Chapter 5

Evaluation and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The collaborative relationship set forth in this research - between the content teacher and the ESL student, the ESL student and the ESL facilitator, and the ESL facilitator and the content teacher - all centered around the ultimate goal of assisting the ESL student to grow and develop her skills in academic English proficiency. This desired increased proficiency - particularly in the area of writing skills - enables the learner to succeed in this English-medium school.

As mentioned before, this triangular relationship can be compared to the current medical trend in patient-centered care. The working relationship between the patient, doctor and nurse is dependent on good communication between all three parties. The input from all three parties must be incorporated into the treatment plan to provide the best medical and nursing care for the individual patient. Doctors and nurses must function within the realm of their professional expertise. The three way collaborative relationship can enhance opportunities to ensure quality patient-centered care. As noted before, this same concept of three-way communication - between content teachers, ESL students and the ESL facilitator - was a cornerstone to the successful implementation of the appropriate scaffolding and support provided to the ESL learner; scaffolding and support delivered at the most conducive time, just as the student needs it. This concept has been called "p.r.n." support throughout this study.

By way of conclusion, an examination will be made to assess the extent this research points to a successful three-way collaborative relationship; a collaborative relationship designed to allow the content teachers and the ESL facilitator to work within their areas of expertise, and in full conjunction with the ESL student. Reflecting the patient-centered model, this ESL facilitator sought to establish a three-way collaborative relationship with the content teachers and ESL students fully participating in this research. Was the ESL facilitator able to work in cooperation with the content teachers and develop a means of supporting the ESL students "as they needed", based on the input of the student, the content teacher and the facilitators own observations? Were the original goals of the study for the students' improved academic English and increased autonomy as learners achieved? Did the ESL facilitator succeed in building relationships with the content teachers in such a way as to have an impact on methods utilized in the content classroom to assist the ESL learner? Through this process as a participant/observer, were the researcher's conceptions of self-efficacy and teacher autonomy altered? I will address these questions as I reflect on the results of this emergent study to form conclusions about

the success in fulfilling the desired goals as well as possible future implications of the results.

5.2 Evaluating the Goals and Outcomes:

Much like the western medical model for patient centered care, it seemed that the better the three-way communication between the content teacher, the student and the ESL facilitator was, the more effective the efforts were to develop the students' academic English writing skills. First, we will survey the conclusions that can be drawn relating to the ESL learners and the goals of academic English proficiency development and as autonomous learners. Next we will assess the effectiveness of the relationship and communication between the content teachers and the ESL facilitator. Finally, a summary of the impact on the ESL facilitator as participant observer will be presented.

5.2.1 Students

Relationships

This emerging ESL Facilitator role lent itself well to building a safe and trusting relationship between the ESL learners and the ESL facilitator. Because this was a non-graded class, the students seemed to quickly become comfortable with this new opportunity in their learning process. They felt free to discuss concerns about classes, workloads, and even dorm life and personal issues at times. They also shared some of their triumphs with good grades or sports events. They grew relaxed with each other and encouraged and comforted their peers appropriately.

The group size of 3-4 students provided a more casual setting than a typical classroom. I tried to promote a non-teacher fronted atmosphere by sitting at the same table as the students. I often encouraged the students themselves to record the groups' ideas on the board when we were brainstorming topics, and thus avoid being perceived as the "teacher" rather than a facilitator of learning opportunities. This student role as scribe helped to build the learners' confidence, and was a skill that could transfer readily to the content classroom. They grew more confident to share ideas and speak up as the semester progressed. I do feel that I was able to build a good relationship with each of the students. But this relationship did not always translate into an effective role in helping the individual learners succeed in regard to improving their academic English especially in the area of writing.

"p.r.n."

The techniques of "p.r.n." support, using the students own written work was beneficial in many ways. It kept our ESL class time focused and relevant to the students' learning needs. It exposed many of the students' learning gaps in the area of writing because we were utilizing their own writing as the basis of our learning materials. This process also encouraged learner autonomy as the students chose what and when they needed help, or even whether they would accept assistance. The natural consequences of their choices - receiving better grades or not - helped most of

them to change their attitudes and behavior as the semester went on. Another observable benefit was transferability of learning.

Ninth graders
This "p.r.n." technique worked most effectively with the three Korean ninth graders. They quickly understood the value of transferring what they were learning to their content classes. They realized the value of communicating with me about their content class assignments. They sought my input on assignments and they often applied my planned lessons - such as using transition phrases - into their writing assignments for content classes.

This also was the group that displayed the most growth in developing as autonomous learners. They moved from asking me what other teachers' comments and instructions meant to - with my encouragement - becoming more self-confident in approaching their content teachers with their questions. They would frequently demonstrate their understanding of the value of working with me in two particular ways. First, they began completing drafts of their homework in a timely manner. This allowed me to help them edit their work, and they could make corrections before the assignment was due. Secondly, they sought my help outside of our twice-per-week meeting times. This indicated a desire and motivation to succeed in their content classes.

Eighth graders
For the eighth graders, Damien was the only one who, during the first semester, seemed to really grasp how I could help him improve his academic English skills. This was evidenced by his bringing his content class assignments to our time together. The second quarter of the semester he began allowing me to help him edit his drafts for English assignments. This came about once he understood that his content teacher and I were talking, and that by all of us working together and communicating he would have greater success in academic English - and as a result, greater success in his content class. This was a verification of the value of the three way collaborative communication concept.

The other two eighth graders did not seem to be motivated or desire to receive ESL support during the first semester. Well into the third quarter, after the IPT results, and after I had finished collecting data, I did see glimmers of hope. Both these boys did allow me to help them with an English essay. Stanley sent his rough draft to me via email and Jason allowed me to help him write an outline from which he wrote his rough draft. Although neither seemed to value our work in ESL class during the time frame from which I gathered my information for this study, I did see as the year progressed that they seemed to become aware of the benefit of seeking the support I could provide. This pointed to the issue of student maturity level as a factor in the success of this concept of three-way responsibility, autonomous learning, and "p.r.n." support. This led me to conclude that, in some cases, one semester was not long enough to really build the type of relationships and awareness needed to establish the co-operative relationship necessary to truly make an impact on the students learning ability. But it also pointed to the value of communication between the content teacher and the ESL facilitator, and the importance of the students' awareness of this ongoing communication.

Seventh graders

For the seventh graders, the concept of "p.r.n." support took on a different look. In an effort to tailor my interactions to their needs and maturity level, I did use their writing errors to guide my class time lessons. But it was based on writing they did in my ESL class time. Since they were reticent to bring their content class assignments to the ESL class, I was forced to seek other means to make our work together relevant and applicable to their overall development in the area of academic English. This initially caused me to question my ability to meet their needs and provide learning opportunities that would be transferrable to their content classes. Eventually, when I realized I was attempting to impose my expectations and standards of autonomy on them rather than allowing them the opportunity to define our time together - including their desire for more "explicit" teaching - I made adjustments to my plans and expectations. They indicated that they wanted a more traditional teacher-student relationship on their final survey forms; they stated that they wanted more explicit grammar lessons, and one even asked for worksheets.

The different maturity level and expectations were summed up by Ellen on the final day of the semester when I was talking about the factors considered when determining if the students needed to continue in "ESL class".

> About that point Ellen spoke up and said, "Hey wait is this ESL class?" We all looked at her for a moment in disbelief but she went on to say, "It wasn't like my ESL class at other schools where I had a teacher and she taught us different stuff and we took tests".
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> (Appendix C FRJ, Dec. 15)

At first I wasn't sure how to interpret what she had said. But later, as I reflected back on this experience, her statement was very telling. I had succeeded in establishing a different kind of learning environment. We had moved away from a teacher-fronted, one teacher per subject classroom and the students did, as individuals, improve in their academic English skills. This improvement was indicated by the various results reported earlier. So in spite of Ellen's not quite grasping that she came twice a week to ESL class, her content teacher had noted improvement in her academic work and attributed it to Ellen's time spent with me

5.2.2 Content Teachers

As this emergent study progressed, I found myself frequently questioning the importance and necessity of the relationship between the content teacher and the ESL facilitator - despite my own understanding that accommodating for language is among the most challenging issues faced by inclusive classroom teachers (Hill & Flynn, 2006). At various times I was encouraged by the responses to my emails and by the specific teachers who sought me out to discuss students that were struggling. At these times I saw great value in relationship building. At other times, when I learned from the students of an upcoming project - too late to help - I became frustrated. I felt that

particular teachers did not seem to recognize the value of informing me of such dates, despite my numerous requests to be informed via email and in person. At these times I had to remind myself that these teachers had full workloads, with many students beyond our shared ESL students, and were dealing with a variety of other needs within their classroom.

I also had to consider that this ESL support was new to these teachers. In the past they had mainly relied on their own experiences - or that of their co-workers - for problem solving issues related to ESL learners. Until - as some of them found - they realized the value of my support, they would not naturally think to seek it. They needed assistance in developing awareness of - and the skills to deal with - students from diverse backgrounds (Ortloff et al., 2001). To those content teachers who recognized this, the idea of "p.r.n." became relevant. Although I found that relationship building was essential - those who did seek my help would not have known to if there was no relationship - it was not as I had anticipated. I had envisioned a more consistent two-way communication regarding the ESL students and their assignments. The teachers with whom I did establish a collaborative and co-operative working relationship were those whose circumstances required assistance, due to a need that had arisen with the ESL students in their class. The concept of bottom-up and as needed "p.r.n." support and resources proved a realistic expectation. This allowed the classroom teachers to seek out assistance and resources as they needed them.

In all fairness, the conclusions regarding relationship building with content teachers and the effectiveness of ESL support in the content classroom may have revealed a very different picture if this study had covered an entire school year. The one semester time frame did not appear to be long enough for teachers to learn experientially - or from other teachers - the value of seeking input and assistance from the ESL facilitator. The limited time issue may have also hindered them from realizing the value of informing me of assignments; assignments that I could have provided needed scaffolding for the ESL learning.

5.2.3 ESL Facilitator

As a new professional undertaking, this role naturally allowed me to grow in relation to concepts and my abilities as a professional ESL practitioner. This experience was notably different from my previous work experiences, or even what my own educational experiences provided. Although I had ten years of classroom teaching experience at a large Thai University, it was very much a teacher-fronted setting. I was the "expert" teaching the nursing students medical and nursing terminology. This was a fairly comfortable situation as I myself am a trained nurse, so the topics and vocabulary were very familiar to me. Due to the large class size - generally 30 or more learners - I was not able to get to know each student personally; nor was I able to tailor the class to meet the individual learners' needs. Instead, it was an established curriculum, and all the lessons were co-ordinated with each of the instructors of the other three class sections. So in regard to self-efficacy I knew I understood the material and could present it, but I was never convinced that the students were

actually learning what they needed to succeed in communicating with English speaking patients.

As for autonomy as a teacher, the role at the University did not encourage - or for the most part allow - autonomy. The lessons, quizzes and tests were all uniform and given to each section at the same time. I often experienced frustration because of the large class size and the required uniformity of the courses. I felt there must be better ways of helping students learn English.

With this conviction of wanting to improve my teaching ability, I enrolled in a Masters of TESOL program. In this academic environment I began to understand what a more communicative and student-centered classroom could be.

Self-efficacy
The reality of the type of role I undertook for this research was far different from any I was familiar with. It challenged my ability to make pedagogic decisions and to plan with specific lessons and students in mind, while at the same time needing to be flexible when the students walked in the door with a completely different need than anticipated. Throughout the semester I questioned myself and the effectiveness of the role in meeting the goals of this study. But as I reflect back over the semester I can say that I do feel that - by phase 3 - I was meeting the intent of the goals I had established.

The students in varying degrees all seemed to show some evidence of academic improvement, as indicated from the data recorded. Some were reclassified as "no longer requiring ESL support" in the coming school year. They all - at some level - found a place where they could safely question and build understanding of this English-medium learning environment. Many, especially the ninth graders, came away more confident in asking questions outside of our ESL class to their content teachers. As I saw these areas of real growth in the students, I was more convinced of the validity of the role as it related to the students in this study. I felt a higher degree of personal self-efficacy at the end of the semester than when I first began, because of the frequent need to problem solve, reflect, and assess for needed change - as well as needing to successfully navigate through these situations.

Teacher Autonomy
In the area of autonomy the results are not as clear cut for me. Throughout the beginning part of the semester I was struggling between explicit teaching and scaffolding the content class lessons. Although I felt a complete sense of freedom to run my class time as I deemed appropriate, at the same time I felt very dependent on the content class assignments and due dates. In truth, I could have decided at any time to choose to focus on only one of these issues; either content class assignments or explicit teaching, and no one would have questioned it. I therefore did have a lot of autonomy but because I really sought to build a co-operative, collaborative role it necessitated a dependent relationship with the content teachers. Even as I write, it is becoming clearer that in reality I am still exhibiting autonomy in the fact that I am acknowledging that I am making choices. I am not being required to follow an established school curriculum or restrained from adapting my plans as I was in the previous university role that I have described.

So, in regard to my professional identity in this role: I found myself evolving from seeing my role as primarily providing scaffolding for the students' content classes and building on what they were doing in those classes, to a willingness to be more directive in providing scaffolding through explicit teaching- when necessary - to meet specific learning needs of some of the students.

5.3 Evaluation

Goal 1: (part 1) Academic English
The first and most important goal of the present study was to determine if this ESL facilitator role - as it developed - would assist the participating ESL students improve their academic English skills and, also of importance, increase their confidence as autonomous learners and members of the school community. Numerous observations in the study results already presented indicate that most, if not all, of the ESL students did show varying degrees of academic English improvement - particularly in the area of writing. Though these learners had many positive influences in this academic learning environment, including their content teachers, it would seem appropriate to credit the ESL class time and contact with the ESL facilitator for at least a portion of the improvements. Some of the students themselves - and a number of their content teachers - attributed elements of the students' improvements in writing to the support received from the ESL facilitator. The use of the students own content homework and essays proved a beneficial means of scaffolding important skills, meeting individual learners' specific needs and providing exposure to transferable lessons. The concept of "p.r.n." or as needed support allowed using the students' limited language study time to its fullest potential.

Goal 1: (part 2) Autonomous learners
In conjunction with furthering academic English ability was the goal of providing opportunities for students to increase their confidence as autonomous learners and members of the school community. In this goal, the results of success seem to very much depend on the grade level and maturity of the learner. As described above, the three Korean ninth graders showed the most growth in the area of autonomous learning. They accepted responsibility for their own learning by seeking my input and transferring the ESL class learning to their content class work. The eighth graders were less motivated or self- determined but did, as noted before, begin to show glimmers of movement toward taking more responsibility for their own learning. The seventh graders, although they seemed willing and motivated to learn from opportunities that were presented to them, were reticent to take initiative for their own learning. Maturity and continued exposure to such participatory learning opportunities - instead of being "taught" by the teacher - might in the future help these students become more autonomous and self-directed.

An additional benefit of this concept for ESL support was in the development of a sense of community. The ESL students found themselves in a safe environment from which to explore the school's ethos and culture. As they continued to study alongside their native English peers in inclusive content classrooms, they had a smaller peer

group within which they could ask questions, try new roles, and share their ideas and experiences.

Goal 2: Content teachers' methodology

The next goal was to develop a positive cooperative working relationship with the eight content English class teachers. This cooperative relation provided a means for the ESL facilitator and the content teachers to mutually support the others' efforts to assist the ESL students to succeed in the academic learning environment. The ESL facilitator needed the content teacher's class topics and schedule in order to provide the most effective support for the learners. In turn the ESL facilitator could provide tools and strategies the content class teacher could use in support of the ESL students in her class. In addition, this communication across disciplines enabled all involved to have a better understanding of some of the challenges faced by ESL students in an English-medium school.

In the case of this research, the situations when there was regular communication between the content teacher and the ESL facilitator - especially when the ESL student was involved - the "p.r.n." support was the most effective. It also appeared that, even though many of the content teachers were not responding to my initiatives, they were applying the tools and strategies suggested by me in their classrooms. This relationship building was an area that would have been enhanced by a longer period of time than the one semester available for this study.

Goal 3: ESL facilitator

The final goal of the research was to assess the impact on the ESL facilitator in regard to self-efficacy and teacher autonomy. This was not directly related to the ultimate goal of improving the ESL students' academic English skills, yet it did reveal the struggles and challenges required in order to develop the role as it evolved. Being an emergent study, it would seem relevant to reflect on the ongoing growth and changes in the researcher/ participant as the experience unfolded. Overall, the process did cause me to refine my conceptions of the roles of self-efficacy and teacher autonomy in the life of an ESL professional. The concept of self-efficacy must be continually reflected upon, and one's belief in their ability to succeed should grow as new circumstances and challenges are encountered. In regard to teacher autonomy, it would seem no one lives, learns, or works in a bubble. By seeking to work in cooperation and collaboration with others - as in this study - the students will be the ultimate winners.

Parting thoughts

This study opens the door for further consideration of this concept of a "p.r.n." based ESL facilitator role; a role that can successfully assist ESL learners to grow in the areas of academic English proficiency and learner autonomy. It would seem that although this framework for facilitating learning opportunities was not totally successful in meeting all the students' ESL support needs, it was beneficial to the learners; it did assist them to improve their academic writing skills. In many cases the learners demonstrated a greater degree of autonomy, demonstrated in various ways – such as taking initiative for their work or confronting a content teacher with a question.

In regard to the content teachers, it was evident that many did apply my tips in their classroom methodology. However, only those who were having challenges with their ESL students actively sought my assistance or input on a regular basis; so again the concept of "p.r.n." became relevant.

Some of the short comings of this study lie in its duration. At least two semesters or one school year would have allowed for more data to support - or negate - the longer term effectiveness of this "p.r.n" based ESL facilitator role. It would have facilitated more opportunities to interface with the content teachers, build relationships, and incorporate optional in-service opportunities where content teachers and the ESL facilitator could entertain questions specific to their contexts and students. These additional contacts could be helpful in making the content teachers more aware of the ESL facilitator as a helpful resource.

This study showed clear evidence that this "p.r.n." based ESL facilitator role - in this specific setting - exhibited varying degrees of success in meeting the prescribed goals. It appears that this concept could be adapted to other learning environments; such as other international schools - both secondary and tertiary - or to schools in English speaking countries with large non-native English populations. It is not clear whether this concept of "p.r.n." support would be effective with ESL beginners, or learners with lower proficiency levels than the students in this study.

A follow-on quantitative study of this concept of "p.r.n." support for ESL students might be informative, and provide further validation of this model. A longitudinal case study that followed ESL students through junior high and high school may provide greater insight into the effectiveness of helping students to grow in academic proficiency and as autonomous learners. Future studies could also determine how transferrable this concept of collaborative relationship might be in other learning contexts.

In concluding we can ponder the question: Can we really 'teach' a language? I would suggest that the answer lies in our efforts to provide 'learning opportunities' for our students.

> "We cannot really teach language: we can only present the conditions under which it will develop spontaneously in the mind in its own way.
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> [Von Humboldt (1836), paraphrased by Chomsky (1965)]