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## Gaining Perspective: Student Learning Perceptions of the Role of TESOL Principles in Their English-Learning Experiences

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GAINING PERSPECTIVE: STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF TESOL  
PRINCIPLES IN THEIR ENGLISH-LEARNING EXPERIENCES

A Thesis Submitted  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Designation  
University Honors

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Entitled: Student Perceptions of TESOL Principles in their English-Learning Experience

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## Gaining Perspective: Student Perceptions of the Role of TESOL Principles in Their English-Learning Experiences

Researchers in the field of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) have explored an expansive range of topics relating to the study and teaching of English in formal settings. Yet almost all of the research in the field has been based on the perspective of researchers and instructors. ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) students' own experiences, perceptions, and ideas about language learning have largely been neglected in TESOL research. Students' perspectives of the ESOL classroom could be a useful resource to instructors and researchers if allowed to inform the ever-growing and ever-advancing field of TESOL.

Throughout the coursework of the TESOL program, it has been clear that there is not a quick recipe for teaching English, partially because of the vast amount of considerations a teacher must make. ESOL classrooms come in a variety of sizes and contexts, and ESOL students come from differing language backgrounds and cultures with differing expectations and goals for their learning. For these reasons, understanding the learner is an invaluable resource that can inform instructional decisions. Furthermore, this understanding of the learner ought to play an important role for researchers in the field as well. Learners' backgrounds, attitudes, opinions, and ideas should be important considerations for researchers and instructors.

Therefore, the present project concentrates on the student perspective in the ESOL classroom by surveying upper-level or recently graduated students of an intensive English program at a university in the Midwest. The project set out to gather student reflections regarding a set of research-based principles that have become prevalent in the field of TESOL, in order to understand if these principles fit into students' learning experiences in ESOL classrooms. The

goal of this study was to determine 1) whether or not students have come to value TESOL principles in their language learning experience and 2) whether or not students have perceived their instructors to demonstrate these principles in the classroom.

Considering how research ideas fit into the realities of the classroom according to the student perspective is potentially beneficial in many ways. The field of TESOL research is continually growing and advancing, and it is necessary to keep theory connected to the realities of practice in the classroom. The student perspective can serve to inform researchers, as they continue to pioneer and refine concepts in the field of TESOL, as well as instructors who continue to develop their practice. Finally, ESOL students themselves can benefit as TESOL instructors and researchers continue to better understand how to serve language learners.

### **Literature Review**

*The field of TESOL has experienced abundant growth in its understanding of how language acquisition functions and which pedagogical methods and approaches can best facilitate language learning. The area of interest in this study concerns student perceptions of the dominant principles in TESOL in their experiences. The literature review will first outline these principles and then consider previous student perception studies in TESOL research.*

### **Current Principles in TESOL**

The first subject to address is how the field of TESOL has arrived at the current principles in language teaching. Great shifts and changes to the basic perspectives of language teaching have occurred over the course of recent decades (Kumaravadivelu, 2006) and through these shifts, language principles have taken their place at the forefront of TESOL pedagogy. Previously, new ideas in language pedagogy consistently took the form of inventing, analyzing, and testing various prescribed methods that instructors were to adopt into their classroom. Such

methods as the Grammar-Translation method and the Audiolingual method were put forth as complete recipes for the language-teaching classroom. A major problem with these methods is that they were decontextualized by nature and lacked the flexibility to adjust when applied in various contexts. According to Kumaravadivelu (2006), far from being a basis for instructional decisions in the classroom, the consideration of context was entirely neglected in the conception of these methods. For this reason, the author continues, such methodologies offer only a limited impact on the realities of language learning and teaching across various contexts, and he suggests that there was a need for a different way to conceptualize language teaching that would allow context to be a more central consideration for decisions regarding instruction.

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method, which first emerged in the 1980s, was an important step toward developing a new way to conceptualize language teaching. While it was still a method in form, CLT attempted to focus on the purposeful use of language in the classroom. Its aim was to utilize authentic communication and adapt across cultures and contexts while still operating as an acceptable and effective method for learning language (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). However, because it took the form of a method, it was still too constrained to actually attain these objectives.

Following CLT, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) finally transcended the method construct, as it allowed for flexibility in purpose and implementation (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Instead of a prescriptive recipe for instruction, this new construct allowed and encouraged teachers to consider the context and objectives of their instruction. In this way, new theories in language teaching were no longer dictating instruction but were acknowledging that teachers ought to base instruction on considerations of the factors of their teaching context. This ended up requiring an alternative framework for conceptualizing language teaching—that is, a new focus

on principles that would allow a solid yet broad foundation for teachers to construct their own ideas about their instruction.

Though methods have fallen out of favor in recent decades, the field of TESOL has not left teachers directionless in their instructional decisions. A large step in the discipline is that researchers have come to focus on constructing broad principles on which teachers can base their instruction, while still allowing flexibility in how these principles are implemented in the classroom. H. Douglas Brown (2002) has been at the forefront of this innovation and described how principles fit into language teaching: “As teachers and trainees develop and carry out classroom techniques, they can benefit by grounding everything they do in well-established principles of language learning and teaching” (p. 17). Principles in language teaching serve to ground instructors in research-based ideas as they also adapt to differing contexts. According to Canagarajah (2006) post-method principles have allowed a significant shift away from both impersonal methods and the potential alternative to methods: learner-centeredness without direction for instructors. Furthermore, these overarching principles complement learner and instructor strategies that are developed in the classroom and provide direction for their development (Canagarajah, 2006). Brown compiled a collection of language-learning principles which comprise, in his words, “a body of constructs which few would dispute as central to most language acquisition contexts” (2002, p. 12). I will briefly outline these principles:

1. Automaticity: Moving students from consciously thinking about language forms to automatically processing and using language.
2. Meaningful Learning: Focusing on topics and content that are interesting or meaningful to learners in the process of learning language.



3. The Anticipation of Reward: Motivating students within the classroom, using short term rewards and positive feedback.
4. Intrinsic Motivation: Helping students find and rely on their own underlying motivation for learning language.
5. Strategic Investment: Encouraging students to invest time in gathering their own skills and strategies for learning language.
6. Language Ego: Helping students develop a second identity with a new mode of thinking, feeling, and acting, as they are learning the language.
7. Self-confidence: Helping students to feel confident and capable of learning the language.
8. Risk taking: Encouraging a willingness to take risks as students are learning language by dealing with language outside of their comfort and certainty.
9. The Language-Culture Connection: Including cultural aspects when teaching language, such as customs, values, and ways of thinking, feeling, and acting.
10. The Native Language Effect: Helping learners understand how their first language may help and interfere in their learning of the new language.
11. Interlanguage: Helping students understand that developing a new language is a process that utilizes input and feedback.
12. Communicative Competence: Focusing on authentic language use and helping students learn language in a way that will help them use the language outside of the classroom, in the “real world,” which is actually comprised of various contexts. (Brown, 2002)

These principles summarize what can be considered the dominant approach to language teaching in the field in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. The importance of context has come to the forefront in the conceptualization of teaching and methodology. However, researchers must also

embrace the importance of context in their practice. Akbari (2008) suggested that the field of TESOL must realize that there is no single overarching idea or theory that can be attained in its research. He pointed out that research ought to be grounded in the context of a specific classroom and should increasingly employ the research method of ethnography instead of purely empirical, quantitative study. That is, research must strive to understand both teacher and student perspectives within a certain cultural and social context. In this way, research and practice must be balanced, in that research ought to be based on gathering knowledge about the realities of the classroom as much as classrooms ought to be based on the knowledge of research. Instead of a research discussion that is purely theoretical, Akbari suggested including the voices of teachers in research and allowing the realities of the classroom to redefine principles and pedagogies. While Akbari emphasized the importance of exploring teachers' experiences in research, the present study focuses on students' perceptions of a selection of the language-teaching principles listed above, according to their own learning experiences.

### **Previous Research Regarding Student Perspectives in TESOL**

The next subject to address is the role that student perspectives and perceptions have played in TESOL research. Many studies have investigated learner beliefs and attitudes, which are valuable in their own right as a topic of study. However, there is a subtle but important difference between analyzing learner beliefs or attitudes and exploring learners' opinions. In seeking out learners' perceptions, there is the idea that research can learn, not only about, but from the student perspective. A few previous studies have focused on the student perspective when it comes to language learning. One study by Christison and Krahnke (1986) gathered 80 open-ended interviews which focused on a structured set of topics in order to learn how students perceive their language learning experience and how they use English in academic settings. The

study begins by saying, “Curriculum design in ESL programs for academic preparation has, in general, failed to use the experience of students themselves as a basis for planning and decision making” (p. 61). The fact that learners’ experiences have not been a major consideration in instructional decisions indicates that there is room for investigation in this area. Better addressing the student perspective could potentially increase the insight of researchers and instructors alike. A study by Hawkey (2006) concluded:

There is no doubt that the more we know about what is perceived to be happening in the classroom, the better our chances are of improving the quality of language learning and use. Impact studies, using opinion surveys, face-to-face opinion finding, and classroom observation can be crucial elements in the discovery process.” (p. 249)

These studies have embarked on gathering, analyzing, and addressing student perceptions and perspectives of language teaching in a way that had previously been neglected, and such studies should encourage others in the field to continue this exploration.

Before focusing on the present study, it is important to consider the precautions that previous student perception studies have offered. According to Hawkey (2006), it is important to ensure that student perceptions are taken as they should be, remembering that they reflect how students view and experience a given situation, and not necessarily the objective truth of the situation. He also emphasized that learners may have certain beliefs and perceptions regarding language learning that could be detrimental to their learning. On this point, Hawkey cited Peacock’s 1998 study which that found that 64% of learners believed that “learning a language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules” (2006, p. 242). This belief then correlated with students who were less proficient in the target language. Hawkey also mentioned that students’ underlying preferences are based on various factors, including values and beliefs. As an

example of this, he cited Nunan's 1989 study in which many students valued the formal language points of a lesson rather than the communicative purpose that the instructor had in mind; this would most likely manifest itself in a preference for formal grammar teaching, and such preferences could manifest themselves as bias in student responses.

Besides the complicated factors that form student perceptions of their own language learning, there are many considerations to take into account regarding the methodology of gathering student perceptions. The chosen methodology for the present study is a survey consisting of rating scales. Previous studies have utilized surveys as well, in addition to interviews and observation of students. Christison and Krahnke (1986), when addressing student perception surveys, noted three areas in particular to be aware of: objectivity, sampling, and validity.

Problems in objectivity can occur through teacher and student bias, stemming from *misconceptions or idealization regarding language learning (Christison & Krahnke, 1986)*. The researchers advised that such problems can be avoided by simply being aware of the areas in which there could be bias. They also recommended that survey questions should be designed to gather either student beliefs or experiences and that the reporting of student experiences should not be subject to the possibly false beliefs that they may hold. Furthermore, they suggested that researchers should be aware that students hold personal and cultural expectations as to what language instruction should be, that students may have limited concepts for discussing language learning and teaching, and that students may only voice opinions they think others want to hear. Overall, they encouraged researchers to work to minimize the effect of students' bias when evaluating learner preference and perception. The authors also mentioned how to avoid problems involving sampling in surveys. They recommend that data be collected from a wide variety of

students and collected in a way in which students will feel comfortable sharing, no matter if the student is particularly vocal or not. Gathering data from a wide variety of students is important to ensure issues in sampling do not affect the outcome of the study.

The previously cited student perception studies are some of the few that have set out to gather and analyze student perceptions of their ESOL classes. A handful of studies have explored student perceptions in regards to certain aspects of an ESOL class or program, such as writing, vocabulary, learner strategies, various activities, and teacher characteristics. However, it appears that no study has yet explored student perceptions of research-based principles set out in language teaching or their instructors' implementation of these principles. As the field of TESOL has advanced rapidly in addressing the needs of instructors and students, the next step may be to consider the student perspective, including students' experiences and perceptions of the principles incorporated into language classroom. Exploring the student perspective could provide a more accurate and holistic vision of the current realities of language teaching.

### **Methodology**

#### **Subjects**

This project has carried out surveying as many students as possible who are enrolled in an intensive English program at a Midwest university. The students were specifically enrolled in the upper levels of the program or recently graduated from the program, so as to gather information from students who are very capable in English and have sufficient experience in the language learning classroom on which to report. There were approximately forty students enrolled in the upper levels.

### **Instruments Used**

The survey was online and utilized a rating scale system in order for students to convey their perceptions of the degree to which the set of principles in TESOL have fit into their experiences in the ESOL classroom. In order to accommodate for the fact that the survey is not in the students' first language, the questions were refined to be as simple and clear as possible. Only eight principles of the twelve were addressed by the survey. This was to avoid subject fatigue while taking the survey. The eight I selected stood out as the most central to language learning and relevant to the intensive English classroom.

The survey used a Likert scale to measure students' attitudes toward given statements. The scale had five points that students could select for each question, from strongly agree, to strongly disagree. The statements used in the survey can be found in Appendix A.

### **Procedure**

The intensive English program Academic Support Coordinator assisted me in meeting with many of the intensive English classes in order to invite students to take the survey, as well as to demonstrate how to take the survey. The coordinator also sent out the email to the student and teacher email lists, with a link to the survey. From there, students could click on the link and take the survey. The original email was sent out soon after I met with the students, and two reminder emails were sent over the next two weeks. The email that students received can be found in Appendix B. The survey project received Institutional Review Board approval, which was required due to the fact that it involved human subjects.

## Results

The survey was designed with parallel sets of questions, each relating to a separate principle of TESOL. The first question in each set elicited students' opinions in regards to the value of the principle to them personally. The second question elicited students' rating of the extent to which the principle has been incorporated into the classroom by instructors in their experience. One trend to note within the results of the survey is that students tended to respond with more extreme answers to questions that addressed students' personal value of a principle. On the other hand, students tended to respond more neutrally when a question addressed their instructors' performance. Thirteen students in the upper levels of an intensive English program responded to the survey. The results can be found in Table 1, while the results in percentages can be found in Table 2. Some percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

The first principle addressed was meaningful learning—that is, learning a language through topics that are interesting or relevant to the learner. When asked if it was important to focus on topics that are interesting to the student in their learning of English, 100% of the respondents answered that they would agree or strongly agree with this statement. When asked if they thought their instructors have included topics that are interesting to them, approximately 39% strongly agreed or agreed while 62% ranged between neutral and strongly disagree.

The second principle involved intrinsic motivation, which is the idea that students should rely on their own reasons and purposes for learning language as motivation in the classroom and instructors should be encouraging students in their reasons and goals. When asked if it was important to have their own reasons for learning English, 93% of the students responded that they agree or strongly agree. One respondent out of the 13 responded neutrally to the statement while none of the respondents disagreed. When it comes to students' perceptions of their

instructors' demonstration of this principle, 62% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their instructors were interested in their reasons for learning English while 39% responded neutrally or disagreed with the statement.

The third set of questions addressed the principle of strategic investment—that is, students' ownership in developing their own skills and strategies for learning and using language. When asked about the importance of this principle to their learning of English, 64% of students responded in agreement while 46% responded neutrally or in disagreement. When reflecting on instructors' encouragement in regards to developing personal skills and strategies, 69% responded in agreement to the statement while 31% responded neutrally or in disagreement.

The next principle was the importance of students' self-confidence in learning and using language. Eighty-seven percent of the students responded favorably to the statement that confidence is important to their learning of English, while 15% of students responded neutrally to the statement and no students were in disagreement. As far as students' perceptions of their instructors, 70% agreed that their instructors have helped them to feel confident and capable of success, while 31% responded neutrally.

The principle that followed was the importance of risk-taking when learning and using language. Seventy percent of students agreed with the importance of this principle to their learning of English, and 15% of students responded neutrally and 16% disagreed with the importance of risk-taking in their learning of English. When asked about their instructors' encouragement in taking risks with the language, 62% of students responded in agreement while 31% responded neutrally and 8% disagreed.

The next principle involved the importance of learning about the culture of the people whose language one is learning. Seventy-seven percent of respondents agreed with the



importance of learning about the culture of American English-speakers when learning English while 24% responded neutrally or in disagreement. Students' perceptions of their teachers' help in learning about culture were 92% in agreement and 8% in disagreement.

The following set of questions addressed the importance of the native-language effect. That is, the importance of understanding how a learner's first language may affect their learning of another language. Sixty-nine percent of students perceived this principle to be important to their learning while 23% responded neutrally and one student refrained from responding. Meanwhile, 30% of the students thought that their instructors had helped them to understand the effect of their first language on their learning of English, and 69% of students responded neutrally or disagreed on this point.

The final principle addressed the importance of learning a language to be able to communicate in the real world as opposed to solely the classroom setting. When students responded to the importance of this principle in their learning of English, 93% agreed or strongly disagreed while the remaining student responded neutrally. When reflecting on their instructors help in achieving this principle, 62% responded in agreement or strong agreement, and the remaining 39% responded neutrally.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of the survey was to elicit and understand students' perspectives on their English Language Learning experience in the classroom. The students responded to questions regarding eight principles of language learning that have emerged in the field of TESOL through changes and advancements in research and understanding of language learning. Student responses to these principles reveal whether or not the student perspective is in line with ideas in research. Additionally, students' estimation of their instructors' facilitation of these principles will show whether or not they perceive instructors to be aligned with their own ideas. The results

show that the majority of students regarded each of eight principles of TESOL to be valuable in their own experience learning English. The results also show that students perceived their instructors to incorporate the majority of the principles into the classroom.

Overall, the students surveyed in the present study reported that they regarded the principles in TESOL to be valuable, based on their own experience learning English. Such principles as meaningful learning, intrinsic motivation, self-confidence, and communicative competence elicited a large majority (over 80%) of positive responses from students. The intensive English program students under study have reported that these ideas, which involve bringing meaningful, interesting, or relevant topics into the curriculum, utilizing students' own goals and purposes in learning English for motivation in the classroom, building learners' self-confidence, and preparing students to succeed in real-world communication, have been valuable to their learning. In this case, it can be understood that research in the field of TESOL and the student perspective are consistent, in regards to the value of these specific principles in the language-learning classroom. These results can help affirm to researchers that these principles are important not only to the theoretical constructs of TESOL but in the concrete reality of a specific learning classroom: that of the intensive English program setting. Furthermore, the field of TESOL can continue to explore ideas and research related to these principles with the knowledge that these students value them.

When considering the remaining principles, the results show that students find these ideas to be valuable to their learning, though not in such overwhelming numbers. Between 60% and 80% of the students surveyed responded that they valued strategic investment, risk-taking, language-culture connection, and the native-language effect in their experience learning English. These numbers suggest that the majority of students surveyed find value in such ideas as

gathering and developing their own English skills, taking risks in their use of English, learning about the culture of American English-speakers, and understanding the effect of their native language on their learning of English. Because the majority of students responded positively, the same affirmations for researchers apply as for the other principles. However, it is also interesting to consider why the response was slightly less positive. Students may not have found that these principles have applied as directly to their learning experiences. On the other hand, students might not have recognized that these principles *would* have helped in their learning of English. There is an element to studying the student perspective in which students are given the role of “expert” in regards to their own learning, yet the other side to consider is the fact that students may not recognize something is valuable to their learning even when it might be. Of course, having a basis of what students value or don’t value is a necessary start, even if it is not clear what exactly the implications are. From the researcher’s perspective, there is still room for students to appreciate the value of these principles in their learning more. Yet, researchers should also take an objective look at the set of principles listed above and evaluate whether or not they are as relevant as the first set within the concrete realities of the classroom. Overall, however, the majority of students reported that they valued these principles of TESOL in their learning and their perceptions align with the direction of research in the field.

When addressing student perceptions of their instructors’ facilitation of these TESOL principles, the majority of students assessed their instructors positively on most of the principles, specifically: intrinsic motivation, strategic investment, self-confidence, risk-taking, language-culture connection, and communicative competence. This suggests that students perceive their instructors to value these principles and incorporate them into the classroom. This is a very positive finding for instructors and should affirm that they are helping students learn language by

incorporating foundational principles that are backed up by research in the field and valued in the students' learning experiences.

However, for a few principles, only a minority of students responded positively about their instructors' facilitation. In regards to meaningful learning, 100% of the students who were surveyed thought it was important that topics in their learning be interesting and relevant. Yet less than 40% responded that their instructors had included such topics into the classroom. Considering how every student who participated in the survey perceived meaningful topics to be valuable their learning, not to mention the research backing up this principle, this is certainly an area where instructors can consider what more could be done to incorporate learning into their classrooms in a way that students would view as meaningful.

Similarly, looking at the native-language effect, approximately 70% of students thought that it would be important to understand how their native language affects their learning of English. Yet, only 30% of the students thought their instructors had helped them in this area. Again, this represents an area where instructors could consider how to better serve students by understanding how a students' native language may affect their learning of English.

### **Implications**

The results of this study carry implications for researchers, instructors, and students alike. Researchers can be encouraged by the fact that these students have valued this set of current research-based principles in TESOL in their own experiences. ESOL students can also take an active interest in these principles of TESOL. Reflecting on why some principles are more important than others in their learning of English could help students understand the principles they have encountered as well as what could work for their learning that they have not encountered yet.

Finally, these results may have the most implications for instructors and curriculum designers. Students have responded that they value the principles of TESOL in their language learning, and there are two in which they thought there was room for improvement in terms of their instructors' implementation. Meaningful learning is one such area, and research points to its importance for better long-term retention (Brown, 2002). A content-centered approach to language teaching is one way to incorporate meaningful learning into the classroom (Brown, 2002). In this approach, the curriculum is focused on topics, projects, and content as well as language objectives. By incorporating this dual focus, students are not subject to rote language learning but are given the opportunity to learn language in a meaningful way.

The second area that student responses could offer insight for instructors concerns understanding how students' native languages affect their learning of English. This is a difficult area for instructors because a classroom may contain students with several different native languages, each representing a different language system. Instructors may only have expert knowledge of the target-language system of English, although it is possible that they could have some knowledge of one or two other language systems. This limits instructors in their implementation of this principle. Furthermore, while the idea could be valuable for learners, within the field of TESOL there are different sides to the discussion of the actual effects that the native language has on the target language when learning another language.

### **Limitations**

This project encountered some limitations that are important to keep in mind. First of all, the sample size was not as large as would be desirable for a survey. The results only captured the perceptions of thirteen students. While there are approximately forty students in the upper levels of the program, a limited number of these students volunteered to take the survey. In order to

gain more of a response from students, especially international students learning English, a paper version of the survey could be given in-class or in another environment where students could have immediate access to it and time set aside to take it. This would take some effort in limiting coercion, maximizing anonymity, and other considerations that the online survey provided.

Also, while there are benefits to a quantitative study, student responses were limited to fit on a scale. This study lacked the depth and specificity of a qualitative study which could have drawn more ideas from students and better allowed them to reflect. Such a study could have revealed common themes among students and allowed for more detailed analysis of their perceptions.

### **Future Research**

A clear step for future research would be to undertake such qualitative studies in which students are able to share their thoughts and reflections about their experience learning English in their own words. This could manifest itself as a case study focusing on the reflections of a few students or larger studies compiling the reflections of many students. A variety of different types of studies will better allow the student perspective to be understood—utilizing both broad and in-depth study.

In addition, there are a vast number of distinct contexts in which students learn English, and similar student perception surveys could be utilized across all of them. Understanding students' perceptions of TESOL principles across various contexts of ESOL learning would not only be interesting and helpful but could be instrumental to researchers and instructors alike. A similar survey could be given to English Language Learners in K-12 public school settings, in EFL settings, and adult language learning settings. The results would aid research geared towards these contexts as well as instructors operating in these settings.

Finally, future research could compare student perceptions across learning contexts and cultures. It is clear that culture is an important consideration to language learning, and it could represent an important factor in the attitudes and perceptions of students. Taking the effort to understand students' experiences and perceptions should include understanding their culture and background and how this may affect their ideas about their own learning.

### **Conclusion**

This study has set out to gather the reflections of students in an intensive English program. It appears that no other study had yet attempted to gather and analyze student perceptions in regards to principles in TESOL. The reflections gathered in this study have included their perceptions of the value of a set of principles in TESOL to students' own learning experience, as well as their perception of their instructors' implementation of these principles. Overall, the majority of students responded that they value the principles of TESOL in their learning experiences. The results also show that most students thought their instructors implemented the majority of the principles into the classroom.

The results offer implications for future research in the field of TESOL, as well as implications for students and instructors in ESOL settings. One such implication is that instructors in the intensive English program could evaluate how to better implement meaningful learning into the classroom, specifically evaluating how relevant and engaging the content and topics are through which students are learning language. The student perspective would be a valuable focus for future studies, especially if such studies use qualitative methodology and consider various contexts of ESOL classrooms, which would simultaneously broaden and deepen the focus of the investigation into student perspectives—a valuable investigation to continue, which would contribute much to the field of TESOL.

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Table 1: Survey Results

	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. a. I think it is important to focus on topics that are interesting to me as I learn English.	5	8	0	0	0
b. My instructors have included topics that are interesting to me as I learn English.	1	4	7	0	1
2. a. I think it is important to have my own reasons for learning English.	7	5	1	0	0
b. My instructors were interested in my reasons for learning English.	2	6	4	1	0
3. a. It is important to have personal skills and strategies for learning and using English.	2	5	4	2	0
b. My instructors encouraged me to develop my own skills and strategies for learning and using English.	2	7	3	1	0
4. a. It is important to be confident in myself and feel capable of success as I learn English.	6	5	2	0	0
b. My instructors have helped me to be confident and feel capable of success as I learn English.	1	8	4	0	0
5. a. I think it is important to risk being wrong when learning and using English.	4	5	2	1	1
b. My instructors have encouraged me to risk being wrong when learning and using English.	1	7	4	1	0
6. a. I think it is important to learn about the culture of American English-speakers while learning English.	9	1	1	1	1
b. My instructors have helped me learn about the culture of American English-speakers while learning English.	6	6	0	1	0
7. a. I think it is important to understand how my first language may affect my learning of English, both positively and negatively.	4	5	3	0	0
b. My instructors have helped me to understand how my first language affects my learning of					

English, both positively and negatively.

1                      3                      8                      1                      0

8. a. I think learning language is about being able to communicate (written and orally) in the real world.

4                      8                      1                      0                      0

- b. My instructors have helped me to learn English in a way so that I could communicate (written and orally) in the real world.

4                      4                      5                      0                      0

Table 2: Survey Results in Percentages

(Note: items may not add up to 100 due to rounding to the nearest whole number.)

	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>1.</b> a. I think it is important to focus on topics that are interesting to me as I learn English.	39	62	0	0	0
b. My instructors have included topics that are interesting to me as I learn English.	8	31	54	0	8
<b>2.</b> a. I think it is important to have my own reasons for learning English.	54	39	8	0	0
b. My instructors were interested in my reasons for learning English.	15	46	31	8	0
<b>3.</b> a. It is important to have personal skills and strategies for learning and using English.	15	39	31	15	0
b. My instructors encouraged me to develop my own skills and strategies for learning and using English.	15	54	23	8	0
<b>4.</b> a. It is important to be confident in myself and feel capable of success as I learn English.	46	39	15	0	0
b. My instructors have helped me to be confident and feel capable of success as I learn English.	8	62	31	0	0
<b>5.</b> a. I think it is important to risk being wrong when learning and using English.	31	39	15	8	8
b. My instructors have encouraged me to risk being wrong when learning and using English.	8	54	31	8	0
<b>6.</b> a. I think it is important to learn about the culture of American English-speakers while learning English.	69	8	8	8	8
b. My instructors have helped me learn about the culture of American English-speakers while learning English.	46	46	0	8	0
<b>7.</b> a. I think it is important to understand how my first language may affect my learning of English, both positively and negatively.	31	39	23	0	0

b. My instructors have helped me to understand how my first language affects my learning of English, both positively and negatively.

8                      23                      62                      8                      0

8. a. I think learning language is about being able to communicate (written and orally) in the real world.

31                      62                      8                      0                      0

b. My instructors have helped me to learn English in a way so that I could communicate (written and orally) in the real world.

31                      31                      39                      0                      0

## Appendix A

## Survey Questions

The headings accompanying each set of questions refer to the TESOL principle that the questions address and did not appear in the actual survey.

## Meaningful Learning

- I think it is important to focus on topics that are interesting to me as I learn English.
- My instructors have included topics that are interesting to me as I learn English.

## Intrinsic Motivation

- I think it is important to have my own reasons for learning English.
- My instructors were interested in my reasons for learning English.

## Strategic Investment

- It is important to have personal skills and strategies for learning and using English.
- My instructors encouraged me to develop my own skills and strategies for learning and using English.

## Self-Confidence

- It is important to be confident in myself and feel capable of success as I learn English.
- My instructors have helped me to be confident and feel capable of success as I learn English.

## Risk-Taking

- I think it is important to risk being wrong when learning and using English.
- My instructors have encouraged me to risk being wrong when learning and using English.

## The Language-Culture Connection

- I think it is important to learn about the culture of American English-speakers while learning English.

- My instructors have helped me learn about the culture of American English-speakers while learning English.

#### The Native Language Effect

- I think it is important to understand how my first language may affect my learning of English, both positively and negatively.
- My instructors have helped me to understand how my first language affects my learning of English, both positively and negatively.

#### Communicative Competence

- I think learning language is about being able to communicate (written and orally) in the real world.
- My instructors have helped me to learn English in a way so that I could communicate (written and orally) in the real world.

## Appendix B

Hello CIEP students,

My name is Danielle Westcot and I am completing a thesis research study this semester. There is an opportunity for you to participate in a simple online survey. The survey is collecting your opinion regarding aspects of your learning of English at UNI.

While your participation in this survey would be greatly appreciated, your participation is completely voluntary. It is not expected or necessary for you to participate.

Follow this link in order to participate in the survey.

Your response will be anonymous and will not be seen by professors or staff at UNI.