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**Co-curriculum and ESL student success: A case study in an intensive English language program**

by  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This project examines the relationship between co-curricular activities and ESL student success in an intensive English language program. Extracurricular and co-curricular activities have been linked to the improvement of several factors, such as self-esteem, retention, and grade point average (Astin, 1984, 1999; Bergen-Cico & Viscomi, 2013). Research in second language acquisition has suggested that meaningful interaction between individuals in the target language (L2) will increase a student's proficiency. Therefore, a ESL student's further involvement in an intensive English program could have a major impact on not only their academic success (operationalized in this study by the amount of classes that received a passing mark), but also their proficiency. Documented are the lived experiences of four, advanced-level ESL students who are currently enrolled in an intensive English language program on the west coast of the United States. The information gathered through face-to-face interviews and an analysis of each student's academic transcript is used to see if there is a relationship between the students' academic involvement in co-curricular activities and their perception of their success.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Extracurricular and co-curricular activities contribute to one's academic career in ways that cannot be experienced solely in the language classroom. Extracurricular activities are defined as activities that are not part of an academic curriculum, but are offered by an academic institution. At most universities, students can expect the availability of many extracurricular activities in order to escape the hardships of academic work. Some examples of extracurricular activities include Greek life, sports, and student government and leadership. Although similar and often used interchangeably, co-curricular activities are defined as activities that are part of a classroom/program curriculum, such as science fairs, student newspapers, service learning, and mock debates. These activities act as a way for students to experience what they are learning in class in a real-world context (Klesse & D'Onofrio, 2000).

Extracurricular and co-curricular activities fall under the category of student involvement. Student involvement has been positively linked to many aspects of academic success, such as GPA, retention, and confidence-building (Astin, 1985, 1999; Bergen-Cico & Viscomi, 2013). To this date, there is limited scholarly literature on what student involvement means for ESL students academically, specifically students who are part of an intensive English language program. Student involvement has implications for improvement in academic success and language proficiency of English language learners (ELLs). That is, research in second language acquisition (SLA) shows that interaction is an important component for language learning. Furthermore, Gass & Selinker (2008) argue convincingly that interaction can be used to facilitate language learning (p. 350). Given this information, my claim is that interaction and involvement together may be highly beneficial for ESL students who are enrolled in an intensive English language program, and therefore, suggest that English language learners who participate in these activities will be more successful than their peers who do not participate in such activities.

This study explores the relationship between co-curricular activities and ESL student success in an intensive English program. Although the activities housed in the IEP are designed as extracurricular activities, I define the IEP's activities as co-curricular because of the students' exposure to and usage of English. In order to show a relationship between co-curricular activities and ESL student success, I document the lived experiences of four ELLs who have participated in the IEP's offered activities.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review covers the relationship between student involvement and academic success and finishes with the introduction of my guiding research question. In this study, academic success is used to describe student's grades while student involvement is used to reflect participation within co-curricular and extracurricular activities. Student involvement is defined as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (Astin, 1984, p. 518).

Researchers in education agree that student involvement plays a heavy role within academic success. However, there is an insufficient amount of data-driven studies within intensive English language program literature that explore the impact of extracurricular and co-curricular activity on student success. To address this gap in the research, I weave together components of *general pedagogical theory*, namely student involvement, and *second language theory and pedagogy*, where research in foreign/second language education and applied linguistics is discussed.

### General Pedagogical Theory

Many educators believe that student development cannot be achieved only in the classroom. Astin (1984) states "a particular curriculum, to achieve the effects intended, must elicit sufficient student effort and investment of energy to bring about the desired learning and development" (p. 522). Researchers note that student responsibility, initiative, and self-directedness in academic achievement are important to improve the quality of a student's undergraduate experience (Kuh et. al, 1991). Xiao & Luo (2009) discovered that the students in their study found English co-curricular activities are not only helpful in their English practice, but they also help create autonomous learning. Therefore, being involved in extracurricular and co-curricular activities allows students to hold agency over their academic trajectory. This has implications for ESL students attending university, particularly in regards to the theory of student involvement.

Astin's theory of involvement (1984) suggests that students learn by immersing themselves in the academic and social aspects of the collegiate experience. The theory "emphasizes active participation of the student in the learning process" (p. 522). In the development of this theory, extracurricular and co-curricular activities were positively linked to retention among undergraduates. On factors that contributed to student retention, Astin states:

It turned out that virtually every significant effect could be rationalized in terms of the involvement concept; that is, every positive factor was likely to increase student involvement in the undergraduate experience, whereas every negative factor was likely to reduce involvement. In other words, the factors that contributed to the student's remaining in college suggested involvement, whereas those that contributed to the student's dropping out implied a lack of involvement. (1984, p. 523)

Additionally, Astin states that his theory is more concerned with "the behavioral mechanisms or processes that facilitate student development" (the "how" of student development as opposed to the "what" of student development) (p. 522). He claims that "the greater the student's degree of involvement, the greater the learning and personal development" (1996, p. 124). Astin also found that student involvement serves as "a powerful means of enhancing almost all aspects of the undergraduate students' cognitive and affective development" (1996, p. 126), with the most prominent forms being academic involvement, involvement with faculty, and involvement with student peer groups. Research has reported that attendance in college and in college activities helps students with their self-esteem, self-confidence, and leadership skills (Astin, 1984; Klesse & D'Onofrio, 2000). ELLs are no exception to this statement. Xiao & Luo's (2009) suggest that "proficient students actively participate in the co-curricular activities because they have more self-

confidence" (p. 245). Therefore, active ELLs in an IEP may experience heightened self-esteem by participating in activities on campus.

In a study conducted by Bergen-Cico and Viscomi (2013), they found that there is a positive association between attendance at campus co-curricular events and GPA. Their quantitative study shows two cohorts that were split into three groups each based on their level of co-curricular involvement. The study showed that students who have attended a mid-level range of events (5-14 over the span of 8 semesters) had the highest GPAs out of the three groups.

## **Second Language Pedagogy and Theory**

Research has consistently supported that students need to practice the target language in order to achieve proficiency (Savignon, 1997; Xiao & Luo, 2009). The theory of student involvement can have implications for ELLs. Astin (1999) states that students gain knowledge by devoting their time to academic activities:

According to the theory, the extent to which students can achieve particular developmental goals is a direct function of the time and effort they devote to activities designed to produce these gains. For example, if increased knowledge and understanding of history is an important goal for history majors, the extent to which students reach this goal is a direct function of the time they spend at such activities as listening to professors talk about history, reading books about history, and discussing history with other students. Generally, the more time students spend in these activities, the more history they learn. (p. 522-523)

This type of involvement for ELLs leads directly into improving communicative competence, which is defined as the competence or ability to communicate (Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983; Hymes, 1972; Oxford, 1990). There are four main components of communicative competence: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence (Brandl, 2007; Canale & Swain, 1980). Linguistic competence refers to knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Sociolinguistic competence refers to the ability to say the most appropriate phrase or word in a certain situation. Discourse competence refers to the ability to start, contribute to, and end a conversation in a consistent and coherent manner. Strategic competence refers to the ability to communicate effectively and repair communication when problems arise (Brandl, 2007; Canale & Swain, 1980).

The learning strategies of ELLs contribute to developing communicative competence. Learning strategies, as defined by Oxford (1990), are the "steps taken by students to enhance their own learning (p. 1). Oxford (1990) states that the "development of communicative competence requires realistic interaction among learners using meaningful, contextualized language. Learning strategies help learners participate actively in such authentic communication" (p. 8). This kind of interaction may eventually lead to better communicative competence, and therefore, lead to "improved proficiency and greater self-confidence" (p. 1).

Oxford (1990) describes six types of learning strategies. These six types fall under two categories: direct and indirect strategies. Direct strategies require the learner to use a great deal of mental processing of a language, while indirect strategies act as the "business management" of language learning strategies. Table 1 shows the different types of direct learning strategies, while table 2 shows the different types of indirect learning strategies. Direct and indirect strategies support each other in the contribution to communicative competence. Oxford (1990) uses a theatre analogy to explain how these strategies support each other:

The first major class, direct strategies for dealing with the new language, is like the Performer in a stage play, working with the language itself in a variety

of specific tasks and situations... The second major strategy class- indirect strategies for general management of learning-- can be likened to the Director of the play... The functions of both the Director and the Performer become part of the learner, as he or she accepts increased responsibility for learning. (pp. 15-16)

Table 1: Direct learning strategies. Taken from Oxford (1990).

<b>Memory</b>	<b>Cognitive</b>	<b>Compensation</b>
Creating mental linkages	Practicing	Guessing intelligently
Applying images and sounds	Receiving and sending messages	Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing
Reviewing well	Analyzing and reasoning	
Employing action	Creating structure for input and output	

Table 2: Indirect learning strategies. Taken from Oxford (1990).

<b>Metacognitive</b>	<b>Affective</b>	<b>Social</b>
Centering your learning	Lowering your anxiety	Asking questions
Arranging and planning your listening	Encouraging yourself	Cooperating with others
Evaluating your learning	Taking your emotional temperature	Empathizing with others

There are two relationships between literature on learning strategies in ESL and the theory of student involvement- the first being learner autonomy. Oxford states that language learner strategies encourage students to have self-direction in communicating. She states:

Self-direction is particularly important for language learners, because they will not always have a teacher around to guide them as they use the language outside the classroom. Moreover, self-direction is essential to the active development of ability in a new language...Learner self-direction is not an "all or nothing" concept; it is often a gradually increasing phenomenon, growing as learners become more comfortable with the idea of their own responsibility. (1990, p.10).

Self-direction is important not only for students in an IEP, but also for university students, which brings back the theory of student involvement. As discussed earlier, students to an extent hold agency over their academic trajectory. This type of self-direction has the potential to improve a student's undergraduate experience. Second, English language students will achieve greater confidence by having self-directedness (1990). This means that for ELLs, better learning strategies lead to students participating more often, and by participating in activities on campus, students become more confident and have higher self-esteem (Astin, 1984; Klesse & D'Onofrio, 2000).

The research reviewed shows several key points that are relevant to my study:

1. Student participation leads to better student learning and development (Astin, 1984, 1996).
2. English language learners who participate in co-curricular activities have greater confidence. Evidence has shown that ELLs generally find that student activities can help enhance their language abilities, although there are exceptions (Xiao & Luo, 2009). Achieving confidence is a language learning strategy that leads to better self-directedness, and therefore, can lead to better communicative competence. For all students, student responsibility, initiative, and self-directedness in academic achievement are important to improve the quality of a student's undergraduate experience (Kuh et. al, 1991).
3. There seems to be a positive relationship between GPA and student campus event participation (Bergen-Cico & Viscomi, 2013).
4. ELLs need to be exposed to meaningful, contextualized language outside of the classroom (Oxford, 1990). Devoting time to co-curricular activities helps the student acquire more knowledge of the subject that they are practicing. (Oxford, 1990; Astin, 1984; Xiao & Luo, 2009).

With these points in mind, I arrive at my guiding research question: What is the relationship between ESL student success and co-curricular activities?

### **III. SETTING AND CONTEXT**

As stated earlier, this study took place at an urban university in the Pacific Northwest. The IEP that is housed at the university is a comprehensive, five-level English program that prepares students to take courses at the college level. Before students start in the IEP, the program gives the students a placement test to determine where they should start in the program. The IEP follows the university's quarter-based system, giving the academic year a fall, winter, spring, and summer term. The program offers five tracks for its students: pre-entry, foundational, communication and culture, undergraduate preparation, and graduate preparation.

The IEP's pre-entry track is designed for students who have very limited English ability. Students in the pre-entry program are expected to be in class 23 hours a week. Pre-entry track students are given extra tutoring support to account for their low English abilities. Students in this program are expected to take grammar/writing, speaking/listening, reading, and American culture and academic life. All pre-entry level students must finish the track in two terms. The end of this track will lead into the foundational track.

The IEP's foundational track is for beginning level students who have basic English skills. The foundational track consists of levels 1-3. Students spend less time in class than the pre-entry level at 18 hours a week, but they spend more time on homework at about 15-20 hours a week. After students successfully complete one level, students continue to the next level. In addition to classes on grammar/writing, speaking/listening, and reading, students must choose one elective, which the IEP calls "skill enhancement courses." Students in this level can choose from classes such as computer skills, pronunciation, or academic vocabulary. After students pass level 3, they can choose the academic track (undergraduate and graduate preparation) or the communication and culture track.

The undergraduate and graduate preparation tracks constitute levels 4 and 5 in the IEP. Up to 24 credits given at levels 4 and 5 in the IEP can be transferred over to the university for undergraduate elective credit. Both undergraduate and graduate students take the same level 4 English classes: advanced English grammar, guided research writing, academic reading, understanding academic lectures, and an elective. At level 5, undergraduate students are expected to take Grammar and Editing for Academic Writing, Independent Research Writing, Advanced

Academic Reading, an elective, and a choice between Discussion Skills or Public Speaking. Graduate students are expected to take an elective, Graduate Oral Communication, Graduate Reading Strategies, Graduate Research and Writing, and a choice between Grammar and Editing for Academic Writing or a language proficiency test preparation course. After completion of level 5, the students can enter the university without taking the TOEFL, a standardized test of English language proficiency required for admission into the university.

The communication and culture track is an alternative track for students who are part of the IEP that are not seeking entry into the university. These students are usually part of a study abroad program and know English well enough to take the courses. These classes teach students more about American culture and help students develop their confidence in communicating. In addition, the classes still focus on English skills, but they are explored through mediums such as movies, music, books, and TV shows. Such courses include social media: interacting online, multimedia listening, cultural themes in reading, practically speaking: conversational English, and communication through volunteering.

In the pre-entry and foundation classes (pre-entry through level 3), grades are given only as pass or no pass (P/NP). To receive a P in their classes, the students have to (a) complete all of their work and (b) receive at least a 70% in their classes. Classes in levels 4 and 5 receive grades on the A-F scale. The scale depends on the class and on the teacher.

Activities in the IEP are open to all students (pre-entry to level 5, undergraduate and graduate). In addition to sponsoring activities that are part of solely part of the program, the program sponsors events with other departments at the university. Below is a description of the activities and events sponsored by the IEP.

**Conversation Practice** - The IEP hosts a volunteer conversation partner program for its students. IEP students are paired up with student volunteers who are L1 speakers of English to practice their conversational English skills. The conversation partner program offers three options for its students:

- An individual conversation partner session where students can sign up for two, 30 minute sessions a week. This is hosted in the department's own "conversation room" every week-day during their business hours.
- A group conversation session every Tuesday and Thursday during lunch hours. Conversation partners facilitate this event, welcoming any IEP student who wishes to come and socialize.
- An individual conversation partner program where advanced IEP students are paired up with volunteer university students. The pairs of students meet at least once a week either on - or off-campus.

**Field Trips** - The IEP sponsors a variety of trips, seasonal and year-round, to various locations and festivals around the Pacific Northwest. Additionally, the IEP purchases tickets for and transports students who wish to attend to the Portland Blazers' games. IEP students, several faculty members, and conversation partners attend the games together.

**International Coffee Hour** - Coffee Hour is sponsored by the IEP and the university's Organization of International Students. Coffee Hour takes place once a week for three hours. IEP students have a chance to meet and converse with university students.

**Parties** - The IEP hosts an end-of-the-term party every term as well as a welcome party for new students who are entering the program. Additionally, in conjunction with the Office of International Students, the IEP hosts an annual Halloween party, where students are encouraged to dress up and attend. All students in the program are invited to attend these events.



#### IV. METHODOLOGY

There is a dearth of articles focusing on the relationship between student activities and student success in the language learning field. These studies also appear to depend on quantitative techniques (Bergen-Cico & Viscomi, 2013). However, as there are many factors that influence a student's performance in school, such as family trouble, relationship problems, sometimes rich qualitative accounts weave these variables together. Thus, I decided to use the case study methodology for this study. In order to find themes among each participant and gender, I decided to interview four students- two male and two female.

It was pertinent to my study that I document the lived experiences of participants who have been in the IEP long enough that there would be significant documentation of student involvement. It was also important that I recruit people with enough English ability to be able to describe their experiences in the IEP. Therefore, I recruited students who met the following criteria:

1. Students had to be currently enrolled in the IEP.
2. Students had to be in the program since at least level 2.
3. Students had to currently be in levels 4 or 5.

To find participants for my study, I worked with the Student Life Coordinator of the IEP. The coordinator's job is to plan, manage, and run all of the supplemental activities in the IEP. Additionally, it is their job to manage the activities budget; hire, manage, and supervise the activities office team of student workers and staff; and plan and arrange the new student orientation each term. The coordinator orally spoke to students that she knew who might be willing to participate in my research. Because the coordinator knew these students, they were students who participated frequently in the IEP's activities. I reached out through e-mail to six students who agreed through word-of-mouth to take part in my research. After sending the e-mail, I received a response from four IEP students- two male and two female. All but one, a female participant, met the criteria that I had set for the research. The coordinator ran out of people she knew who fit my criteria, so I found my last participant through another one of my participants.

Through my e-mails to the participants, I asked them if they were willing to participate in a face-to-face interview. Upon their agreement to participate, I asked them to give me their available times in order to reserve a private study room in the university library. In the e-mail, I also included a copy of the consent form for them to read and sign. I wrote that I wanted to send it ahead of time for them to read, but I would review it in our meeting together and address their questions about it in person.

Instead of asking for a transcript, which would have cost the student money and would have taken weeks to be delivered, I asked each participant to prepare a copy of their Degree Audit Reporting System (DARS) report. A DARS report is a document showing a student's progress towards completing their academic degree and displays other academic such as class grades, major and overall GPA, and transfer credits.

For each interview, I reserved a private study room in the university library for an hour and a half. Although I stated in each e-mail that the interview would take only 30-45 minutes, I reserved the study room for longer in order to complete field notes after each interview. The interviews were not recorded. Instead, I took extensive notes while my participants were answering my questions. After the interview concluded, I continued writing things that I might have remembered or observations during our interview that I did not have a chance to write while they were speaking.

The interviews were semi-structured. The questions I asked aimed to elicit information about their lives, academic life, their friends, and the ways in which they approach their work. This information was used to see if there were parallels between their involvement in activities and their academic history. I also asked each participant for a copy of their Degree Audit Reporting System (DARS) report, which reflects the grades they received in their classes.

## **Limitations**

This study does not come without its own limitations. Firstly, this study was designed and conducted in a very small time frame, given that it was part of the McNair Scholars Program. My proposal was submitted to the Internal Review Board in April 2014, and I received approval in June 2014. A study with a longer time period would have created more thorough and detailed results. This information given, the narratives of participant provided in the next section would have been richer if I had interviewed my participants more than once and if I had recorded the interviews and not have just relied on note-taking. However, I am confident that I noted the most important information possible during the 30-45 minute interviews- all of which is presented in my narratives.

## **V. NARRATIVES**

This section documents the narratives of all four participants: Will, Grace, Jack, and Karen. In each narrative, I have (1) described their daily life and interests; (2) described the people each participant interacts with on a day-to-day basis; (3) documented their participation in the IEP's activities, when they started participating in each activity, and how often they have participated; (4) listed the grades they have received in the IEP; and (5) documented their perception of their performance in the IEP as well as any reasoning they have given as to why they received a less than satisfactory/failing grade. Following the narratives, I will give my own interpretation of the data as well as emerging themes I have noticed from each interview.

### **Karen**

Karen is a female student in the IEP. During the summer 2014, she was enrolled in the level 4 classes required for undergraduate and graduate students. She started in the fall of 2013, placing in level 1 of the IEP in speaking/listening and reading. In grammar/writing, she placed in level 2. At the time of our interview, she had just moved into a dormitory on the university campus, living with an American roommate. Before her move, she was living with a host family since October 2013, commuting to campus every day.

Karen is a sports lover. Much of her time outside of school is spent participating in sports related activities. She stressed her love of attending and watching National Basketball Association (NBA)/Major League Baseball (MLB) games to me during our interview both locally and regionally. Twice a week, she attends softball games with some of her L1 English-speaking friends. She states that because of her frequent attendance at local softball games, she is well-versed in speaking about softball in English. She also enjoys being physically active, participating in sports and Zumba on campus when she has the time.

Unsurprisingly, the majority of people that Karen encounters on a day-to-day basis are L1 speakers of English: teachers, roommate, host family, and friends of hers, all of whom are American. However, most of her friends are L2 speakers of English, with the majority of them being from countries outside of her own. In regards to this, Karen stated that she enjoys learning about culture and ideology of other countries, which is one of her favorite things to learn. She and her friends outside of her native country will discuss various aspects of their own respective cultures.

Since starting in the program, Karen has participated in a variety of different activities the IEP has to offer. Table 3 shows Karen's participation in IEP activities. These activities include the pumpkin patch trip, the Halloween party, several trips to the mall, three Portland Blazers games, two class trips to Seattle, a trip to Mt. Hood, and a trip to the Tulip Festival. Her further participation in IEP activities include participating in the conversation partner program, which she started participating in during winter term. She also attends the International Coffee Hour, an activity that she really enjoys, approximately three times a term.

Table 3: Karen's Participation in Activities.

Activities	Times Participated
Conversation Partner Program	Since winter 2014
International Coffee Hour	~3 per term
Field Trips	~8
Parties	~3

Karen states that she has a strong determination to learn English. After the no pass she received fall term, she dedicated herself to interacting more in English. Therefore, she started participating in the IEP activities more often. During our interview, she said that going to Coffee Hour was one of her favorite activities for this reason. Her love for learning about new cultures allowed her to meet and interact with people from other countries outside of her own at this event. She stated during our interview that she could not attend this event every time because of her schedule, which is why she attends only about three times a term. Frequently at Coffee Hour, university students who are studying her L1 will try to talk to her using her L1, but she resists using it because of her determination to use English. She thinks that using this strategy has helped her English greatly, though she did not give specific reasons.

Karen's exception to her "English-only" rule is her occasional conversations with her friends, conversations with her family over Skype, and her conversation partner. With her L1 friends, she uses her native language only when she is frustrated and cannot find the words to say exactly what she wants to say. I asked her to estimate the amount of times she does use her L1. She stated that she only uses it about 10% of the time.

Since winter 2014, Karen has been participating in the conversation program in the IEP. Her first conversation partner was a Mexican-American who spoke English and Spanish as her L1. They met frequently throughout winter and spring term, going to restaurants and bars. Karen was very curious about Mexican culture, so her partner would teach her different aspects about it. It was not until late spring/early summer 2014 that Karen switched conversation partners and received a conversation partner who is an American learning Karen's L1. Because of this, Karen is more lenient with her "English-only" rule.

Karen claims that she was not "a good student" when she first started in the IEP in fall 2013. Table 4 shows a list of grades that Karen has earned thus far in the IEP.

Table 4: Karen's Grades in the IE

Class	Fall '13	Winter '14	Spring '14
Level 1 - Reading	P		
Level 1 - Speaking/Listening	P		
Level 2 - Grammar/Writing	NP	P*	
Level 2 - Reading		P	
Level 2 - Speaking/Listening		P	
Level 3 - Reading			P
Level 3 - Speaking/Listening			P
Level 3 - Grammar/Writing			P
Skills Enhancement Electives**	P	P	P

\*Class retaken for a passing grade; \*\* Different class for each term.

Since starting in the IEP, she has only failed one class, which was during her first term (Fall '13) in the IEP. In addition to failing a class, she claimed that she had almost failed her other classes because of her lack of English participation. However, the following term (Winter '14), she retook the class and passed it. When I asked her about why she thinks she failed the class, she told me that it was the fact that she barely attempted to speak in English during her first term. In the beginning of her time in the IEP, she said that before she could not retain knowledge about English. Her lack of English knowledge discouraged her, which led her to only interact with other speakers of her native language. Karen claims that because of her lack of English interaction, combined with a really difficult teacher, led her to getting an unsatisfactory grade in level 2 grammar/writing. I asked Karen if she thought she was a good student presently, to which she said yes. Nowadays, however, Karen has a better grasp of English and feels comfortable participating in activities.

### Jack

Jack is a male, level 5 graduate student in the IEP. During the summer 2014 term, he described his days as being long, spending about 5 hours in class a day. When Jack started the IEP, he was placed in the level 2 reading and speaking/listening classes; however, he was placed in the entry level grammar/writing class. After his first term, he skipped grammar/writing level 1, slightly closing the gap between this skill area and the others. In terms of work, Jack usually completes his homework immediately after his classes. Once he is finished, he goes to the campus recreation center, where he goes usually goes swimming or plays basketball with his friends. On the weekends and holidays, Jack takes a lot of time for himself. His favorite hobby is travelling and exploring, so he uses this time to go on various trips, ranging from the beach to a city he has never explored. On Sundays, Jack prepares for the long week by relaxing and finishing his homework for the week.

Instead of transferring into the university after he finishes the IEP, Jack plans on transferring to a university in the mid-west to start his master's degree. In the spring of 2014, after three completed terms in the IEP, he took the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). He passed

the exam, and therefore does not need to finish the program. However, he decided to stay and take the classes in the IEP to help his English skills.

Jack has many friends in many different circles. When I asked him to elaborate on who his friends are, he stated that about half of the people he interacted with were L1 English speakers and the other half were L2 English speakers. He knew some of his friends from his native country before he came to the U.S. to learn English. In addition to his friends he knew prior to coming to the states, he has many friends who he met in the IEP that speak his L1. He interacts with them frequently in their L1. Although he has many friends that speak his L1, Jack interacts with many of his classmates outside of his L1 as well. He is a very popular student with many friends in other language circles. Although it seems like he speaks in his native language quite often, he stated that he makes in effort to interact in English with his classmates, hanging out often with his other L2 English friends.

Jack has a large circle of L1 English friends as well, all of whom are American. He lives on campus with two L1 speakers of English, both of whom he considers good friends. He also said that he talks to his teachers quite a bit, even becoming friends with one of them after his class ended. Jack also has a conversation partner. With his conversation partner, they often discuss class, presentations, and papers. Jack has asked his conversation partner, as well as his other L1 English friends, to correct his grammar if it is wrong. He notes that when he first came to the states, he was corrected all of the time. Nowadays, he says, he is not corrected as much anymore.

Jack still communicates often in his L1, unlike Karen who tries not to use hers at all. However, in the presence of someone who does not speak his L1, he reports that he does not use it at all. He is afraid of looking rude and excluding people from a conversation. Therefore, he will use English instead.

Jack is a very active participant in the activities the IEP has to offer, which is shown in table 5. Starting immediately after his entrance into the IEP in the summer of 2013, he has participated in many of the trips, stating that it was the “best part” of the IEP. He has generalized that he has attended every trip, except one during winter term. These field trips include several class trips to the mall, Mt. Hood, a pumpkin patch, the Tulip Festival, and several trips to the beach. He has also attended three Portland Trail Blazers games and has gone to Seattle twice with his class.

Table 5: Jack’s Participation in Activities.

Activities	Times Participated
Conversation Partner Program	Since Summer 2013
International Coffee Hour	~2 per term
Field Trips	~10
Parties	None Reported

As a participant in the conversation partner program, Jack has his own conversation partner. Before that, he would go into the drop-in sessions to converse with some of the program’s employees. Additionally, he talks to the activity coordinator and their assistant quite a bit. In fact, Jack reports that he makes an effort to talk with any L1 English speakers he can. For example, when going to the Portland Blazer’s games, he tries to sit next to the activity coordinator or any

conversation partner as opposed to an L2 English speaker. He also attends Coffee Hour from time to time, following this same strategy.

Jack was very adamant about how he was not a good student- his reason being that he “hate[s] academic English. [He] passed [his] classes because [he has] to.” Table 6 lists the grades that he received over the past four terms he has already completed in the IEP.

Table 6: Jack’s Grades in the IEP

Class	Su '13	Fall '13	Winter '14	Spring '14
Grammar/Writing Level E	P			
Reading Level 2	P			
Speaking/Listening Level 2	P			
Grammar/Writing Level 2		P		
Reading Level 3		P		
Speaking/Listening Level 3		P		
Grammar/Writing Level 3			P	
Academic Reading Nonnative Speaker			F	A-*
Understanding Academic Lectures			C	
Advanced English Grammar				D
Guided Research Writing				B
Skills Enhancement Course**	P	P	P/P***	P

\*Class retaken for a passing grade.; \*\* Different class for each term.; \*\*\* Two classes were taken that term.

I asked specifically about winter term 2014, where he received an F and a C, but received a P in the other three classes he was taking at the time. During winter term 2014, he says he was “really busy.” I asked what he meant by that, and he stated that he was having family trouble at the time. I made the conscious decision not to ask him specifically about what was happening at the time, but he did state it was severe enough that he was not focused on school that term. When he retook the class in the spring 2014 term, he completed the class with an A-. When I asked about the D he received in his grammar class during the spring term, he said that he hated grammar classes, which might explain his placement in the entry level grammar/writing class during his first term in the program. He stated that lost the motivation to do well in this class because he passed the TOEFL that same term.

When I asked him if the activities in the IEP helped him, he did not let me finish the question before he gave a very excited “Yes!” He went on to state that the IEP activities gave him the motivation to want to learn English. The people he has encountered in various activities help him

“keep in the mood for speaking English”. Many of his friends who are a part of his L1 do not participate in these same activities. They do not interact with people the way he does, and according to him, he says he is much better at English than them.

**Will**

Will is a level 5 student taking the undergraduate preparation courses in the IEP. Starting in fall 2014, he was placed in the foundational track of the IEP after only having prior English instruction for only six months before he came to the U.S. from his native country. He placed in the level 1 grammar/writing and speaking/listening classes. Instead of placing in level 1 for reading, he placed in level 2.

On an average day, Will wakes up every day at 6 a.m. He goes to the gym every morning as soon as it opens. After the gym, he goes back to his dorm to take a shower and eat breakfast. He finishes just in time for his first class every morning at 9:15 a.m. Once his classes end for the day at around 3 p.m., he goes home and calls his mother. After their conversation, he does about two hours of homework, which varies day-to-day. During his homework, he watches cartoon shows. If he is not watching cartoons, he will listen to music to also help him do his work. He finds that the music helps him relax.

After his homework is complete, he is dedicated to learning something new about his academic major in English, varying from vocabulary to content. In his free time, Will reports that he does a great deal of rollerblading, either alone or with his friends or roommates. On the weekends, he goes to the gym more often, rollerblades, and makes a point to go to a new place every weekend. If he does not make it to a new place, he will go to the river to hang out with some of his friends.

Will considers both of his roommates friends of his. Both roommates are L2 speakers of English, one of them being a regular university student and the other being a student in the IEP. He told me that he had two very close friends in the IEP, both of whom are not from his native country. He is also friends with many students who are studying in the IEP. Will only knows two L1 English speakers, one of which is an acquaintance and the other is a friend of his. Will interacts in his L1 when he is alone with other people who speak his L1. Otherwise, Will makes it a point to speak in English as much as possible.

Will made it very clear to me that he “came here to study. So, [he has] to study.” The ways in which Will went about doing his work are worth mentioning. On days when he needs to do homework and he is with his friends, he makes sure that he only speaks English when doing any of his homework. Often, if he is doing homework with his friends, he finds himself tutoring his friends.

Although Will is dedicated to getting his work done, he is still a very active participant in the IEP activities. Will values the activities that are hosted by the IEP greatly. Table 7 shows Will’s participation in these activities. Will has gone on many of the class trips, including trips to the mall, Seattle, the pumpkin patch, Mt. Hood, Multnomah Falls, and the Tulip Festival. In addition to field trips, he has attended “six or seven” Portland Trail Blazers games, the fall and winter end-of-the-term parties, and the Halloween party. Will only attended Coffee Hour once, which was during the spring 2014 term.

Table 7: Will’s Participation in Activities.

Activities	Times Participated
Conversation Partner Program	Since fall 2013

Activities	Times Participated
International Coffee Hour	1
Field Trips	~14
Parties	~3

Although he will speak his L1 when his friends are around, Will makes it a point to speak only in English during the field trips, regardless of if his friends are around. Will stated without hesitation that the conversation partner program was the “best activity” in the IEP. He is a very active participant, starting immediately since his arrival in the fall. Since the fall, he stops in twice a week for a drop-in session during his lunch hours. He also has a personal conversation partner. Will stated that he used to be very anxious about speaking, but he no longer feels this anxiety, which he thinks is because of the conversation partner program.

Will received nothing less than an A- in his classes. Table 8 lists the courses he has taken and the grades that he has received thus far.

Table 8: Will’s Grades in the IEP

Class	Fall '13	Winter '14	Spring '14
Grammar/Writing Level 1	P		
Speaking/Listening Level 1	P		
Reading Level 2	P		
Grammar/Writing Level 2		P	
Speaking/Listening Level 2		P	
Reading Level 3		P	
Advanced English Grammar			A
Guided Research Writing			A
Academic Reading for the Nonnative Speaker			A-
Discussion Skills for the Nonnative Speaker			A
Skills Enhancement Courses*	P	P	P

\*Different class for each term

Although Will started out in speaking/listening levels 1 and 2 in the fall and winter terms, he skipped over levels 3 and 4. He told me that level 2 was incredibly boring and not challenging. Even after skipping over those two speaking/listening classes, he managed to make an A in his level 5 listening course in the spring 2014 term. He even notices that among his classmates, he



can speak better than many of them, which facilitated his decision to skip those levels. He felt ready to be a part of the more advanced class.

Despite his grades, Will does not think of himself as “a good student.” He states that he “knows students who are better than (him).” A part of the reason for this thought is because of his English background. Many of the students he is comparing himself to started learning English long before entering the IEP, according to him. Since he only started learning English six months prior, he feels as though he cannot compare on an intellectual level.

Will believes that the activities hosted by the IEP helped him greatly with his academics and his language proficiency. He states that he could not speak in English at all before he started the IEP, and the activities helped him further his English education and speaking ability.

## **Grace**

Grace is an undergraduate student taking level 5 classes in the IEP. Like Will and Karen, Grace began classes in fall of 2013, placing entirely in level 1 classes. She is a dedicated student who spends weekdays studying and completing homework. Grace is so dedicated that she was able to skip the level 3 classes in the program. She finds small breaks when she can, however, going to the campus bar to enjoy \$1 drinks with her friends on Thursday evenings, watching TV at night after homework, and taking lunch breaks with friends. Although she studies hard during the weekdays, she uses the weekends for fun. On Saturday mornings and evenings, she likes to visit parks and gardens. At night, she stated that she likes to go to dorm parties with her friends. If there is no dorm party that night, she goes to the bar instead. Because of her weekend partying, she likes to wake up late on Sunday. With the rest of her time that day, she works on projects and studies for class. About twice a week, she talks to her family. Before this term, she would talk to them almost every day. She says that she is too busy this term, taking 16 credits with one class being a class for her major.

Grace stated that she is very shy. With the exception of her classmates and teachers, she mostly interacts with her friends, most of whom are from her native country. She expressed in her interview that even though she will speak English in class, she will use class breaks to talk to her friends in her L1. Karen reports that she has about six American friends, although she scarcely speaks with them. Although she prefers to speak in her native language, Grace is courteous when her American friends are around, much like Will and Jack, speaking in English when they are spending time with her and her native L1 friends.

Grace studies with her friends occasionally. She works best when she is working alone in silence. On the rare days that she does study with her friends, she works entirely with her native friends. During the times when she does study with them, they are usually working on their speaking and listening homework. While they are not practicing they speak their L1 entirely to understand the English they are learning or practicing.

Grace participates in a moderate amount of extracurricular activities, which is shown in table 9. She attends field trips frequently, going on two trips to Mt. Hood, two trips to the mall, one trip to Seattle, one trip to Multnomah Falls, and a trip to the Tulip Festival. She has also attended a large amount of Portland Trail Blazers' games, going to five during the season. Although she has not attended any of the end-of-the-term parties in the IEP, she has attended all of the welcome parties for the students. She expressed during our interview that she speaks almost entirely in her L1 during these events except when she absolutely has to speak to someone outside of her L1. Lastly, she has only participated in Coffee Hour and the Conversation Partner Program once each, both of which happened in winter term and spring term respectively.

Table 9: Grace's Participation in Activities.

Activities	Times Participated
Conversation Partner Program	1 drop-in session
International Coffee Hour	1
Field Trips	~12
Parties	~3

Grace has not come close to failing a class during her time in the IEP. As opposed to the other participants, she does believe she is a good student. However, she states that she needs to study more and continue to improve. Table 10 shows the grades she has received in her classes thus far.

Table 10: Grace's grades in the IEP and university.

Class	Fall '13	Winter '14	Spring '14
Grammar/Writing Level 1	P		
Reading Level 1	P		
Speaking/Listening Level 1	P		
Grammar/Writing Level 2		P	
Reading Level 2		P	
Speaking/Listening Level 2		P	
Guided Research Writing			A
Advanced English Grammar			A-
Academic Reading Nonnative Speaker			A
Understanding Academic Lectures			B+
Major Classwork (1 credit)			A
Skills Enhancement Course*	P	P	P

\*Different class for each term

During our interview, while asking Grace if she thought she was a good student, she also expressed that she knows she needs to participate in the activities the IEP has to offer. Although Grace attends activities and usually uses her L1, people still speak to her in English. Being very shy, she does not initiate conversation in English. Grace stated that she and her native friends try

to speak in English, but they almost immediately revert back to their L1. On this she says, "It's natural, but we try." Despite not using the target language to her full advantage at these events, she still sees the activities as a good way to practice.

## **VI. DISCUSSION**

In this section, I address the findings from my interviews in regards to how they might show a possible relationship between ESL student success and co-curricular activities. Several different themes emerged from the interviews as described in the narratives. These themes provide insight into my original guiding research question as stated in my literature review: What is the relationship between ESL student success and co-curricular activities in an intensive English language program (IEP)?

From my findings in the interviews, Karen, Jack, Will and Grace had good experiences taking part in the IEP's activities. Each interviewee felt like the activities were beneficial, no matter what their level of participation in activities was or the capacity in which they participated. Each participant, with the exception of Grace, expressed their favoritism towards one activity more than the others. For Karen, it was the International Coffee Hour. For Will and Jack, it was the Conversation Partner Program and the variety of field trips respectively.

### **Conversation Partner Program**

Karen stated that she valued the International Coffee Hour because she had the opportunity to meet people from a variety of other cultures. However, what I saw emerge from our interview is a possible relationship between her grades and the Conversation Partner Program. Karen became more involved though during the winter 2014 term, when she started the Conversation Partner Program. Prior to her start in the Conversation Partner Program, she failed her grammar/writing class and nearly failed her other classes during the fall. As described in her narrative, Karen stated that she hardly participated in activities, but she started to become determined to speak English. The Conversation Partner Program, as it is structured, forces students to interact in the target language. Therefore, Karen had no choice but to use English. She also believes her participation helped her in achieving better English skills and that after she started the Conversation Partner Program, she was able to pass her classes, which remained consistent.

Will claimed that the Conversation Partner Program was the best activity in the IEP, but he participated in all of the activities consistently with the exception of International Coffee Hour. He also had the highest grades of all the students in this study. I can see a similar relationship in his case that I do with Karen's- a relationship between the Conversation Partner Program and student outcomes. It is interesting that Will was placed in both the level 1 speaking/listening and grammar/writing classes during his first term, the fall 2013 term. During the spring 2014 term, after two terms in the program, he skipped over the level 3 grammar class and over levels 3 and 4 of the speaking/listening classes. Furthermore, Will received an A at the completion of his level 5 speaking/listening class.

### **Personal Struggle and Loss of Motivation**

Jack is a very active participant in the IEP's activities. He stated that he values the field trips the most out of all of the activities in the IEP, expressing during our interview that he likes to travel to different places locally and nationally. It is hard to assess if Jack's grades are linked to his participation in the IEP's activities because of his personal trouble during the winter 2014 term. He stated during our interview that the distractions of this trouble caused him to fail his level 4 reading class (F) and receive an average grade in his level 4 speaking/listening class (C). With the

exception of the one field trip he missed, Jack's participation in activities did not waver during the winter 2014 term.

His family trouble settled by the start of the spring 2014 term. After failing his level 4 reading class in the winter, he retook it again in the spring and received a high grade (A-). However, during the same term, he received a D in his grammar class-- a class that he said he hated. This grade was attributed to the loss of motivation he experienced after passing the TOEFL exam the same term. Because he passed the exam, he no longer needed to pass the class. Because of these additional factors, his family trouble and his loss of motivation, I cannot see if there is a positive link between co-curricular participation and ESL student success.

### **Opportunities to Practice**

The IEP activities have operated as opportunities to practice where the student is forced to speak in the target language. Practicing, as stated by Oxford (1990), is a form of cognitive learning strategies. Second language researchers and teachers would agree that being in a country where the target language is spoken is the best way to find opportunities to practice (Oxford, 1990). To me, it seems that students who do not actively seek opportunities to practice have taken away a chance for growth in not only language acquisition, but also in student development. I can see this firstly in the contrast between Grace and the other students.

Grace was not as active as the other participants in my study. The way she participates in the activities also differs from the way that the other students participate. Although all of the students, including Grace, see the activities as a way to practice the target language, Grace is the only one who does not speak English during the field trips or at the NBA games. Additionally, she does not often participate in International Coffee Hour or in the Conversation Partner Program. Despite this, Grace is still makes high grades. Although she received two high grades in her grammar class (A-) and speaking/listening (B+), they are lower than her reading and writing grades, both of which she received A's in. The activities in the IEP are not geared towards improving reading and writing skills because they aim for interaction. Grammar, speaking, and listening are skills that would be improved directly as a result of involvement.

### **Confidence**

There is very little evidence in the data of students gaining confidence; however, there might be evidence in the cases of Karen and Grace. Karen was discouraged from using English when she first started in the program, as stated in her narrative. However, after she failed her grammar class the first term, she reported that she was determined to put herself in more situations with speaking the target language. She also stated during her interview that she taught she was a good student now. I believe that her participation in the activities have helped her find the confidence to be able to pass her classes. By immersing herself in the target language, she was able to improve her English abilities. Furthermore, by immersing herself in the activities and having a better grasp on English, she was able to improve her confidence and find better learning strategies that worked for her, such as her "English-only" rule.

Although I did not put this in my narrative, my interview with Grace was very different from my interviews with the other students. All of the other students were willing to give as much information as possible, but Grace's answers were very brief and vague. This may be reflective of her uncomfortable feelings towards speaking in English during the IEP activities and her self-confidence (Astin, 1984; Klesse & D'Onofrio, 2000; Oxford, 1990). All of the other students who participated very actively were speaking almost non-stop, giving large answers to each of the questions I asked.

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

This small, preliminary examination between co-curricular activities and ESL student success has revealed differences among a small group of English language learners. Based on the cases of two of my participants (Karen and Will), active participation in activities has supported the claim that students will be more successful if they participate in the social and academic aspects of the collegiate experience. Another case (Jack) has shown that despite active participation in IEP activities, personal struggles, family trouble, and a loss of motivation can still lead to class failure. One case (Grace) has shown that active participation in IEP activities is not needed to achieve high grades, although there may be room for improvement in confidence, speaking ability and grades if the student does choose to participate.

This study has several implications for researchers, teachers, and program administrators. Researchers are not drawing from all the areas of research outside of TESOL that they can. Astin's theory of involvement should have a voice in the area of TESOL and should be a part of relevant research. Furthermore, Xiao and Luo (2009) was the only research- to my knowledge- that explored the relationship between ESL student success and student involvement with a special interest in co-curricular activities. It is for this reason that more qualitative and quantitative research should be conducted to strengthen the clarity of this relationship.

Teachers should promote extracurricular and co-curricular activities in their classroom. I have illustrated that students see these activities as opportunities for practice. Teachers should be aware of the resources that are available on campus and allow students to make an autonomous decision to participate in such activities. Program administrators should continue to fund these activities for their students. Students make decisions about which schools to attend because of location, academics, programs, or educational philosophies. Having a strong catalogue of extra- and co-curricular activities may sway a student's decision to attend a university, and as people who work in academia, it is important for us to empower students and give them agency.

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