages. My main interest is in literature, novels, and short stories and instructional and curricular changes that impact academic vocabulary as well as reading comprehension would be to integrate literature and high tech devices into the curriculum because it will affect students positively” (Sara, personal communication, Oct.3, 2015).

Max addressed the instructor’s role, “our role is to discuss and give it to them”. He further discussed the items that will improve ELL academic reading comprehension and he stated that “instructors need to focus on teaching strategies, instilling a love of reading, and creating motivation” (Max, personal communication, Oct. 12, 2015).

Adam repeatedly discussed the need for “more time in the program and that ELL success could be positively impacted by motivation and wanting to succeed. They get very distracted in our program because they are sitting in the same classroom all day” (Adam, personal communication, Sept. 16, 2015).

Jane quickly added that “the program sets them up for failure from day one. It is too discouraging, too fast, and winds up being a vicious circle. There’s no adequate study skills, no motivation, and they need more time to practice what they are learning so that they will have academic success. The impact of academic vocabulary on their learning could be phenomenal if they could grasp the vocabulary we are trying to teach them here” (Jane, personal communication, Oct. 12, 2015).
Brenda stated that “academic vocabulary could prepare them and help them with speaking and students would benefit a lot. She further added that “we do not have a complete and student serving ESL program, we need integrated and contextual learning, and we need a structured and well thought out program. The program is too short and the students come in very weak in English, even after 12 years of study in English k-12” (Brenda, personal communication, Oct. 15, 2015).

Karl stated that the “instructional and curricular changes should be for integrated skills being taught and the program where I teach is not effective”. Although I asked him about instructional and curricular changes, he discussed program format, curriculum, and goals that were not planned properly. He added, “reading texts should be more challenging and contextually relevant” (Karl, personal communication, Oct. 3, 2015).

**Documents provided**

Tom submitted a four paged photocopied vocabulary activity packet from a popular British English textbook that focused on communicative activities with vocabulary. The vocabulary was not academic based, but was a fun and interactive way for students to engage in conversation.

Max provided a two paged photocopied exercise sheet that worked on collocations in English as an academic vocabulary document. The exercises were standard and multiple choice in format.

As an example of what she uses for academic vocabulary instruction, Adele provided an 8 paged photocopied chapter from a popular textbook used for reading that included preview questions on activating prior knowledge on the topic at hand, new academic vocabulary to be learned, a reading text that used those same items, some direct academic vocabulary exercises, and follow up discussion prompts for speaking practice while using those same academic words.
Research Question 3

Interview questions 1, 3, and 9 resulted in data to answer the third research question, “How do ESL instructors describe their experience with this particular population of ELL students?” Participant responses, documents, and non-participant observer notes were used in addition to the instructors’ perceptions.

Instructor Area of Concern: Intentions: Great Financial Incentives and Travel Abroad

Tom responded that, “I am happy to teach in the GCC as I came here because of financial reasons” (Tom, personal communication, Oct. 12, 2015). Adam came here “for the money, the good work-life balance and the overall positive experience” (Adam, personal communication, Sept. 16, 2015). Joseph came to the region “for money and for financial reasons and will leave after my financial goals have been reached” (Joseph, personal communication, Oct. 12, 2015).

On November 24, 2015, as a non-participant observer I observed a participant and she stated that, “I was tired of living paycheck to paycheck and just getting by back home” (Sara, personal communication, Nov. 24, 2015). Additionally, I observed during one of my interviews that the speaker was very happy and animated regarding his reason for coming to the GCC. He explained, “I must be honest that my sole reason for coming here was for the tax benefit and financial package that we are offered” (Adam, personal communication, Sept. 16, 2015). Additionally, I have observed with six of the 11 participants that their first initial response to question 1 was to “get a high salary and to enjoy a high standard of living” (See Appendix M).

As a persistent observer in this context, I have noted that some people who come to the Gulf do come here for a financial advantage. There are very generous salaries and packages given to all international instructors here, airline tickets (to and from their home country for the instructors and their families), free housing, a car allowance, a phone allowance, and at times, a
household utilities allowance. In addition to this, there is a foreign income exclusion tax benefit to some instructors, depending on their country of origin. These benefits have been substantial due to the oil and gas wealth in the region and a large incentive to teaching in GCC up until now.

Of the 11 participants, only three have been in the GCC for more than 10 years, and they have adjusted to life in the GCC. The other eight participants have been working in a few other countries before coming to the GCC and have remarked, “This is a great way to see the world”. When I heard this phrase, I agreed within my mind, but then I thought the following as I reflected on the institutional issues and instructional issues that the participants voiced. I can only wonder at the level of permanence in instruction and care that may or may not go into institutional and instructional issues when there is a majority of the faculty and staff that are transient. As a longtime observer in the GCC, I have noted that perhaps institutional and instructional issues may also be further encumbered by the transient nature of the faculty and staff who do not, and are not able to, have a truly vested interest to stay and build the institutions that they work in.

**Institutional Area of Concern: College Preparation, Goal Setting and Study Skills**

Brenda never intended to come to the GCC region but “was drawn here with family and once here felt that the students were underprepared for this particular academic environment. This compounds the problem of having them learn what we teach them and the repeated attempts to change the tardy and absence rules we impose at the university. Some become quite upset at being marked tardy or absent and feel we should change that for them. This happens frequently, but I generally enjoy my students apart from these issues” (Brenda, personal communication, Oct. 15, 2015).
Tom replied that, “I have met hardworking students, but some who need motivation to be successful. I myself was not encouraged to read that much, and I see this in my students as well. I see many instances of lack in much needed college level skills. We must redo what was done in high school like research skills, citation, and why plagiarism is not acceptable” (Tom, personal communication, Oct. 12, 2015).

Adele reported that “teaching is a great experience for me and my family. I enjoy the students who are there to learn and those who transform into focused students with a professional goal” (Adele, personal communication, Nov. 7, 2015).

Karl commented that “I came here because I get along well with Middle Easterners, but teaching in the GCC can be challenging for the instructors as well because students are not academically prepared” (Karl, personal communication, Oct. 3, 2015).

Adam said that there are “challenges and they are not an easy thing because the students do not have a strong background or foundation in studying or English and sometimes it is not taken seriously. Some students are easily distracted and sometimes it is hard for them and it’s a challenge” (Adam, personal communication, Sept. 16, 2015).

Dina came to the GCC because “it is safe and I wanted to experience a new way of life and I really enjoy working with this population of learners” (Dina, personal communication, Sept. 28, 2015).

Jane “needed to come to the region after 9/11 with her family to see and understand the political situation in the region and to understand the people. I must admit it was difficult for me to warm up to my students at first and it is sometimes difficult for them to adapt to the college and they just want to be comfortable, ya know, as they have it good now. The focus here is on themselves and future goals need to be set and they need to see that they must follow the rules at
the college. It is a different culture and many students are great and that group keeps me teaching here” (Jane, personal communication, Oct. 12, 2015).

Max was drawn to teach in the GCC as he has roots in the region and stated that “it is enjoyable in this challenging situation as we as instructors need to have a deep understanding of the learners themselves both culturally and academically.” He also added that, “we need to work with them on long term goals. I don’t see myself as just a teacher here, but to support the students in their long term goals” (Max, personal communication, Oct. 12, 2015).

Michelle has been in the GCC for a long time and thoroughly enjoys her work here. She came here with her family and has made a solid, long-term career in the region. Her answers to the interview questions were that “students need to be reading so that they can come up with ideas for writing as well. It’s the same all over the GCC in that there is a lack in the need to study. There is a need to acculturate them into academic study at a higher level. Their primary and secondary educational systems are inconsistent and there are such big institutional challenges. There is lots of peer pressure to pull students away from studying seriously and there is a sense of entitlement at times” (Michelle, personal communication, Nov.5, 2015).

Joseph stated, “My experience has been generally positive but I think there is the issue of motivation. They are not prepared for even the foundation program even after studying English in high school. The students for the most part are quite respectable and friendly and some can be socially late, but I haven’t had many negative experiences at all” (Joseph, personal communication, Oct. 12, 2015).

**Documents**

I looked for and tried to find documents or resources that may be used before ELLs start their ESL program to promote goal setting and study skills, but there are no courses nor orientation
programs that serve that need until they finish their ESL studies. There is however, a study skills type course for students who take regular college level classes. Out of four university ESL programs, documents and syllabi that I researched in the GCC, only one of the four offered a study skills course at the earliest possible level. The other three did not offer any study skills courses at the pre-college ESL level, but offered study skills courses at the beginning college level segments.

Research Question 4

The research question, “What challenges in reading comprehension of academic texts do ESL instructors perceive that these ELLs face?” was elicited by questions five and six. All pertinent participant responses, documents, and non-participant observer notes were analyzed for this question.

Institutional Area of Concern: Student readiness and academic acculturation

Sara believes that the student challenges lie in their “lack of English vocabulary” and having to “cope with a different culture” at the university; academic acculturation and western acculturation in English” (Sara, personal communication, Oct. 3, 2015).

Michelle perceives the challenges to reading academic texts as due to “a lack of reading in general and the issue is not just a lack of vocabulary. The challenges that they have in academic reading success is despite governmental financial hemorrhaging to require English instruction from k to 12 and their educational systems did not deliver.” Michelle added that “what could help positively impact ELL academic success and academic vocabulary learning would be to become a reading culture. Also, libraries throughout the region should be expanded not closed. In one of the GCC region’s libraries were actually closed down as well as their k-12 school
system failing them, although millions of dollars were poured into them to teach English from k to 12th grade” (Michelle, personal communication, Nov. 5, 2015).

Max linked challenges in reading academic texts as a disconnect between “culturally unrelated texts that they are required to read and the academic texts are also challenging to them”. He then added that they also have general challenges to academic success in that many times there is a “lack of specific personal as well as long term academic goals. They need study skills and they are not accustomed to academic pressure. They should have long term goals, personal goals, and academic goals to achieve them. It’s like they do not know what they want” (Max, personal communication, Oct. 12, 2015).

Karl feels that challenges in reading academic texts due to “lack of academic and general vocabulary as well as that texts are not culturally appropriate. This is an American context and that does not work for all students in this different culture” (Karl, personal communication, Oct. 3, 2015).

**Institutional Area of Concern: Adult Learner Programming**

Joseph feels that we “underestimate the needs of our students with regard to timing”. There are many adult students who are working full time and coming to ESL classes full time. They should not be required to come to ESL classes for 4-5 hours every day. They need a modified schedule between work-study-life balances” (Joseph, personal communication, Oct. 12, 2015).

Jane’s perception of the challenges to reading academic texts lies in the program she works in does not meet the needs of the learners. “The program is too quick, it is almost as though they are set up to fail, it is discouraging for the students, and they need more time in a well-structured program to be able to digest academic reading texts” (Jane, personal communication, Oct. 12, 2015).
Institutional Area of Concern: Academic ESL Programs of Study

Dina’s perception is that “some students enter and exit our program and do not have a solid foundation in academic vocabulary to assist them in reading academic texts” (Dina, personal communication, Sept. 28, 2015).

Adam perceives that since “vocabulary is the cornerstone to ESL learning, we need to help them focus on it more, especially academic vocabulary. They don’t know amounts of vocabulary words and at times the text lengths daunt the students and it is hard on them”. Also, “there are many challenges on them in general and there is a range of students we get so it seems hard for some to apply themselves, especially in introductory ESL classes. There seem to be challenges to motivation, attitude, and basic knowledge, so it’s like a vicious cycle” in combination with trying to study at an academic and college level” (Adam, personal communication, Sept. 16, 2015).

Adele added that the challenges that some students may have in reading academic texts lies in a few different areas, “lack of overall vocabulary, lack of academic vocabulary, but it is the institution’s responsibility to ensure a high level of programs for the ELLs” (Adele, personal communication, Nov. 7, 2015).

Brenda perceived that “the program is ineffective and poorly structured, we don’t have a complete program” to support students who are already ill prepared due to the k-12 system in the region with unqualified teachers’ (Brenda, personal communication, Oct. 15, 2015).

As I was taking notes during the interview with Michelle, she mentioned that there are “institutional challenges that greatly impact the ELLs who are already challenged in reading academic texts” (Michelle, personal communication, Nov. 5, 2015). It was apparent that she has spent much time on pondering why so many of our ELLs are not successful with reading
academic texts. She, like other participants, was very sincere and forthright in her answers, and I could tell that she had discussed the issues before and had thought about them deeply and with concern.

**Summary**

This chapter focused on 11 participant instructors who described their experiences related to academic vocabulary instruction to adult English language learners in tertiary level ESL programs in the Gulf. Using the data collected from my unscheduled observations as a non-participant, interviews and documents of the instructors, I managed to analyze, compare, contrast, and qualify the groupings in meanings and perceptions that led to a fuller description of their lived experiences. The structural and textural descriptions that were a result of the interviews, observations and documents helped me to group their responses and form a picture or essence of their lived experience of the phenomenon. This study’s goal was to understand ESL instructor’s perceptions of academic vocabulary instruction, self-efficacy, and the challenges to GCC student reading and academic success. The two main areas of concern that became apparent were instructor focused issues and institutional areas of concern. The subtopics that came to light were alluded to and discussed by most, if not all of the participants.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

In this final chapter, I will present an overview of the results as well as the answers to the four research questions that led this phenomenological study. As a follow up, a discussion of the findings will be continued with the implications and the theoretical framework. Limitations of the qualitative research study and recommendations for future research will both be included at the end of the chapter.

Summary of Findings

The aim of this phenomenological qualitative study was to garner more insight into instructors’ experiences and perceptions of academic vocabulary instruction in the GCC, instructional self-efficacy in this area, and perceptions of the students they teach in college level, academic bridge ESL programs in the GCC. I collected data on this issue through semi-structured, open-ended, face to face interviews of 11 participants, analyzed academic vocabulary documents that participants submitted, analyzed institutional documents from four different GCC institutions, and made unscheduled observations as a nonparticipant/observer as I took notes and was able to record my observational data without any involvement with people or activities. I also listened to the 11 participants’ perceptions of academic vocabulary instruction, self-efficacy, and the challenges to GCC student reading and academic success to try to determine perceived common factors of student challenges in this type of program in the GCC. I collected detailed descriptive data on all 11 participants. All of the data that came to light during the interviews was screened for accuracy by using member checks from the participants as part of the triangulation of the data. I did this to ensure that all of the participants’ voices would be checked and confirmed as being accurate in the study. I read and reread the data gathered to arrive at a
view or essence of what the instructors have experienced. As I did this, I highlighted the clusters of responses and statements. I noticed that there were common significant statements that were poignant, meaningful, sincere, and relevant. Mid way through the interviews, I realized that there were common statements being made by all of the participants in two main areas, and I wrote my notes down about these similarities in all of their stories. There were two themes that initially appeared: “Instructor Focused Areas of Concern” and “Institutional Focused Areas of Concern”. The former had sub topics of curricular and instructional awareness and financial interests. The latter had sub topics of program planning and organization, curricular and instructional changes, academic ESL programs, adult learner program structure, program accreditation, student readiness and study skills, and context acculturation, both academically and culturally. My goal was to understand the views of the instructors as they teach their students and work at the local institutions with the intent of developing a more intimate view of how to assist and support these ELLs in the GCC at the college level.

Findings per Research Questions

The research questions assisted in identifying instructor perceptions of academic vocabulary instruction, self-efficacy, and the challenges to GCC student reading and academic success to determine common factors of student challenges in this type of program in the GCC. Theme 1 emerged as “Instructor Focused Areas of Concern,” and there were two sub topics to this theme: curricular and instructional awareness and financial interests. Theme 2 also emerged as “Institutional Areas of Concern” and comprised the topics of: program planning and organization, curricular and instructional changes, academic ESL programs, adult learner program structure, program accreditation, student readiness and study skills, and context acculturation (both academically and culturally).
The first question in the study was, “How do ESL instructors describe academic vocabulary instruction in their institution?” The responses given were identified broadly into two themes: instructor areas of concern and institutional areas. Appendix R illustrates that 23% of participants cited program planning as a major concern with regard to this question. Some said there was no academic vocabulary in the programs they teach and that general English was taught instead. They also mentioned that there was not enough time to teach students what they needed. The program was a “vicious cycle” and was “not set up for student success”. They indicated that the programs that they teach in are not structured properly and have no clear internationally recognized, nor accredited standards. The other area of concern that emerged was that of instructor curricular and instructional awareness. Six of the 11 participants (54%) did not directly answer this question, but rather discussed program organization and student success or lack of student motivation. When asked, three of the 11 participants did not understand the impact of academic vocabulary instruction, had no opinion of it, and were not aware of any need to focus on that type of vocabulary in a college or university focused institutional program. Instead, the latter participants discussed word study, developing general vocabulary skills, or documents such as syllabi for courses focused on “appropriate spectrum of vocabulary to use.”

The second question in this study was, “How do participants view the role of academic vocabulary in their ESL classes and how it may positively impact ELL comprehension of academic texts?” Three of the 11 participants were not aware of any need for academic vocabulary instructional needs, asked for clarification of the term, and discussed how they teach word study “sometimes” in class, but that it’s not in the curriculum at their institutions. After collecting and analyzing three textbooks that they use at their institutions, the textbooks do teach academic vocabulary, although these three participants were not aware. There is a need for
understanding of the curricular and instructional impact or role of academic vocabulary in ESL classes. The other participants discussed that either academic vocabulary instruction was important at the college level and that students need it to be part of their studies or that the programs that they teach in need to be internationally accredited. Of the four institutions where the participants work, three of them were only accredited by their country’s internal Ministry of Education, not regionally, nor internationally. The last one was not accredited locally, regionally, or internationally. Participants added that if programs were internationally accredited, there may be higher standards and they would be institutionalized. Three of the eleven participants highlighted the need for international accreditation to improve ESL program outcomes and student success (Appendix S). Integrated ESL language classes were repeatedly focused as a need and that program changes are needed in all of the programs that they teach in. Although the question was about the instruction in their classes, most of the participants went on to discuss the needs of the programs themselves and how the deficiencies in the programs impact their classes. Appendix T shows that 76% of the additional comments added by the instructors, addressed a lack of institutional effectiveness and the need for academic acculturation of the students. The instructional issues made up only 8% of the additional issues that instructors felt they wanted to add to their interviews. Six percent of the added responses were that they had no comment.

The third question to the study was, “How do ESL instructors describe their experience with this particular population of ELL students?” Participants, for the most part, enjoyed their students, although they again identified a myriad of challenges related to the institutions themselves. Participants identified the following areas of institutional concern: a need to offer a study skills course before starting the ESL classes, lack of student academic readiness, lack of
student motivation, need for instructors to understand the students themselves, and goal setting for students and the institution itself. Additionally, Appendix M demonstrates a possible view into participant mind set. Six of the 11 participants (55%) indicated that their main focus of being in the GCC was for financial gain.

The last question was “What challenges in reading comprehension of academic texts do ESL instructors perceive that these ELLs face?” It was with this question that institutional concerns such as student academic readiness, cultural and academic acculturation, adult learner programming needs, and academic ESL programs were again indicated.

Most of the participants that I interviewed cited numerous challenges to student reading and academic success as a result of institutional voids in the programming, standards, and planning. Participant responses (Appendix Q) demonstrated that for challenges to academic reading success, 32% of participants responded that students do not make reading a priority. Thirty seven percent of participants reported that a lack of vocabulary contributed to student challenges in this area, and only 10% cited that academic readiness for reading was an issue. Participants responded that challenges to academic success (Appendix R) were due to a lack in appropriately organized ESL programs (23%), a lack of institutional support (18%), a lack of academic skills (27%) and a need for a college, work, and life balance (18%). Additionally, it was apparent that all of the participants were quite motivated to describe their firsthand experience perceptions and insight. It was clear that they all had been absorbed by the need to understand why so many students were facing challenges in reading success and academic success in general. The rich and detailed data I gathered and analyzed from my three areas of interviews, documents, and observations, will be discussed in the following section.
Discussion

Consulting the literature review in this study offered insight and evidence into the challenges of academic vocabulary instruction, acclimating adult learners into a culturally new and rigorous academic context, and institutional support for ELLs.

The literature review points to the effectiveness and quality of the instruction and its impact on adult ELL students in academic contexts. Only “35% of adult ESL teachers in a recent survey reported having had training related to preparing students for academic contexts” (Johnson & Parrish, 2010, p. 619). Participant background and educational degrees in this study demonstrated that seven of the 11 participants (64%) had a Master’s degree or higher in ESL, four of the 11 had an unrelated Master’s degree or higher, and none of the 11 participants had a Bachelor’s degree in ESL. The data from this study does support the literature claim and it was apparent that 3 of the 11 participants were not fully aware of a need for preparing ELLs for an academic context. Although 64% of the participants did have graduate preparation in teaching ESL, it may be possible that the institutions that they teach in do not have clear requirements for the additional instruction of study skills, which 27% of the participants say is needed. With 64% of the participants coming from a Western background and education, perhaps instructors expected that their students would have the necessary academic study skills by the time they reach the tertiary level of education.

Kenner and Weinerman (2011) investigated ELLs and demonstrated evidence for the need for instructional sensitivity as well as instructional awareness when teaching ELL college students with academic challenges. The data collected from the interviews, document analysis, and observations demonstrated that six of the 11 participants did not directly address the questions regarding academic vocabulary instruction. This study did support the literature as
three participants needed clarification of the term itself, and two of them discussed word study instead. Consistent with the literature this study’s data pointed to the need for instructional sensitivity toward acculturation of students into a new academic environment and having a deeper understanding of one’s students.

The literature review also demonstrated that higher educational institutions may be able to reduce negative impacts on ELLs when there is increased institutional support for their academic, linguistic, emotional, and economic needs (Ahmed, 2013, pp. 111-114). Evaluating, assessing, and properly planning out the programming needs of adult college level English language learners (ELLs) should be a core concern for institutional, departmental, curricular and instructional goals. Consistent and in tandem with the above literature cited, participants in this phenomenological study repeatedly identified the need for institutional support, a palpable change in program planning, and serving adult learner needs.

Some adult, college-level GCC ELLs may face challenges to reading academic texts in English due to the lack of a deep and wide academic vocabulary. The challenges may also be a result of the impact of inadequate instructional and curricular factors, the impact of institutional development factors, and an impact of proper program planning (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012; Fareh, 2010; Dakhli & Zohairy, 2013; Jabbarifar, 2011; Nation, 2011; Wessels, 2011).

The theoretical framework of adult learning theory has a significant role in ESL developmental programs and the institutions that offer them. Malcolm Knowles (1970) acknowledged that there are institutional responsibilities of meeting adult learner needs:

Andragogical process involves the following phases consistently in both levels of application (total programs and individual learning activities: 1) The establishment of a climate conducive to adult learning; 2) The creation of an organizational structure for
participative planning; 3) The diagnosis of needs for learning; 4) The formulation of
directions of learning (objectives); 5) The development of a design of activities; 6) The
operation of the activities; 7) The rediagnosis of needs for learning (evaluation). (p. 59)

The second theoretical framework that guided this study was social cognitive theory which
describes learners impacting their individual actions (Bandura, 1986). Schunk and Usher (2012)
focus on social cognitive theory as a “psychological functioning that emphasizes learning from
the social environment” (p. 12). Jabbarifar (2011) expands and clarifies this theory as a way for
ESL instructors to understand their college level ELL learners who may face challenges.
Jabbarifar (2011) asserts that foreign language/ESL educators should uncover their students’
self-efficacy beliefs to develop awareness and belief in their own abilities, as well as reinforcing
the educator’s belief in the ELLs themselves as well (p. 122). The self-efficacy of the learner
coupled with the educator’s belief in the ELL to succeed, are a focal point of Jabbarifar’s 2011
study. This ELL self-reflection coupled with instructor concern and belief in her/his students,
bring us “to this conclusion that foreign language classrooms should be places where they foster
care, respect, and mutual support. In such a place, a positive self-image is enhanced, social
relationships are improved, and learning the foreign language is inevitable” (p. 123). Consistent
with this framework, the data from this study pointed toward the need for study skills courses
being taught where self-reflection and goal setting were noted as being helpful toward student and
instructor self-efficacy in this context.

The new or novel contribution of this study adds to focusing on ESL college instructor
perspectives in the GCC and investigating their shared experiences of the academic vocabulary
and reading challenges that they perceive their local students have. Usually studies are focused
on student motivation or lack of instructional excellence as main causes of lack of success in
student academic reading or even overall academic success. This study led to a focus on a) the need for internationally recognized institutional accreditation and clear standards for program planning (instructional and curricular); b) the need for instructor and institutional awareness of how best to serve ELLs in a tertiary academic environment; c) a much needed focus on serving adult ELL learner needs in the GCC (which is contingent on the two former foci just mentioned). With a void in the former two foci, the latter may not be properly served, thus resulting in moderate levels of program and ELL success.

**Implications**

The data collected in this phenomenological study brought to light the genuine concern, insight, and depth of detail that the participants voiced regarding ELL academic reading comprehension success and academic success in the GCC. It also focused on the clear and articulate concerns and perspectives of the participants regarding the issue. Theoretical, empirical and practical implications are interrelated and will be described in this section.

The theoretical implications of adult learning theory and empirical implications both support and imply that it is important for instructors and institutions to identify and employ elements that may help to support adult college level learners to continue and persist in culturally distinct and unfamiliar academic environments (Ahmed, 2013; Jabbarifar, 2011; Finn, 2011; Andres & Carpenter, 1997; Sandler, 1999; Weldman, 1985; Kenner & Weinerman 2011). Participants’ voices in this area were clear and strong. They all alluded to or discussed in detail the lack in academic readiness of the ELLs in their classes. The theme of institutional issues encompasses this sub topic. Most, if not all participants discussed the need for study skills classes to be given before ELLs start their program. This practical implication, for institutions of higher education,
were clear from the study participants as well as Kenner and Weinerman (2011). They urge that “college level learners form their metacognitive skills from their communities, peers, and their local cultures. Role models and peer relationships are also key to their learning strategies” (p. 89). Malcolm Knowles (1970), one of the prominent founders of andragogy, or adult learning theory, explained that we should format our instruction based on the needs of the learners we teach. I take this one step further, in that, the institutions of higher education must also provide properly and internationally recognized and challenging educational programs to ensure that instructors are able to achieve and promote the academic goals of the particular institution with regard to the needs of the students. If the institutions themselves are in the process of development and lack effective structure, qualified faculty and administration, program development and planning, and acceptable curriculum, instructors will struggle to be able to meet adult learner needs. Educators and adult level educational institutions “have a responsibility to create conditions and provide tools and procedures for helping learners discover their "needs to know" (Knowles, 1970, p. 40).

In developing educational institutions, there is a need to also ensure that adult life based challenges to learning are addressed by the program format and curriculum themselves (Finn, 2011, p. 35). Finn (2011) addresses the fact that adult ESL learners, in developmental and community college settings, need programs that are structured to address adult learner characteristics and life challenges in addition to their academic needs. It does make sense, especially in the GCC context. Program developers and instructors need to be cognizant of “potential situational barriers” that may impede adult ELL academic and success (p. 35). Orem (2000) highlights six key areas for adult ESL program development: “1) a common educational core, 2) social and economic adaptation, 3) development of cognitive academic skills, 4)
personal relevance, 5) social change, and 6) technological management” (Orem, 2000, p. 442). The author highlights adult learning and how appropriate and effective activities for adult learners should be implemented to help support their adult, academic, and daily life needs. There are multiple variables that impact adult ELL academic success and being aware and addressing both the programmatic and instructional needs for adult learners helps to create positive experiences for ELL success.

The theoretical implication of social cognitive theory, supported by the empirical literature, also provides insight and support into another area of institutional issues that impact ELL success. “Since learner's self-efficacy and goal-setting are interrelated, teachers should guide students to identify challenging, yet manageable goals. Feeling that they can achieve these goals may result in a sense of success and achievement” (Jabbarifar, 2011, p.123). Jabbarifar (2011) lays the basis of how instructors can understand their college level ELL learners who may be having challenges. Perin (2013) discusses the particular needs of college level students who may be academically unprepared and implications of how they can be brought to college level with specific interventions (p. 119). The need for study skills courses and basic academic readiness were a common refrain from the participants in this study. The literature here also supports the data from this study.

The last area of institutional issues that were voiced from the participants, was highlighted by Calderon, Slavin, and Sanchez (2011). They reviewed only effective and successful ELL programs for their study (p. 103). The researchers identified the key effective instructional elements that made specific programs successful for ELL learners: “institutional reform, proper leadership, integration of language, literacy, and content, high quality professional development, reading interventions and tutoring, and monitoring and implementation of reading outcomes”
This study’s data from all 11 participants supports this literature and they voiced concern and need regarding institutional reform, proper leadership (for program design and application) and integrated skills.

The second theme found was that of instructional issues. The literature also was supported by this study with regard to instructional efficacy and quality of the instruction. Calderon, Slavin, and Sanchez (2011) urged that, “Teachers’ knowledge about how students acquire languages, their grasp of when and how to maximize the use of the primary language spoken, and their modeling of academic discourse in the first and second languages can have important effects on how students learn language and content” (p. 119). The literature also supported this study’s findings. The data collected demonstrated that not all of the participants had proper preparation in teaching ELLs. As a matter of fact, seven of the 11 instructors had a Master’s or doctoral degree in the area of ESL instruction (64%) and four of the participants had unrelated higher degrees. All of the 11 instructors had an unrelated Bachelor’s degree. This illustrates that 36 percent (4 of the participants) did not have related educational degrees in ESL and have not been trained in this area. Even with instructors with the necessary ESL education (64%), it appears that definitive challenges to student success were still reported. This may point to a further need to investigate institutional, programmatic, and contextual variables that further challenge student success. It may be that even with the best instructional skills and education, that the instructor alone is not the only variable to student academic and reading success.

Another instructional issue is that of academic vocabulary instruction and its importance. Instructional efficacy and a focus on academic vocabulary instruction clearly support and assist in ELL language proficiency. This study is again supported by the literature as Barr, Eslami and Joshi (2012) urge that the lack and gap in ELL language proficiency may be a result of what
teachers do or do not do to support English language learning. Instructors need to encourage and promote the study of academic vocabulary study, structural analysis of the words, and content area vocabulary study (Barr, Eslami, & Joshi, 2012). There needs to be a rich overall as well as academic focus on vocabulary as needed, whether general, content area specific, and developing mastery of the vocabulary through meaningful practice study (Barr, Eslami, & Joshi, 2012). The authors promote and recommend the idea that direct instruction of vocabulary is important and vital to language learning, “key vocabulary needs to be taught explicitly” (pp.110-12). In an academic environment “ELLs should be provided instruction to address their language learning needs to raise their levels of English proficiency and academic achievement” (p. 112). Three of the 11 participants were not aware of a need for academic vocabulary instruction, requested clarification of the term, and offered another explanation as to how they teach word study “sometimes” in class, but emphasized that their institutions do not include academic vocabulary instruction.

The literature explains the challenges to teaching EFL in the region and it is supported by the data in this study. In fact, four of the eight findings below were specified in the data collected for this study. Fareh (2010) investigated and found the following:

There were 8 distinct challenges identified in the literature to the context of instruction in EFL programs in the region: 1) improperly or inadequately trained instructor/teachers and methodology, 2) teacher centered, and not learner centered, 3) students’ aptitude, initial preparedness and motivation are low. School and university teachers often complain of the low proficiency of their students. 4) lack of an integrated approach to language instruction, 5) emphasis on rote learning, 6) lack of adequate teaching materials and
textbooks, 7) inadequate assessment methods, 8) lack of exposure to English language communication (p. 3601).

We who work in educational institutions in the GCC need to find organized and positive ways of impacting ELL academic reading and academic success, but it has to start at the institutional hierarchical levels, where policy makers, institutional leaders, and student support services link to organize and plan ahead together with seasoned experts in higher educational institutional development. Without the proper and basic organizational goals and institutional departments working together in tandem on concrete and unified mission goals, there will be a gap in the educational system, and the student’s needs will not be met nor even considered. These elements need to be in place before an institution opens to students. Of course, these institutional departments need to first hire properly trained professionals in their fields to oversee, craft, guide, and ensure that there are departmental and program outcomes at an internationally recognized level of accreditation.

I would like to garner the support and attention of policy makers and human resource professionals in these institutions and encourage them to hire seasoned experts who have a record of higher educational administrative institution building with collaborative and internationally recognized standards of performance in terms of evaluation, as well as accreditation. The key to fixing the issues, that the participants found to be challenges to reading academic texts and academic success, lies primarily in the effectiveness in the planning and organization of the programs and the people who are hired to effect these programs institutionally.

I could see that perhaps there are those who believe the issue of ELL academic reading and academic success are solely the responsibility of the instructors, but the latter can only
instruct within the predefined program within a particular institution. The instructional departments need the strong and dependable support of the student services department, the registrar, the academic advising department, and the other key departments within a university or college setting. The instruction can only be successful if program planning is done effectively and in conjunction with appropriate instructional strategies. We need to move forward with improving the planning and hiring of well-trained, appropriately educated faculty and staff who have proven track records of institutional and instructional effectiveness.

Some recommendations I offer for proper program planning are to the human resource departments as well as the key departments of developing higher educational institutions. Higher educational institutions in the GCC that teach ELLs can and should take the time and effort to hire the best qualified individuals for institutional and program reform. The data collected in this study predominantly revealed that there is a great need for program reform institutionally to include support and assistance to ELLs in the form of study skills courses before starting courses at the college level, using an integrated language approach, changing program format to meet adult learner needs for scheduling, and academic acculturation to a new cultural context for the ELLs. Higher educational institutions are key to the vital role they play in ELL success and would only benefit from the voices and insight that the participants in this study voiced and shared.

Only individuals who have a proven track record of higher educational institutional education, experience, and effectiveness should be hired. Whether they are to design programs, curriculum, or format a student services department, there is the need to have a team of people who are qualified in the area to make broad, specific, and appropriate decisions at the institutional level in collaboration with other related institutional entities. If there are these key people in place, the
institution will have the foresight to supply and put in place the necessary programs, policies, and procedures that are needed to have the institution serve adult ELL needs ultimately.

Similarly, with regard to instructional issues, I recommend that the human resource departments and relevant departments hire instructors with degrees in ESL. The data collected regarding the importance of academic vocabulary and academic reading indicated that three of the 11 participants were not aware of the importance, impact, nor necessity of academic vocabulary instruction in their programs, nor in their specific classes. The data also revealed that four of the 11 participants had no education nor training in teaching ELLs or in ESL/EFL. They made up 36% of the instructor participants. ELL instructors should have ESL degrees from internationally accredited and recognized higher education institutions. Short course certificates do not offer depth of knowledge nor breadth of understanding of instructional nor curricular effectiveness in ESL. Full academic degrees are required for other departmental instructors, so the same should hold true for ELL instructors. It is critical to the region and to regional mission country goals that all of its citizenry are well versed and educated in English to be able to compete for higher level employment as well as to compete internationally.

The final two points that were revealed through the participants’ voices were those of instructor intention: financial gain and transience. These two unexpected participant issues from this study also add to the literature in that there has been scant literature in this area and the possible impact on academic vocabulary instruction and academic reading comprehension. As a longtime observer in the GCC, I have noted that perhaps institutional and instructional issues may also be further exacerbated by transient faculty and staff who do not have, nor are able to have, a vested interest to stay and improve the academic strength of the institutions where they are employed.
Limitations

There were a number of limitations related to this study. The first was the number of participants and the regional setting. There were only 11 instructor participants in this study, so generalizability was not feasible to other locales due to the unique population and region. The institutional expectations, contexts, and programs are distinct to this study and therefore limit my recommendations to the GCC only.

The second limitation identified was that I only looked at the participants’ specific circumstances and collected data that displayed possible insight for the challenges that ELLs face in the GCC when they are in developmental college level ESL programs. Additionally, I did not use any measurement of instructor or student traits (character, personality, professional, etc.). This was a limitation about the instructors and perhaps a fuller profile into their views, perspectives, and backgrounds may have led to a more conclusive and definitive profile of the situation.

Another limitation to this study is that I used purposive sampling to garner participants. It was based on age, experience, profession and location/setting. The sampling was not based on probability, and I qualified participants solely on their experience and knowledge within this research area (Oliver, 2006). Although they provided a keen insight into their seasoned experiences, including a random sampling may have offered more variety of perspective and perhaps distinctive insight that was not steeped in experience in the region.

Recommendations for Future Research

The intention of this study was to discover and explore more about 11 ESL instructors’ experiences and perceptions of academic vocabulary instruction and instructional self-efficacy of the adult college level students they teach in their ESL programs in the Gulf States of the Middle
East. The study’s goal was to help to describe the essence of why many adult learners in these programs have difficulty with English academic text reading comprehension and academic success at the tertiary level. The study was aligned to the following four research questions:

1. How do ESL instructors describe academic vocabulary instruction in their institution?

2. How do participants view the role of academic vocabulary in their ESL classes and how it may positively impact ELL comprehension of academic texts?

3. How do ESL instructors describe their experience with this particular population of ELL students?

4. What challenges in reading comprehension of academic texts do ESL instructors perceive that these ELLs face?

As the data gathering and analysis procedures took place, the research questions were answered, participants offered implications, and new concerns and questions arose regarding this topic. This qualitative study design is not able to identify a definitive nor binding conclusion to this most complex instructional, institutional, educational, and cultural context issue. On the other hand, it may contribute to the extension of a closer focus on the importance for all possible stakeholders within the tertiary level educational community to collaborate and plan their areas so as to support these adult ELLs in college level developmental ESL programs in the GCC. I focused on ESL instructors teaching at the college level in the GCC.

Future research is recommended by including several institutions in a similar study using a quantitative methodology to collect a broader and larger sample of a similar profile. This could possibly allow for the ability to analyze the data for causes, effects, and the relationships between variables in the context and the stakeholders. Results from such a study would help to improve the situation by allowing us to see the broad reasons, variables, and causes of this issue.
so that we could find solutions to improve ELL academic reading comprehension and academic success in these programs.

Another qualitative study should be done to explore the insider view of all stakeholders (directly related to ESL programs) so that a compiled profile of their institution’s ESL program and ELL success could be garnered and analyzed. It may be advantageous to study the phenomenon through the lens and perspective of the institutional stakeholders, as well as the students themselves to provide deeper clarity on the issues and experience at hand, especially from the ELL student perspective. Inside views of the experience bring to light the gravity of the problems and would only help to alert all stakeholders to the issues that need to be addressed.

Quantitative studies and data collection about student attrition rates, passing and failing statistics, need to be investigated so as to have a statistical background of the situation as well with a larger number of institutions participating throughout the tertiary levels of the GCC ESL programs. There is a public paucity of these types of statistics in the region as at times institutions may keep the information for their own records. There are frequently barriers to accessing these types of data for locally, as well as internationally based institutions here for a variety of reasons. It would be most helpful to be able to see and study accurate numbers on attrition, student pass and fail rates, and the number of times students repeat the same course. Future studies such as these could possibly lead to the creation of institutional and instructional reform that would help to create programs that would fully address the needs of the adult English language learners, support their learning, and help them to be the successful students that they want to be.
Summary

While interviewing the instructors, I bracketed my personal and professional ideas and perceptions to allow their voices to be heard regarding the researched topic. On a few occasions, I must admit that I had a deep connection and understanding with the voiced experiences that these instructors offered and detailed throughout the interviews. I made sure to keep my feelings and experiences in check by not speaking or engaging in a dialogue with the participants. I simply focused on the questions and reiterated them if they requested any type of clarification. I can say that I kept my own voice out of the process and focused on the participants’ voices and experiences. After reading and listening to the transcripts several times, I was aware that the concerns, insights and statements were also a part of my shared experience.

There are two main themes that came to light from this study: instructional issues and institutional issues. The main lessons learned here are that: (1) instructional efforts are rooted in, as well as limited by, levels of instructional awareness and ESL program curricular/instructional planning, (2) adult learners need institutional support in programming, scheduling, and academic acculturation, (3) a temporary and transient faculty and staff may possibly have an impact on the two aforementioned issues.

The goal of this phenomenological qualitative study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of ESL instructors regarding academic vocabulary instruction in the GCC, instructional self-efficacy in this area, and perceptions of the adult students they teach in college level, academic bridge ESL programs in the GCC. Repeatedly I noted that two themes initially appeared: “Instructor Focused Areas of Concern” and “Institutional Focused Areas of Concern”. The sub topics of curricular and instructional awareness and financial interests really came to light with the former theme. The sub topics of program planning and organization, curricular
and instructional changes, academic ESL programs, adult learner program structure, program accreditation, student readiness and study skills, context acculturation were voiced throughout the second or latter theme. The instructor’s voices are most important to document so that we can understand the challenges that may exist for our adult ELL population in tertiary level ESL programs at the university and college levels in the GCC. My intention was to document ESL instructor voices so that we have an account of their key vantage points and insight into this issue. Perhaps, as educational reforms continue to evolve, we may be able to take heed of their insight and give greater attention to the needs of the adult ELL learners in this region who need to be educationally and professionally ready to meet the needs and calls of the workplace and workforce for their countries’ development and competitiveness in the near future.
REFERENCES


Field notes template. Qualitative Research Methods course material. EDUC 817. 2014. Lynchburg, Virginia.


First Cycle Coding Methods

https://study.sagepub.com/node/31740/student-resources/select-sage-journal-articles/chapter-3-first-cycle-coding-methods


APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

August 31, 2015

Indrani Ibrahim
IRB Approval 2281.083115: Academic Vocabulary Instruction for Adult English Language Learners in the Arabian Gulf: A Phenomenological Study of Instructor Perspectives

Dear Indrani,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971
APPENDIX B

Participant Consent Form

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from 8/31/15 to 8/30/16
Protocol # 2281.083115

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION FOR ADULT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN THE ARABIAN GULF: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF INSTRUCTOR PERSPECTIVES
Principal Investigator, Indrani Ibrahim
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of instructor perspectives of vocabulary instruction in adult level ESL programs at college institutions in the Gulf of Arabia (GCC) region. You were selected as a possible participant because you have been teaching in this context for more than two years. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Ms. Indrani Ibrahim, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore instructors’ experiences and perceptions of ESL/EFL program academic vocabulary instruction, instructional self-efficacy in this area, and perceptions of the students they teach in these programs to see how they possibly impact student success in academic reading.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study and be part of my dissertation, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Agree to allow me to include in my dissertation your responses to the preliminary background questions already completed.

2. Answer open-ended questions related to the above in a face-to-face interview while I audio record our conversation. This should take approximately 20 to 30 minutes.

3. Submit samples of documents/materials that you use in instructing academic vocabulary (from any course that you teach).

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The study’s risk factor is no more than the risk you may encounter in everyday life. All information will be held confidential and all participants and institutions referred to will have pseudonyms.
There are no direct personal benefits to participation other than you will be participating to help in finding possible solutions to significant attrition rates in developmental ESL classes in the Gulf of Arabia college level institutions.

**Compensation:**

You will not receive any type of payment for participating in this study.

**Confidentiality:**

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from 8/31/15 to 8/30/16 Protocol # 2281.083115

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject or an institution. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. I will use pseudonyms for all participants as well as pseudonyms for all institutions where the participant(s) work. Any and all contact information, emails, phone calls, Skype calls, and audio recordings will be used for this particular study and will be kept completely private. The data will be stored for three years under password protection and will only be accessible by the investigator.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**Withdrawal from the Study:**

Should you decide you no longer wish to participate in this study, simply inform the principal investigator and all of your records will be removed and disposed of.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is Ms. Indrani Ibrahim. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at my advisor, Dr. Charles Schneider, Assistant Professor, School of Education.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Carter 134, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu. Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(Note: Do not agree to participate unless IRB approval information with)
CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

The researcher has my permission to audio-record.

Signature: _________________________________________________________ Date: _____________

Signature of Investigator: _____________________________________________ Date: _____________
APPENDIX C

Non-participant observer field note sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIELD NOTES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TITLE OF STUDY</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<th>SITE DIAGRAM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After the interviews I was observing interactions between participants and regional colleagues. There were discussions regarding similar topics in ESL- GCC instruction. I took notes and jotted down key phrases and sentences I heard being used to describe their experiences.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEMOING</th>
<th>THICK DESCRIPTION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Student readiness&quot;</td>
<td>It was interesting to hear the term being used by the participant and I was glad to see that there was a desire to figure out how to best serve her students. There is at times a belief that it is only the instructors who are to blame for the lack of student readiness. The actuality is that there is a myriad of issues that are leading up to this issue and that need to be addressed and hopefully rectified. The literature in this study supports the need to make students ready for academic pursuits at the tertiary levels.</td>
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<tr>
<th>&quot;There are no personal or academic goals set&quot;</th>
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<tr>
<td>During the discussions the participants were having with other colleagues, I heard one of the participants discuss the need for goals being set on a personal level, as well as an academic level. This realization and comment was meant in the light of helping the ELLs succeed. This is supported in the literature review and</td>
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<tr>
<th>&quot;There’s a focus on unsuccessful students&quot;</th>
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<tr>
<td>It was interesting to see that they are/were used to discussing the students who need attention and support. The unsuccessful students are the ones that are focused on in the GCC as the governments have spent excessive amounts for reform initiatives in the k to 12 years and have only had moderate success in their goals. The literature also supports this statement as much of the literature is focused on this population of students so as to find a solution.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Field notes template. Qualitative Research Methods course material. EDUC 919 (2014). Lynchburg, Virginia
## APPENDIX D

**Log of Interviews**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>September 16, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karl / Sara</td>
<td>Skype/Skype</td>
<td>October 3, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dina</td>
<td>Face to face/Skype</td>
<td>September 28, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom / Jane</td>
<td>Skype/Face to face</td>
<td>October 12, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max / Joseph</td>
<td>Face to face/Skype</td>
<td>October 12, 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>October 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle/Adele</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>November 5-7, 2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E

Initial questionnaire instrument for participant selection

1) Have you taught ESL in the GCC region (Bahrain, UAE, Saudi, Qatari, Oman, or Kuwait) for more than two years?

2) What is your age?

3) Are you currently teaching ESL at a college or university developmental program in the GCC?

4) Which country do you consider as your home country or what is your nationality?
APPENDIX F

Standardized open-ended interview questions

1. Please fully describe your personal and professional reasons for coming to the GCC in the Middle East to teach ESL. Please include your family and friends’ views of your career selection to this region? Please give examples.

2. Please fully describe your complete educational teaching and training history as it relates to teaching ESL here in the GCC region as well as in other locations.

3. Please fully describe your past experiences teaching college level ESL in the GCC. What is your favorite area of ESL to teach at the college level? Why?

4. What is your opinion of academic vocabulary instruction in your institution’s ESL program? How do you think academic vocabulary instruction impacts ELL students?

5. What challenges do you believe some ELLs at your institution have in reading academic texts?

6. What challenges do you believe some ELLs at your institution have in academic success in the GCC college context?

7. What instructional and curricular changes do you think could positively impact ELL academic reading comprehension at your institution? Why?

8. What do you think could positively impact ELL success at your institution?

9. Please describe your personal experience and opinion of working with this population of ELLs.

10. Would you like to add or mention anything else regarding your experience as an ELL instructor in the GCC or of vocabulary instruction?
APPENDIX G

My bracketing transcript of the open ended interview questions

I. Ibrahim: Good morning, and I am here answering the open-ended interview questions that I will use in my data collection for my dissertation. This is part of my bracketing.

Interviewer: Question 1: Please fully describe your personal and professional reasons for coming to the GCC in the Middle East to teach ESL. Please include your family and friends’ views of your career selection to this region? Please give examples.

I. Ibrahim: I came out to the region originally in 2006 with my family and we first were posted in the GCC with my husband’s position. I had suspended working for the moment as our family was moving internationally and we had three small children at the time. I had been a US certified teacher of ESL, Spanish and French for nearly 10 years prior to coming out to the GCC. As I mentioned, we came out here because of my husband’s job. So, once our kids were all in school, I started working in the area of ESL in the GCC, as it is needed and I had gone to a few conferences in the GCC, so I knew there was a trend for recruitment of ESL teachers. I had taught in New York for many years and Pennsylvania as well. My love is in teaching foreign languages and I truly enjoy supporting and teaching students in second language learning. For me, it is magical to see a student go from not being able to communicate in a language to being communicative and thriving. My professional career, writing and research have always put my students’ needs first and foremost in my goals.

Regarding my family, well…they are used to me traveling and living out of state. I am originally from New York City, but moved out of state to Pennsylvania and Texas for ten years before we moved to the GCC. With regard to friends, we had some friends in Texas who could not believe we would move to the GCC. They thought it was a dangerous place. One neighbor asked me, “How could you take your family there?” It is interesting to see some people’s reactions to a place they have never been. Other friends were quite supportive, so I guess I could say that I have heard a range of responses from positive to negative about our living in the GCC.

Interviewer: Question 2: Please fully describe your complete educational teaching and training history as it relates to teaching ESL here in the GCC region as well as in other locations.

I. Ibrahim: My Bachelor’s degree was in Spanish, my Master’s was in TESOL with a Concentration of coursework in Linguistics, and my Ed D is in Curriculum and Instruction. The latter’s focus is on ELL issues in the GCC. I had taught foreign language and ESL in the US for many years and was involved in many foreign language organizations in the US. I had yearly professional development there for second language acquisition issues as well as for foreign language teaching. I
went through a very rigorous and challenging teacher training and certification process in the state of New York. I hold permanent lifetime teaching certifications in ESL, Spanish and French. I have taught ESL for about 15 years and have focused on ESL specifically for the last 10 years I’ve been residing in the GCC. I was an English Language Specialist for the US State Department from 2010 to 2014 for short term host nation institution ESL projects in the GCC. I was also a student teacher supervisor for a joint teacher preparation program in the GCC. For the past few years I’ve been teaching ESL at the college level there. Presently, I am a peer editor and peer reviewer for TESOL Arabia’s academic publication, *Perspectives*. It is a love of mine to read and review the scholarly works that are coming out of the GCC area regarding TESOL, EFL, ESL, and second language acquisition issues.

Interviewer: Question 3: Please fully describe your past experiences teaching college level ESL in the GCC. What is your favorite area of ESL to teach at the college level? Why?

I. Ibrahim: I came to teach ESL because I love to be in the classroom with my students. I am from a family of public servants in the US, and I am just a natural teacher at heart. I want all of my students to achieve the most that they are capable of and I want to be there to assist in their development. There is nothing else I can say. My GCC students are fantastic and I feel bad that so many have had to go through the educational reforms in the region. The impact of educational reform policy on their k to 12 learning has been large. My experience in the GCC teaching has been a positive one. Of course, there is a spectrum of student ability, as there is all over the world, but my experience has been a positive one.

Interviewer: Question 4: What is your opinion of academic vocabulary instruction in your institution’s ESL program? How do you think academic vocabulary instruction impacts ELL students?

I. Ibrahim: Hmm…my opinion of academic vocabulary instruction is that it is not focused on in any of the programs I have been associated with. Although I must say that the academic vocabulary, many times, may be in the college level textbooks used anyway. We just don’t see a concerted effort at the program or departmental levels that focuses on this aspect. I think it is very important for ELLS to be able to recognize and understand the academic words that are frequent in college texts. I think it makes sense to focus and require them to be studied at the tertiary level. Academic vocabulary instruction and learning is important because it enables the student to understand the higher level texts that are used at the college levels. Studying in a second language at the college level puts the ELL at a disadvantage if there is a lack of vocabulary. Students have to know the vocabulary in order to understand the topics of complex classes. It just makes simple sense.
Interviewer: Question 5: What challenges do you believe some ELLs at your institution have in reading academic texts?

I. Ibrahim: I think there are a couple of variables at play here. I think that ELL challenges to reading academic texts are the following: 1) Challenges in personal schedules of work, study, and family, 2) need for study skills, 3) sometimes the ESL program formats need organization with regard to curricular and instructional emphasis, 4) there is a need for reading literacy, extensive reading and reading for pleasure.

Interviewer: Question 6: What challenges do you believe some ELLs at your institution have in academic success in the GCC college context?

I. Ibrahim: I believe that some ELLs may have challenges in organization of study skills, time management, work life balance, etc. Also, goal setting for long term and short term is very important. I usually ask my first year students what their educational and professional goals are and many say they want to get a "certificate, diploma, degree". Many times, they are not sure in what, how, when, where, or why when I ask these follow up questions.

I think that instructor expectations and student expectations culturally may be different. Both are valid, but they need to dovetail together at some point. The instructors many times expect the students to understand culturally accepted Western norms for academic behaviors. They should better understand the audience that they are teaching. They need to understand the historical, cultural, and contextual group that they instruct so that they can better serve their educational outcomes. There is a gap in understanding that I think may exist where the instructors are mostly expats teaching in the region.

Interviewer: Question 7: What instructional and curricular changes do you think could positively impact ELL academic reading comprehension at your institution? Why?

I. Ibrahim: Instructional changes would include: 1) having all instructors trained in best practices for ELL academic reading success, 2) having all instructors trained and well versed in the importance of academic vocabulary instruction, and 3) having a well-planned out, organized and time tested instructional strategy plan for the faculty that need to get their ELLs up to speed to the college level reading comprehension levels that their native speakers are already performing at.

Curricular changes would be to: 1) have textbooks chosen that use an integrated approach of thematic learning, 2) have a direct, and continuous focus on academic vocabulary instruction alongside 3) have a curriculum that includes reading skills and strategies that are best for academic texts.
Interviewer: Question 8: What do you think could positively impact ELL success at your institution?

I. Ibrahim: I think that there are a myriad of variables that could support success in learning for our students.
1) Well functioning and established procedures and policies for the institutions themselves is first and foremost because without those, the institutions will not function properly.
2) Well vetted and sourced employees who are qualified at the Masters and above in the areas that they instruct. They are the ones with the “know how” and details of the subject matter that they instruct. If there is a person with an unrelated degree, that would not be appropriate to hire them to teach an unrelated subject area.
3) Similarly, the ESL program structure, curriculum and instructional strategies used need all to be well organized, thought out, crafted, and taught by qualified faculty. The adult student’s needs must be taken into consideration when program planning occurs.
4) Students would benefit from a strong student services department presence and workshops that would acclimate them into the new academic college experience.

Interviewer: Q9: Please describe your personal experience and opinion of working with this population of ELLs.

I. Ibrahim: My personal experience has been positive and very rewarding with all of my classes. The students are why I am in the classroom and I truly have had a great experience in the GCC teaching ESL at the college level. My opinion is that it is challenging to work in shifting programs, institutional uncertainty, and with transient faculty. The students have been a great source of my reason for working with ELL populations and I would love to do it again in the future. I want to find more ways to help support adult learner success in a second language.

Interviewer: Q10: Would you like to add or mention anything else regarding your experience as an ELL instructor in the GCC or of vocabulary instruction?

I. Ibrahim: I would like to mention that I am blessed to have had the opportunity to have worked with such great faculty and students in the GCC. The level of humanity, consideration, and kindness has been beyond expression. My feeling is that there is much work ahead institutionally, program wise, curricular wise and adult student development wise.
APPENDIX H

Sample transcript of interviews

Interview 11: Michelle

I. Ibrahim: The first question I wanted to ask is about academic vocabulary instruction in the Gulf/GCC. And I want to know about your professional reasons for teaching in the Gulf.

Michelle: Sorry can you repeat that?

I. Ibrahim: Your professional and personal reasons for working in the Gulf region.

Michelle: Oh I came to the Gulf region and 19… 1988

I. Ibrahim: Wow!

Michelle: I think because my husband got a job here in Riyadh. So, yeah I came to me.... My professional reasons for working in the Gulf is because my husband is based here.

I. Ibrahim: Yes…and what is your home state Dr. Michelle?

Michelle: USA ---.

I. Ibrahim: I’d like to ask you question two. And if you could just give me a little bit about your educational background and training as it relates to ESL instruction in the GCC region.

Michelle: Okay I did my Bachelor’s degree in English Composition at a small private college in the Midwest of the US. And then and then I joined the Peace Corps and that’s where I met my husband in Africa and then when I started working again I got a job at a hospital a training hospital in Riyadh teaching English to allied health professionals. And when I was there I started doing my Master’s degree by distance in TESOL and Applied Linguistics. And then when I came here in 2001 that's when I completed my masters. And then I I started doing my doctorate by distance maybe in 2003 and I finished in 2005 or… 2007.

I. Ibrahim: Great. Question three is please describe in your own words your experiences of teaching ESL in the GCC.

Michelle: Well I've been teaching in the GCC for more than 20 years .I've taught in Riyadh as I said and I taught in two different institutions in Riyadh for seven years. And I've been teaching at a university in the UAE for 15 years now and I've also taught at places like you know for summer school or at the British Council. I also like
taught at some language institutes part time in the summer. And I've also taught young learners.

I. Ibrahim: Here’s question four. Please give me your opinion and description of academic vocabulary instruction at the college level. I know you've also taught college level so what is your view or opinion and description of academic vocabulary instruction in the GCC?

Michelle: You know it's always big territory that you cover here cause when you talk about English for specific purposes You know that you're often talking about professionals who have content knowledge and they want to transfer that knowledge to English as a medium to present at conferences or for more international opportunities. So a lot of what we talk about ESP for our students is that people that don't have qualifications yet in their subject area. So you know for me it’s more general English even when you're talking about English for academic purposes. Now I’d have to say here at the place where I teach, I’ve taught a long time at this place here and you know when I first started working there we were more English for academic purposes and teaching them general study skills. You know helping them in university life. And now it has become more for the past oh I don't know I would even say 10 years or 12 years, the foundation bridging program just became all about passing the IELTS test. So academic vocabulary, I mean it usually it's not specifically academic vocabulary right? The way that Averil Coxhead did her research….first you know you had to have access to large corpuses to find the most common words across all of them and more recently it has been shown that there is a lot of problems with that because you know I think I think it's 800 word families she has on the list. On the 10th list the rarest words are not very common so what would be the point of teaching them anyway. What has driven me to teach vocabulary you know to teach I do explicitly teach vocabulary but when I was working at the cardiac center we were a small team of science teachers, English teachers and allied health professionals. Some of our students were learning to become cardiac technicians, EKG technicians and ultrasound technicians and Cath Lab technicians. One of the instructors for the Cath Lab technicians said my students need general English when I start teaching them the content if I say that this lags behind they don't know the meaning of the word lag so that they don't understand what I'm saying.

I. Ibrahim: Right.

Michelle: I mean my approach has always been to…. Whether whatever kind of syllabus we have whether it's a topic based syllabus or the syllabus that follows the course for whatever readings or whatever materials I'm preparing for that week to teach. I look at the vocabulary on that and I do check and see if it's on the academic word list I do check and see if it's….what collocates with. Things like that and then I usually have a cycle of recycling vocabulary like every I have a week and two week and two-week cycle of recycling vocabulary. So I do explicitly teach
vocabulary but I don't teach an isolated word list. I teach it from the content that we have. I use authentic texts that we are supposed to use.

I. Ibrahim: Yes. Thank you so much! Here is question five. What challenges do you believe some ELLs at your institution have in reading academic texts?

Michelle: For college-level well are...the challenges that our students have are not limited to a lack of vocabulary. In a way, their lack of vocabulary is limited or caused by the lack of reading. So you know what innovative thing we started doing at the place where I work is we started a competition to get the students to read graded readers and we were tracking that by “M Reader” because I mean I also believe that vocabulary... Teaching doesn't really cause learning....learning is something you do yourself.

I. Ibrahim: I absolutely agree!

Michelle: For vocabulary you can teach the same time word several times in a week and we can we try giving spelling tests with trying to teach the vocabulary list. I mean I believe that I believe in the research of innovation and others that students need to see the word several times in context before they learn the word. Man I think the best way to do this is by assigning graded readers and not to exclude you know using word cards are using the word dictionary... we've done that before in other words...giving a vocabulary notebook. I've given vocabulary notebooks and assessed them. But it's been my experience with this that a student who comes to class already and one of the two students comes to class already with the vocabulary notebook... with her writing down the words very cute...they keep doing it. They don't really need me to force them to do it and then a lot of ones that you forced to do it, well it's just a task to force them and that it's gonna be graded so they get somebody else's notebook and copy the answers. So, at the end we got a, you know, when they write down all the other person's words, they will not learn. I think all that the teacher can do is, you know, create opportunities for students and I think probably the best way for us is to let them learn more using the graded readers.

I was recycling activities and they were all focused on content. I think it depends because for example, the level lower-level students can handle more than, you know, eight or 10 words a week if you see also the research for native speakers I think at the time it was about 11 or so? You can’t expect a second language learner to accomplish more than native speakers, and it doesn't really work like that. And students also, I think I noticed, bring their own knowledge of vocabulary and stuff to class as well. My students used to watch a lot of western movies sometimes and I had/have students who were very keen on Western culture and then there's another subgroup of students, and I think we have to mention it because it's become such a billion-dollar worldwide industry. They bring their language skills from online gaming to our classes and they are
excellent. I mean, they are young men and they bring all kinds of things they learn from online in the classroom.

I. Ibrahim: Absolutely, absolutely. I’d like to move on to question six which is, what challenges do you believe that some of your ELLs may have with regard to academic success in the GCC context in academic bridge programs at the college level?

Michelle: I think that the school system has really failed them and you know I want to compare Saudi context with the UAE context. You know in Saudi they have to send their kids to the government school and you have to get any special permission like if you were a diplomat and your kids lived in America or Australia for six years and come back to Saudi. The government gives special permission so they can go to an English medium private school for two years and it is something that they had to switch back to the Saudi medium of course. All the expatriates living there send their kids to private as well because their kids are not allowed to study in the government schools. Still, there is a gap and this is despite multiple huge multibillion dollar educational reform during my 30 years here but it goes back even further than 40 years at least here in the Emirates.

There's been at least three huge major educational reforms that were supposed to be able to fix the education system, but it is still bad. Okay still bad so what the UAE has started doing almost 80% of the students in the UAE go to an English medium school until they’re at least 10 or 11 if not their whole career where they go to a mixed private Arabic-English school because the family sees they can't get ahead. Parents thought that because of private learning they were going to be prepared for better jobs. So in the urban areas you know it's up to 80% send their kids to private English medium schools to solve that problem because they all know the education system is so bad despite all these educational reforms.

My mother used to say things like we had to memorize the pledge of allegiance and what is wrong with memorizing. The instruction and learning here is another challenge to success because it is focused on memorizing, but not critically analyzing. Today like it if you if you learn chemistry what's wrong with having to memorize the periodic chart? My son is 14 going to school here near the UAE. He studied under the old reformed system and he studied under the old system and he said, “You know when I went to school at least I learned something…. I memorized but I learned something”. Now you say my son is learning nothing… just all this touchy-feely stuff and technology, so what is really wrong with you to memorize and I do think they should memorize certain things. They seem to be good at it because that's all …you know it’s part of their religion.

Another issue is the quality of the private schools because the costs are so different for different customers. For example, private English medium schools here right have all price ranges right they have for you know lower-level workers, clerical workers and banks and things like that those have to be reasonably priced.
For k-12 tuition, it is at least 40,000 dirham a year, you know the ones you have also to split that cost with employers. You know like the American school that cost or British will it cost more than a year at University/College in America!

I. Ibrahim: Yeah, yeah.

Michelle: The other thing is that the focus has gone from academic English to general English and passing standardized entrance exams. We are getting more direct entry students from private schools too and that means they have more than up to a score of five on their IELTS exams. But I would say like if they come up in our foundation program and they struggle through a year or two years of that they're supposed to exit with about five or 5.5, but really it's like a Frankenstein five because they can take three different IELTS that just have to be within six months of each other you know so it's not it's not a five with a minimum of five in each skill. So it's a very low level. But then on the other hand, you have those guys in class with other students who have you know, like about seven…even maybe some bad eights. At that level, they feel like, “why do I have to take academic reading and writing? Well, we know they need to be taught how to write a research paper. You see, we wouldn't talk like that before under the old foundation programs, right? You know we would've talked notetaking skills and how to write. The foundation program has become it's about learning general English but the ultimate goal is to get a higher IELTS or TOEFL score to enter university. Where I work now, we have a new Vice Chancellor and a new college director and the both of them studied in the States. They know that a five is a very very low level. A lot of people in the country are realizing themselves that, yes it is a low-level low level of English that is being produced by the governments despite the full financing of these programs. Sometimes the students speak English and their communication skills are very good but their reading and writing are like being left behind. And the parents will often swap their kids around numerous English medium schools so much so that they get mad at their kids’ lack of skills, but it was not even like they have followed one English or British curriculum. So that same thing is now happening at foreign English universities. They charge about three-times more than the price for these foreign students and they take their money and the money has really been a key factor!

I. Ibrahim: I see. Would you like to add more to that? You look like you'd like to add something.

Michelle: And so the same private high schools that are English medium schools- they want to keep people in their schools and it reaches a level of exclusivity where they say well, you were a troublemaker so we don't want them here right? They don't hesitate to take the money and especially if it's a local student. Another part of the problem is also they have different values that are and will probably change with this generation. If you can picture like a Westerners home by three you get home from school, you sit along at the desk or the table with your kids and everybody does their homework together, probably throughout elementary school. With our
students here, though, homework in the living room is done to at least till 11 or 12 at night, right? If you gone into the homes of our students, you know, they don't even have a desk in the room. Often they share big TVs in there, but even I mean I've been I've been in some of their homes where they have a nice dining room and then went they go eat and sit around on the floor. You know I think I think this.... acculturation into western education has not caught on here. If you come here, you know some cultures that are doing so well on the PISA exam are a lot of south Southeast Asian countries like Korea, China, and Hong Kong. They are doing so well so far compared to others. A lot of technology in the classroom really is very traditional here in the UAE and teaching methods as well, but they have tried to be acculturated somewhat. Developing academic patience is very important and that's the way forward ...to be an engineer or lawyer or doctor you have to study hard. This generation has been spoiled somewhat and it's this entitlement. You know, I've been here a long time in the UAE, and many students are great, but there are some who want the degree you know they want to be an engineer they want to be a lawyer, but they don't work together. They just want it so they can get a higher salary. So how do you explain how do you explain how that affects their motivation for learning?

I. Ibrahim: Would you expand on that?

Michelle: Well, right, so I also have actually witnessed a kind of peer pressure for students to not do well, not do homework, not to cave in to western culture and maintain the local ways. I had a student that was half Palestinian and who I had a variety years who was very good. Then after some time I saw a change and I would ask her, what have you done? Why didn't you do your work? You don't have them talking in Arabic and then she didn't do her homework anymore either. She's kind of an outsider to the other UAE students because you know her father ...as she comes from a mixed marriage and she didn't go to a government school, she went to a private one. Right, so I actually witnessed that kind of peer pressure to not do your homework. Their lives at the college are so separate to their lives outside. Yeah it's really too distinct.

I. Ibrahim: Let me move on to question seven. What do you think could positively impact ELL academic reading comprehension?

Michelle: I think the only thing that could really impact their academic successes would be to change them from oral culture to a reading culture. Because you know that that brings up another difference between these private medium schools and then it falls on the government schools. You know that despite recent educational reform there are still no libraries?! They closed the local library here in -----and then they promised and put one in the mall. Why would it be in another mall? It's never happened at the site actually! This educational reform states that it’s supposedly been on the website and says that they are making libraries-- were doing libraries but it's still not there and I mean I really believe that they will not build one! The power of reading is so important and I mean they have done studies in the States
showing the kids who come from low socioeconomic groups have less access to books and less role models to aspire to. That impacts their overall learning experience. So here in the UAE, there are no workshops in their neighborhood libraries and fewer books in their schools. But here ironically they have a great deal of wealth as well and even the country seems to invest in international book fairs. We have international books that we do here and compete prizes for literature. There was an Arabic international book fair during their reading weeks but still like the effort on the ground was lacking! If they improve the library fun now that would make school a more focused goal. You know it so so access to literacy and access to literature is needed. And books I mean I guess maybe they think that we have Internet so we don't need that. I had some students arguing with me, “I get everything I need from the Internet why do I need to read books” So and I was thinking it’s like a hidden agenda to me I mean it's a lot of show for we are promoting reading but it's almost like they don't really want to.

I. Ibrahim: Let’s move on to question number eight. What could positively impact ELL success at your institution?

Michelle: You know, creating a literate and educated class… is really important. I know this is a far away answer to the question. It would take a lot of planning and policy, but that is what’s needed.

I. Ibrahim: Questions eight and nine are for you to describe what could positively impact ESS success at your institution and your opinion of working with this population. I am including the two, as you have discussed them already, but if you could give your insight, that would be great.

Michelle: I have been in the GCC for more than 20 years and do enjoy my students a lot. It’s just that the issues and challenges are many. Lack of reading affects our students’ writing also this lack of reading this is why they don't have any ideas When it's time to write, and it's not it's not just a question of the mechanics of writing, it is also how to say something. The idea does not come to their mind they don't read so they rely on things like translation. There are so many issues that I told already.

I. Ibrahim: And the question is just would you like to mention anything else or talk about or anything else you feel you'd like to share with me? So is there anything else that you would like to discuss or talk about?

Michelle: You know I think it will be very interesting research I think that we actually have to try to publish and get the word out more about literacy and an educated and literate population.

I. Ibrahim: Oh good I want to thank you so much for taking the time. I want to thank you so much and that you have a wonderful day.
APPENDIX I

Initial Questionnaire-Question 1 (11 participants)

Have you taught for more than 2 years in the GCC?
APPENDIX J

Initial Questionnaire-Question 2 (11 participants)

Age range of the 11 participants

- 21 to 30 yrs: 28%
- 31 to 40 yrs: 18%
- 41 to 50 yrs: 18%
- 51 to 60 yrs: 18%
- 61 to 70 yrs: 9%
APPENDIX K

Initial Questionnaire-Question 3 (11 participants)

Are you currently teaching ESL at a college or university in the GCC?

100.00% Yes

100.00% Yes
APPENDIX L

Initial Questionnaire-Question 4 (11 participants)

Which geographical region are you originally from?
APPENDIX M

Open ended interview Q1 (11 participants)

Description of personal and professional reasons for teaching in the GCC
APPENDIX N

Open ended interview Q2 (11 participants)

Description of educational background
APPENDIX O

Open ended interview Q2 (11 participants)

Descriptions of teaching experiences in the GCC

- Positive: 53%
- Challenging: 42%
- Negative: 5%
APPENDIX P

Open ended interview Q4 (11 participants)

Description of academic vocabulary instruction in participant’s institution.
APPENDIX Q

Open ended interview Q5 (11 participants)

Description of ELL challenges to reading college level academic texts

- Lack of vocabulary: 37%
- Academic readiness: 10%
- Cultural relevancy of texts: 10%
- Reading is not a priority: 32%
- Time constraints-job: 11%
APPENDIX R

Open ended interview Q6

Description of ELL challenges to academic success in GCC

- Lack of academic skills: 27%
- Lack of goal setting: 9%
- Lack of institutional support: 18%
- Lack of appropriate ESL program: 23%
- Work-life balance: 18%
- Lack of motivation: 5%
APPENDIX S

Open ended interview Q7 & Q8 (11 participants)

Description of instructional and curricular changes needed in GCC college level ESL programs
APPENDIX T

Open ended interview Q10 (11 participants)

Description of additional comments
## APPENDIX U

Sample of Instructor Materials and Documents

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APPENDIX V: Excerpt of Reflective Notes

October 2015

Being an instructor in the Gulf region of the Middle East, I have my own ideas as to why some of our ELL’s face challenges to academic reading comprehension success as well as academic success from the student side there may be:

• no previous Western style education. This is particularly so with most of our students because they have gone to the local governmental schools. Expectations and behaviors are distinct and vary from K-12 instructors. Students are not used to our college level sense of independent learning.
• a need to focus on their personal and professional goals in life. I’ve asked all of my students what their goals in life are and more than not, they are eager to talk about it and we discuss their goals together. Sometimes they don’t have not had the
opportunity to see the many resources and possibilities available to themselves.

Some instructor notes:

- I think that many instructors are sincere and helpful with instruction.
- There is a need to learn more about the country, culture, and students that they instruct.
- I have heard many opinions about their working in the G.C.C. Sometimes it is moderately positive.
- The instructors' expectations are sometimes distinct to that of students so there is a disconnect.
**APPENDIX W**: Descriptive Codes in Participant Transcripts

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