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Conversation and Storytelling as Cultural Practices: Designing a Communication Activism Intervention with Migrant English Language Learners

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Running head: CONVERSATION AND STORYTELLING AS CULTURAL PRACTICES

CONVERSATION AND STORYTELLING AS CULTURAL PRACTICES: DESIGNING A
COMMUNICATION ACTIVISM INTERVENTION WITH MIGRANT ENGLISH
LANGUAGE LEARNERS

by

KELLIE BROWNLEE

B.A., North Park University, 2014

A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts
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2018

CONVERSATION AND STORYTELLING AS CULTURAL PRACTICES

This thesis entitled:

Conversation and Storytelling as Cultural Practices: Designing a Communication Activism

Intervention with Migrant English Language Learners

written by Kellie Brownlee

has been approved for the Department of Communication

Dr. Lawrence R. Frey, Chair

Dr. David Boromisza-Habashi

Dr. Leah Sprain

Date _____

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

IRB Protocol # 16-0712 (preliminary study)

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ABSTRACT

Brownlee, Kellie (M.A., Communication)

Conversation and Storytelling as Cultural Practices: Designing a Communication Activism
Intervention with Migrant English Language Learners

Thesis directed by Professor Lawrence R. Frey

This communication activism for social justice research (CAR) study created and implemented storytelling workshops to improve the communication of migrants who are English language learners (ELLs), by increasing their knowledge of and experience with U.S. cultural norms and narrative practices for conversation. Prior to the intervention study, a preliminary study, which used ethnography of communication (EC) and cultural discourse analysis (CuDA), was conducted to explore situated meanings of communication in Conversations in English (CIE) groups that ELLs attended at a local library. By using findings obtained from that preliminary study to design, implement, and study the storytelling workshops in which ELLs participated, the intervention study demonstrates how EC and CuDA can inform interventions, as well as how communication design can be used to plan and analyze interventions. The intervention study also shows how English language education and, in particular, teaching ELLs about U.S. cultural communicative practices, can be enhanced through the use of storytelling. Finally, the project reveals important lessons learned about engaging in CAR.

Keywords: communication activism, cultural discourse analysis, ethnography of communication, storytelling, English language learners, applied communication

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CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION	1
	English Language Learners and Social Justice	5
	Overview of Thesis	10
II.	LITERATURE REVIEW	11
	Applied Communication Interventions	11
	Communication Activism Research Interventions	16
	Gaps in English Language Education	28
	Storytelling as a Promising Intervention	32
III.	PRELIMINARY ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY	36
	Research Site	36
	Methods	38
	Data Analysis: Acting and Relating in Conversation	41
	Complexities and Challenges of Conversation as a Cultural Practice	55
	Conclusion	61
IV.	COMMUNICATION DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STORYTELLING WORKSHOPS	64
	Communication Design	65
	Methods	68
	Workshop Design	74
	Implementation of the Workshop Design	81
	Findings	85
	Conclusion	93
V.	DISCUSSION	94
	Cultural Discourse Analysis and Applied Communication Research	94
	Communication Design	97
	English Language Education and Storytelling Practices	99
	Communication Activism for Social Justice Scholarship	101
	Limitations of the Research Project	105
	Future Research Directions	108
	Conclusion	109
VI.	REFERENCES	112
VII.	APPENDICES	
	Appendix A: Preliminary Study Interview Protocol for Students	129
	Appendix B: Preliminary Study Interview Protocol for Facilitators	131
	Appendix C: Preliminary Study Verbal Consent Script	132
	Appendix D: Preliminary Study Written Consent Document	134
	Appendix E: Intervention Study Interview Protocol (Pre-workshop Questions) ..	137
	Appendix F: Intervention Study Interview Protocol (Post-workshop Questions) .	140

Appendix G: Intervention Study Written Consent Document	143
Appendix H: Questionnaire Form	146

TABLES & FIGURES

Table 1	Workshop Lesson Plan Summaries
Figure 1	Translation of CuDA Hubs to Workshop Design

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Applied communication research is conducted to discover and provide evidence about potential communication solutions to real-world issues and problems that affect people. Examples of recent applied communication research include investigations of communicative practices to inoculate inexperienced investors' "stay-in-market" beliefs during financial crises (Dillingham & Ivanov, 2017); increase parents' compliance with medicine prescribed for their children (MacGeorge, Caldes, Smith, Hackman, & San Jose, 2017); prevent extreme, faulty group/team decision making (Prah, Van Swol, & Kolb, 2017); help organizational members to talk about difficult issues, such as racism (Ramasubramanian, Sousa, & Gonlin, 2017) and sexual violence (D'Enbeau, 2017); encourage low-income community members to express their views of urban revitalization projects (Villanueva et al., 2017); aid teens to navigate tensions that they experience in online interactions (Redden & Way, 2017); increase public awareness of and support for policies regarding treatment of animals (Lancaster & Boyd, 2015); and promote supportive interactions between Mexican immigrants to the United States and U.S. allies (Kvam, 2017). As this short list suggests, applied communication research cuts across all subareas of the communication discipline.

The common thread that connects these and other applied communication studies is scholars' desire to make a significant difference in people's lives. As Cissna (1982) explained:

Applied research sets out to contribute to knowledge by answering a real, pragmatic, social question or by solving a real pragmatic, social problem. Applied *communication* research involves such a question or problem of human communication or examines human communication in order to provide an answer or solution to the question or

problem. The intent or goal of the inquiry (as manifest in the research report itself) is the hallmark of applied communication research. Applied communication research involves the development of knowledge regarding a real human communication problem or question. (p. iv)

Although all applied communication research seeks to affect people's lives positively, according to Frey and SunWolf (2009), there are at least two distinct ways in which that research is conducted. Most scholars conduct what Frey and Carragee (2007c) called "third-person-perspective studies" (p. 8) that describe, interpret, explain, and/or critique problems, and, to make it qualify as "applied communication research," offer recommendations for others to enact to manage those problems (e.g., people affected by those problems or practitioners working with affected populations). A smaller group of applied communication scholars conduct "first-person-perspective studies" (Frey & Carragee, 2007c, p. 8) that intervene into problems studied and document their interventions (e.g., with respect to intervention design, implementation, and results). That form of applied communication scholarship studies researchers' interventions, as opposed to interventions engaged in by others (which would be third-person-perspective studies).

There are a number of purposes to which communication scholars' interventions are directed. One type of communication intervention seeks to affect individuals' behavior; for example, Keller, Austin, and McNeill (2017) employed a theatre intervention to increase youth's awareness and use of suicide-prevention resources. Another type of communication intervention attempts to influence groups and organizations, such as Poole and DeSanctis's (2009) overview of their research program that created and implemented decision support systems (electronic meeting systems that combine group decision support technologies with communication and computer technologies), to develop teams involved in a quality-enhancement effort at a large

service organization. A third type of communication intervention promotes civic causes, such as the Public Dialogue Consortium's facilitation of public dialogues about important issues affecting local communities, such as immigration (for an overview of that research, see Pearce, Spano, & Pearce, 2009).

The most relevant interventions that are conducted by communication scholars, for the purposes of the present project, are those that promote *social justice*, which Frey, Pearce, Pollock, Artz, and Murphy (1996) described as “the engagement with and advocacy for those in our society who are economically, socially, politically, and/or culturally underresourced” (p. 110). As Frey et al. explained, social justice applied communication research focuses, first, on researchers understanding how people with particular identity markers (characteristics that cultural members employ to categorize themselves and others, such as gender and race) are disenfranchised, excluded, and/or marginalized from important material conditions (e.g., food and shelter) and discourses (e.g., having a say in public deliberations and policies about food and shelter) that affect their lives. Once researchers have acquired that understanding, they intervene into those unjust material conditions and discourses, seeking to reenfranchise people and make those material conditions and discourses more just. *Social justice activism* by researchers, therefore, involves engaging in

action that attempts to make a positive difference in situations where people's lives are affected by oppression, domination, discrimination, racism, conflict, and other forms of cultural struggle due to differences in race, ethnicity, class, religion, sexual orientation, and other identity markers. (Broome, Carey, De La Garza, Martin, & Morris, 2005, p. 146)

Employing that definition, Frey and Carragee (2007c; see also Carragee & Frey, 2012, 2016) advanced *communication activism for social justice research* (*communication activism*, for short), which involves communication researchers working with marginalized communities, and with social justice advocacy groups and organizations, to design, implement, and study their communication interventions to promote social justice.

Although communication activism research has been articulated in some conceptual depth, a relatively small number of communication activism studies have been conducted (see, e.g., those in Frey & Carragee, 2007a, 2007b, 2012). Although those empirical studies have shed light on how communication activism research tenets are operationalized in practice, much more empirical research is needed about this type of applied communication research, especially with regard to understanding beneficial and problematic practices associated with communication researchers intervening to promote social justice.

This research project responds to that need by studying a communication intervention that I conducted to aid a population—migrants to the United States who are English language learners (ELLs)—experiencing, especially in the present U.S. context (e.g., President Donald Trump’s Administration), marginalization, exclusion, oppression, and other social injustices. Specifically, this thesis reports how knowledge from a preliminary ethnographic research study that I conducted was used to inform the communication design and implementation of an intervention, involving storytelling practices, that I conducted to aid the English language education of that population.

This remainder of this chapter explains the specific population engaged and the site where this communication activism research was conducted. The chapter concludes with an overview of chapters that comprise this thesis.

English Language Learners and Social Justice

In the United States, immigrants and international visitors frequently are marginalized because of their inability to communicate, not just in terms of using proper grammatical English but also because of not knowing and understanding unstated, culturally specific expectations for conversation (Bishop, 2013; Gertsen, 1990; Kvam, 2017). This communication barrier presents those persons with multiple challenges, including navigating everyday interactions, confronting English speakers' stereotypes about and biases against them, and advocating for themselves in the public sphere. Thus, language (in)ability disenfranchises ELLs from economic, social, political, and cultural resources that are more accessible to native or fluent speakers.

Migrants' ability to communicate in the host language is a critical factor in managing challenges that they face living in a new country. Milstein's (2005) research on sojourners found that when living in a foreign country, "an individual undergoes numerous and frequent communication-specific mastery experiences in adjusting to the host culture . . . [and] must regularly attempt to master host culture communication codes and rules" (p. 224). Similarly, Y. Kim (2001) argued that the task of adapting to another culture "entails much more than 'mastering' the language alone, as strangers face the special challenge of learning the covert, subtle, implicit, complex, and context-bound uses of the language as well as the host's non-verbal codes" (p. 104). Therefore, it is important to understand how migrants learn to communicate successfully in a new language, and how that learning process can be improved.

Migrant's communication abilities are embedded within the larger framework of their cultural adaptation, and, consequently, recognizing the ideologies that influence migrants' goals is crucial for designing interventions that address the full spectrum of challenges facing them. There are many kinds of migrants (e.g., sojourners, immigrants, and refugees), and their real-life

experiences can be vastly different because of, for instance, their reasons for resettling, the local culture in which they resettle, and the degree to which dominant systems of oppression interfere with their adaptation process (see, e.g., Bishop, 2013; Drzewiecka & Steyn, 2012; Xu, 2013).

Normative theories of cultural adaptation place the primary responsibility for adaptation on migrants, dividing their experiences into set categories and/or structures (see, e.g., Callahan, 2011; Christmas & Barker, 2014; Hanasono, Chen, & Wilson, 2014; Hsu, 2010). For example, Callahan (2011) divided migrants' communication experiences into three adaptive processes: (a) deculturation, (b) reentry, and (c) psychological adjustment. This normative approach ignores how social problems related to migration, typically, result from hegemonic ideologies of, for instance, racism, xenophobia, and/or classism that are beyond individuals' control (De La Garza & Ono, 2015). De Fina and King (2011), for instance, found that women immigrants to the United States experienced language conflicts or misunderstandings as a result of ethnic conflict, which affected the amount of time that it took them to adjust, both linguistically and socially, to living there. Bishop (2013) pointed out how the U.S. citizenship guide that is given to all immigrants constructs a reality that overrules integration in favor of assimilation, and, thereby, encourages immigrants to abandon their previous culture and adapt fully to U.S. behavioral norms. In both examples, larger systems of power had serious implications for how immigrants adapted to the host culture, and language was a powerful force for supporting or challenging those systems of power. These critical perspectives call attention to ideologies at work in U.S. society, and, when those perspectives are applied in practice, they can offer practical ways to alter or disrupt those systems of oppression. Although this study does not seek to critique directly systems of power that affect migrants' adaptation process, that perspective is a springboard for interpreting why English as a Second Language (ESL) education needs to be

expanded to include new methods, and why this issue is about social justice. Next I will discuss the specific site and participants in this thesis study to understand the unique features of the scene that influenced the research design and intervention.

Research Site and Participants

In response to the steady stream of ELLs into the United States, many public libraries provide adult literacy and ESL programs. On a basic level, these programs develop learners' language skills, but they also strive to help them build community with other learners and to reach personal goals through improved communication skills and confidence. I conducted a preliminary ethnographic study (from late 2016 to mid-2017) that analyzed how Conversations in English (CIE) groups at a local library in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States socialized ELLs to U.S. communication norms. Using that information as a foundation, I conducted an applied communication study that designed and implemented a workshop series as an intervention to improve learners' communication and language skills, by engaging them in storytelling practices.

This intervention study stands in contrast to a long history of research about ESL education that has focused, primarily, on those who identify as immigrants, and that, typically, has been conducted in formal classroom environments (e.g., Agar, 1994; Early & Norton, 2012; Hart, 2016; Nero, 2005). As Nero (2005) noted, the ESL classroom is assumed to be a learning environment where students speak limited or no English. Students in the present study, however, had a working proficiency of spoken English that allowed for relatively advanced levels of conversation and multifaceted interaction. The library program in this study provides CIE classes that offer an informal, social learning environment that supplements traditional language education. Conversational practice groups that offer opportunities for ELLs to practice their

speaking and listening skills are a common part of library literacy programs. Typically, these conversation groups consist of people from many countries other than the United States who have varying English-speaking skill levels, making them multicultural sites that are comprised of a diverse set of learners who have varying needs. Thus, the study that I conducted offers an alternative perspective on language education that acknowledges how conversational practice socialize ELLs to a new culture, lead them to improve their communication in culturally informed ways, and, consequently, help them to adapt better to the new culture.

Additionally, although research studies have addressed immigrants' complicated experiences in terms of community, communication, and adjustment (e.g., Bishop, 2013; Kvam, 2017; Urban & Orbe, 2010), less research has focused on nonimmigrants' experience. According to the U.S. Department of State (2015), 531,463 immigrant visas were granted in 2015, but there were more than 10 million "nonimmigrant" visas issued. Generally, *nonimmigrants* are tourists, students, business, or specialty workers who do not intend to remain permanently in the United States; their length of visit is anywhere from a few weeks to several years, as long as they are working or studying under the premise of their visa. Scholars have paid far less attention to nonimmigrants' experience, despite there being considerably more of them, compared to immigrants, entering the United States; therefore, this study aimed to understand language-learning experiences of both immigrants and nonimmigrants, with the term "migrants" used to encompass both populations. Although, typically, scholars have categorized nonimmigrants into separate groups, such as "expatriates," "sojourners," "international students," and/or "strangers" (e.g., Gertsen, 1990; Y.-S. Kim, 2001; Martin, 1989), these categories divide nonimmigrants and do not acknowledge settings where they share common experiences and challenges, such as ESL education. Understanding how language education

affects both immigrants and nonimmigrants in the United States provides insight about how they adjust to U.S. culture, in general, and how they are socialized, in particular, to become better communicators in their U.S. communities. That knowledge, potentially, is useful to educators, employers, and community groups serving both immigrants and nonimmigrants.

The workshops conducted in this study (as explained later in more depth) offer a holistic approach to language learning, with students practicing their English in creative ways through storytelling, and, simultaneously, learning about U.S. cultural expectations to improve their communication. Research has shown that storytelling projects can help participants to articulate pivotal moments in their lives and, thereby, promote their sense of agency (see, e.g., Hull & Katz, 2006). Storytelling also is a useful educational tool for promoting language development and literacy goals, because it emphasizes listening, writing, reading comprehension, and speaking skills (Peck, 1989). Furthermore, Ball-Rokeach, Kim, and Matei (2001) showed that the creation of storytelling networks, or communication avenues, is a critical building block for community development, which, as mentioned previously, is an important goal of ESL programs.

This thesis project, thus, suggests that a potential answer for communication problems facing ELLs in adjusting to U.S. culture is to provide educational experiences (specifically, in the form of creative storytelling) that improve their communication in culturally reflexive ways. By focusing on such alternative language-education practices, involving both immigrants and nonimmigrants, and using storytelling to improve their communication and English language skills, this project brings together several research traditions (explored in the next chapter) to produce a unique perspective on English language learners' communication. The study, therefore, contributes to applied communication research, and, more specifically, applied

communication interventions that are the hallmark of communication activism for social justice research; and has potential applications for improving English language education in the future.

Overview of Thesis

Chapter 2 reviews the scholarly literature on applied communication interventions, communication activism for social justice, English language education, and storytelling practices. Chapter 3 explicates the preliminary ethnographic study, which used cultural discourse analysis to interpret the meaning of conversation for ELLs in CIE groups, and challenges within language education that led to the intervention study. Chapter 4 discusses how the knowledge obtained from the preliminary study informed the design of the storytelling workshops, employing the concept of “communication as design” to evaluate the intervention’s design, implementation, and results. Finally, Chapter 5 considers the limitations of the study, future directions, as well as the theoretical and practical contributions of this project to research on communication activism for social justice, cultural discourse analysis, communication design, and English language education.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Communication activism research (CAR) has gained prominence in recent years, but there still is a need to communication scholars to conduct more intervention research and understand more fully processes and practices that are involved, especially with regard to challenges facing researchers. This thesis project, consequently, has two primary purposes: (a) to understand the process of designing and implementing a communication intervention that is intended to promote social justice, by (b) improving English language education in ways that are relevant culturally and beneficial for those participating in that intervention. To situate those goals within extant scholarship, first, I review literature on applied communication research interventions. I then discuss how CAR interventions are distinguished by their focus on promoting social justice, and I review a variety of issues that have been addressed, methodologies that have been employed, and lessons that have been learned from that body of scholarship. To situate the specific issue of supporting migrant English language learners (ELLs) that is addressed in this thesis project, I review research on English language education to examine the need for programs that go beyond language-fluency objectives and embrace a sociocultural perspective on education. Given that need, I suggest that storytelling practices are a useful intervention method for improving English language education and English language learners' communication by highlighting the cultural norms and values of both the host country and ELL's home countries.

Applied Communication Interventions

Because applied communication scholarship in which researchers engage in intervention is an established form of research in the communication discipline, I start by reviewing briefly

the history of such research and types of interventions that have been conducted. I then discuss the specific method of workshops that was used in this thesis project, as well as how ethnographic methods knowledge has been used in applied communication research.

The communication discipline developed as a practical field that oriented to solving social problems and intervening to improve communication in people's everyday interactions (Barge & Craig, 2009). Scholars conducting research in the early days of the communication discipline, for instance, intervened to teach public speaking, lead reflective-thinking sessions, and facilitate group interaction (Cissna, Eadie, & Hickson, 2009). These practical studies were not called "applied communication research" but they enacted its goals by using communication theory to inform the interventions that researchers conducted to improve practices of communication. For example, McCroskey and Lashbrook (1970) studied effects of using videotaped playbacks (that they created) in public speaking courses to improve pedagogy. The prevalence of this type of research that had practical implications led to the rise of "applied" communication, which was formalized in 1973, when Mark Hickson and Don Sacks founded the *Journal of Applied Communications Research* (later changed to the *Journal of Applied Communication Research*; Cissna et al., 2009).

Keyton (2000) argued that the primary purpose of applied research should be to address and solve practical problems. Since the inception of applied communication research as a field, scholars have debated its conceptualization, the role of theory, methodologies, and degree of researchers' involvement with the scene (Frey & SunWolf, 2009). These debate have resulted in a general consensus that applied communication research spans every area of the communication discipline, integrates theory and practice together, uses any methodology that is appropriate for

the problem being addressed, and, above all, that applied communication research seeks to answer practical problems to make a difference (Frey & SunWolf, 2009).

Although not all applied research involves interventions, it has been a central feature of many applied communication studies. The history of the communication discipline, and applied communication research, in particular, testifies to the prominence of intervention-oriented research and the multiplicity of theory and methods that inform those interventions. There are several types of research interventions, which is why Yep (2008) argued that interventions are characterized by “(a) multiplicity and complexity; (b) provisionality, heterogeneity, and context dependency; and, (c) flexibility and individuality” (pp. 197–198). Intervention strategies used in applied communication research include conducting dialogue forums, skills training, focus groups, media campaigns, service-learning projects, and theatre performances (for an overview of those interventions and applied communication research conducted about them, see Frey & SunWolf, 2009). Despite the growing number of intervention-oriented research studies, it still is a relatively new area about which scholars seek to understand the multiple challenges and tensions involved (Yep, 2008).

Workshop Interventions

This study intervened by offering educational workshops, a method that has been used successfully in other applied communication interventions (e.g., Shapiro & Gottman, 2005; Sunwolf, 2007; Yeh, Okubo, Cha, Lee, & Shin, 2008). Workshop formats vary significantly in length of time, content, and pedagogical practices that are employed. Shapiro and Gottman’s (2005) “psycho-communicative-educational” workshop, for instance, was designed to help expectant and new parents make a smooth, positive transition to becoming a family, by teaching them conflict communication skills, and by providing information about supporting a baby’s

psychological development. The workshop lasted 2 full days and consisted of a combination of lectures, demonstrations, role-plays, videotapes, and communication exercises. Shapiro and Gottman measured the intervention's success by having a control group and following up post-intervention with workshop participants, with both methods showing that the intervention improved participants' perceptions of their marital quality.

Sunwolf's (2007) workshops offered defense lawyers new communication tools for engaging in meaningful dialogue with potential jurors about their attitudes and reasoning concerning the appropriateness of the death penalty, for the purpose of dismissing potential jurors who favored that penalty. Those workshops took place over the course of 3 to 10 days, lasted 2–4 hours each day, and involved an iterative “performance-critique-dialogue” (p. 300) process that had lawyers try new communication techniques in a mock jury setting. Sunwolf (2007) and Shapiro and Gottman (2005) indicated that the length of their workshops was designed around participants' needs and time availability. However, workshop timing and length can have profound effects (discussed in later chapters). Measurement strategies and specific exercises employed in workshops also differ based on the problem(s) being addressed.

The workshops in this study drew on narrative theory and practices, which have been employed in a number of applied communication interventions. Hecht and Miller-Day (2010), for instance, used narrative theory to guide curriculum development for a middle school substance use prevention program, with an emphasis on acting out youth narratives about decision making and resistance processes and eliciting students' own personal narratives about drug resistance. Although the goals of Hecht and Miller-Day's intervention are very different from those in this thesis project, both interventions utilized narratives to understand participants' personal experiences and to enact relational connections among participants. Through narrative

analysis, “one can gaze on the content and organization of the story to gain insight into individual and collective experiences” (Hecht & Miller-Day, p. 221).

Keller et al. (2017) also used narrative as part of their theatre intervention to promote communication by youth about their suicidal ideation. In their research, narratives yielded important information about youth’s perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs within a community, and narratives also functioned to create empathetic engagement among participants. Keller et al.’s findings indicated that narrative engagement helped participants to identify and address entrenched beliefs and stigmas, specifically related to suicide, and that it empowered participants “in an unusual, engaging, and memorable way to learn about and access resources within their communities” (p. 307). These results are useful for my intervention with ELLs, because they indicate how narrative methods can help participants to analyze entrenched cultural beliefs, build relationships with others, and access needed resources. Building on narrative methods, I argue that storytelling practices, in particular, are useful for intervening in English language education (discussed more at the end of this chapter). Another method that has been used in many applied communication research studies is ethnography, which is especially relevant for this thesis project.

Using Ethnographic Knowledge for Applied Communication Research

Ethnographic methods have been used in multiple intervention studies, providing beneficial examples for the intervention that I conducted. Kvam (2017), for instance, employed ethnography of communication (EC) to understand challenges facing immigrants, which was used to build allies’ communication competence in working with that community. In their report of three applied case studies about communication in three different scenes (a nonprofit promoting Latino art and culture, a public health clinic, and asylum seekers in Germany),

Witteborn, Milburn, and Ho (2013) found that “EC scholars often align their research outcomes with the ends of the community,” and, thus, as engaged researchers, they are positioned well to “sacrifice their own ends in privileging the community’s goals and anticipated outcomes” (p. 189).

A majority of the applied communication studies that have employed ethnography have focused on producing rich descriptions of communication in the specific context studied, to understand those communicative practices and to offer recommendations for improving them (Ellingson, 2009). This thesis project, however, goes a step further to not just make recommendations but also to use the knowledge gained from conducting ethnography to intervene into the problem studied. Sprain and Boromisza-Habashi (2013) argued that the EC approach, which was used in the preliminary study, can contribute to applied communication projects when analysts generate and use knowledge about culturally competent communication to assess and assist practitioners’ strategic actions. This thesis project fulfills that goal by starting with a foundation of ethnographic knowledge that was obtained about participants and the scene, which was used to design workshops to meet the needs of everyone involved. That ethnographic knowledge and design process are discussed in depth in Chapter 3, but, here, it is useful to know that interventions studies have found ethnographic methods to be beneficial for designing strategic solutions that reflect participants’ needs and concerns. Ethnographic knowledge also has been used to conduct CAR, with those studies distinguished from applied communication research by their focus on promoting social justice, which I discuss next.

Communication Activism Research Interventions

Applied communication interventions can serve a variety of interests and take many forms, from doing consulting work on improving work-unit productivity in a large health-care

industrial plant (Hunt & Ebeling, 1983), to providing resources that address reproductive health-care disparities among African American women in a small, disadvantaged urban community (Matsaganis & Golden, 2015). These interventions differ with respect to several important elements, including the size and scale of the project, length of the intervention, and methods used to conduct and study the intervention; most importantly, the two examples just offered represent the divide between whose interests are being served through the research. In Hunt and Ebeling's (1983) study, the project was a form of consultation that was designed to support the company's interests and, not, necessarily, workers' needs. In contrast, Matsaganis and Golden's (2015) social justice issue applied communication research sought to aid population members who were disenfranchised by power structures such as race and class that were beyond their control.

The distinction of whose needs are being served by the research is what distinguishes applied communication interventions, in general, from social justice interventions (Frey & Carragee, 2007a, 2007b, 2012). Crabtree and Ford (2007), navigating the activist–consultant dynamic, acknowledged that “there exists a clear for-profit bias in how consulting by academics currently is conceptualized and conducted in the academy” (p. 266). To address this bias, those who seek to be researchers, practitioners, activists, and consultants must continue to live and act reflexively, asking critical questions of themselves and others to ensure that dignity and freedom for all people becomes a reality (Ford & Yep, 2003).

As discussed in Chapter 1, applied communication scholarship that intervenes to reenfranchise those who are disenfranchised from important discourses and material conditions is called *communication activism research* (CAR; Carragee & Frey, 2016). Hartnett (2010) noted that in the first phase of CAR, scholars wrote traditional academic studies that analyzed communication habits of groups engaged in activist work; thus, “these were not works of

advocacy but of analysis” (p. 76). As CAR progressed, scholars moved from “an implied politics to an engaged politics . . . [wherein] scholars build projects where they are directly implicated in and work alongside disadvantaged communities” (Hartnett, 2010, p. 78).

Conquergood (1995) reflected this sentiment when he wrote:

The choice is no longer between pure and applied research. Instead, we must choose between research that is “engaged” or “complicit.” By engaged I mean a clear-eyed, self-critical awareness that research does not proceed in epistemological purity or moral innocence. There is no immaculate perception. Engaged individuals take responsibility for how the knowledge that they produce is used instead of hiding behind pretenses and protestations of innocence. . . . As engaged intellectuals we understand that we are entangled within world systems of oppression and exploitation. . . . Our choice is to stand alongside or against domination, but not outside, above, or beyond it. (p. 85)

Hence, Conquergood (1995) argued that applied communication research can be complicit if it ignores power structures or does not offer practical solutions on behalf of those who are disenfranchised; consequently, applied communication scholars need to intervene to promote social justice.

To understand better challenges and tensions involved in conducting CAR, I review social justice issues that communication activism interventions previously have addressed. Although a number of social justice causes have been supported and promoted through communication interventions, with several interventions that relate to immigration or that are directed toward migrants, there is a lack of studies on English language learners, specifically. I then look at methodologies that have been used in communication activism interventions, highlighting interventions that have focused on narrative practices, as well as those that were

informed by knowledge obtained via ethnography. I also summarize some important lessons that have been learned from communication activism interventions. Using that knowledge, I then discuss literature that relates to my specific intervention with English language learners, including gaps in English language education and why storytelling is a useful intervention for that purpose.

Social Justice Issues Addressed in Communication Activism Research

Communication activism interventions cut across every subfield of the communication discipline and study a range of topics. In the field of health communication, for example, CAR interventions have been conducted to address substance abuse in an American-Indian community (Belone et al., 2012) and to improve health services for women who partner with women (Campo & Frazer, 2007). In organizational communication, CAR, scholars have intervened to enhance the ethical culture (especially for those who were marginalized) of a diversified media corporation (May, 2012) and they have helped employees and managers to evaluate critically and change hierarchical organizational power structures (Ritchie, 2007). CAR scholars also have intervened to support truth, justice, and reconciliation efforts through community dialogues and targeted media efforts (Jovanovic, Steger, Symonds, & Nelson, 2007), as well as engage a community in discussions regarding important issues affecting youth, such as teen pregnancy and high school dropout rates (Adams, Berquist, Dillon, & Galanes, 2007).

Most CAR interventions seek to address a macrolevel social justice problem, such as racism or minority members' access to health care, by focusing on specific needs and challenges that characterize a particular marginalized population and/or site. Although CAR, certainly, does not necessarily produce immediate changes for the systemic social justice problems being confronted, researchers believe that their interventions are important and necessary steps in a

positive direction toward such systemic change. Harter, Sharma, Pant, Singhal, and Sharma (2007) reflected this conviction in their research on participatory folk performances in rural India, stating:

Issues of gender inequities, dowry, and caste as performed by participants represent deeply entrenched social, political, and economic problems—systemic issues that are difficult to change overnight. Although we do not claim that the 1-week participatory theater workshops and performances have corrected these social ills, they provided a first-time opportunity for young men and women from four villages of Bihar State in India to work together and voice their concerns—on stage, with a microphone—in front of their parents, elders, and other community members. . . . Such actions represent important steps toward securing social, cultural, and political reform. (p. 308)

Thus, CAR interventions are “strategically exercising pressure on the fault lines of a network of power” by acting on those problems in localized ways (Yep, 2008, p. 196). Such an effort answers Hartnett’s (1998) call for engaged scholars to approach issues of social justice not only as sites of research but as sites of research and engagement with disadvantaged communities. Regardless of what is being studied, specifically, social justice interventions are a form of resistance in a network of power relations, seeking to enact changes on a local level that will have ripple effects on macro-issues of inequality (Yep, 2008).

Research Interventions about Immigration and with Migrants

There is a limited amount of CAR that has been directed toward immigration, in general, and migrants, in particular, and, as of yet, no studies have been done on English language learners (ELLs), specifically. Although English language education has been studied extensively in other disciplines—most notably, in linguistics and education—communication scholarship is

well positioned to research essential communicative practices that constitute and influence language learning. I explore later in this chapter scholarship on English language education, but, first, it is useful to review communication interventions that have been directed toward the topic of immigration and toward migrants.

Research on migrants has studied domestic violence curriculum and risk factors (Liao, 2006; Marrs Fuchsel & Hysjulien, 2013), therapeutic interventions in social work practice (Bushfield & Fitzpatrick, 2010), prevalence of depression among immigrants and refugees (Martens, 2012), and the social-emotional needs of Latino/a youth (Blanco-Vega, Castro-Olivo, & Merrell, 2007). Although these studies have highlighted challenges and discrimination that migrants face in a host country, primarily, scholars have offered recommendations for possible interventions, with very few conducting an actual intervention. Additionally, those studies were not framed as CAR. The following three research studies did involve some form of intervention with and for migrant populations, either by the researcher directly intervening or through a partner organization, and, thus, they provided useful lessons for this thesis project.

Kvam (2017) used the ethnography of communication (EC) to understand the means and meanings of communication among immigrants and their allies at an immigrant support center (ISC), enabling the organization to intervene in ways that were more reflexive of immigrants' needs. Based on 7 months of participant observation and 37 interviews conducted, Kvam found that Mexican immigrants resettling in the United States engage in adaptation amidst a climate of hostility and threats from the host society, making them hesitant to engage with the host society and presenting challenges for allies assisting in their resettlement process. These findings are relevant to this thesis project because they illuminated how immigrants experience hostility and identity conflicts that create communication challenges for them in the process of resettlement.

Of particular interest was how the organization used *intercambios*, low-pressure speaking events for Spanish-speaking Mexican immigrants and English-speaking U.S. Americans to practice a non-native language and to connect with one another, as occasions for communal learning and cross-cultural communication. Kvam's analysis of *intercambios* indicated that these communication events could foster identification between immigrants and host society members, which "is particularly important in a context where immigrants are constantly reminded of their otherness" (p. 17). The concept of "communication events," similar to *intercambios*, is related closely to the storytelling workshops conducted in this study that involved both ELLs and volunteer native speakers. Designing communication events with both ELLs and native speakers creates a sense of community and mutual understanding that is beneficial for both parties. A similar EOC approach also is useful for understanding local meanings of communication that influence ELL's experiences within the CIE classes and storytelling workshops.

Conquergood's (1988) research in a Hmong refugee camp is one of the few studies in which the researcher conducted communication interventions in a refugee context, and it offers a good example of the value that is gained from involving members of the site in design and implementation of interventions. Conquergood (1988), who moved into the refugee camp, interacted with refugees and shaman leaders to learn native beliefs, customs, and folklore, especially about health practices, as he wanted to "enact an example of dialogical exchange, or barter, wherein each culture could benefit from the other," which was important "because the refugees were accustomed to having expatriates undermine, even outrightly assault, their traditions" (p. 182). Based on the knowledge that he acquired through his ethnographic research of the culture, such as the Hmong's use of performance, Conquergood (1988) designed and directed a wide-ranging health education campaign that created a performance company in which

Hmong children performed skits, using Hmong customs (e.g., having a person play a fox, which is a trickster in that culture), to, for instance, teach refugees the need for vaccination of their dogs, the importance of using latrines, and other health practices. Conquergood (1988) reported that refugees' performance of their traditions to promote health practices led them to experience a sense of stability and to experiment with strategies for adaptation to living in the camp, which is useful for this thesis project in that his research demonstrated how participation in performance (e.g., telling stories) can be important communicative practices for promoting social justice. Moreover, by partnering with refugees in the design and implementation of the theatre company's performances, Conquergood (1988) demonstrated the value of working with participants in ways that respect their cultural traditions and that seek actively their contribution to the social justice intervention.

As a final example of an intervention conducted with immigrants, Yeh et al. (2008) conducted a school-based intervention program that was designed to aid the cultural adjustment of Chinese adolescents who had immigrated to the United States. Although this was not a communication study, the results showed the importance of developing culturally reflective interventions. Specifically, the researchers designed and implemented a Cultural Adjustment Class (CAC) for those Chinese youth, and the storytelling workshops that were conducted in this thesis project share key goals of the CAC intervention, including creating a space for students to (a) interact with other students who also are adjusting to a new cultural environment, (b) discuss difficulties and challenges that these recent immigrants are encountering, and (c) learn concrete information that can aid their smooth transition to the new culture. Yeh et al.'s findings indicated that the CAC increased participants' sense of social connectedness and their information-seeking behaviors regarding useful tools and resources that were in the school

setting where the study took place. Moreover, because the CAC focused on reflecting and discussing cultural values and conflicts, it is a useful example of how to conduct educational workshops that incorporate students' home cultures while also increasing their knowledge of the new host culture.

In summary, although there is a wealth of literature about migrants and ELLs, there are limited interventions that CAR scholars (and others) have done with that population. Due to the lack of such projects, the intervention that I conducted was designed using information that was obtained from an initial ethnographic research study that I conducted that sought to understand challenges facing ELLs and their communication needs (which is discussed more in Chapter 3). As a foundation for that research, I utilized methodologies from other communication interventions that have addressed other social problems.

Communication Activism Research Intervention Methods

Although all scholars who engage in CAR (and other scholars who intervene) conduct interventions that they have designed, those interventions vary in some important ways. Key features that vary across interventions are the length of the intervention, number of people involved, and degree of researchers' collaboration with research participants and the site.

Some interventions are conducted only once, whereas others are repeated multiple times and adapted in the process. For example, Yeh et al.'s (2008) intervention, discussed previously, was piloted once, then revised and implemented over the course of three consecutive college semesters. The time line of interventions can vary as well; an intervention that is conducted once could last several months, depending on the schedule and degree of researchers' involvement with the site, or it could take place in a single day. There is a general consensus that more time and multiple tests of an intervention are preferable. However, conducting multiple tests is easier

when the study is part of a larger research projects that is funded by large grants and/or staffed by teams with multiple researchers (e.g., Hecht & Miller-Day, 2010; Keller et al., 2017; Scott, Eli, & Golden, 2015).

The number of people involved in an intervention study varies widely, ranging from small group projects to interventions conducted with hundreds of participants at large organizations. Depending on the size of the project, interventions also differ with regard to the extent to which researchers collaborate with and involve in the process partner organizations and research participants. Because most applied communication interventions (including CAR interventions) value highly the researcher–practitioner relationship, scholars engage in collaborative projects with practitioners and affected population members (see, e.g., Crabtree & Ford, 2007; Walker & Curry, 2007). However, researchers may be pioneering new techniques in an organizational system that is hesitant to engage in change, such as when Hartnett (1998) had students in a communication course that he taught in a prison restage the Lincoln–Douglas debates about slavery, to give them experience in public speaking but also to show how tropes of racism from that time period persist in modern society. Even though prisoners who participated in the course were receptive to this social justice intervention, other prisoners and prison personnel (e.g., guards and administrators) were skeptical about the project.

Lessons Learned from Communication Activism Research Interventions

The CAR studies that were explicated above, as well as other CAR studies and still other studies in which researchers have conducted interventions, yield valuable lessons regarding issues and challenges involved in conducting such research. Yep (2008), for instance, identified five sets of dialectics, or tensions, that characterize such interventions: (a) symbolic–material (types of acts), (b) individual–group (number of people involved), (c) potentiality of action–

realization of change (goals), (d) short term–long term (nature of effects), and (e) one time–ongoing (sustainability). These dialectics illustrate how “the fluidity, heterogeneity, and flexibility of interventions also produce their own internal movements and tensions” (Yep, 2008, p. 199). Crabtree and Ford (2007) also found that a dialectical perspective to be useful for understanding challenges associated with working in and with communities as researcher-activists. In Crabtree and Ford’s experiences negotiating outsider-within status at a sexual assault recovery center, they argued that “our personal lives, professional responsibilities, and political activism can be derived from and mutually reinforcing of one another” (p. 258).

Several studies have found that research relationships are a particularly challenging element when conducting CAR interventions, as researchers must navigate multiple relationships with communities, including organizations, community leaders, and intervention participants. Researchers must, for instance, build trust with each party that is involved, to ensure their access to sites (especially social justice sites where members may not want to be studied), engage in social justice change efforts, and minimize the power differential between themselves and people who participate in the intervention. For example, in Ritchie’s (2007) CAR intervention to decentralize power in a local nonprofit organization, trust was essential for ensuring that employees perceived themselves to be safe criticizing their work environment, but that trust did not come easy. Managing relationships also can be difficult for researchers if there are multiple or competing goals across the people, groups, and organizations involved (see, e.g., Cagle’s, 2007, experience with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender activist groups) Summarizing CAR studies that have been conducted, Frey and Carragee (2007c) suggested that “the praxis of communication activism is based, in large measure, on the creation of a trusting, collaborative

partnership that produces a reflexive research process shaped by both researchers and the social actors seeking social change” (p. 36).

Another challenge that often characterizes CAR is researchers’ attempts to promote social justice with members of affected populations who are very different from them (e.g., culturally and socially; Frey & Carragee, 2012). In their research on participatory folk performances in India, for instance, Harter et al. (2007) shared that “the most important lesson we learned about communication activism was the importance of honoring and respecting local traditions coupled with paradoxically challenging some of those customs” (p. 305). Differences in ideologies, values, and culture are most salient when scholars conduct research in a culture of which they are not members. Social justice issues, of course, are intertwined with cultural customs; thus, researchers have to be careful not to offend community members’ values but they also, at times, have to challenge their normative practices. Additionally, differences between scholars and community members can be challenging when the researcher is studying a community to which they already belong. In Norander and Galanes’s (2014) intervention to facilitate conversations about diversity by their city’s Chamber of Commerce and professional organizations, they were challenged to negotiate their raced, classed, and gendered identities; a prominent community member even refused to be interviewed by them, because “we could not adequately articulate if or how this research might benefit the minority community” (Norander & Galanes, p. 363). Critical reflexivity and collaboration, thus, are essential tools for researchers attempting to navigate such differences and for ensuring that the social justice research is conducted with and for communities, and is not just about them.

Despite the tensions and challenges of conducting CAR, that research, potentially, results in significant benefits for both researchers (e.g., testing theories in practice) and for communities

with which they collaborate (e.g., changing oppressive systemic policies and conditions). Although it often is difficult for CAR to produce immediate results or measurable outcomes, scholars “should not forget that our work always has possibilities beyond our expectations” (Pezzullo, 2010, p. 453). For intervention participants, CAR invites them into a collaborative partnership that not only values their perspectives and concerns but also strives to engage in direct change of socially unjust material conditions and discourses (Walker & Curry, 2007). CAR turns researchers into scholar-citizens who are attempting to do something about the significant social justice issues that affect marginalized and oppressed communities (Frey & Carragee, 2007c). Hartnett (2010) articulated the “joyful commitments” of CAR as a shift “from the model of the isolated genius hammering away at some sliver-thin riddle in a cloistered office to a more community-based, team-building, project-centered mode of action that leaves us immersed in our local dilemmas and face-to-face with our neighbors” (p. 87).

This thesis project sought to uphold these goals of researchers’ joyful commitment to social justice change and collaboration with affected community members; in doing so, this CAR project attempted to make a difference by designing and implementing a storytelling workshop intervention to aid ELLs. To understand specific challenges that characterize current English language education, and how they problematize what it means to be an ELL, I will now review literature on those topics and argue that there is a need for programs that go beyond language-fluency objectives to embrace a sociocultural perspective on that education. Based on that literature, I offer storytelling as a useful intervention for improving English language education and ELLs’ communication in ways that are culturally reflective.

Gaps in English Language Education

A growing trend in research on second-language learning and teaching is an emphasis on sociocultural elements of language acquisition, especially the potential for language learners to participate in their target language communities (Quinlisk, 2004). Although English as a Second Language (ESL) pedagogy in the last few decades has improved its focus on sociocultural factors (see, e.g., Smith, Teemant, & Pinnegar, 2004; van Compernelle & Williams, 2013), elements of that education continue to problematize what it means to speak English successfully or to employ meaningful communication skills.

One critique is that ESL programs, especially those intended for migrants, promote one-directional adaptation, with students expected to abandon their home culture and adapt completely to the new culture, especially with regard to dropping their previous accents, dialects, and other features of talk that might distinguish them as being different from those in the host community (Urban & Orbe, 2010). Early and Norton (2012) also argued that “to have one’s identity constructed as an ‘ESL student’ is problematic,” (p. 197), because it often implies being a second-class citizen or someone who is incapable. In those and other ways, essentialization diminished ELLs’ complex identities, and, frequently, classroom practices fail to address their multiple interests and intentions. Nero (2005) made a similar argument that dynamic constructions of identity, as posited by scholars, “is often at odds with the tendency in educational institutions to ascribe fixed ethno-linguistic identities to [ELL] students” (p. 195).

A principal criticism is that many ESL programs do not address cultural norms and expectations that characterize language and communication; consequently, the sociocultural approach still needs to be emphasized further in those programs. Agar (1994) argued that culture is not inherent or natural in any sense; instead, people gain and learn it. Understanding a

different culture from one's own does not require just a different language, because "differences in language go well beyond what you find in the grammar and the dictionary" (Agar, p. 16); instead, cultural understanding requires learning a different perspective and system of meaning-making. In an analysis of educational assessment tools, Smith et al. (2004) found that performance requirements fail to account for cultural or social expectations of language use in teaching English to ELLs. To be successful communicators in their host country, ELLs need to learn the "patterns of reasoning, shared meanings, and customary practices needed for competent participation and problem solving in a particular social group" (Smith et al., p. 39), necessitating a sociocultural approach to that teaching and learning.

Hart's (2016) research on speech and culture in an online ESL program provided a useful model for understanding how ESL education can teach cultural expectations about how to best communicate in English. Hart identified six interrelated rules that guided communication in the program that she studied, "all of which were associated with native English speech, locally defined: Oral speech had to be organized, succinct, spontaneously composed rather than rehearsed, original and honest, proactively improved, and positive" (p. 296). These rules reinforce U.S. norms for speech and, thereby, demonstrate that ESL education is not a culture-neutral activity. Once ESL education is recognized as a form of cultural education, those programs can be adjusted to balance better what these students know from their home culture and what they learn about the new host culture. As Hart noted, "It is commonly accepted that analyzing student needs is a prerequisite to developing, delivering, and assessing any type of teaching or training program" (p. 310). However, her case study also revealed that it is equally important to establish a corollary understanding of participants' communication culture and their meanings of communication as a practice. Considering the role of social and cultural factors on

ELLs' education experience, thus, is an essential feature of this thesis project, which seeks to improve students' ability to speak English and to communicate appropriately in a variety of local situations and contexts.

To address these concerns, scholars have suggested that ESL programs should embrace dialogic models that engage with students' home cultures, to acknowledge their complex identities as migrants and as ELLs (see, e.g., Erbert, Perez, & Gareis, 2003; Urban & Orbe, 2010). Kvam (2017) argued that adaptation "not only hinges on immigrants' ability to acquire the necessary cultural knowledge to communicate competently with members of the host society during resettlement, but may also require members of the host society to learn about immigrants' cultural communication practices" (p. 4). Similarly, in his research on expatriate training and education programs, Gertsen (1990) advocated that "absolute behavioral adjustment cannot be seen as a general ideal"; instead, the goal should be to educate migrants "to adjust their communicative behavior without completely renouncing their own cultural background" (p. 359). In attempting to reach that goal, Early and Norton (2012) emphasized the role of narrative in that adjustment process, arguing that

to be effective a teacher must ask: How might narratives and narrating be linked to the language learners' identities, everyday needs and interests, and hopes for the future? How might narratives be used to link possibilities for greater learner investment, on the one hand, and social action and transformation, on the other? (p. 199)

As argued next, a dialogic, give-and-take, learning experience, preservation of ELLs' home cultures, and an emphasis on narrative can be accomplished using storytelling methods to improve the ESL experience.

Storytelling as a Promising Intervention

Scholarship using the storytelling approach is rooted in the narrative paradigm, which reflects Fisher's (1985) belief that all forms of human communication can be seen as stories, and that all humans, essentially, are storytellers. The narrative view asserts that humans "experience and comprehend life as a series of ongoing narratives, as conflicts, characters, beginnings, middles, and ends" (Fisher, 1987, p. 24). Narratives, according to Fisher (1989), can be constitutive of people, communities, and the world; thus, the narrative paradigm laid a foundation for explaining how storytelling as a form of communication can increase people's perceived agency. Sunwolf and Frey (2001) suggested that storytelling "serves both cognitive and communicative functions, specifically: (1) relational (ways of connecting people), (2) explanatory (ways of knowing), (3) creative (ways of creating reality), (4) historical (ways of remembering), and (5) forecasting (ways of visioning the future)" (p. 120). All of those functions are useful for ELLs and migrants, who are seeking, in the host country, relational connections, knowledge about that country and its cultures, and ways to balance the simultaneous tension of remembering where they came from and where they are now.

When storytelling is used as a form of intervention, the purpose is to create opportunities where people can talk about such things as their histories, families, pivotal moments in their lives, and their dreams for the future; that sharing can happen through digital technology (e.g., Rance-Roney, 2008; Ranieri & Bruni, 2013), written narratives (e.g., Sutherland, 2016), and/or oral conversation and performances (e.g., Ortiz Juarez-Paz, 2017). Storytelling as an intervention offers several benefits, in particular, for helping ELLs to learn English and adapt to their new culture, by improving their practical language skills and building among them a sense of community. Storytelling also promotes migrants' agency to influence new communities

within which they find themselves. Thus, this project employed a storytelling intervention for the purpose of improving ELLs' communication.

One of the primary benefits of a storytelling approach is that it creates a space for agentive and constructive performative moments to occur. For example, Hull and Katz's (2006) two case studies demonstrated how storytelling provided people with powerful means and motivations for forming and giving voice to their agentive selves. Examining a community center's afterschool programs for disadvantaged youth, Hull and Katz found that storytelling practices "helped to position these participants to articulate pivotal moments in their lives and to assume agentive stances toward their present identities, circumstances, and futures" (p. 44). The social environment of the community center where the study took place also was a crucial element, because the safety and support offered in that space encouraged participants' enthusiasm and willingness to tell their stories honestly. DeGennaro (2008), analyzing a similar after-school program on digital storytelling, found that the program provided "opportunities for youth to reveal multiple aspects of their unfolding identities as well as the employment of their agency in the process" (p. 429). These examples were used as a foundation for the workshops that were offered in this thesis project, as they showed how storytelling, when practiced in a safe and supportive educational environment, can improve participants' ability to share their personal narratives in meaningful ways.

As an educational tool, research has revealed benefits of using storytelling to promote language development and literacy goals, because storytelling emphasizes listening, writing, reading comprehension, and speaking skills (Peck, 1989; Skinner & Hagood, 2008; Vasudevan, Schultz, & Bateman, 2010). Sunwolf (1999) argued that communication and language pedagogy can be improved significantly by implementing storytelling, "because it is interdisciplinary,

embodies whole language pedagogy, addresses the needs of students with different learning styles, and teaches high level thinking skills” (p. 62). Beyond literacy goals, storytelling contributes to students’ cultural socialization, by orienting them to values, histories, and meanings that are significant to a specific community or group (Sunwolf, 2004). Drawing on Fisher’s (1985) concept of the “narrative self” (*homo narrans*), Sunwolf (2004) stated that people “are socialized by narrativity, though we may be educated by rationality” (p. 3). If ESL programs seek to embrace the sociocultural approach, they should acknowledge the dual advantage of storytelling as teaching students both about language and about culture. However, the majority of the studies that have been conducted have focused on employing storytelling to educate children or teenagers; thus, this thesis projects extends that scholarship by studying how storytelling can be used to educate adult ELLs.

Finally, it is common for ESL programs, especially those for adults and migrants, to emphasize the goal of community building alongside the goal of language acquisition, and storytelling is an influential method for creating and improving community relations. Quinlisk (2014) argued that “the ability of language learners to participate in their target language communities is regarded not only as the ultimate goal, but as an integral part of the process of learning itself” (p. 84). The creation of storytelling networks, or communication resources, is a critical building block for community development that can foster people’s engagement, especially in culturally diverse areas (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001). Moreover, storytelling can be seen as a form of activism when it provides members of marginalized groups with the opportunity to voice their perspectives and desires (Ortiz Juarez-Paz, 2017), especially regarding unjust situations that they experience. Because the study took place in partnership with a literacy program that is directed at marginalized individuals and that views community building as a

central component of its mission, storytelling is an ideal activist practice for meeting the goals of improving ELLs' language and building their relationships and community.

In summary, a significant challenge facing ELLs is their knowledge of and ability to communicate in the host language, and to adapt to cultural expectations of everyday interactions in a new country. Although a variety of programs have responded to this need through improved ESL education and training, those programs continue to problematize what it means to be an ELL, and, typically, they lack a sociocultural perspective that embraces the dialogic nature of migrants' experiences. A storytelling approach offers a valuable answer to ESL education problems that have been identified, and it not only can develop ELLs' languages but also promote a broader sense of culturally informed communication and community building.

In the next chapter, I discuss the preliminary ethnographic study that was conducted to understand ELLs' needs, and how CIE groups socialize ELLs implicitly to understand the U.S. cultural practice of conversation. The findings from that preliminary study informed the communication design of the storytelling workshops, with that design analyzed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 then discusses the significance of both studies for cultural discourse analysis research, CAR interventions, and language education.

CHAPTER 3

PRELIMINARY ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

As discussed in the previous chapter, intervention-oriented applied communication research and, especially, communication activism research (CAR) benefit greatly from scholars conducting initial research to understand the population with which they work and the (social justice) issue(s) that their research seeks to address. When I first started conducting observational research (as an assignment for a qualitative communication research methods course) at the local public library on how language education took place in Conversations in English (CIE) groups, I did not anticipate designing a communication intervention for that population or at that research site. However, during the 6 months that I conducted participant observation research at the library, both library administrators and CIE learners expressed a desire to go beyond traditional English language practice and education; thus, I approached the directors of the literacy program about engaging in an educational intervention. The knowledge gained from the preliminary study that I conducted was essential for designing that intervention.

This chapter reviews the preliminary study that I conducted and findings obtained from it. Chapter 4 then discusses how those findings influenced the design of the intervention that I conducted for this thesis project, and how that intervention was implemented.

Research Site

CIE classes are a common form of English language education that is offered in libraries across the United States, and this preliminary study examined CIE classes being offered at a public library in the Rocky Mountain United States. The city where the library is located has a strong technology and research sector that hires many international workers, which is one reason that the public library has a full division that is dedicated to literacy and English language

services. Community members can use the library's resources and attend its "CIE groups" (which the library's website and program directors use to refer to the program, and not "classes," to emphasize their relatively informal nature), without committing to attending any particular number of group sessions. CIE group facilitators are volunteers, and although they refer to themselves as "teachers," they do not teach in the traditional lecture style that is employed in U.S. schools and classrooms. The library's website refers to people who participate in CIE groups as "adult learners," although within the informal boundaries of these groups, the term "student" is used. To reflect that local discourse, I use, primarily, the terms "teacher(s)" and "student(s)."

Participants in the library's CIE groups include both immigrants and nonimmigrants, with the latter, generally, considered to be tourists, students, and business or specialty workers who do not intend to remain permanently in the country. The length of nonimmigrants' visit can be from a few weeks to several years, as long as they are working or studying under the premise of their visa. Many students in the CIE groups came to the particular city in which this library is located because of ties to the large state university that is located there, for study or work opportunities. They range in age from 19 to 60+, most are well educated, and, most often, their English language ability is at an intermediate level or higher. However, some students are at an introductory English language ability level, and they struggle to keep up with the more advanced students, which creates challenges for both them and for teachers of the CIE groups. Almost every student with whom I spoke either had taken English language classes previously or were enrolled concurrently in another language education program that was offered somewhere else, and they viewed this library's CIE groups as a method for practicing English in ways that mirrored real-life conversations and language use. Over the course of the preliminary study, 32

students from 20 countries participated in the CIE groups that I observed.

Methods

This preliminary study used the ethnography of communication (EC) and cultural discourse analysis (CuDA) to understand participants' communicative practices and their situated meanings in this specific speech community (Carbaugh, 2005; Hymes, 1962, 1972). I embraced the inductive nature of EC research, in which "the idea is not to declare in advance what one will find, but to understand what is found as the result of a human social creation" (Carbaugh & Boromisza-Habashi, 2015, p. 543). These methods, therefore, can discover ways that this scene expands beyond the library's stated purpose for the groups and how the interaction in them constitutes U.S. cultural discourses of language learning practice. From that perspective, the primary goal was what Carbaugh, Nuciforo, Molina-Markham, and Van Over (2011) described as "interpretive reflexivity," or working "toward understanding the meaningfulness of the communication practice to participants" (p. 158). CuDA was particularly useful for this study, because it is concerned with communicative practices that people use in situated scenes, cultural meanings that inform those communicative practices, and consequences that those meanings have in people's social life (Carbaugh, 2007). Therefore, I viewed communication, and, particularly, the act of conversation, in these CIE groups as a situated cultural practice where meaning is both presumed and created in the activity of conversation.

Fieldwork for this study began in October 2016 and ended in March 2017, lasting a total of 6 months. Using an ethnographic approach, I engaged in participant observation of the library's CIE groups, contributing, at times, to the conversations, but, primarily, engaged in observation. I also conducted in-depth interviews with eight students and four facilitators. Each CIE group, which consisted of a facilitator and 2–15 students, lasted for 1–2 hours, based on

facilitators' time management of them. I attended 30 CIE groups during the 6 months of fieldwork, averaging 1 or 2 groups each week, and totaling 55 hours of participant observation. Descriptive fieldnotes were written after each group to capture "inscriptions of social life and social discourse" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011, p. 12) from my perspective. I also engaged frequently in ethnographic interviews, also known as an "informal conversational interview" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 176), which occur in the midst of social action) before and after CIE group meetings, asking students and/or facilitators questions about what had transpired in the group that day or their thoughts on the conversation.

A semistructured guide/protocol was developed to conduct the in-depth interviews with students (see Appendix A), with questions written in straightforward, simple language, to "adjust the wording of a question to the verbal style or competency" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 201) of the English language learners (ELLs). Trying not to ask questions that contained jargon or esoteric academic language was intended to counteract any academic or language distance and hierarchy that interviewees may have perceived between themselves and me. Questions that students were asked covered a variety of topics related to language learning and their identities as migrants and ELLs, including their perceptions of the language learning process, reasons/goals for learning English, how conversational practice might be related to those goals, and their perceived identities in relation to language and to CIE groups. Questions that the facilitators were asked (see Appendix B) focused on their facilitation strategies and goals for the group interaction, to understand how they conceptualized the group and communication activities that took place within it, including why they employed certain activities and how they handled misunderstanding or miscommunication with students.

The protection of human participants was of central concern because some ELLs

experience shame or stigma related to their identities as migrants and ELLs, and they do not want to jeopardize their jobs or migrant status by criticizing their host country or discussing their challenges with learning English. For example, a student I interviewed asked not to be audio recorded because she was concerned that recording could endanger her visa status if, somehow, it was released to immigration authorities. I assured her that her name would not be used in both the research report and the interview record, and I took written notes during the interview instead of audio recording it.

Participants' protection also included using pseudonyms instead of their names, and obtaining two types of informed consent from them. Institutional Review Board (IRB) permission was obtained from my university to allow for group participants' verbal consent, using a script (see Appendix C), because it would have been difficult to obtain their written consent, given that many had a limited proficiency in written English, and because CIE groups did not have consistent attendance. At the beginning of the CIE groups, when there were new participants I had not met, I introduced myself and the purposes of my project, explained that I would not use anyone's real name or give physical descriptions that could identify them, and made it very clear that if they did not wish to be included in the study, they could choose not to participate and that there would be no consequences of that decision. For interviews, written consent forms (Appendix D) were distributed in advance to interviewees, providing time for them to translate the forms and/or to ask me for further explanation of them, if needed.

Pseudonyms were used in all fieldnotes to provide additional protection of individuals' identities.

Researcher Positionality

In this preliminary study, my position as a participant-observer meant that I observed the group as an outsider but also, at times, participated by contributing to the conversation, if doing

so seemed relevant or useful. Because CIE groups are designed to serve ELLs' needs and, therefore, they should be the primary speakers during group conversations, I was conscious of not speaking too much during them. Most often, I contributed verbally when a teacher or student asked me a direct question, although, sometimes, when the teacher offered a viewpoint that seemed to suggest it was the "normal" or *only* perspective on U.S. culture, I offered an alternative perspective. For example, a teacher of a CIE group told students that it was normal in the United States for people to talk to strangers in grocery stores, and I said that such behavior varied in different parts of the United States, and, hence, speaking to strangers was not expected, necessarily. My contributions during such moments reflected my position that, when appropriate, scholars should offer their knowledge and expertise to improve or elucidate communication.

Data Analysis: Acting and Relating in Conversation

Fieldnotes and interviews were analyzed initially using open coding methods, to examine how "textual units (typically words, phrases, or sentences) relate to each other in ways that suggest a new category" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 247). In line with CuDA procedures, I then examined those initial codes and categories for "radiants of meaning," cultural premises, and communication norms (Carbaugh, 2007). *Radiants of meaning* ask questions about what a discursive practice means to people, *cultural premises* are "formulations about participants' beliefs about the significance and importance of what is going on" (Carbaugh, 2007, p. 177), and *communication norms* are statements about conduct that participants in a speech event or community grant a degree of legitimacy. The results, presented later in this chapter, include using all of these aspects of CuDA to interpret the communication that characterized CIE groups and to understand participants' meanings about interactions that occurred in those groups.

The data from this study produced a wealth of information about how ELLs understood the practice of conversation in CIE groups, which was useful for designing an intervention to meet participants' learning goals and address challenges facing them in language learning. To organize the analysis, CuDA's interpretive "hubs of acting and relating" were used to highlight central meanings that ELLs attributed to conversational practices in CIE groups. The *hub of acting* focuses on what people take themselves to be doing when they engage in a communication activity, which provides a meta-commentary about the type of activity that is taking place; the *hub of relating* emphasizes how people are being related to each other through their communicative practices as they engage in the activity (Carbaugh, 2007). I focused on these hubs of acting and relating, because they represented well the purpose of conversational practice for ELLs, as well as the goals of and challenges to language learning that were present in that communication scene. Moreover, in that scene, acting and relating are intertwined; through the act of practicing their speaking and listening skills, by sharing personal stories about their lives and practical information about living in the United States, students related to one another and created a sense of community.

Below, first, I describe cultural terms that participants used in CIE groups and discuss how those terms support the hubs of acting and relating. I then analyze how the hubs of acting and relating support the premise that the goals of conversational practice in these groups are both individual and communal. I conclude by discussing implications of the acting and relating meanings for ELL students in language education, and how the information that was obtained from this ethnographic study proved useful for designing the storytelling workshop intervention, which is discussed in Chapter 4.

Cultural Terms

The library's website description of the CIE program states that CIE groups offer a friendly and informal environment for English language learners to "practice" their "speaking and listening" skills, by engaging in conversations about relevant life topics. The terms "practice" and "speaking and listening" are repeated often by teachers and students, both in the group and outside of it, to stress the practical goals of the CIE groups. The informal context is an important part of the appeal of these groups to students, because they are seeking not to learn specific grammar rules or how to write in English but, instead, want a place where they can practice more casual aspects of the English language to use in their everyday life, which gets expressed as "speaking and listening skills." Practice is significant locally, because it is not a chore or a burden (which can be students' perceptions of more formal learning of English) but something that they desire and, therefore, seek. A student expressed this point about the CIE groups by saying, "The main goal is to improve your English, to be confident with yourself, because you can read or study grammar, but if you never practice or study speaking, it's no good." Practice is associated with the goals of speaking and listening, because learners cannot engage in those behaviors alone (at least not very well). For example, many students told me that they watched television in English or used online study programs, but that they came to the CIE group because it provided more realistic, spontaneous practice with other human beings. Another student said:

The most important thing for me is, uh, speaking; you know, it's a force for me to speak English. Yeah, and to think English, because I need to prepare answers for the questions, so it makes me to think English to answer.

Practice, in this context, thus, requires in-the-moment speaking and listening, which prepares

ELLs well to engage in the spontaneous interactions that characterize their (and everyone's) lives.

“Conversation” and “sharing” are two additional cultural terms that both teachers and students used to frame interactions that occurred in CIE groups. Teachers construct the meaning of conversation as generating, for students, language learning, personal sharing, relationships, and practical knowledge about life in the United States, in more intimate ways than what is and can be promoted in traditional classroom environments. Because teachers viewed sharing as being necessary for conversation to occur, most teachers told me that their goal for each class was to make sure that they do not do all of the talking, and that everyone has a chance to share.

The sharing and conversation that occurs in the CIE groups, however, mimics what is understood commonly as “small talk,” because it tends to be generic or at a surface level. When a student was asked about how conversations in the class differed from those that she had in her native language, the student responded:

When I come to library and conversation club, I speak just very general things with people from other countries. Even though I speak about small things, sometimes, there are a lot of people. Even if I get to speak a few times, I still say I had conversation, but [in my home country] I would have a lot of speaking and more my opinion or my emotions.

This student, thus, saw less opinions and emotions being expressed in conversations that occurred in the CIE group, compared to that person's experiences speaking with others in his or her native language. That difference is not because opinions or emotions are not allowed in CIE groups; rather, the conversation about “very general things” reflected participants' limited language abilities.

Several students identified the biggest challenge that they face trying to speak in CIE groups is their inability to express fully their thoughts or emotions, because of their limited language skills. However, they still saw these groups as valuable opportunities for sharing themselves, especially about their home countries and their lives in the United States. They perceived the value of their sharing to be high, because they are less self-conscious about their language (in)ability and they are freer to have a conversation, knowing that everyone else in the interactional context is in the same situation; therefore, the social meaning of “sharing” is both expressive and relational. The importance of sharing in CIE groups reflects Carbaugh’s (1988) finding that U.S. cultural discourse recognizes that “sharing is not only an expression of one’s inner experiences and feelings, but is also speech with a relational embrace, speaking that nurtures shared social purposes” (p. 145). Both sharing and conversation are rooted in U.S. cultural discourses that are connected to personhood; thus, in CIE groups, these terms emphasize a relational aspect of communication that is necessary for “good” conversation to occur.

Together, these cultural terms constitute two main hubs of meaning that focus on what is involved in the action of conversation in CIE groups, and how that conversation relates the people involved in it to each other. The cultural terms of “practice” and “speaking and listening” capture larger beliefs and values of CIE groups that the act of having conversation is a cultural skill, whereas the emphasis that is placed on “sharing” and “conversation” highlights relational qualities of that activity.

Acting: Conversation is a Cultural Skill

The act of conversation in CIE groups requires and builds participants’ communication skills. Students see themselves as practicing and learning these skills for the purpose of becoming better English speakers. Conceptualization of the conversation that occurs within

these groups as a “skill” is supported by several practices that are used in them, including the program’s goals for generating speaking and listening skills, an expectation that understanding what another person says is necessary for responding to that person, and the frame of “dialogue” that teachers employ to encourage students to ask questions. These features of conversation that are stressed in the CIE groups align with cultural norms for communication in the United States (explained more below), which reinforces the socialization of these students to proper ways of talking in U.S. conversations. Consequently, these learners are developing skills regarding both how to speak the English language and how to speak with others in line with U.S. cultural norms for communication.

As reflected in the CIE program’s goals, speaking and listening are crucial skills that students need to learn and practice to be successful English speakers. A student said that she participated in a CIE group, in addition to taking other classes, because “the most important part was my speaking, and I couldn’t hear well. I have problem listening.” The focus on speaking and listening in CIE groups, and using those practices in conversation, distinguishes this approach from more formal language education, where, primarily, students listen and speak to the teacher. For example, many students said that there are no classes in their home countries that are similar to the CIE groups because they are more formal and focused on grammar or vocabulary, thus, they appreciated the opportunity to practice speaking and listening in real conversations with other people. As a student explained:

Learning, itself, is not too difficult but real communication in the United States is a little difficult for me, because listening and speaking is a little different than in a class, because people speak very fast. I studied alone, but it focused on reading and writing, or taking a test, not listening and speaking.

Conversation in any language requires listening and speaking, but much language education does not give students regular practice in using those skills. Most important, *how* to have a conversation assumes that participants know, for instance, how much to speak and how much to listen, and that they act in accordance with that knowledge, but, typically, that assumption goes unstated, because people are socialized into those patterns as they learn a language. In CIE groups, although those expectations remain unstated, they are demonstrated in teachers' instructions to students about how to share themselves and respond to others.

For example, students in CIE groups are socialized to view the practice of listening as the attempt to understand their conversational partner as a specific skill that is grounded in assumptions of equal dialogue and exchange between interactants. In CIE groups, students are instructed to listen to another person who is speaking to understand their meanings, not just for those purposes alone but with the goal of responding, eventually, to the speaker. Teachers accomplish this goal by having students engage in a number of activities, such as introducing themselves to another person in the group, and being instructed to listen closely to their partner's introduction of him or herself, such that they then can introduce their partner to the entire group. In a session that I observed, the teacher prompted students to repeat three statements that another student made, encouraging them to remember what that student said, be able to repeat it, and, then, to ask that student a question about what he or she said. These activities, thus, focus on the eventual exchange between students, not just listening to hear what another person said but listening for the purposes of understanding and responding to that person.

This focus on students' response to others ties into the overall frame of "dialogue" that is featured in CIE groups. I use the term *dialogue* to represent the mutual exchange that occurs in conversation, which is prevalent in U.S. cultural discourse and everyday interactions in which

people engage, as conversation is not simply talking to someone else in a transactional (one-way) manner; it requires give-and-take by both interactants to communicate symbolic and interactional meaning (see, e.g., Cameron, 2000; Carbaugh, 1988). Although that assumption of dialogue might hold in most countries for everyday dyadic interactions, in many classrooms around the world (and, often, in the United States), the traditional practice of teachers lecturing to students is one-way communication, but in the United States, in comparison to many other countries, dialogue between teachers and students often is emphasized, in part, because it reflects the U.S. democratic system (see, e.g., Nystrand, 1997). A student mentioned the emphasis on dialogue in the CIE group as one of the most surprising differences between her experience learning language in Korea and learning to speak in the United States:

In Korea, our culture is different. For example, in class, just speaking our opinions is not so required or good behavior, because we should listen more to what the teacher is saying, and, after the class, we can ask something to the teacher. So, debating is an ability in the United States, but not in Korea. So, it comes from culture, I think. . . . In Korea, I could tell my opinion everywhere, but compared to other Koreans, I was good at it, but, at first, it was not so easy, even though I was good at it in Korea. But in the United States, it was more aggressive; everybody wants to speak their opinion, [and] at first, it was a little shocking. Should I do like that? But it's more comfortable now. For example, asking something to the teacher, it was not so comfortable for me but now, I can, and almost every time when I want to do that, I will ask something, [and] that means I am more comfortable.

CIE groups, thus, privilege dialogue between and among students, as well as informality in communication that occurs between students and teachers, both of which are unique for

people who come from cultures where they do not engage much (at least not in classrooms) in dialogue or debate. Dialogue, of course, necessitates interactants having certain communication skills, including how to speak freely, listening to respond, asking questions, interrupting, and communicating with others in ways that reflect U.S. standards for conversation. Students in CIE groups never are told these standards explicitly but they are socialized to understand them through the practices of speaking and listening that are privileged in those groups. Additionally, as explained next, learning these skills of conversation facilitates the relational purpose of connecting with others through conversation.

Relating: Conversation as a Means for Connection

Another way that the approach to language learning in CIE groups is unique to U.S. culture is the emphasis on sharing and relational practice through conversation. That emphasis accentuates the meaning that conversation is not just an activity that requires skill but it also constitutes a way of relating to others. The focus on relating is an important motivator for the communication that takes place in CIE groups, and it highlights a central purpose of those groups for students. The relational nature of these groups is grounded in creating a welcoming and accepting environment, learning the norm of equal and free participation, and engaging in the practice of personal sharing and, overall, being friendly when speaking with others.

A significant characteristic of CIE groups is their attempt to create a low-stress environment that establishes a norm of acceptance regarding language mistakes or (in)abilities, which reduces participants' perceived pressure to perform. Teachers emphasize this characteristic by encouraging students to speak, applauding them for sharing, and correcting students' language only minimally or when someone requests such help, specifically. Teachers highlight the norm that everyone is accepted, regardless of their level of language proficiency, by

making statements, such as “We are all learning” and “Thank you for sharing,” to make students feel confident about speaking.

Many students commented on the absence of pressure in CIE groups, saying, for instance, “[Everyone’s] native language is not English, so if I speak not very well, it doesn’t matter.” Because CIE groups are not structured as a formal learning environment and do not involve any formal assessment (e.g., grades), students are not worried about forming sentences that demonstrate perfect grammar or saying something in the wrong way, which enables them to speak with confidence than when those issues are the focus of concern. Topics of conversation also are flexible with regard to what students want to discuss, further encouraging a sense of openness for them to share. As a student explained, “The class is free, the topic is free; you can talk about your country, your town, anything. This class, people make many mistakes; in Mexico, we had to say correctly.” Facilitators stress during interviews their desire to create a welcoming space where learners feel accepted, regardless of their language ability. Thus, the low-pressure, welcoming environment generates conversations that can and do focus on relating to others, with participants not having to worry about saying things in perfect English.

Given the informal structure of and accepting atmosphere that is created in CIE groups, teachers communicate indirectly U.S. cultural standards for conversation as involving equal participation and freedom to discuss any topic. As mentioned previously, many students said that CIE groups do not, and, probably, would not, exist in their home countries, given the rigid, structured education system that is in place there. Although they know that the CIE groups are not a traditional class, they still were surprised by the relaxed and relational nature of the groups. The practices of relational sharing, equal participation, and free discussion mirrors U.S. cultural values, such as the privileging of free speech, expressed friendliness toward others with whom

people interact, and interpersonal connections (see, e.g., Philipsen, 1992). Teachers communicate these values by emphasizing, as they said during interviews, that “everyone should talk,” “making sure everyone laughs at some point,” and “talking about any topic, even if it might be controversial, because it helps them learn.” When asked about the CIE group’s main goal, a student said that it is “to allow each person to talk a little bit; when we discuss some topics, yes, to hear opinion of each of us; or some [teachers] ask us which topic do you want to talk about.” This goal establishes equal and free participation as a foundation for students relating to one another and to the teacher in CIE group conversations, which is rooted culturally in U.S. discourses of democratic engagement and communication as being essential for building relationships between people (see, e.g., Carbaugh, 1988).

Most important, the emphasis on sharing in CIE groups leads students to understand conversation as a means for relating to others. Several students claimed that they came to these groups not only to practice or learn language skills but also to meet other people. Within the groups, teachers encourage everyone to share aspects of their personal lives, including stories about what they did that week, life memories, aspects of their personality, and their opinions on a wide range of topics; these practices reinforce the relational aspect of conversation. Additionally, some facilitators encourage explicitly behavioral norms that are considered to be “U.S. American” ways of communicating and relating to people. In one session, a teacher tried to convince students to talk more to strangers than they did typically, because engaging in such interactions was a good way to learn about the United States, and because it is a “normal” way to relate to people in this country. As she exclaimed, “I really encourage you while you are here to practice being more friendly.” In response to her exclamation, a student noted that people in the United States “think socializing is very important.” Such interactions not only teach students

how to speak English but they also socialize them with respect to what to talk about and how to relate to others through conversation. Thus, as explained below, the hubs of acting and meaning reflect both individual and communal goals for conversational practice in CIE groups.

Individual and Communal Goals

Understanding the act of conversation as a skill and as a way to relate to others might be obvious when stated; however, CIE groups demonstrate how ELLs are socialized to understand those meanings of conversation within a U.S. cultural discourse that prioritizes two primary goals for conversation: (a) personal expression and development of the individual, and (b) communal sharing that builds relationships. This premise is rooted in the speech practices that were discussed previously in this chapter, many of which reflect a dominant U.S. cultural discourse that is grounded in democratic speech and the importance of the individual. As a final example that shows how the hubs of meaning support this premise, consider the following interaction that occurred in a CIE group discussing the topic of procrastination:

1 The teacher said she recently listened to an author on the radio talking about a
2 book he wrote on procrastination, and she thought it would be interesting to talk
3 about what people procrastinate. She asked if people know the word “procrastinate,”
4 everyone shook their head “no,” and she commented, “Really? How interesting!”
5 Then she explained it, and once explained, lots of people said they actually do that a
6 lot. She instructed everyone to go around and share one thing that they tend to
7 procrastinate, and after each person, she asked the other students to offer suggestions
8 on what that person could do to motivate them to not procrastinate.

9 One student from Japan talked about how she procrastinates doing laundry,
10 especially the items she has to hand-wash. Another student suggested she watch
11 television or listen to music while doing the laundry, to make it more enjoyable.
12 Several students shared that they tend to procrastinate their housework the most. The
13 teacher asked if any of their husbands help them with housework, and most of them
14 said “No” or “Very little.” One woman from Japan said her husband never learned
15 how to do any of those things, so he is “helpless,” which made everyone laugh and
16 say expressions of agreement, like, “Yes, mine too” or “So true.”

17 At the end, the teacher asked everyone if this was interesting and helpful, and
18 many people nodded “yes.” She ended by saying, “This is to help everyone, not just
19 with English.” After the class, as people are leaving, she told me that she thought

20 today went really well because we had a good conversation. “I love classes like this,
21 we all learn something and we have fun doing it,” she said.

As the excerpt shows, radiants of meaning about acting and relating in this CIE group were made explicit through some key discursive moves that were engaged in by the teacher. What students are doing, or the action in which they believe they are participating, primarily, is learning English and working on their conversational skills. Initially, the teacher defined the word “procrastinate” (line 5), fulfilling a basic goal of the CIE program to provide students with new vocabulary to improve their English. However, the bulk of the interaction is about more than learning that word; it is about putting the word into practice. The teachers’ training manual, program’s website, and students all repeat the phrase “speaking and listening” when they talk about language skills on which they are working in these groups. In this particular example, students worked on both of these elements of conversation. They were instructed to talk about when they procrastinate (line 6), letting them practice the skill of speaking, but they also had to listen actively to everyone else’s responses to understand what other students were saying, so that they could follow the instructions to offer suggestions in their response (lines 7–8). By engaging in this activity, they practiced skills of conversation that go beyond semantics of learning a language, which was evidenced when the teacher said, “This is to help everyone, not just with English” (line 18).

This example also demonstrates that conversation in this setting is connected to implicit meanings about how personal sharing builds relationships. First, the teacher introduced the topic of conversation as something that began with a personal experience of listening to the radio outside of the group’s meetings (lines 1–2). This account from the teacher set a precedent for conversation as something that requires personal sharing of experience. She further indicated the importance of sharing when she instructed everyone to share things on which they procrastinate

(line 6). In this way, sharing was emphasized as a requirement for conversation. By asking students about the role of their husband in doing housework (line 13), the teacher, again, established a frame of sharing in which students talked about personal matters, such as their relationships and home life. The resulting laughter (line 15) and expressions of solidarity (line 16) are signs of how friendships or relationships were being built through this conversation, because everyone shared and discussed common experiences. Thus, in CIE groups, conversation is a form of relating that is about personal sharing and building relationships.

Students in that CIE group that day were from Japan, Brazil, China, and Korea, and through the conversation about procrastination, they practiced their language skills and discussed personal details of their lives that related them together through the sharing of similar experiences. Not only did students learn the word “procrastinate” but the teacher took it a step further to help them practice speaking and listening about that topic. They then shared about their married lives and their husbands, further establishing among them a sense of relationship or community. At the end, the teacher’s comment that “we all learn something and we have fun doing it” (line 20) indicated that the two elements of learning and fun constitute good conversation in these groups.

Learning in CIE groups, thus, is skill based (connected to meanings of action), and that fun is based on building relationships (connected to meanings of relating). These meanings of conversation in CIE groups support the radiants of acting and relating in ways that reflect U.S. cultural norms for conversation. Conversation in CIE groups is understood as fulfilling the instructional purpose of teaching students about skills of speaking and listening in English, which could be considered an individual goal; however, conversation also involves a crucial relational element of personal sharing that makes it more than a typical vocabulary lesson, which

orients students to their communal experience. The development of language skills accomplishes individual goals for conversation; the opportunity to relate to others builds on communal goals for sharing, to develop an open, accepting community. Hence, CIE groups socialize students through language to understand the larger premise that communicating in the United States requires both language and relational skills, to accomplish both individual and communal goals. However, despite students' positive responses about CIE groups, I explain below how I also uncovered several challenges that students faced, both in CIE groups and in their everyday life, regarding being an ELL and a migrant in the United States.

Complexities and Challenges of Conversation as a Cultural Practice

The analysis of data obtained in this ethnographic study focused on how U.S. cultural meanings are communicated in CIE groups through the practice of conversation that requires specific communication skills and is highly relational in nature. Understanding those hubs of meaning leads to a discussion of how those meanings reveal both the goals of and challenges facing ELLs in this setting.

According to Carbaugh (2007):

There is the commitment in cultural discourse analysis to describe and interpret a communication practice from the view of participants, prior to its critical appraisal. In this way, the analyst establishes a deep understanding of the phenomenon of concern, from the view of those engaged in it, prior to evaluating it. (p. 173)

CuDA allows for interpretation of how discourse, as a practice in meaning-making, involves a meta-cultural commentary, a range of explicit and implicit messages that people take for granted about themselves, their identities, actions, feelings, and the nature of things (Carbaugh, 2007). The taken-for-granted meanings surrounding conversational language practice have significant

implications for how this type of language education can be improved. To address those concerns, this section transitions from an interpretive analysis to a critical discussion of how the meanings of conversation in CIE groups advantage some people more than others, and how this form of language education can be altered to address that issue of inequality.

The hub of acting involves multiple challenges when participants are not able to act in desired ways or perform acts in ways that satisfy themselves and/or their conversational partners. ELLs participating in CIE groups sought to gain practical experience speaking and listening in English, to improve their language skills for having “natural” conversations with other English speakers. However, because speaking and listening in English are culturally informed communicative practices, CIE groups had to socialize students to understand how to perform those practices in ways that reflect values and norms of the U.S. speech community. For both teachers and ELLs, this learning process was implicit and unrecognized; consequently, CIE teachers often struggled to understand why students did not respond in desired ways, and students struggled to adapt or communicate fully in ways that were satisfactory for them. Despite the overall accepting tone employed in CIE groups, students often had to navigate face threats concerning their level of English fluency; sometimes, their language ability was questioned by teachers directly, and, at other times, reproaches came from other students. These approaches were subtle, such as someone asking lots of clarifying questions or correcting someone’s mispronunciation of a word. When I asked students about these moments, they admitted feeling embarrassed or ashamed, but they said that they accepted those practices as a normal part of the language learning process. Even though they accepted such practices as being normal, when the act of conversation could not be conducted according to desired norms, students with less experience were disadvantaged, and, frequently, they perceived themselves as

being isolated from the rest of the group members.

Students' ability to participate in the act of conversation according to implicit norms was complicated further when they could not express their thoughts in ways that they wanted to relate to others. In those instances, the CIE groups' goal of relating to others through conversation was threatened. Many students expressed frustration about how their language (in)ability limited their capacity to communicate complex ideas or explanations. Frequently, students used conversational qualifiers, such as saying "sorry," "I can't say," or "I don't know how," when they had problems explaining something. Use of those qualifiers was particularly apparent by ELLs who were highly educated; a student with an advanced degree in physics told me that in his native language, he comes across as being intelligent, because he can explain complicated ideas, whereas in English, he cannot express himself to the same degree and, therefore, he perceived himself to be less intelligent than he was when speaking in English.

When both hubs of acting and relating were challenged in CIE groups, increasingly, the hub of being, which is about messages of personhood and identity that are raised through discourse (Carbaugh, 2007), became salient. Challenges to students' identity came up when students were confronted with stereotypes about their ethnicity or home country. In CIE groups, there was a pattern of students trying to contest stereotypes about their ethnicity or home country, by sharing personal narratives about their countries and their cultural norms for behavior that differed from the identity that someone else had assumed about them. For example, in a CIE group meeting, the teacher asked two students, one from Russia and the other from Kazakhstan, if they like to drink a lot of vodka. The student from Kazakhstan dismissed immediately that stereotype about Russians, saying that he used to drink a lot of vodka, but, now, he has high blood pressure and cannot indulge in that behavior. The woman from Russia

laughed and said that not all Russians are heavy drinkers, adding that she does not even like straight liquor, and that most of her friends will drink vodka only if it is mixed with something else. Both of these responses can be seen as attempts to dispute a false identity or stereotype that was being assumed about these individuals, by sharing a personal perspective that countered the stereotype.

Although some stereotyping occurred in CIE groups that I observed, they also are spaces where students see themselves as having more agency to speak in English than they do outside those groups; hence, sometimes, they used those groups as an opportunity to share about their home country and present alternative narratives to counteract stereotypes about that country. For instance, a student from the Middle East said that she knows some stereotypes that U.S. citizens have about the Middle East, which often make her afraid of how people will judge her, but in the CIE group, she likes to share about her country to establish her point of view. As she explained:

Every time I go out of the home, I'm really worried about the way I'm dressing and what people think, or what people, you know, what's people reaction towards me. . . . Maybe they think I'm extremist. . . . There's a wrong image for my country and for the culture, um, for the people. So, you know, I heard a lot about some wrong things about my country, so it really bothered me, or it bothers me that people do not, mmm, know the right things about my country, so I really enjoy to share that [in the group].

This preemptive move indicates that some students shared things about their country intentionally in response to widely known stereotypes about that country, and, thereby, attempted to paint a different picture of their culture and their connected identity. Although there were times when students encountered face threats in CIE groups, they have agency in that setting to negotiate their language competence, contest stereotypes, and establish unique versions of their

identities, through offering alternative narratives that counteract those stereotypes. As discussed previously, the informal structure and the relational environment of CIE groups are critical elements to achieving the goals of practicing conversational skills and relating to others; leveraging those features in positive ways enables students to do identity work and to try communicating complex ideas in the group.

Outside the setting of CIE groups, ELLs experience fear and discrimination because of their status as foreigners or migrants. Almost every ELL from the Middle East who I spoke to was afraid that, as a person put it, “the people in United States think we are terrorists.” Another student shared negative experiences that she had with native English speakers who were angry at her for not speaking English well. Everyone interviewed gave examples of stereotypes or strange questions that people asked them about their home countries. For example, a student from China said that most people in the United States assumed that he came from a poor village or that he was not allowed to speak about politics in the United States because of the assumption that the Chinese government censors political speech. ELLs found it frustrating that they could not always refute people’s misconceptions of them and their home countries, or offer counternarratives to those misconceptions, because their language skills were not advanced enough. ELLs also found it difficult to offer counternarratives if strangers asked them questions, because outside the CIE groups, they did not feel as confident speaking English, they were more afraid of making language mistakes, and/or they worried about people judging them negatively because of their accents. Based on their experiences, most ELLs viewed being a non-native speaker as a significant obstacle to success in their careers and to adapting to life in the United States, showing how language education is a social justice issue (as discussed in Chapter 2).

Another difficulty that ELLs encounter because of language ability are misconceptions

and misunderstandings by native English speakers when they try to relate to them.

Misunderstanding what someone says is a general challenge in cross-cultural interactions, and, other than through experience, it is difficult to learn unstated norms regarding how people are supposed to interact in a specific culture. A student stressed this problem by sharing a story about the first time that she attended a dinner that was hosted by her husband's boss, saying, "I couldn't speak well, and they thought that, you know, I'm not sociable, and it was really bad for me. I couldn't speak, I couldn't communicate with people, and, yeah, it was a big problem for me." Her inability to speak English well made her seem quieter than she actually was, and she was judged incorrectly by others at the dinner as being unsocial. By working on her English, she was trying to combat that misconception, to socialize appropriately with native speakers, according to U.S. cultural standards, which emphasize sociability. Many students echoed this problem of often being misjudged because of their language ability. CIE groups, certainly, help students to practice having conversations, but there is no explicit instruction in them about U.S. cultural norms of interaction; thus, students expressed a desire to learn those skills, to be able to relate to native speakers and to prevent misunderstandings that often occur in those interactions because of language or communication.

On a practical level, knowing how to speak English is necessary for ELLs to accomplishing basic tasks, such as going grocery shopping, talking to an employer, and renting an apartment. Despite knowing English, many students did not perceive themselves as being able to perform those speaking and listening skills to achieve those tasks successfully. For example, a CIE group engaged in an extensive conversation about how to schedule an appointment with a physician. The student who brought up this problem, technically, was an advanced English speaker, but he did not understand the "normal" way to make such an

appointment, such as whether it had to be made via phone, or why personnel at the physician's office asked certain questions about his insurance or medical symptoms. The difficulty that he faced did not have to do with his vocabulary repertoire; rather, the problem was because "normal" communication in the United States to accomplish this goal was very different from that communication in his home country. Such challenges were what motivated students to attend CIE group meetings and why they wanted guidance and practice regarding how to have practical, everyday conversations with native English speakers.

Conclusion

The original purpose of this study was to understand the meaning of conversation as a cultural practice within the language learning context of CIE groups. The hubs of meaning that were analyzed in the study provided an essential foundation for understanding what is important to ELLs in this type of language education. For ELLs participating in CIE groups, the act of conversational practice develops communication skills that go beyond vocabulary and grammar; they seek this practice because they want to learn how to speak and listen in line with U.S. cultural norms for conversation. The development of these skills enables the second important goal of encouraging these learners to relate to others, both in CIE groups and with native English speakers in their everyday lives.

The study also uncovered multiple challenges that are associated with having conversations and building relationships within CIE groups, as well as stereotypes and misconceptions that influenced negatively ELLs' experiences as migrants in the United States. During interviews conducted with ELLs, they expressed a desire for additional language education resources that might prepare them better to communicate in culturally appropriate ways and to connect relationally with native English speakers. ELLs indicated that the

conversational learning practice was more helpful than formal types of English as a Second Language education, which, generally, as explained previously, focus on vocabulary and grammar, because focusing on conversation and relevant life topics generated discussion around situated meanings of English words and abstract concepts. However, they wanted more discussion about U.S. cultural norms and meanings, as well as how to have conversations with native speakers in which they could express themselves better than they could currently.

The information obtained from this study was used to design a storytelling workshop intervention to meet the dual needs of learning English-language skills and U.S. cultural knowledge, to aid ELLs in their desire to relate better to others, especially native speakers or U.S. citizens. Based on the two hubs of acting and relating, I decided that storytelling practices could address both goals, by facilitating conversations that develop communication skills and relate ELLs to each other, through the sharing of personal narratives. Storytelling also can address challenges to accomplishing those two goals; in particular, it is a beneficial method that can aid students to construct narratives about what it means to be an ELL, a migrant, or other identities that they want to foreground from their personal experiences.

The ethnographic knowledge obtained from this study also facilitated an element of critical reflexivity for designing the intervention, as that knowledge enabled intentional design of an applied communication intervention that did not reinforce problematic trends of cultural adaptation or stigma, as discussed in Chapter 2, that are associated with some forms of ESL education. Sprain and Boromisza-Habashi (2013) argued that the ethnography of communication approach can contribute to applied communication projects when analysts generate and use knowledge about culturally competent communication to assess and assist practitioners' strategic actions. The preliminary study extended that purpose by using CuDA to

generate interpretations about what is meaningful to ELLs who participate in CIE groups, and how that discourse is informed by implicit cultural norms. As described in the next chapter, the ethnographic knowledge that was obtained from this preliminary study was essential in designing specific features of the storytelling workshops and implementing that intervention.

CHAPTER 4

COMMUNICATION DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STORYTELLING
WORKSHOPS

The cultural discourse analysis of the data collected in the ethnographic study (explicated in Chapter 3) demonstrated how the hubs of acting and relating are significant to the meaning of conversational practice for English language learners (ELLs). Although that study found that the Conversations in English (CIE) groups provided several benefits for the ELLs, ELLs struggled to understand implicit meanings of U.S. conversational norms, how to express complex thoughts and identities, and meanings of being an ELL who encounters prejudice or negative stereotypes because of the lack of English language ability. Based on the hubs of acting and relating, I argued that storytelling practices can address ELLs' needs by facilitating conversations that help them to develop communication skills that are relevant culturally and, simultaneously, help them to relate to each other through the sharing of personal narratives. Storytelling also can address some of the challenges that accompany those two goals, because it foregrounds cultural meanings and ideologies, as well as allows these students to construct their narratives about what it means to be an ELL, migrant, or other identities.

This chapter analyzes how I engaged in the practice of communication design by using the ethnographic knowledge that was obtained from the preliminary study to inform the communication activism research (CAR) storytelling workshop intervention that I offered to ELLs. First, I review briefly literature on communication design, discussing the concept's utility for analyzing applied communication interventions. I then explicate methods that I used to conduct this CAR study. The analysis of the data discusses the design of the workshops based on the ethnographic knowledge obtained from the preliminary study, implementation of the

workshops, and results of the intervention. The chapter ends with some concluding thoughts on benefits of using communication design principles to conduct interventions, general, and those that employ storytelling, in particular, followed by, in chapter 5, a discussion of the significance of this research project.

Communication Design

The storytelling workshop intervention employed in this study offers an opportunity to consider the practice of *communication design*, which occurs when “there is an intervention into some ongoing activity through the invention of techniques, devices, and procedures that aim to redesign interactivity and thus shape the possibilities for communication” (Aakhus, 2007, p. 112). Design choices reveal implicit or explicit positions about how interaction should lead to preferred forms of communication, with analysts tracing how particular features of interaction allow and restrict desired forms of communication (Aakhus & Laureij, 2012). As Sprain, Carcasson, and Merolla (2014) explained, “Interpretive analysis then informs theorizing about the desired form(s) of communication and the possibilities for how particular outcomes might be achieved or prevented” (p. 153). Communication design practice, thus, is relevant to exploring how the workshop intervention employed in this study may have enabled and/or constrained certain interactions occurring in the workshops. A nuanced understanding of the communication design of this intervention also, potentially, can improve future offerings of this intervention or similar ones.

The study of communication design is distinguished from the study of communication, more generally, in that although communication as design is part of the communication discipline, it is a distinct approach that focuses on choices and instrumentalities that enable and

constrain certain communication processes and/or outcomes. As Barbour, Gill, and Barge (2017) explained:

Whereas communication research, broadly speaking, attends to the processes and effects of communicating, a concern for design is a concern for how and why actors make choices with the aim of creating particular processes and effects. For example, the study of health campaigns typically focuses on the effects of campaigns, not the communicative processes that constitute those campaigns. Likewise, the study of messages in general is distinct from, but related to, the study of message production processes. (p. 91)

Thus, the focus on communication design in this project concentrates on an analysis of processes that were employed in the storytelling workshops, which is as important as a focus on intervention effects.

Barbour et al. (2017) recommended analyzing the objects and subjects of communication design, to delineate overlapping and multilevel areas of communication design. The objects of communication design are specific designable features or choice points. These designable features can include both (a) specific communicative actions, such as formats for structuring public deliberation (Sprain, Carcasson, & Merolla, 2014) or ombuds processes (Harrison, 2014), and (b) clusters of communicative action, such as its genre (Orlikowski & Yates, 1994) or flow (McPhee & Zaug, 2000). The subjects of communication design are the actors involved in making those communication choices.

In this study, the specific objects of communication design were the workshop lesson plans, which were part of the clusters of storytelling and conversation that framed the design. As the primary designer of the workshops and researcher who studied them, I was the individual subject who made most of the communication choices. However, workshop participants also

influenced the design collectively through their reactions to the workshop content and discussions. It is beneficial to analyze the relationship between the individual and collective communication design, to interpret how they influence one another and the design, overall.

Taking a design stance in analysis allows researchers to understand how communication design happens and what consequences it has on interactions that occur within the designed space. Communication design is hypothetical in the sense that “each design for communication hypothesizes how communication works and how it ought to work through its affordances and constraints” (Aakhus, 2007, p. 114). Chapter 3 described some of the affordances that were present in CIE groups, such as how those groups lead students to perform the act of conversation and, simultaneously, to learn about the English language, in addition to the conversation relating students to each other and to the U.S. culture in which they live currently. However, the constraint of this practice is its emphasis on unstated U.S. norms for conversation, which isolates some students who are not accustomed to those norms, and its lack of explaining explicitly U.S. cultural values (e.g., regarding conversation).

Therefore, the storytelling intervention employed in this study is a form of a design hypothesis that aims to maintain the positive affordances of CIE groups and address their limitations. Once a hypothesis is tested through an intervention, communication design then can be theoretical, by “recognizing how designs for communication embody theories of communication and how communication design work is an activity of theorizing communication” (Aakhus, 2007, p. 115). This chapter addresses that theoretical concern by analyzing how I used the cultural discourse analysis (CuDA) hubs of acting and relating to hypothesize this communication design, how that design was implemented and altered in the workshops, and findings from the workshops, overall, that might contribute to theoretical

knowledge regarding communication design, storytelling methods, and English language education. Chapter 5 then discusses implications of this study as a form of CAR.

Methods

Research Participants

The intervention study, including recruiting participants, offering the workshops, and conducting interviews with ELLs who participated in them, began in early October, 2017, and ended in January, 2018. Participants were recruited through the same library's literacy program and its CIE groups that were the focus of the earlier ethnographic study. Four workshops were offered free of charge, to make it easy for people to participate, and students were not required to attend all four workshops. Although it would have been ideal for people to have participated in all four workshops, several people could not attend all of them but still wanted to participate in them; therefore, I decided that it was best to have as many people attend as possible, rather than deny them the opportunity to benefit from workshops that they could attend.

As explained previously, most of the ELL students connected to the library literacy program moved to the United States because a family member got a job or was attending school here, and a majority of them are classified as "nonimmigrants." In general, these students' English is sufficient for daily life, but they want to improve their ability to speak casually in everyday conversation with other people. To be included in the study, participants had to be ELLs with a working knowledge of English (demonstrating, at least, an intermediate level of speaking and listening proficiency), who were at least 18 years old. Thus, the only exclusion criteria was being under the age of 18 or being a beginning language learner. Twelve people participated in the workshops over the course of 4 weeks. These participants varied in gender and age, from 19 to 60, with the majority being in the 20-to-40-age range. The ethnic

distribution of participants also was diverse and included students from China, Italy, Mexico, Japan, Brazil, and Iran.

Procedures

Before the workshops began, I conducted one-on-one interviews with three prospective participants to understand their level of English language ability and their communication goals for English conversations. Due to time constraints, I did not interview all participants before they participated in a workshop but I led a discussion in the first workshop to hear from those who I had not interviewed, and to generate group goals for the workshops. Each workshop lasted approximately 75 minutes. The workshops took place once a week for 4 weeks, culminating in the fifth week in a final storytelling event, where participants shared stories that they created during the workshops with a public audience. Audience members for that public event were invited through the library's social media and through the communication department at my university. The purpose of the final storytelling event was to give students an opportunity to exercise their storytelling and conversational skills with invited native speakers and members of the local community, while also encouraging community members to consider these migrants' experiences in the United States.

In accordance with Institutional Review Board (IRB) standards, before the research began, students were given a written consent form (Appendix F) with detailed information provide about the study. I explained verbally the consent process to the entire group, avoiding coercion by reminding people that their participation in this research was optional, and that they could withdraw at any time from the study; answering any questions that they had about the research; and giving them sufficient time to decide whether to participate. Participants' names were changed in fieldnotes, transcripts, and final products, to respect and protect their privacy.

The final storytelling event was open to the public, but if participants wanted to protect the privacy of their stories, their names could be changed (if written or visual media were employed), or they could opt out of presenting their stories. To my knowledge, no participants opted out of the final event because of privacy concerns; rather, their choice to attend was influenced by scheduling conflicts and other commitments that they had in their everyday lives. Because the stories were the creative work of participants, they were told that they could share them, if they chose to do so, after the event with whomever and in any manner.

I discuss the specific design and plan of the workshops later in this chapter, but, in general, they were conducted in an educational format that was familiar to participants, because they had participated in CIE classes and/or other English-language instruction. I coordinated with the library literacy program's directors to recruit volunteers for each workshop who were native speakers, to work alongside ELLs and provide additional opportunities for ELLs to practice speaking and listening with native English speakers. The purpose of using additional volunteers was to give learners time to speak one-on-one with a native English speaker, which was identified by ELLs in the preliminary study that I conducted as a goal for CIE courses. Volunteers were told that they should contribute to conversations regarding U.S. communication norms, but I instructed them not to dominate those conversations and to prioritize sharing by ELLs.

After the workshops concluded, I interviewed several participants to assess what, if anything, they gained from the workshops, and how, if at all, participating in the program changed their communicative practices. For both the preliminary interviews and the post-workshop interviews, a guide/protocol was used to conduct semistructured interviews (see Appendices D and E, respectively); however, I attempted to employ a conversational model

during interviews that was similar in friendliness and responsiveness to what characterized the communication that occurred in the workshops. Questions were written in a format that was accessible for participants, attempting to “adjust the wording of a question to the verbal style or competency” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 201) of participants, given that English is not their first language that their English-language fluency, probably, varied. Interview questions covered a variety of topics related to their experiences learning English, their cultural adjustments as migrants in the United States, the role of language in their daily lives, and their perceptions of whether and how participation in the workshops affected their ability to have conversations in English and to relate to other people through speaking English.

Several workshop participants had to leave the country to return home or, for other reasons, were not available to be interviewed after the workshops concluded; consequently, three interviews were conducted with participants in the month after the workshops ended. To obtain feedback from workshop participants who could not be interviewed at that time, I submitted an IRB amendment and got permission to send those participants a questionnaire that contained similar questions to those asked on the interview guide (see Appendix G). The questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms; before participants completed the questionnaire, they completed a new consent document that they “accepted” or “declined” by checking a box. After they accepted the consent document, they were directed to a page that contained the questions. Four survey questionnaires were completed, meaning that feedback was received from a total of 7 of the 12 people who participated in the workshops.

Researcher Positionality

My epistemological and ontological commitments informed my role as the facilitator of the intervention conducted and my approach to teaching communication. As a graduate student

who teaches communication courses, my teaching philosophy embraces dialogue, discussion, and mutual exchange of knowledge between students and teachers. Recognizing that my worldview is not the only or “right” one, I encourage multiple voices and opinions in my courses and class discussions. In line with that view, I told students during the intervention workshops that what I said represented only one point of view, and I encouraged volunteer native speakers to contribute to discussions, to promote multiple perspectives on U.S. culture and norms.

Moreover, because I view communication as a constitutive process that creates and sustains norms, values, and beliefs, I strove to employ a dialogic approach that taught U.S. norms (e.g., about communication) but also encouraged ELLs to share cultural norms from their home countries, producing discussions of content covered from multiple cultural perspectives. This teaching approach influenced the design of both the workshops and the final storytelling event, in that I believed promoting dialogic exchange, multicultural knowledge, and storytelling as a relational tool would increase ELLs’ ability to confront issues of inequality in their everyday lives.

Data Analysis

Three types of data were collected and analyzed: (a) video recordings of the workshops, (b) pre-workshop design memos (discussed below) and fieldnotes that I completed after each workshop, and (c) interview or questionnaire responses from workshop participants. I had IRB permission to video record the workshops, and all participants agreed to be recorded. After each workshop, I spent 1–2 hours writing detailed fieldnotes. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

The data obtained were analyzed in light of scholarship on storytelling, language education, and communication design, to assess whether and how the intervention design met

participants' needs and communication skills that they wished to improve. To facilitate analysis of the communication design, I prepared memos for each workshop that outlined its goals and affordances, including assumptions about the communication employed and how various exercises should enable certain types of interaction to occur. In that analysis, I compared the communication design memos that were prepared for each workshop to the fieldnotes and video recordings, to evaluate whether the intended workshop goals were met and to consider how the communication design of workshops enabled or constrained interactions among participants.

Video and interview recordings were analyzed to interpret participants' meanings of communicative practices in which they engaged during the workshops, which provided an emic interpretation of their perceptions of the workshops. The final storytelling event also was video recorded and analyzed to assess whether shifts in participants' conversational skill resulted from workshops, the final storytelling event, or their combination. Interview data were analyzed to draw conclusions about whether interviewees perceived the workshops and/or final storytelling event as improving their conversational skills and language ability. Evidence for improvement included participants' self-perceived confidence levels and language ability, as well as new knowledge that they acquired regarding U.S. cultural norms of conversation. Open coding of transcribed video recordings and fieldnotes was used during the initial analysis to examine how "textual units (typically words, phrases, or sentences) relate to each other" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 247), in ways that suggested meaningful categories. Those categories then were examined for emergent themes of how storytelling and other conversational practices employed in the workshops affected ELLs' communication abilities to have conversations and to relate to others when speaking English.

Workshop Design

Because both creation and critique are central to communication design (Harrison, 2014), this section focuses on the creation of the workshops, with subsequent sections analyzing their implementation and results, for potential critiques that can be used to improve future workshops. The creation process in communication design requires two central features: establishing specific goals and analyzing the intervention site for elements of the context that will influence and interact with the implementation of the design (Harrison, 2014). The philosophy of design encourages site-specific interventions, which is why the knowledge that was gained from the preliminary ethnographic study was useful for designing the storytelling workshops in this specific context. I used four factors to inform the goals for these workshops: (a) findings from the preliminary study, (b) scholarly literature on language education and storytelling (discussed in chapter 2), (c) discussion with program directors, and (d) participants' feedback obtained from pre-workshop interviews conducted with them or from the first workshop session.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the preliminary study demonstrated how the hubs of acting and relating illuminate ELLs' goals for this type of conversational language practice. For ELLs in CIE groups, the act of conversational practice develops communication skills that go beyond vocabulary and grammar; ELLs seek this practice because they want to learn how to speak and listen in line with U.S. cultural norms for conversation. Development of these skills enables the second important goal of ELLs relating to others, both in CIE groups and in their everyday lives when interacting with native English speakers. To reflect the ethnographic findings obtained from the preliminary study, as well as participants' expressed needs and desires, the workshops sought to highlight these same goals by being designed to (a) involve a conversation that taught

students a new word, phrase, or cultural practice in English; and (b) connect students to each other by engaging in activities to build their relationships.

Before the workshops began, I met with two of the directors of the literacy program at the library that offers and oversees the CIE groups. This was an important step for gaining access to the site and obtaining permission to offer the workshops, but I also wanted to involve the directors in the design process, to understand their goals and hopes for students in the program. The directors acknowledged that they have limited funding, which is why they rely heavily on volunteer labor and cannot offer as many classes or resources as they want. The limited funding also makes it difficult for the program to offer more targeted instruction to address the varying levels of English abilities that students possess. Because of these challenges, the directors were eager to partner with me, and they were excited about the opportunity to offer something new that was designed, specifically, to meet learners' needs. Their primary goals focused on learners' language development and building community among them. They also were excited about using storytelling practices, because storytelling has been a broad theme across the library's programs, which they were trying to implement in new ways.

The final source of input on the workshops' goals came from participants. As mentioned previously, three workshop participants were interviewed before the workshops began, and they all said that they wanted to learn more about U.S. culture. Two participants also said that they wanted to improve their "confidence" in speaking English. When asked about her level of English ability, one of them said:

I need to know about how—the ways to, uh, present myself better, to tell—I found that it is very important to American culture, you—the ability of telling the story about your

works, about your situation, about your goals. It's very—content is very, very important here.

This quote points to why storytelling is significant, not just as a pedagogical procedure for practicing language but also as a relational communicative practice in U.S. culture. Telling stories or narratives about one's life is a way to connect with others, and it is a mode of self-presentation.

Another participant interviewed, as shown in the following interview excerpt, also mentioned the role of storytelling in U.S. culture and how storytelling was a routine part of CIE groups:

Excerpt 1:

- Kellie: KB: Okay. Um, part of these workshops is that we'll practice telling stories as a way to help you with language. Um, is telling stories something that you do a lot in China?
- Li: No. ((laughs))
- Kellie: No?
- Li: Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- Kellie: Why?
- Li: Uh, I think, uh, Chinese people don't, uh, tell—many of them don't tell—enjoy telling stories.
- Kellie: Oh.
- Li: I think it's a cultural difference, maybe. Yeah.
- Kellie: Okay. Why do you think that is?
- Li: Yeah, uh, because [in the] conversation class, uh, [the facilitator] always asks, uh, what, what have you done last, uh, weekend, or- what's interesting, like that. And, uh, normally, in China, we don't ask uh such questions, yeah.

These comments were surprising to hear, because, as discussed in chapter 2, storytelling practices have been used in many cultures, and scholars consider narrative to be a key feature of human communication. However, participants noted that storytelling in the United States still is a distinct cultural practice that is different from how people communicate in their home countries. This was an important insight that informed the workshops' design, because it

suggested that it would be beneficial to discuss features of storytelling that are unique to the United States, and to have a conversation about how storytelling differs here compared to participants' home countries.

Because all participants could not be interviewed before the workshops began, I led a discussion in the first workshop about their goals, and I asked them about what they wanted to learn in subsequent workshops. They reiterated many of challenges and goals that were found in the preliminary study, especially their desire to practice speaking and listening in English, to improve their ability to have everyday conversations with others. They also wanted to learn something about U.S. culture and history. A person mentioned that he had a hard time talking to people on the telephone, which elicited several more comments about practical communicative behaviors, such as how to respond to service workers in restaurants or shops who ask, "How are you?" and "Did you find everything okay?" Because these comments from ELLs were identified in the preliminary study, the information obtained during this session reinforced the importance of adding cultural knowledge and discussion of U.S. norms to the workshops.

Based on the feedback obtained from ELLs and program directors, their goals, and my ethnographic knowledge of the site, I decided that there should be two main parts to each workshop: (a) discussion about U.S. communication norms and English language skills, and (b) activities for students to practice speaking English and/or telling stories. These two features also mirrored the two goals for the workshops that were mentioned previously (see Figure 1). Table 1 lists the discussions and activities that were covered in each workshop.

Figure 1

Translation of CuDA Hubs to Workshop Design

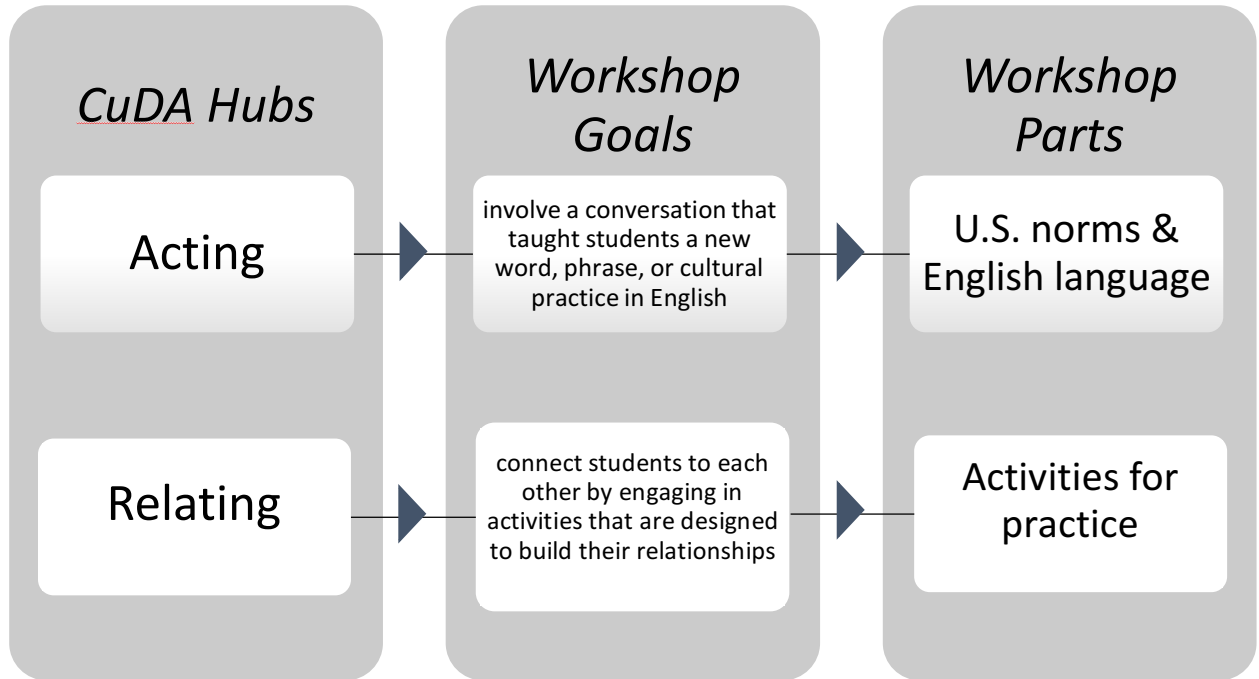


Table 1

Workshop Lesson Plan Summaries

	Part 1: U.S. norms & English language	Part 2: Activities for practice
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion about challenges speaking English and workshop goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six-word story exercise (students given examples and a worksheet to write their story)
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask students what words they think of when they think about the United States • Include regional varieties in culture • Discuss values in the United States and compare to their home countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migration map stories: each person draws on a world map where they came from, where they have lived, and where their family is from • ELLs share a short story with the group that represents their migration experience
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about folk stories in the United States and in their home cultures • What do these stories tell us about what is important in those cultures? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storytelling elements worksheet: story arc, types of stories, and audiences • ELLs work with volunteer partner to plan a story that they want to tell at the final event
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking in groups and in front of people; norms for telling stories in the United States and in other cultures • Discussion of fears and concerns about talking in front of others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone shares the story on which they are working • Group members give feedback and ask questions about each story

The topics for discussion about U.S. communication norms came from the findings of the preliminary study, as well as ELLs' feedback regarding what they wanted to learn about U.S. culture. The one exception was the discussion of folk stories during the third week, which I decided to incorporate based on storytelling research that found folk stories to be a useful pedagogical tool for teaching people about cultural values (Katriel, 2008; Peck, 1989; Sunwolf, 2004). Folklore is "the traditional knowledge of the people" (O'Hara, 1995, p. 94), and folk stories or tales represent this knowledge through narratives that are passed down from generation to generation. The discussion part of the workshop involved talking in pairs and in small groups, to offer multiple conversational formats.

The storytelling part of each workshop was grounded in empirical research on storytelling education and exercises, based on several models of storytelling curriculum that have been used in similar workshop initiatives. In line with findings from studies of storytelling programs (e.g., Hecht & Miller-Day, 2009; Sunwolf, 2007), the workshops were designed to embrace a dialogic experience that encouraged participants to exercise their communication agency, teach students about U.S. norms for conversation, and offer them opportunities to practice speaking and listening in English. Specifically, workshop activities and exercises were designed based on Sunwolf and Frey's (2001) five categories of storytelling functions (explained in chapter 2): relational, explanatory, creative, historical, and forecasting. Some activities were based on storytelling exercises used by organizations, such as the Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS) StoryCenter (Lambert, 2010) and the Storyology Program of the American Friends Service Committee in Charlotte (American Friends Service Committee Office of the Carolinas, 2010), as well as on the *Immigrant Nation* storytelling education guide (Peng, n.d.). Volunteers were available, as needed, to help ELLs with their storytelling projects and with language

explanations. Those exercises included the 6-word story prompts, personal migration maps, and written narratives about pivotal moments in their life in the United States. Storytelling practices also were intended to foster ELLs' ability to make communication choices in conversations, and to pursue their goal of self-improvement through creative expression.

In summary, the topics and content for each workshop were designed to meet participants' needs, as determined in collaboration with administrators of the public library, literacy program directors, and participants. Initial interviews conducted with participants prior to the workshops revealed specific communication challenges that they faced and language skills that they most wanted to improve. Workshop activities were planned to explore participants' cultural models of storytelling and to distinguish their meanings of various types of stories, whether they be folk stories or personal stories. Although the workshops were designed to focus on personal stories, participants were encouraged to embrace multiple models that fit their cultural understanding of storytelling. This approach was useful both for interpreting participants' responses to the storytelling practices and for evaluating workshop effects in ways that were conscious of cultural differences between the United States and ELLs' home countries. Below, I discuss the implementation of these design choices, and how the design changed in the process, based on participants' interaction during the workshops.

Implementation of the Workshop Design

Initial coding and analysis of the data generated two main insights regarding the workshops' design and implementation: timing and unplanned language learning. These insights are useful for considering how the design changed in the process of implementing the intervention, how the design was adapted to suit the goals and needs of each workshop, and

issues that need to be addressed in future interventions. Below, I examine each point and offer examples for it, before discussing the results of the workshops.

Timing of the workshops was one of the most difficult design issues. In planning the workshops, I chose Thursday night because I thought that it might result in more attendance than offering a workshop during a the morning or afternoon of a weekday or on a weekend; moreover, because there was a CIE class offered on Tuesday nights that was well attended, that night, potentially, could draw a similar number of people. I also chose to conduct 75-minute workshops, because that was same length as the CIE groups, meaning that it would be a familiar and similar time commitment for participants, and because the library offered only 90 minutes of free parking.

This timing of the workshops fit with participants' schedules, but every workshop ran longer than planned and seemed rushed or short on time. The planned activities also took longer to complete than expected. For example, the first workshop planned to use the six-word stories as an introduction exercise that might last 15–20 minutes, and then spend more time discussing group goals and U.S. cultural norms for speaking and listening in English. I also had the migration map activity ready in case there was extra time at the end of that session. In actuality, however, the six-word story activity took approximately 45 minutes, as several participants arrived 5–10 minutes late, and they then spent an extended amount of time talking with their volunteer partners before starting their six-word stories. The extended time spent on the first activity meant that there was less time afterwards to discuss group goals and U.S. norms, and the migration map exercise had to be saved for the second week's workshop. A similar pattern happened in each workshop, with, usually, the first part of the workshop taking longer than

expected, resulting in rushing people to finish it and move onto the second part, or having less time than planned for the second half of the workshop.

Another interesting pattern that occurred during the workshops involved frequent instances of “unplanned language learning,” moments that were not part of the communication design but that occurred through natural conversation with or questions asked by participants. Such moments were not negative per se; rather, they were rich points and positive indicators of emergent ways that language learning occurs in natural conversation, and they showed how unplanned moments can generate explicit discussions surrounding cultural meanings and norms in the United States. Those unplanned moments helped me to examine how features of the workshop design involved, on my part, implicit knowledge that I had not taken into account in the design process.

Most instances of unplanned language learning began with a native English speaker, either the facilitator or a volunteer, using a word or phrase with which ELLS were unfamiliar, and one of them then asked what that word meant, which spurred a useful discussion of a topic or feature of language that was not planned for in the design of the workshop. For example, I began the second workshop by asking participants to list words that represented the United States, or words that they associated with U.S. culture. A student mentioned “LGBT,” because, as she pointed out, gay rights were more prominent in the United States than in her home country. I wrote “LGBT” on the board and mentioned that, now, many people use the acronym “LGBTQ,” and someone asked what each letter meant. I explained each one, but because none of the participants were familiar with the word “queer,” I explained briefly its meaning. This material was not something that I anticipated discussing during that workshop but participants did learn new vocabulary and, in the process, some U.S. cultural knowledge.

A similar moment occurred in the same workshop when talking about regional cultures across the West, Midwest, Northeast, and Southern United States, when a volunteer mentioned the word “redneck.” Because ELLs were not familiar with that word, I explained the complicated meanings of “redneck” as a category for a specific type of people, pointing out that, frequently, the term is accompanied by negative connotations about those being referenced.

What stands out from these unplanned language learning moments is the role of the facilitator and native speakers in conveying meaning and language use. There is a lot of power in the facilitator position, because if the facilitator conveys a meaning incorrectly or without explaining it fully, there is the possibility that students could use that word incorrectly in the future and find themselves in an uncomfortable position. One exception to the pattern of native speakers using an unknown word occurred when an ELL participant used the wrong word first without realizing the mistake, and I, as the facilitator, asked her to clarify that word, resulting in her learning its meaning in the process. That moment occurred in the first workshop, when I asked all of the students to write their six-word stories on the board, such that everyone could read them. Lotus, a woman from Iran, wrote her story on the board as, “Mr. Tramp, you did the best,” and the following exchange took place:

Excerpt 2:

- Kellie: Did you wanna say Mr. Trump? (.) You wrote “Tramp.”
 Lotus: ((looking at board)) Oh!
 Kellie: Do you know what tramp means?
 Lotus: No::: ((laughter))
 Kellie: Okay, we can talk about it ((laughter))
 Lotus: Tramp? (.) I’ve never heard that.
 Kellie: It’s okay (.) Do you want to change it?
 Lotus: Eh (.) uh it’s with “u”? Yeah?
 Kellie: Yes.
 Lotus: ((gets up and grabs marker)) Tramp is bad meaning or:::?
 Kellie: Yeah, uh, so it means, like (.) uh, it’s, typically, a word for (.) a man or person-
 Volunteer: =who sleeps around.

- Kellie: Yeah, sleeps with lots of people.
 Lotus: Uh huh ((nods in understanding)).
 Volunteer: So it works. ((laughter))
 Lotus: Okay I will let it- I will let it stay like that ((laughter)), because everybody knows ((laughter)).
 Kellie: Tramp uh (.) it's also a word for a male dog.
 Lotus: Okay, it's a nice word. ((laughter))
 Kellie: There's a Disney movie called *Lady and the Tramp*. uh (.), because the dog is, like (.), flirts with all the ladies.
 Lotus: O::h, yeah, yeah. ((laughter)) We learned something useful. ((laughter))

As this excerpt reveals, several interesting things took place during this interaction. First, I made an effort to clarify the meaning of the contested work, offering Lotus an opportunity to change its spelling, if she wanted it to say “Trump” not “Tramp.” She was about to change that word, as indicated by her getting up and taking the marker, but then she asked what the word “tramp” meant. The pauses in my response to her expressed my hesitation, as I tried to formulate an explanation of the word, using simple language that was both accurate of the word’s definition and appropriate for the context. The volunteer jumped in, offering the explanation of someone “who sleeps around,” and I tried to adapt that comment by saying, “sleeps with lots of people,” because I realized that comment was a euphemism that ELLs might not know. Participants, however, seemed to understand that euphemism, as Lotus nodded, suggesting her understanding of the phrase, and laughing, which indicated that she got the joke of why her misspelling was humorous. That interaction, certainly, was an unplanned language learning experience, because I did not anticipate teaching the meaning of the word “tramp” during that workshop but Lotus’s response that “we learned something useful” demonstrated how such unplanned moments can result in ELLs learning useful cultural knowledge.

Findings

I analyzed the data to assess whether the workshop goals were met, as well as whether and how storytelling and conversational practice affected ELLs’ abilities to have conversations

and to relate to others when speaking English. Multiple data sources, including fieldnotes, workshop videos, post-workshop interviews, and questionnaire responses were analyzed to determine lessons learned about communication design and storytelling practices from this intervention. This section discusses the workshop goals and outcomes that resulted from using storytelling practices, as well as the outcome of the final public event that took place. The theoretical implication of these findings are examined in more depth in Chapter 5.

Workshop Goals

As explained previously, the workshops were designed to (a) involve students in conversations that taught them a new word, phrase, or cultural practice in English; and (b) connect students to each other through relationship-building activities. These goals were reflected in the two parts that comprised each workshop: (a) discussion about U.S. communication norms and English language skills, and (b) activities for students to practice speaking English and/or telling their stories. Although it might seem repetitive to differentiate between the goals and the two workshop components, the communication design approach views goals as being separate from the objects of communication design. That separation also ensures that the actual objects of design—in this case, the workshop plans—align with the design’s overall goals. After analyzing the workshops and participants’ feedback about them, I argue that that both goals were met in each workshop via the two-part design.

The first goal was achieved through both planned and unplanned discussions of U.S. cultural norms and English words, such as the examples, offered previously, of the words “queer” and “redneck” coming up during workshop discussions. The preliminary study that I conducted identified how ELLs were socialized with regard to some implicit norms for conversation in CIE classes; consequently, I wanted workshops to discuss those norms more

explicitly. In the first workshop, when challenges facing students and their goals for the workshop were discussed, U.S. norms for speaking and listening in English also were discussed. Students mentioned the importance of giving everyone a chance to speak and being able to ask questions of everyone, including the facilitator. The second workshop discussed cultural norms that people associate with the United States, and how certain values, such as privacy, independence, and hospitality, are communicated in everyday discourse. For example, a student thought it strange that privacy was important to people in the United States, because they seemed to share a lot of personal details about themselves and often asked people about private matters, such as their relationships and home life. This question led to an interesting discussion about what people in the United States view as private vs. public information, and how they talk about those topics with other people. Moreover, during conversations about U.S. norms, volunteers' contributions added a variety of opinions that supplemented my views of U.S. culture.

In the post-workshop interviews and on questionnaires that students completed about the workshops, many mentioned learning about new words or parts of U.S. culture that they did not know before participating in the workshops. As Lotus, the woman from Iran, commented, "It was interesting for me that I heard about different, um, cultures, and different attitude of the people in the United States." Lotus also said that after learning the word "stereotype" in the first week's workshop, someone used it in a conversation with her that occurred outside of the workshops, and she was excited that she knew what the word meant and the topic about which that person was talking. Li, who was from China, also commented that he learned a lot from the workshops about U.S. culture, including descriptions of "multicultural" and "land of opportunity." When asked about something surprising that he learned, Li talked about the final storytelling event and how one of the public guests described the United States as being

“divided.” As Li explained, “It’s surprising what American people think of their culture. It’s—it’s a—it’s a different view . . . from us.” These quotes show that both the workshops and the final storytelling event contributed to the goal of teaching students about English language and U.S. culture.

The second goal of connecting participants through relationship-building activities was achieved through the part of the workshops that helped ELLs to practice language skills by engaging in storytelling activities. A questionnaire response remarked that the workshops’ most memorable part was “meeting people from other countries and hearing their stories.” As Maria, a woman from Brazil, said during the interview conducted with her, she “learned a lot about other people” and that she enjoyed “making friends from all over the world.” This quote highlights the relational aspect of the workshops and how it connected the ELLs who participated in them. Having additional volunteers, as opposed to CIE groups with only one facilitator, also gave students an opportunity to relate with native English speakers and to practice, in one-on-one conversations, their speaking and listening skills. Every response by participants, during interviews or on the questionnaire, mentioned that they liked having so many volunteers because they were helpful for practicing their English language skills. Several ELLs also commented that they enjoyed hearing volunteers’ experiences and perspectives on U.S. culture.

Storytelling Approach

Analysis of the data indicated that the storytelling approach was useful for meeting both workshop goals. Based on participants’ feedback and interactions during workshops, the storytelling practices in which participants engaged generated discussion of U.S. cultural norms and practices, and they facilitated English language practice that mirrored everyday

conversation. Although some participants discussed being nervous, initially, about sharing stories, later, they acknowledged that the storytelling activities were fun and helpful ways for them to practice speaking English and to relate to others.

Discussion of cultural norms and practices, both from the United States and ELLs' home countries, also was present in unique ways during each of the storytelling activities. As noted previously, participants mentioned that storytelling in the United States is a distinct practice that is different from how people communicate in their home countries. The discussion of folk stories, in particular, was useful for discussing cultural norms, because all folk stories contain value and/or moral messages. I began that conversation by asking volunteers to share folk stories that they remember, and they shared stories, such as "The Tortoise and the Hare," "Goldilocks," and "The Boy Who Cried Wolf." After each story was told, we discussed its moral meanings, and how they pointed to U.S. cultural values. I asked ELLs about folk stories that they heard growing up in their home countries, and we discussed how those stories expressed similar or different values from U.S. folk stories. A participant mentioned that he found "many similarities in the folk stories between [our cultures], so I think I'm getting closer to the American culture." In workshops offered during the third and fourth weeks, discussions centered on styles of storytelling and how they vary culturally, such as with respect to story organization (e.g., temporal or topical) and variations in speakers' pace and volume when telling stories. The purpose of that discussion was to discuss explicitly U.S. communication norms that, frequently, are taught in more implicit ways.

The second result of the storytelling method was that it facilitated English language practice in ways that mirrored everyday conversation and narrative communication. When asked

in the post-workshop interview about the primary purpose of the workshop and what he learned, Li remarked:

It's, uh, interesting (.), uh, because we learn many things in every workshop, and, uh, it's also (.), mm, needs some effort, because to make, uh (.), to tell stories fluently takes some effort. . . . Before the workshop, I don't know how to tell story, and, uh, from workshop, I know, like, uh, uh, if we can like make a six-word story first and then go into detail, and uh, also we can, like, uh, there's a curve, like a—like an arc.

Before the workshops, Li told me that he was very shy and struggled with self-confidence when speaking English. His comment that “to tell stories fluently takes some effort” reflected how many ELLs need to develop that skill, especially when speaking in a new language. In that quote, Li referred to both the six-word story activity from the first workshop and the storytelling elements activity from the third workshop. The six-word story activity was intended to show that people do not need to know or use a lot of words to tell a good story, with Li referencing that point when he mentioned that a person can start with a “six-word story first and then go into detail.” The curve and arc of stories to which he referred was from the third workshop, when participants were given a worksheet with a story arc that showed how, at least in most Western and U.S. literature, there is a rising action, followed by a climax, and ending in a falling action. The purpose of that activity was to offer a format that participants could use to tell a story, if they wanted to follow a basic, linear structure. During the interview conducted with Li, he said that he would use what he learned about telling stories in his daily life and at work, because it “inspires me to say more.” His comment also suggested that the storytelling workshops activities promoted participants' confidence in sharing their stories with others.

Li also mentioned during the interview that he found the activities and worksheets particularly useful, because he liked that they “helped us to organize the story” and were “task-driven.” His points are valuable because although some students like the free-flowing format of CIE groups, others, such as Li, wanted more specific instructions or tasks than were employed in those groups. I tried to blend both of those elements in the workshops, by providing participants with materials and activities, as well as engaging in open conversation and discussion. Incorporating both styles of learning, thus, worked well with this participant population (and they may with other populations as well).

Final Public Event

The final storytelling event after the workshops was intended as an opportunity for participants to share what they learned in the workshops. Due to scheduling conflicts with and lack of promotion of the final storytelling event, the event was of a smaller size, with regard to both participants and attendees, than I anticipated originally. Only two participants and seven community members attended.

Because I knew ahead of time that only a few participants were presenting, I designed this small gathering to mirror the format of the workshops in terms of structuring intimate conversations between participants and attendees. The event began by discussing two questions that I posed to attendees (and that had been discussed in the workshops and, thus, were familiar to presenters): “What is one word you would use to describe the United States?” and “What is something that makes you nervous or scared?” Attendees then wrote a six-word story about a significant moment or part of their life (a workshop activity that ELLs had done) and shared (and explained) their story with everyone. Finally, the two ELLs who attended each shared a folk story from his or her home country, with that activity saved for last because one of them said that

he was nervous and did not want to go first; hence, engaging first in the other activities gave him time to feel comfortable enough to share his story, which he did.

This design turned out to be beneficial for participants, because they were very nervous about sharing their stories with people they did not know. Both participants presented folk stories from their countries, one from China and the other from Mexico. Later, when I interviewed those participants separately, they both said that they wanted to tell a folk story, instead of a personal story from their lives, because the event offered them an opportunity to share their culture with attendees. Hence, sharing cultural knowledge and identity was another benefit of the workshop storytelling practices.

If I conducted a similar public event again, I might alter it in one of two ways: (a) reproducing and improving the small group format, or (b) making it a larger presentation, with more workshop participants presenting stories, specifically, about their experiences as migrants and as ELLs. With regard to the first point, the small group of people who attended the event was beneficial in that it reflected the size of CIE groups and it produced an interactive, dialogic experience between ELLs and attendees, which was important given that the final event was intended to provide ELLs with the opportunity to share their stories and to speak with native speakers. The event, however, could be improved by having a few more people attend and interacting in several small groups (e.g., of 4–5 people), to generate even more conversation among them than what occurred at this event.

Alternatively, if the public event was intended to support immigration or to create a larger forum for discussion of migration, it could be planned such that participants gave formal presentations that consisted of stories about their experiences as migrants and as ELLs. In that case, the workshops would need to provide students with targeted instruction about formal public

speaking presentations, as opposed to them focusing on conversation. In the intervention that was conducted in this research project, because the workshops were designed to socialize ELLs to U.S. norms and values, the target of socialization did not focus much on external audiences per se, or, more specifically, on native speakers. The workshops and the public event easily could be altered in future interventions to focus more on outreach to native speakers and other local community members. As enacted, however, the small public event that occurred benefited ELLs and audience members in the ways described, and it accomplished the workshops' goal of engaging both groups in storytelling.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated how communication design proved to be a useful framework for analyzing the implementation of the communication intervention that I conducted. The CuDA hubs of meaning that were analyzed in the preliminary study became frameworks for the two goals of the intervention: (a) engaging in conversation that taught ELL students a new word, phrase, or cultural practice in English; and (b) using relationship-building activities to connect students together. Those goals then were considered throughout the implementation of the intervention, with results showing how the design enabled certain communication outcomes to occur. Although the workshops' timing and unplanned language learning that occurred during them created unforeseen issues, students' feedback about the workshops was positive, and it indicated that both workshop goals were met. The storytelling practices also were beneficial for achieving those goals, and they produced promising results for future language education. Given this description and analysis of the intervention, the final chapter discusses the significance of this research, especially with regard to its theoretical and practical implications for conducting communication activism research interventions to promote social justice.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This thesis project constitutes communication activism for social justice research (CAR) that involved me, as a researcher, employing a communication intervention to aid members of a population (migrants who were English language learners; ELLs) to create and share stories with members of the dominant population, to, hopefully, counter negative stereotypes that circulate in popular culture about migrants. Prior to the intervention study, a preliminary study, which used ethnography of communication (EC) and cultural discourse analysis (CuDA), was conducted to explore situated meanings of communication in the speech community of English language education. By using findings obtained from that preliminary study to design, implement, and study storytelling workshops in which ELLs participated, the intervention study demonstrates how EC and CuDA can inform interventions, and the study shows how communication design can be used to plan and analyze results of an intervention. The intervention study also shows how English language education and, in particular, teaching ELLs about U.S. cultural communicative practices, can be enhanced through the use of storytelling. Finally, the project reveals important lessons learned about engaging in CAR. This chapter discusses this thesis project with regard to each of these areas, identifies potential limitations that characterized the study, and offers suggestions for future research directions.

Cultural Discourse Analysis and Applied Communication Research

Hymes (1972) considered EC to be practical work because it dealt directly with the social world, provided local knowledge about a community, and could detect conditions and possibilities for social change. Using that logic, Sprain and Boromisza-Habashi (2013) suggested that ethnographers of communication “contribute to applied research projects by using

ethnographic knowledge to build cultural competence and design strategic action” (p. 183).

These practical features of EC research were evident in the preliminary study, which described and interpreted logics of communication among ELLs in the Conversations in in English (CIE) groups, and then used that knowledge to design an intervention that was relevant strategically and culturally for the library’s ELL community.

CuDA, derived from EC principles, is equally useful for generating local knowledge that is conscious of cultural practices and discourses (Carbaugh, 2007). Despite CuDA’s practical nature, however, few scholars have employed it to conduct applied communication research, and this study was intended to fill that gap. CuDA asks the central question of how communication is shaped as a cultural practice, and Chapter 3 analyzed how the preliminary study revealed that conversation in the CIE groups is communicated as a distinct U.S. cultural practice, and how that practice is connected to meanings of acting and relating, from the perspective of ELLs. That research also found that because conversation in the United States (as it is in all countries) is a unique cultural practice, ELLs experience discrimination and misunderstandings when they cannot communicate with others in line with U.S. cultural norms for conversation. Although CIE groups socialize ELLs into the cultural practice of conversation in the United States, because that socialization is done implicitly, and not explicitly, it poses challenges for learning those U.S. cultural communication norms. Once I had done descriptive work to understand the meaning of conversation as a cultural practice, and difficulties that characterized CIE groups with regard to communicating U.S. cultural norms, I was well equipped to address those challenges by conducting an applied communication intervention study that sought to aid ELLs’ learning of English within the context of U.S. cultural norms of conversation.

Most important, because CuDA “focuses inquiries on communication as a practice and culture as emergent in practices” (Carbaugh, 2007, p. 169), it enables the design of communication interventions that are conscious of cultural practices and their meanings to participants. If the storytelling workshops that comprised the intervention study that I conducted were designed without having done the preliminary study, I might not have understood how important the conversational practice was for students to improve their language skills and to relate to each other. I might have inferred participants’ meanings of the practice, but the workshops might have focused on grammar or language practices, which was less important than were participants’ relational goals. Additionally, because I considered U.S. conversation as a normative cultural practice, the workshops focused explicitly on those norms. Once ELLs realized the influence of U.S. culture on everyday communications in the United States, they understood that their difficulties with having conversations in English were not solely because of their language ability but also because of their cultural differences with native English speakers and their lack of understanding of U.S. cultural norms. Addressing both language and cultural knowledge, thus, provided a comprehensive learning experience that addressed ELLs’ communication needs better than does traditional language education.

Both EC and CuDA research, however, have been criticized for being limited to the description and interpretation of phenomena. Although those are important goals of both EC and CuDA, as the intervention showed, findings obtained from them can be instrumental for designing intervention-oriented applied communication research. Applied communication research, on the other hand, has been criticized for focusing on the explication of outcomes and not recognizing and discussing sufficiently the research process that leads to those results (see, e.g., Witteborn et al., 2013). This thesis project privileged both the means and the ends of this

research, viewing the research processes of interpreting the scene and people, and conducting the resulting intervention, as being equally important.

With regard to the research approach, Carbaugh (2007) described five modes of inquiry that researchers employing CuDA can take: theoretical, descriptive, interpretive, comparative, and critical. Carbaugh (2007) argued that the first three modes are necessary for CuDA research, whereas the last two modes are possible but are not required. As Sprain and Boromisza-Habashi (2013) noted, increasingly, EC scholars are working in a sixth applied mode that is characterized by “a co-orientation to a social problem with others at the table . . . [and] a commitment to seek a workable solution with them for that problem” (p. 185). The applied mode requires taking some critical steps to evaluate how observed cultural practices generate certain outcomes, and then, at the very least, offering recommendations (see Chapter 1 regarding applied communication research), and, more important for the purposes of this thesis project, engaging in interventions that are relevant culturally for improving those interactions. Hence, although CuDA should maintain its commitment to describing and interpreting communicative practices from participants’ perspectives, prior to critical appraisal of those practices, once those steps have been taken, scholars can use the descriptive knowledge obtained to intervene in ways that are intended to be beneficial for that scene and people in it. I accomplished that goal, as explained in the next section, through the use of communication design to evaluate which intervention communicative practices, potentially, would generate positive results for participants.

Communication Design

Chapter 4 explored how communication design was a useful approach for creating and analyzing communication processes that shaped possibilities for participants’ interaction in the storytelling workshops. Communication design is concerned with theory’s consequences for

practice, but it recognizes that “theoretical concepts and principles do not translate into practical courses of action in straightforward or predictable ways” (Aakhus, 2007, p. 115). In the communication design of the intervention conducted in this research project, I translated knowledge that was obtained from the preliminary study into the decision to conduct a storytelling workshop intervention and into processes and practices that characterized that intervention. That translation process used CuDA’s hubs of acting and relating, which were prominent hubs of meaning regarding conversation in CIE groups, to inform the two primary goals for the workshops, as well as the two parts that comprised each workshop lesson plan. Thus, the design of the intervention was an attempt to have both theory inform practice, and practice inform theory.

Due to the reciprocal relationship between theory and practice, design, itself, is a practice to be understood, theorized, and developed. Jackson and Aakhus (2014) linked the practical and theoretical nature of communication design to Craig’s (1999) constitutive meta-model for communication, in that every theory of communication offers a particular way of constituting, or designing, the process of communication; thus, each theory suggests what elements of communication are designable. For example, as discussed previously, although CuDA’s theoretical commitments to observation and interpretation have limited CuDA’s potential to be an applied mode of research, those same theoretical commitments uphold that cultural meaning is constituted through communication; hence, cultural practices can be influenced by communication design and intervention.

Despite the prominence of design work and practical intervention being conducted by communication scholars, there still is relatively little reflection on the design process (Jackson & Aakhus, 2014). By focusing a substantial portion of this thesis on the design of the storytelling

workshops, I sought to direct attention to design as an essential practice of applied communication research, and, simultaneously, to contribute to theorizing how design aids the implementation and analysis of communication interventions. As Harrison (2014) claimed:

Communication design serves as a lens that helps focus and redefine what is possible in difficult interaction . . . [therefore,] a design approach acts as an integrative perspective for finding the relevance of theory to a specific site of intervention. (p. 136).

This thesis, thus, contributes to the growing body of communication design scholarship by providing an example of how design can inform intervention-oriented applied communication research. The design also was crucial for considering, as discussed next, how certain activities and practices facilitated the goals for English language learning in the storytelling workshops.

English Language Education and Storytelling Practices

Both the preliminary study and the intervention research that was conducted for this thesis project contribute valuable knowledge to the study of English language education. As discussed in Chapter 2, a principal criticism of many English as a Second Language (ESL) programs is that they do not address cultural norms and expectations that characterize language and communication; consequently, a sociocultural approach to language education is needed, and the preliminary study provided evidence of the need for a sociocultural approach. For example, although CIE groups offer a unique, relational means for ELLs to practice their speaking and listening skills, ELLs in those groups (and in U.S. life) are expected to understand and adapt to U.S. cultural norms that are not discussed explicitly in those groups. ELLs also experienced discrimination and/or shame regarding their language abilities and identities as migrants. A sociocultural approach accounts for both internal (within the language class) and external (outside the class) factors that affect the learning process (van Compernelle & Williams, 2013).

As Hymes (1972) noted, the interaction of language with social life is a matter of human action “based on a knowledge, sometimes conscious, often unconscious, that enables persons to use a language” (p. 53). Using a language requires specific knowledge of acting and relating through that language, and CIE groups socialize ELL students to understand that knowledge in implicit ways. Thus, findings from the preliminary study that I conducted, thus, advance scholarship on language education by supporting scholars’ call for ESL programs that are conscious of how cultural and social practices influence the education process (see, e.g., Smith et al., 2004; van Compernelle & Williams, 2013).

Workshops conducted for this study focused on, and reveal benefits of, storytelling practices as an intervention for improving ELLs’ communication. Participants responded positively to the workshops’ storytelling activities; many joined the workshops because they were interested in the storytelling aspect, and several told me that it was the most memorable part of the workshops. Undoubtedly, ELLs found storytelling to be memorable because it offers several benefits for helping them, simultaneously, to learn English and to adapt to the new U.S. culture, by both improving their practical language skills and building among them a sense of community. Beyond accomplishing language learning goals, storytelling contributes to students’ cultural socialization, by orienting them to values, histories, and meanings that are significant to members of specific groups/communities (Sunwolf, 2004). This thesis project, thus, provided evidence of how storytelling can teach ELLs about U.S. culture and cultural practices of communication, as well as how storytelling promotes a dialogic relationship that values the mutual exchange of culture and acknowledges migrants’ agency to influence the new community within which they live.

With regard to practical implications of findings obtained from this research project, ESL educators could increase their reflexivity regarding whether they teach communication norms implicitly or explicitly in their classes. The storytelling methods that were used in this intervention also can be implemented in language education programs to improve ELLs' cultural knowledge, conversational skills, and relational abilities. Beyond language education, this research could be useful for employers to understand more fully that communication challenges facing migrants are not just a matter of language skill but that they also are connected to migrants' need for explicit cultural knowledge about how to relate to others, especially those from the host country, in conversation. Moreover, as discussed next, the storytelling approach also serves well the purposes and goals of CAR scholarship.

Communication Activism for Social Justice Scholarship

This project fulfilled the purposes of CAR research by engaging with a population, migrant who are ELLs, that is marginalized, and using communication theory and practice to provide support for that population's needs. There are several lessons to be learned from this study regarding CAR, including the use of storytelling interventions, difficulty of documenting effects that are produced by social justice interventions, role of scholar-activists engaged in short-term interventions, and considerations when working with migrants and ELLs. I discuss each of these lessons and offer recommendations for other researchers considering engaging in similar CAR interventions.

Storytelling/narrative practices have been used in a number of CAR studies (see, e.g., McHale, 2007; Sunwolf, 2007; Walker & Curry, 2007), but most of those studies focused on the persuasive power of storytelling to advocate for changing public perceptions or opinions regarding social justice issues/policies. In comparison, this study used storytelling as a method

to aid ELLs to learn the language and to share themselves through stories that they told at the final event that included a public audience. Stories that ELLs told at that event were folk stories from their native country, and not personal narratives about discrimination or challenges they faced in the United States. Although the latter type of story might have generated a stronger message promoting social justice, I did not want to influence students' stories, and, thus, I encouraged them to choose a story that was important to them. I also was limited by the relatively short period of time in which this intervention took place, as well as by participants' limited English language ability; hence, it was easier for them to tell a folk story with which they were comfortable instead of engaging the complexity of, for instance, their migration experiences or the discrimination practices directed at them in the United States.

Even given that limitation, the storytelling employed in this study served both as a form of social justice communication “pre-activism” and as social justice communication activism. First, participants said during interviews conducted with them that the storytelling practices helped them to gain confidence to share their experiences with others. Second, the public event provided an opportunity for participants to share about themselves and their native country, as well as to interact with audience members in conversations about themselves. To the extent that the event provided members of this often marginalized and oppressed population with an opportunity to share and humanize themselves, it met the purposes of social justice (Ortiz Juarez-Paz, 2017).

Although ELLs spoke about how the storytelling intervention and public event aided them, one challenge of CAR that, certainly, characterized this study is the difficulty of documenting intervention effects with regard to the social justice issue being addressed. Methods that were employed to evaluate effects of the workshop intervention were minimal,

consisting of interviews conducted with participants within 1 month of completing the intervention, and the questionnaire that was sent to participants who could not be interviewed; consequently, no information was obtained regarding whether and how the workshops influenced participants' everyday interactions with U.S. native speakers, including whether they actually advocated for themselves using the communication knowledge that they gained from the workshops. Sunwolf (2007) faced a similar dilemma when she conducted storytelling workshops with antideath penalty trial lawyers but did not know whether those lawyers put the knowledge that was gained from the workshops into practice. Because she did not know the eventual effects of her intervention, Sunwolf (2007) labeled herself as an "itinerate activist" who "is challenged to be content with giving extraordinary energy to people who the activist probably will never see or hear from again" (p. 318). Offering workshops as a form of social justice intervention, and, especially, short-term workshops, therefore, results in researchers not knowing effects of their interventions. Hopefully, the intervention employed in this thesis project contributes to the long-term social justice goals of migrant ELLs gaining needed language and relational communication skills, to adapt to and represent themselves in conversations, especially if and when they experience any form of discrimination, marginalization, or oppression.

Given the type of communication intervention that I conducted (e.g., short-term workshops), forming a partnership with site members and conducting a preliminary study to obtain knowledge that informed the workshops were crucial for the intervention's success. Interventions vary, of course, based on sites and participants, but in all cases, preliminary research aids understanding those sites and participants, information that then can be used to design an intervention to meet their needs. As Yep (2008) noted, "Interventions are open-ended, conditional, and heterogeneous depending on the nature, demands, and expectations of the social,

emotional, political, and economic contexts” (p. 198). Understanding important contexts for this intervention, including the library program’s goals and participants’ needs, helped me to design an intervention that worked within that context.

Part of the context that operated in this particular site was the range of participants’ English language skills and educational background, in that some people had taken more English language classes than had others. For scholars working with populations that might be similar to the ELLs and migrants language learners with whom I worked, it is important to recognize how population members’ language abilities might constrain what can be achieved. Many workshops interventions that have been employed in applied communication research, in general, and CAR, in particular, have been conducted with highly educated populations, such as Sunwolf’s (2007) workshops for anti-death penalty defense attorneys or Carey’s (2012) workshops for stakeholders (e.g., police and border agents) involved in preventing human trafficking on the border of Nepal and India; I know of no workshops that have been conducted (in English) with populations that are learning to speak English. In this study, participants’ widely varying language ability meant that some of them had relatively very small English vocabularies, which limited conversations in English and required significant time to explain simple concepts or stories. In the preliminary study and in the workshops conducted for the intervention study, a number of participants mentioned their English language level as a source of frustration, because more advanced students saw themselves as being held back by those who were English language beginners. However, because I did not have resources to conduct workshops based on ELLs’ English language ability, I had to work around that issue in the workshops. Having volunteers present during workshops was helpful for managing this issue, because students got to practice

speaking one-on-one with a native English speaker who accommodated to meet their language ability.

As this project showed, CAR scholars confront multiple issues and challenges involved in acquiring knowledge of sites and people with whom they work, designing culturally appropriate effective interventions that meet people's needs, and assessing effects of their interventions. In the case of this project, conducting the preliminary study was essential for designing an intervention that tried to manage those issues, but as with all such interventions, and research, in general, as discussed next, there were some important limitations that characterized this research project.

Limitations of the Research Project

Although this project yielded some important findings and insights about topics covered in this chapter (and other chapters), those insights need to be interpreted in light of important limitations that, potentially, characterized this project. As explained below, because this project was an ambitious attempt to conduct both descriptive and intervention-oriented applied communication research, the project took a significant amount of planning and fieldwork. The study was constrained by, among other things, timing, data-collection methods, and the structure of the final storytelling event, all of which could be improved or altered for future research.

The workshops' timing, as discussed in Chapter 4, presented multiple challenges for the content that could be covered in them and the amount of time that was needed to engage participants. Because workshops were limited to 75 minutes (in line with the library's typical class offering), many activities and conversations were rushed, and, hence, they not given as much attention as they deserved. Spreading the workshops out to once a week for 4 weeks also made it difficult for people to attend all four workshops. To address both of these concerns, it

might be better to conduct workshops over two longer sessions on a weekend, perhaps for 5 hours on a Saturday and on a Sunday. However, that time frame still would be significant time commitment that might prevent some people from participating. In this study, even though the timing of workshops was a challenge for some people, it made sense for the ELLs at that site, because it was similar to CIE classes that they took and, therefore, fit within their time expectations.

With regard to the data-collection methods, the intervention study was limited by having only one researcher, inconsistent student attendance at workshops, and limited feedback from participants about the workshops. Because I was the sole researcher, there was the possibility that my role as both facilitator and interviewer could have limited the feedback that participants offered about the workshops, because they might not have wanted to say anything negative about them to the person who led them. Thus, it would have been better to have a person lead the workshops and another person conduct interviews that asked about participants' views of the workshops.

The inconsistent student workshop attendance also made it difficult to compare participants' experiences, because not everyone went to all four workshops and the final storytelling event. Two participants went to all four workshops and the final storytelling event, and I interviewed both of them afterwards. Other participants attended an average of three workshops, but they were not able to come to the storytelling event. This difference in attendance meant that some participants, compared to others, had less knowledge of the workshops' content; consequently, undoubtedly, their feedback about the workshops was not as comprehensive as those who participated in all of them.

Another limitation was that I did not receive feedback from every workshop participated; moreover, the feedback obtained differed depending on whether it came from interviews conducted with them or from the questionnaire that they completed. In interviews, I was able to ask additional questions and generate additional responses from interviewees, but most of the questionnaire responses were significantly shorter in length. Ideally, it would be useful to create questionnaire that could be employed before and after the workshops, to measure changes in participants' perceived language ability and U.S. cultural knowledge, and whether they formed any relationships or connections in the process of completing the workshops. Acquiring all participants' feedback also would be important to ensure that the information obtained represented the entire group of participants.

Lastly, the final storytelling event could have been improved to achieve better the project's social justice goals. The storytelling event was conceptualized as a space and time for the ELLs who participated to share their stories with members of the broader local community, in the hope of reducing stigma around being an ELL, and encouraging relationships among ELLs and between ELLs and those community members who attended the event. Unfortunately, due to the timing of the event and how it was promoted through advertising, only a small number of community members attended that event, and only two ELLs participated. Part of the reason for the small number of people at that event was that although the library and, specifically, its literacy program were supposed to publicize the event extensively through their social media channels, that task got backlogged, and it was difficult for me, as an outsider to the library organization, to intervene into that problem. There also was confusion on the part of both ELLs and, probably, members of the public, regarding what the event was about, and people, generally, are hesitant to come to events when they do not know what they are about, exactly. That

confusion could have been solved if ELLs had been given during the workshops more specific guidelines about that public event, and through more targeted marketing of it. Additionally, as a graduate student researcher, I did not have the capacity to make the event a bigger production. However, having a smaller event than was planned initially proved beneficial in some ways, because it created less pressure for the ELLs who shared their stories, and it provided them with one-on-one interactions with audience members. Thus, when similar events are conducted in the future, researchers and organizers should consider carefully those events' goals and the size of audience that will accomplish best those goal.

Future Research Directions

There is significant potential for extending this research in the future. For instance, based on limitations that were identified, additional workshops could be conducted to investigate effects of varying time schedules for offering workshops, workshop lesson plans, and participants' ages and/or language abilities. As mentioned previously, timing of the workshops could be adjusted to fit within a single weekend, or they could accommodate longer sessions, which, potentially, would make them less rushed. New activities and conversational topics, such as U.S. history and/or politics, could be incorporated, to investigate whether those topics would lead to more social justice-oriented interactions among ELLs. It also would be beneficial to conduct a longitudinal study that tracked ELLs' changes in communication over an extended period of time, before and after the workshops, to assess effects of the workshops with regard to whether and how participants use what they learned from the workshops in their everyday interactions. Using mixed methods, including some quantitative assessment, in addition to qualitative data, also could generate useful information about whether and how workshop participation changed ELLs' communicative practices. Additionally, these workshops were

conducted with adults, but a simplified version could be used for ELLs who are children, to see how various age groups respond to the intervention.

In addition to these practical advances, it is important to continue to theorize how ethnographic knowledge, and, especially, that obtained from using CuDA, can contribute to applied communication scholarship. Applied communication researchers also would benefit from using a communication design approach to elucidate how theory can contribute to their intervention practices, and to consider how choices that are made during interventions both enable and constrain certain outcomes. Such knowledge will contribute to conducting more effective CAR.

Conclusion

The preliminary study that was conducted demonstrated the value of using the ethnography of communication and cultural discourse analysis for understanding situated meanings of communication in the Conversations in English groups. That study revealed that learning in those groups both was skill based (connected to meanings of action) and based on relationships (connected to meanings of relating). English language learners viewed conversation in the Conversation in English groups as fulfilling the educational purpose of learning speaking and listening skills, which could be considered an individual goal; however, they also understood conversation as a means for relating to others that made it more than a typical vocabulary lesson, which oriented them to a communal experience. The development of language skills accomplished individual goals for conversation; the opportunity to relate to others built on communal goals for sharing, to develop an open, accepting community. Hence, Conversation in English groups socialize students through language to understand the larger

premise that communicating in the United States requires both language and relational skills, and, thereby, those groups support both individual and communal goals.

However, the preliminary study also uncovered multiple challenges that English language learners encounter, both in the Conversation in English groups and as migrants in the United States. In the Conversation in English groups, facilitators expected English language learners to understand and accommodate to implicit U.S. norms of communication, creating difficulty and frustration for those who came to those groups and were unfamiliar with those norms. Being an English language learner and a migrant in the United States also is stigmatized in popular culture and everyday discourse (see, e.g., De Fina & King, 2011; Early & Norton, 2012; Urban & Orbe, 2010). Similarly, English language learners often experience fear and discrimination because of their status as foreigners or migrants. Based on their experiences, most English language learners viewed being a non-native speaker as a significant obstacle to success in their careers and to adapting to life in the United States, showing how language education is a social justice issue.

The storytelling workshops that I conducted in this applied communication activism for social justice research attempted to address these needs by supporting participants' goals for improving their language skills and building a community. At the same time, the workshops discussed explicit U.S. communication norms and cultural practices that provided English language learners with knowledge that they need to be successful communicators in English in the United States, which, hopefully, will assist their adaptation to the United States. This project, thus, demonstrated how the ethnography of communication and cultural discourse analysis can contribute to communication activism research, advanced the practice of communication design, and promoted sociocultural approaches to language education through the use of storytelling. As

one of the workshop participants said in the final interview, “The thing that it is very important for you is that you can tell your story, you can be self-confident, and when everybody can understand you, that’s enough; you can talk with them.”

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APPENDIX A:

PRELIMINARY STUDY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR STUDENTS

Introduction:

The purpose of these interviews is to gather information for a research project I'm working on as part of a graduate class. I chose to observe the Conversations in English groups to understand how United States culture is shared during conversation and in language learning settings. In this interview, I would like to ask you questions about your experience in the group, your process of learning English, and how that relates to your life in the United States. Your name will not be used in any written papers, to make sure that no one can identify you with your answers.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Are you okay with me recording the audio of our conversation?

Background Information

1. Where are you from?
2. What is your native language?
3. How long have you lived in the United States?
 - a. Probe: Why did you move to the United States?
 - b. Probe: How long are you planning to stay in the United States?

Topic 1: English Language Learning

1. When did you first start learning English?
2. Why do you want to learn English?
3. What challenges have you had trying to learn English?
4. How often do you speak English outside of this group?
5. When do you speak your native language and when do you speak English?
 - a. Probe: In what contexts? Why?

Topic 2: Cultural Identity & Communication

1. What has your experience living in the United States been like?
 - a. Probe: What challenges have you faced?
 - b. Probe: What positive experiences have you had?
2. Are there differences between the way you speak to people in your home country compared to how you speak to people in the United States?
 - a. Probe: Like what?
3. What does it mean to have a "conversation" in your home country?
 - a. Is it different than having a "conversation" here in the United States?
4. When you are living in your home country, are there things you might say or talk about that you wouldn't say in the United States? Or vice versa?
5. How often do you talk to people here in the United States about your home country?
 - a. What do you typically tell people about your home country?
 - b. What stereotypes do people have about your home country?
 - c. Do you try to correct those stereotypes?
 - i. If yes, how?
 - ii. If no, why not?

Topic 3: Conversations in English groups

1. Why did you decide to join the Conversations in English groups?
 - a. Probe: How long have you been coming? And how often?
2. Have you tried other language learning classes or groups?
 - a. Probe: How were those different or similar to this group?
3. Are there classes like this in your home country, where people have conversations?
 - a. How do most people learn to speak a new language?
4. If you were telling a friend about the group, how would you describe it?
 - a. Probe: What is the purpose of the group?
5. Are you comfortable speaking in the class?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. How do you feel about interacting with the other students in the class?
 - c. Could you tell a story of a time when you have not been comfortable in the class?
6. Have the groups been helpful for you?
 - a. Probe: In what ways has the group helped or not helped?
7. Do the facilitators ever correct you in class? Do you want them to or no?
 - a. Are there other things you wish the facilitators would do more? Or do less?
8. What have you learned in the conversation groups?
 - a. Probe: Have you learned about things other than language?
 - b. Probe: Can you give me an example of something you learned about United States culture? Anything surprising?
9. How often do you discuss your home country in the group?
 - a. What challenges do you have when describing your home country to others?
10. Has there been anything that happened in the class that surprised you?
11. What do you like about this class?
12. If you could change something about the class, what would you change?

APPENDIX B:

PRELIMINARY STUDY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR FACILITATORS

Introduction:

The purpose of these interviews is to gather information for a research project I'm working on as part of a graduate class. I chose to observe the Conversations in English groups to understand how cultural identities and differences are shared during conversation and in language learning settings. In this interview, I would like to ask you questions about your experience facilitating the CIE group, your goals for the participants, and how you perceive the students' experience in the groups. Your name will not be used in any written papers, to make sure that no one can identify you with your answers.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Are you okay with me recording the audio of our conversation?

Background Information:

1. Where are you from originally?
2. How long have you been teaching the Conversation in English classes at the library?
3. Do you teach anywhere else, or in any other capacity?
4. Why did you decide to volunteer for this program?

Topic 1: Facilitation Strategies

1. How would you describe your role as facilitator of the conversation group?
2. What are your goals for the class?
3. How do you handle misunderstanding in the class?
 - a. Because of language?
 - b. Because of cultural differences?
4. What kind of challenges are there in the class?
 - a. Are any challenges caused by certain types of students?
 - b. What challenges do students face?

Topic 2: Student Experience

1. How is this class different for students than other ESL classes?
2. What is the primary demographic or types of students that participate?
3. How do they hear about the group?
4. How do students benefit from participating in this class?

APPENDIX C:

PRELIMINARY STUDY VERBAL CONSENT SCRIPT

Title of research study: An Ethnographic Study of Identity in English Conversation Groups

Investigator: Kellie Brownlee, Master's Student, CU Boulder—Communication Studies

Why is this research being done?

This research study is trying to understand how English language learners communicate their individual and cultural identities through the Conversations in English groups at the library. By participating, you can help improve knowledge related to English language learners.

What should I know about a research study?

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide to participate.

Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, you may talk to the researcher or the faculty advisor using the contact information provided to you on the information sheet.

This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (“IRB”). You can also contact them using the information listed on the information sheet.

How long will the research last?

I will be observing the CIE groups a few times each week for the next few months. If you choose to participate, you are not required to come every week. Participation in the research only requires participating in the conversation group like you normally would.

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?

- You will be observed during the weekly CIE groups at the library.
- Your name will be kept confidential.
- You may be asked to participate in an individual interview, but it is voluntary, and you are allowed to refuse.
- The researcher will take notes on your participation and dialogue in the group, some of which may be shared in the final report or presentation of the research.
- There is little risk involved and you are not going to be asked to do or say anything that makes you uncomfortable or puts you in danger.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research?

You can refuse to participate in the research at any time and it will not be held against you.

If you do not want to participate in the research, you can inform the researcher and she will leave the group and not observe any class that you attend so that you can continue participating as normal.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?

You can leave the research at any time it will not be held against you.

If you decide to leave the research and do not want to be included in the final report, contact the researcher so that any collected data regarding your participation can be withdrawn or omitted.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

Efforts will be made to limit the use of your personal information, including in the research study and records, to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy.

APPENDIX D:

PRELIMINARY STUDY WRITTEN CONSENT DOCUMENT

Title of research study: Learning Beyond Language: An Ethnographic Study of English Conversation Groups

Investigator: Kellie Brownlee, Master's Student, CU Boulder—Communication Studies

Why am I being invited to take part in a research study?

We invite you to take part in this research study because you are over the age of 18 and you participate in the Conversations in English groups at the library. The research study seeks to understand how these classes teach participants about what it means to communicate in English and in the United States. By participating, you can help advance knowledge related to English language learners.

What should I know about a research study?

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to the researcher, Kellie Brownlee, by emailing kellie.brownlee@colorado.edu or the faculty advisor Dr. Leah Sprain at leah.sprain@colorado.edu in the Department of Communication at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (“IRB”). You may talk to them at (303) 735-3702 or irbadmin@colorado.edu if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this study is to examine how English language learners participate in conversational practice and learn how to communicate in the United States. The goal is to understand how the experience of language learning through conversation teaches students about cultural norms and communication.

It is important to understand how language and cultural experiences affect non-immigrants in the United States, both to help them adjust during their time in the country and to help American teachers, employers, or community members understand the challenges of intercultural interaction so that they might improve their communication practices accordingly. This will build on other research related to cultural communication discourse and language socialization by offering a case study that examines those elements within the framework of learning English through conversational practice.

How long will the research last?

The research is scheduled to last eight months, taking place from October 2016 to May 2017.

How many people will be studied?

We expect about 55 people will be in this research study at the Conversations in English groups at the library.

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?

- You will be observed during the weekly CIE groups at the library.
- Your name will be kept confidential.
- You may be asked to participate in an individual interview, but it is voluntary and you are allowed to refuse.
- The researcher will take notes on your participation and dialogue in the group, some of which may be shared in the final report or presentation of the research.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research?

You can refuse to participate in the research at any time and it will not be held against you.

If you do not want to participate in the research, you can inform the researcher and she will leave the group and not observe any class that you attend so that you can continue participating as normal.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?

You can leave the research at any time it will not be held against you.

If you decide to leave the research and do not want to be included in the final report, contact the researcher so that any collected data regarding your participation can be withdrawn or omitted.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information, including research study and records, to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB and other representatives of this organization.

What else do I need to know?

If you would like to know the results of the research or to see the final report, you can contact the researcher at kellie.brownlee@colorado.edu and request a copy.

Signature Block for Capable Adult

Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research.

_____ Signature of subject	_____ Date
_____ Printed name of subject	
_____ Signature of person obtaining consent	_____ Date
_____ Printed name of person obtaining consent	<div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #cccccc; width: 100%; height: 20px;"></div> IRB Approval Date

APPENDIX E:

INTERVENTION STUDY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (PRE-WORKSHOP QUESTIONS)

Introduction:

The purpose of these interviews is to gather information for a research project I'm working on as part of my master's thesis. I chose to organize these workshops to help English-language learners improve their language and communication skills, while also learning about the communication challenges you encounter. In this interview, I would like to ask you questions about your process of learning English, your experience in the workshops, and your goals for communicating in English. Your name will not be used in any written papers, to make sure that no one can identify you with your answers.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Are you okay with me recording the audio of our conversation?

I. Background Information

1. Where are you from?
2. What is your native language?
3. How long have you lived in the United States?
 - a. Probe: Why did you move to the United States?
 - b. Probe: How long are you planning to stay in the United States?

II. English Language Learning

1. Why do you want to learn English?
2. What challenges are there if you don't speak English, or don't speak it well, in the United States?
 - a. Probe: Tell me about a time when you had difficulty communicating in English. What happened?
3. When did you first start learning English?
 - a. Probe: What kind of language learning classes or groups have you taken?
 - b. What kinds of tools or classes were helpful for learning the language?
 - c. What was least helpful?
4. What has been the hardest part of learning English for you?
5. How often do you speak English in your day-to-day life?
6. When do you speak your native language and when do you speak English?
 - a. Probe: In what contexts? Why?

III. Cultural Identity & Communication

1. What has your experience living in the United States been like?
 - a. Probe: What challenges have you faced?
 - b. Probe: What positive experiences have you had?
 - c. Probe: What helped make the transition easier?
2. What are some differences and similarities between your home country and the United States?
 - a. Probe: Are there differences or similarities in the way you talk to people?
 - b. Probe: If yes, what are they? Can you give me an example?

3. When you are living in your home country, are there things you might say or talk about that you wouldn't say in the United States? Or vice versa?
4. What questions do you have about U.S. culture?
 - a. Probe: Is there anything that confuses you? Surprises you?
 - b. Probe: Do you ever discuss these questions with other people? Who?
5. How often do you talk to other people about your home country?
 - a. What do you typically tell people about your home country?
 - b. What stereotypes do people have about your home country?
 - c. Do you try to correct those stereotypes?
 - i. If yes, how?
 - ii. If no, why not?
6. What parts of living in the United States are stressful for you?
 - a. How do you handle those stressful situations?
7. As you spend more time in the United States, is it getting easier or harder to live here?
 - a. What has changed during the time you have been here that makes it easier or harder?

IV. Pre-Workshop Questions

1. Why did you decide to join the workshops?
2. How would you describe your ability to speak in English (beginner, intermediate, advanced, etc.)?
3. How would you describe your ability to listen and comprehend English (beginner, intermediate, advanced, etc.)?
4. How would you describe your confidence level in speaking English?
5. How would you describe your knowledge of U.S. customs or culture?
6. What do you want to get out of these workshops?
 - a. Probe: What is something you want to learn about?
 - b. What is an area of your language or communication skills you want to improve?
7. What specific situations or moments are difficult for you to communicate in?
 - a. Probe: What makes you nervous about talking to people in English?
 - b. In what situations do you feel most confident about speaking English?
8. What kinds of topics are you comfortable discussing?
 - a. Probe: What are you uncomfortable discussing?
9. Is telling stories an important part of your home culture?
 - a. Probe: Give me an example of a well-known story that is part of your cultural tradition, a story that many people in your country know, whether it be from literature, history, or folklore.
 - b. Why are stories important to you?
 - c. What is the purpose of telling stories?
 - d. Who tells these stories the most?
10. Do you share these stories with people you meet in the United States?
 - a. Probe: Why or why not?
 - b. Do you want to share these stories with people?
11. Do you tell people about your history or family using stories?
 - a. Probe: Why or why not?
 - b. What do you want people to know about who you are or where you come from?

12. How do you feel about speaking in front of an audience?
 - a. Probe: What is difficult about speaking in front of an audience for you?
 - b. Would you consider sharing your story in public?
 - c. What would make it easier for you to share your story with others?

APPENDIX F:

INTERVENTION STUDY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (POST-WORKSHOP QUESTIONS)

Introduction

The purpose of these interviews is to gather information for a research project I'm working on as part of my Master's thesis. I chose to organize these workshops to help English-language learners improve their language and communication skills, while also learning about the communication challenges you encounter. In this interview, I would like to ask you questions about your process of learning English, your experience in the workshops, and your goals for communicating in English. Your name will not be used in any written papers, to make sure that no one can identify you with your answers.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Are you okay with me recording the audio of our conversation?

*[*Skip Sections I-IV if the person was interviewed before the workshop]*

I. Background Information

1. Where are you from?
2. What is your native language?
3. How long have you lived in the United States?
 - a. Probe: Why did you move to the United States?
 - b. Probe: How long are you planning to stay in the United States?

II. English Language Learning

1. Why do you want to learn English?
2. What challenges are there if you don't speak English, or don't speak it well, in the United States?
 - a. Probe: Tell me about a time when you had difficulty communicating in English. What happened?
3. When did you first start learning English?
 - a. Probe: What kind of language learning classes or groups have you taken?
 - b. What kinds of tools or classes were helpful for learning the language?
 - c. What was least helpful?
4. What has been the hardest part of learning English for you?
5. How often do you speak English in your day-to-day life?
6. When do you speak your native language and when do you speak English?
 - a. Probe: In what contexts? Why?

III. Cultural Identity & Communication

1. What has your experience living in the United States been like?
 - a. Probe: What challenges have you faced?
 - b. Probe: What positive experiences have you had?
 - c. Probe: What helped make the transition easier?
2. What are some differences and similarities between your home country and the United States?

- a. Probe: Are there differences or similarities in the way you talk to people?
 - b. Probe: If yes, what are they? Can you give me an example?
3. When you are living in your home country, are there things you might say or talk about that you wouldn't say in the United States? Or vice versa?
4. What questions do you have about U.S. culture?
 - a. Probe: Is there anything that confuses you? Surprises you?
 - b. Probe: Do you ever discuss these questions with other people? Who?
5. How often do you talk to other people about your home country?
 - a. What do you typically tell people about your home country?
 - b. What stereotypes do people have about your home country?
 - c. Do you try to correct those stereotypes?
 - i. If yes, how?
 - ii. If no, why not?
6. What parts of living in the United States are stressful for you?
 - a. How do you handle those stressful situations?
7. As you spend more time in the United States, is it getting easier or harder to live here?
 - a. What has changed during the time you have been here that makes it easier or harder?

IV: Pre-Workshop Perceptions

1. Why did you decide to join the workshops?
2. How would you describe your ability to speak in English (beginner, intermediate, advanced, etc.)?
3. How would you describe your ability to listen and comprehend English (beginner, intermediate, advanced, etc.)?
4. How would you describe your confidence level in speaking English?
5. How would you describe your knowledge of U.S. customs or culture?
6. What do you want to get out of these workshops?
 - a. Probe: What is something you want to learn about?
 - b. What is an area of your language or communication skills you want to improve?
7. What specific situations or moments are difficult for you to communicate in?
 - a. Probe: What makes you nervous about talking to people in English?
 - b. In what situations do you feel most confident about speaking English?
8. What kinds of topics are you comfortable discussing?
 - a. Probe: What are you uncomfortable discussing?
9. Is telling stories an important part of your home culture?
 - a. Probe: Give me an example of a well-known story that is part of your cultural tradition, a story that many people in your country know, whether it be from literature, history, or folklore.
 - b. Why are stories important to you?
 - c. What is the purpose of telling stories?
 - d. Who tells these stories the most?
10. Do you share these stories with people you meet in the United States?
 - a. Probe: Why or why not?
 - b. Do you want to share these stories with people?
11. Do you tell people about your history or family using stories?

- a. Probe: Why or why not?
 - b. What do you want people to know about who you are or where you come from?
12. How do you feel about speaking in front of an audience?
- a. Probe: What is difficult about speaking in front of an audience for you?
 - b. Would you consider sharing your story in public?
 - c. What would make it easier for you to share your story with others?

V. Post-Workshop Reflections

1. How would you describe your language ability (beginner, intermediate, advanced, etc.)?
2. How would you describe your ability to listen and comprehend English (beginner, intermediate, advanced, etc.)?
3. How would you describe your confidence level in speaking English?
4. How would you describe your knowledge of U.S. customs or culture?
5. What did you learn about in the workshops?
 - a. Probe: What was the most helpful part?
 - b. What did you learn about communication?
 - c. What did you learn about U.S. culture?
 - d. How will you use the things you learned in your everyday life?
6. Tell me about one of the most memorable parts of the workshops for you.
7. What did you think about the storytelling parts of the workshops?
 - a. Probe: How was this similar or different than other English classes you've taken?
 - b. Do you think storytelling is helpful in your everyday life? Why or why not?
 - c. How did telling your stories make you feel?
 - d. What was it like to share those stories with other people?
8. If you could change something about the workshops, what would you change?
9. Were there parts of the workshops that were confusing or didn't make sense?
10. If you were telling a friend about the workshops, how would you describe them?
 - a. Probe: What was the main purpose of the workshops?
11. Describe your experience at the storytelling event.
 - a. Probe: What did you like or not like about it?
 - b. What would you change in the future?

APPENDIX G:

INTERVENTION STUDY WRITTEN CONSENT DOCUMENT

Title of research study: Developing Language Learners' Communication Agency and Competence through Storytelling Workshops

Investigator: Kellie Brownlee, Master's Student, CU Boulder—Communication Studies

Why am I being invited to take part in a research study?

We invite you to take part in this research study because you are over the age of 18 and you are an English-language learner. The research study seeks to understand how storytelling workshops can help language learners improve their communication skills and confidence. By participating, you will receive training in English communication and can help advance knowledge related to English language education.

What should I know about a research study?

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to the researcher, Kellie Brownlee, by emailing kellie.brownlee@colorado.edu or the faculty advisor Dr. Larry Frey at larry.frey@colorado.edu in the Department of Communication at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (“IRB”). You may talk to them at (303) 735-3702 or irbadmin@colorado.edu if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this study is to help English language learners improve their communication skills and examine how storytelling practices are useful for language education. The goal is to understand how students learn about cultural norms through language education, and to use that knowledge to support the communication goals of English-language learners.

It is important to understand how language and cultural experiences affect immigrants and non-immigrants in the United States, both to help them adjust during their time in the country and to help American teachers, employers, or community members understand the challenges of intercultural interaction so that they might improve their communication practices accordingly. This will build on other research related to cross-cultural communication and language socialization by offering a case study that examines those elements within workshops for English-language learners.

How long will the research last?

The research is scheduled to last three months, taking place from October 2017 to December 2017. You will be participating in the workshops that take place once a week for four weeks, and be interviewed at other times before and/or after the workshops end.

How many people will be studied?

We expect about 25 people will be in this research study that takes place at the Public Library.

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?

- You will be observed and recorded during the workshops offered at the public library.
- Your name will be kept confidential.
- You may be asked to participate in an individual interview, but it is voluntary and you are allowed to refuse.
- The researcher will take notes on your participation and dialogue in the group, some of which may be shared in the final report or presentation of the research.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research?

You can refuse to participate in the research at any time and it will not be held against you.

If you do not want to participate in the research, you can inform the researcher and your information will not be included in the research.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?

You can leave the research at any time it will not be held against you.

If you decide to leave the research and do not want to be included in the final report, contact the researcher so that any collected data regarding your participation can be withdrawn or omitted.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information, including research study and records, to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB and other representatives of this organization.

What else do I need to know?

If you would like to know the results of the research or to see the final report, you can contact the researcher at kellie.brownlee@colorado.edu and request a copy.

Signature Block for Capable Adult

Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research.

Signature of subject	Date
Printed name of subject	
Signature of person obtaining consent	Date
Printed name of person obtaining consent	<div style="background-color: #cccccc; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div> IRB Approval Date

APPENDIX H:
QUESTIONNAIRE FORM

Questionnaire for Workshop Participants (administered through Google Forms):

1. First name (optional—you can leave this blank if you want your response to be anonymous)
2. Email (optional)
3. What is native / home country?
4. What is your first language?
5. What makes you nervous about talking to people in English?
6. Why do you want to improve your English?
7. What classes or practices have helped you to improve your English language skills?
8. How many of the workshops did you attend? (multiple choice answer)
 - a. 1 workshop
 - b. 2 workshops
 - c. 3 workshops
 - d. All four workshops
 - e. All four workshops AND the final storytelling event
9. What was a memorable part of the workshops for you?
10. Was there anything you did not like about the workshops? Or parts that were not helpful?
11. What did you think about the storytelling part of the workshops? How did it feel sharing your stories with other people in the workshop?
12. What did you learn about in the workshops?
13. Did you learn anything about US culture? If yes, what did you learn?
14. Did you learn anything about the English language or communication? If yes, what did you learn?
15. Do you have any ideas for how to improve these workshops? Was there something you wanted to learn that we didn't cover?
16. Do you think the workshops were helpful for you? Why or why not?